

Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586)  
*Astrophil and Stella* 1

Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,  
 That she (dear she) might take some pleasure of my pain;  
 Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know;  
 Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain;  
 5 I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,  
 Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain;  
 Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow  
 Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburnt brain.  
 But words came halting forth, wanting invention's stay;  
 10 Invention, nature's child, fled step-dame study's blows;  
 And others' feet still seemed but strangers in my way.  
 Thus great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,  
 Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite,  
 'Fool,' said my muse to me; 'look in thy heart, and write.'

*Astrophil and Stella* 55

Muses, I oft invoked your holy aid,  
 With choicest flowers my speech to engarland so  
 That it, despised in true but naked show,  
 Might win some grace in your sweet skill arrayed;  
 5 And oft whole troops of saddest words I stayed,  
 Striving abroad a-foraging to go,  
 Until by your inspiring I might know  
 How their black banner might be best displayed.  
 But now I mean no more your help to try,  
 10 Nor other sugaring of my speech to prove,  
 But on her name incessantly to cry:  
 For let me but name her, whom I do love,  
 So sweet sounds straight mine ear and heart do hit  
 That I well find no eloquence like it.

*The Major Works*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 153, 174. *Astrophil and Stella* is a sequence of 108 sonnets and eleven songs which was probably written 1581–83, though it was not published until after Sidney's death.

John Donne (1572–1631)  
A Valediction: forbidding Mourning

As virtuous men passe mildly away,  
And whisper to their soules, to goe,  
Whilst some of their sad friends doe say,  
The breath goes now, and some say, no:

5       So let us melt, and make no noise,  
          No teare-floods, nor sigh-tempests move,  
'Twere prophanation of our joyes  
          To tell the layetie our love.

10       Moving of th'earth brings harmes and feares,  
          Men reckon what it did and meant,  
But trepidation of the spheares,  
          Though greater farre, is innocent.

15       Dull sublunary lovers love  
          (Whose soule is sense) cannot admit  
Absence, because it doth remove  
          Those things which elemented it.

20       But we by a love, so much refin'd,  
          That our selves know not what it is,  
Inter-assured of the mind,  
          Care lesse, eyes, lips, hands to misse.

Our two soules therefore, which are one,  
Though I must goe, endure not yet  
A breach, but an expansion,  
Like gold to avery thinnesse beate.

25       If they be two, they are two so  
          As stiffe twin compasses are two,  
Thy soule the fixt foot, makes no show  
          To move, but doth, if the'other doe.

30           And though it in the center sit,  
              Yet when the other far doth rome,  
              It leanes, and hearkens after it,  
              And growes erect, as it comes home.

              Such wilt thou be to mee, who must  
              Like th'other foot, obliquely runne.  
35       Thy firmnes makes my circle just,  
              And makes me end, where I begunne.

*The Elegies and The Songs and Sonnets*, ed. Helen Gardner (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), 62–64. You can find notes in the version on [Representative Poetry Online](#). [Digital Donne](#) has facsimiles of the [first printed edition](#) (1633) and [manuscripts](#) (date unknown).

William Wordsworth (1770–1850)  
“A slumber did my spirit seal”

A slumber did my spirit seal,  
I had no human fears:  
She seem'd a thing that could not feel  
The touch of earthly years.

5       No motion has she now, no force  
          She neither hears nor sees  
          Roll'd round in earth's diurnal course  
          With rocks and stones and trees!

William Wordsworth [and Samuel Taylor Coleridge], *Lyrical Ballads, with Other Poems* (London: Longman and Rees, 1800), 2:53, [Internet Archive](#).

Ezra Pound (1885–1972)

IN A STATION OF THE METRO

The apparition of these faces in the crowd :  
Petals on a wet, black bough .  
*Ezra Pound*

“Contemporaria,” *Poetry* 2, no. 1 (April 1913): 12, [JSTOR](#).

H.D. (1886–1961)  
Sea Rose

Rose, harsh rose,  
marred and with stint of petals,  
meagre flower, thin,  
sparse of leaf,

5        more precious  
          than a wet rose  
          single on a stem—  
          you are caught in the drift.

10       Stunted, with small leaf,  
          you are flung on the sand,  
          you are lifted  
          in the crisp sand  
          that drives in the wind.

15       Can the spice-rose  
          drip such acrid fragrance  
          hardened in a leaf?

*Sea Garden* (London: Constable, 1916), 1, [HathiTrust](#).

Langston Hughes (1901–1967)  
Harlem

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up  
like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore—  
5 And then run?  
Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over—  
like a syrupy sweet?

10 Maybe it just sags  
like a heavy load.

*Or does it explode?*

*Montage of a Dream Deferred* (1951) in *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, ed. Arnold Rampersad (New York: Knopf, 1995), 426.

Philip Larkin (1922–1985)  
This Be The Verse

They fuck you up, your mum and dad.  
They may not mean to, but they do.  
They fill you with the faults they had  
And add some extra, just for you.

5 But they were fucked up in their turn  
By fools in old-style hats and coats,  
Who half the time were soppy-stern  
And half at one another's throats.

10 Man hands on misery to man.  
It deepens like a coastal shelf.  
Get out as early as you can,  
And don't have any kids yourself.

*Collected Poems*, ed. Anthony Thwaite (London: Faber, 2003), 142. The title clips a line from Robert Louis Stevenson's "Requiem" (1890): "This be the verse you grave for me." Larkin's poem appeared in his volume *High Windows* (1974).

Rae Armantrout (1947–)  
Will

In English  
we place a noun  
meaning fixed purpose  
before our verbs  
5 to create the future  
tense.  
  
Here, in the private life  
my team invents,  
I'm in a floodlit kitchen  
10 like the set  
of an old-time ad  
for Tide  
  
and I am chopping  
something.  
  
15 Isn't this the past  
perfect?  
Should I feel nostalgic?  
  
This corn is highly  
leveraged  
  
20 and I'm wearing  
a pink slip.

*Poetry* 201, no. 6 (March 2013): 535, [JSTOR](#). Bonus: compare Shakespeare's [Sonnet 135](#).