

from **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.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you two years before the Flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.
--Andrew Marvell (1621-1678)

from **MY LAST DUCHESS**

That's my last duchess painted on the wall
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder now. Fra Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
'Fra Pandolf' by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus.
--Robert Browning (1812-1889)

from **RICHARD CORY**

And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place

So on we worked and waited for the light
And went without the meat and cursed the bread
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.
--Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869-1935)

from **OZYMANDIAS**

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,

--Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

I LIKE A LOOK OF AGONY

I like a look of Agony,
Because I know it's true—
Men do not sham Convulsion,
Nor simulate a Throe—

The eyes glaze once—and that is Death—
Impossible to reign
The beads upon the Forehead
By homely Anguish strung.

--Emily Dickinson 1830-1886)

from **BREDON HILL**

In summertime on Bredon
The bells they sound so clear;
Round both the shires they ring them
In steeples far and near,
A happy noise to hear.

Here of a Sunday morning
My love and I would lie,
And see the colored counties,
And hear the larks so high
About us in the sky.

--A.E. Housman (1859-1936)

ARS POETICA

A poem should be palpable and mute
As a globed fruit,

Dumb
As old medallions to the thumb,

Silent as the sleeve-worn stone
Of casement ledges where the moss has grown

A poem should be wordless
As the flight of birds.

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A poem should be motionless in time
As the moon climbs,

Leaving, as the moon releases
Twig by twig the night-entangled trees,

Leaving, as the moon behind the winter leaves,
Memory by memory the mind—

A poem should be motionless in time
As the moon climbs

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A poem should be equal to:
Not true.

For all the history of grief
An empty doorway and a maple leaf.

For love
The leaning grasses and two lights above the sea—

A poem should not mean
But be.

--Archibald MacLeish (1892-1982)

from **THE RAVEN**

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door—
“Tis some visitor,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door—
Only this and nothing more.”

...

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before/
“Surely, said I, surely that is something at my window lattice:
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore--
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;--
‘Tis the wind and nothing more!”

--Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)

from **THE BELLS**

Hear the sledges with the bells—
Silver bells!
What a world of merriment their melody foretells!
How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
In the icy air of night!
While the stars that oversprinkle
All the heavens, seem to twinkle
With a crystalline delight;
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells
From the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells—
From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

--Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)

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.

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
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,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

--Robert Frost (1874-1963)

PASSPORTS

We save them, as we save those curls
culled from our kids' first haircuts, or from lovers
felled too early. Here are

all of mine, safe in a file, their corners
clipped, each page engraved
with trips I barely remember.

Why was I wandering from there to there
To there? God only knows.
And the processions of wraiths' photos

claiming to prove that I was me:
the faces greyish disks, the fisheyes
trapped in the noonhour flashflare

with the sullen jacklit stare
of a woman who's just been arrested.
Sequenced, these pics are like a chart

of moon phases fading to blackout; or
like a mermaid doomed to appear onshore
every five years, and each time altered

to something a little more dead:
skin withering in the parching air,
marooned hair thinning as it dries,
cursed if she smiles or cries.

--Margaret Atwood