HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
Frederic Will, Ph.D.

LYRIC POETRY

Contents

Ancient Period (Egypt - Europe (Greece – Rome) – China)
Postclassical Period (Europe – India – China – Arabia – Japan)
Early Modern Period (England – France – Italy – Spain – North America)
19th Century (England – France - Germany – Italy – Russia – North America)
20th Century (England - France – Germany - Poland – Russia – Spain – China – Japan – Arabia - North America - Latin America – Africa)

SECTION I : Ancient Period
(Egypt - Europe (Greece – Rome) – China)

EGYPT

Ancient Egypt equals its Ancient Greek counterpart, in artistic achievement. From the pyramids and temples that meet us in the third millennium B.C.E., to the love poetry that seems astonishingly contemporary to us—though dating from the still ancient aesthetic revolution of the l9th and 20th dynasties—1290-1078 B.C.E.—the Egyptian mark on literature, visual art, and religious thought is strong and distinctive. Thanks to the privileging of historical context, and cultural familiarity, ancient Greece got the ear of later centuries, while the Egyptians world got buried in the sand. But this imbalance yields, on a closer look, to the sense that our attention should fall on Ancient Eastern Mediterranean cultures, if we want to understand the true achievements of either Greeks or Egyptians.

The background to the explosion of verbal art, in Egyptian love poetry, looms over the lyric's sensuous outbreak in the innovative theological poetry of the first 'nearly Monotheistic,' sun worshipping Pharaoh Akhnaten (d. 1336 B.C.E.) The passionate sense of nature's course, in Akhnaten's *Hymn to Aten*, readies us for the marshes, hunting scenes, fleeing gazelles which stud the natural backdrop of the love lyric we discover in the 'aesthetic revolution,' above, the lyric created not so remote in time from the brilliant creations of the Greek Sappho and Archilochus, in the seventh century B.C.E.

What most stuns us, in this accessible Egyptian love poetry, is the ease of reading it today—that despite the frequent lacunae in the papyrus texts, which make the basic interpretation of many lines difficult. The overall play of this poetry, however, is never difficult to grasp: from the 'red fish in the water,' Norton I, pp. ll9-20, to the 'milk shot through water' (p. 122) to the 'Moringa oils/ in her diaphanous garments…' (p. l24). It is in fact the Greek Sappho who most comes to mind, as a parallel to the directness, simplicity, and passion of this lyric outburst.

Egyptian Love Poems 13th Century B.C. (Egypt)

Emotion in language. Egyptian love poems, from the thirteenth century B.C., open our way to what seems a direct expression of emotion, and a verbal field on which we can read without endless footnotes, cautions, and uncertainties. (And without that awesome sense of strangeness that the *Pyramid Texts* or *Book of the Dead* enforce in style and narrative technique.) We should no doubt keep some guard up, for where ready feeling offers itself there is always room for delusion and even deception. The comparison of alternate translations is one way to remind ourselves that the original is never of a single meaning, but in literary work flays out into multiple meanings. And that reflection will remind us that the quest for selfhood, and for ways for formulate it, is (in literary art) a byproduct of language. The language of poetry is inherently ambiguous, and thrives on a margin of half clarity, and is in that different from the languages of, say, the *Code of Hammurabi*, which *proscribes* and lays down, or the language of *The Instruction for Merikar*e, which *prescribes*.We will start with a juxtaposition of two translations of a single text, whose language neither proscribes nor prescribes, but *suggests.*

The languages of translation. The distinguished pioneer Egyptologist, Adolf Erman, published his *Ancient Egyptian Literature* in l923, and in it we read (itself a translation from German into English) the following:

____my god. My brother, it is pleasant to go to the (pond) in order to bathe me in thy presence, that I may let thee see my beauty in my tunic of finest royal linen, when it is wet____I go down with thee into the water, and come forth again to thee with a red fish, which (lieth?) beautiful on my fingers____Come and look at me.

(Erman, p. 248; trans. Blackman, l927).

.

The language is an archaized English—itself a kind of translation, of seventeenth century English/ King James Bible translation language—and simulates a difficulty of disengaging meaning from material (papyrus) not easily read, and syntax not easily converted into the languages of English poetry. This is the kind of anti-English English translation which we will find generative in Week 14, when we turn to lived verbal creations of our time, in which Ancient Near Eastern Literature becomes part of English language newspeak. Erman's translation work contrasts sharply with our second example (in a volume translated 2001), also by a talented Egyptologist:

Love, how I'd love to slip down to the pond,
  Bathe with you close by on the bank.
Just for you I'd wear my new Memphis swimsuit,
  Made of sheer linen, fit for a queen—
Come see how it looks in the water!

Couldn't I coax you to wade in with me?
  Let the cool creep slowly around us?
Then I'd dive deep down
  And come up for you dripping,
Let you fill your eyes
  With the little red fish that I'd catch.

(John Foster, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 2001; p. 23.)

Foster's translation not only smoothes and charms, where Erman/Blackman scrape rough meanings straight off the papyrus, but Foster also attempts to simulate the meter and rhythm of Egyptian poetry, an effort Erman (p. xxxi in his Introduction) speculates on, but makes no effort at.

Reaching the past through language. Translation is the hidden issue below that 'distance' of Ancient Near Eastern literature, which we discussed in our first paragraph this week. (As a student of literatures not native to you, you may want to reflect on the enormous importance of translation as a whole, is establishing our senses of the creative traditions of our world.) That being said, however, it remains true that Ancient Egyptian Love Poetry, of the Ramasside Period (13th century. B.C.), does what it can to touch broadly human registers, and thus to overcome its birth passage to us through language and artifact barriers—papyrus quickly dries and cracks, and is rarely intact; stelae are often hard to read--not to mention the pure hazards of location and discovery. In this week's readings you will find poems by women as well as men, sensuous as well as longing poems, and lustful poems.

Selfhood and the love lyric. It is from this small collection that we now pay our weekly homage to the issue of selfhood and the person. The language before us, in whatever translation, is clearly one of suggestion and implication, as distinct from the languages of law, manners, or religious adulation. (We can see that suggestive trait of this language, even through the mist of translation.) The expression of longing, passion, nostalgia, which drives Egyptian love lyrics, is at bottom just a distinctive kind of language, the language of feeling *yes* but in a deeper sense the language of implication and suggestion. Is this language of poetry different from the language of prose, say from that of *The Tale of Sinuhe*? It is difficult to answer, given our distance in time and language from the texts in question. *The Tale of Sinuhe*, we might want to say, is as allusive/suggestive as the love-poems we are reading, but the language of the tale is more causatively sequential, and narrative. In either case, *Sinuhe* or the love-poem, it is the self-identity of the narrator that provides the driving *eros* of the piece, and that keeps us under a spell that at the same time involves ourselves.

Reading

John Foster, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* pp. 17-31.
Foster, John L., *Love Songs of the New Kingdom*, Austin, l992.
Adolf Erman, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, pp. 254-310.
Wilson, Penelope, *Sacred signs: Hieroglyphics in Ancient Egypt,* Oxford, 2003.

Discussion Questions

1 Historically speaking, we in the West seem to inherit our cultural and artistic values more from the Greco-Roman than from the ancient Egyptian tradition. How do you explain this state of affairs? What is responsible for it?

2 It is easy to say, and has some truth, that ancient Egyptian love poems are very modern. But is it true? Are the translations you look at, of Egyptian love poetry, characteristic of the way an English language poet would express his or her love today?

3 Does the *Hymn to Aten* use sensuous language, like the love poems we have just discussed? Does it bring the god directly into the world of sensuous experience?

4 Is there any norm for good translation? Should it be as literal as possible, and try to replicate (in the case of poetry) the meter and even sound of the original? Or should the translation of poetry strive for a new version entirely in the new language? This is a classic conundrum in translation theory, and there have been as many responses as translators. Do you have a position on this issue? Do you prefer Foster or Erman, from our own brief survey above? What is your impression of the translations we have been reading in this course? Is there any text that seemed to you to fare especially badly in its English version, and if so what do you surmise was the problem?

5 Do *The Tale of Sinuhe*, *Gilgamesh*, and the love poems we have read seem to you have in common that they all spring from the imagination? We have implied that point repeatedly here, in an effort to consider the width of the range of the texts that go into this class. But are we to think there is not imagination in the *Enuma Elish* or that there is nothing but imagination in the kinds of love poetry we are reading? If imagination means what is created from within special wholeness-establishing powers of the person, might we not say that the pond-poem we sampled above is rather a literal descriptive statement of an emotional condition, while, say, the *Enuma Elish* employs the imagination of huge cosmic conflicts—rather like Milton?—even while purporting to account for the actuality of events in heavenly time? What, finally, do you think of our tripartite division of three kinds of language? Is it proving a useful guide for you as you move through these archaic texts?

6 As you peruse the love lyrics in Erman or Foster, do you accept Foster's view, that when it comes to 'love lyrics' the universal kicks in; we all understand what is going on here, in a way we do not with, say, a creation hymn or a hymn to the sun. Erman's translation segment, above, seems to suggest that at least the flowing syntax of Foster's translation must have cost something in the course of 'smoothing out' the original. Nevertheless, though, do you buy into the idea that the way the 'romantic' is expressed in widely

different cultures will be fairly consistent and similar—as distinct, say, from the way the languages of high theology are expressed?

Egyptian love poems in Bedford Vol. 1

P. 121 If am not with you where will you set your heart?

Analysis. A blend of desperate fear of abandonment, with ample self-confidence where her charms are in question, the lover calls to he vanished lover, putting to him the penalties for leaving her. 1290-1278 B.C. appears to be the timespan during which the lines of poetry joined here were composed. There is no smoothing the rough texture of these lines, no missing their fierce intent.

P. 122 My love for you is mixed throughout my body

Analysis. The bulk of this brief piece is forceful and medical. In the Greek poems we read earlier, by Sappho and Archilochos (7th-6th centuries, B.C.) the body is a whole sensuous presence, out of which the narrator speaks; in these Egyptian lyrics, the body is discussed as though it is a disjunctive set of parts. It is a quantative whole, in which discreet fluids, including the potion of love, flow equally.

P. 122. My heart is not yet happy with your love

Analysis, I want more of you, some rough stuff. I'm
satisfied, that's for sure, but even so, if the others try to 'keep
me away from you, ' beating me up, I will not stop loving and needing you. A simple poem, or is it? Neither the beloved nor the
dissuaders will yield whole heartened love to the poet. He alone seems to
be capable of love.

P. 123. I sail downstream in the ferry by the 'pull of the current.'

Analysis. The waters of the river draw me down the stream, until I reach Ptah,
Memphis' creator god. When I get there I will ask for my girl. All is wine and brightness at Memphis. The poet or poets of these love poems long powerfully and think physically.

P. 123 My God, my lover…

Analysis. The lady of love goes to the water, to meet her amorous and
handsome gpd, and to take his red member in her hands. Her river soaked gown will have clung to her in just the appropriate places, that the god may know just where his member belongs.

Gods abound in this Egypt of the imagination, and play erotically with their mortal lovers. Greek and Roman gods shack up with mortals, and the permutations of these relationships generate, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* a semi complete theology. But the Greek immortals live a supple and risking love life, while the gods of the waters of Egypt incline to the statuesque and straight-spine.

P. 124. I embrace her

Analysis No simulated copulation here, but rather a fusion driven as two bodies meet in a kiss. Interestingly enough, drugs are called into the explanation: erotic herbs of the east.

P. 124. I wish I were her washerman

Analysis. The poet, fixated on the beloved's genital area and on the filmy cloths she covers the softness with, wishes for the maximum tactical contact with the garments which nestle there. To wash those love drenched panties is an ecstasy of realization coming to us startlingly across three millenia.

P. 124 Seven days have passed, and I've not seen my lady love

Analysis. As early as 3000 B.C**.** Egyptians had a significant medical tradition, a training school for medical doctors, and the capacity to perform surgery and precise dental operations. This early and highly empirical development sets a background for the 'physicalist' characteristics of certain of the love poems we discuss here. The point of the present poem, of course, is that medical science will not cure the pains of love, though such science may cure some pains.

P. 125.   Please come quick to the Lady Love

Analysis.   The reader is exhorted to run faster, so that he can catch up with his gazelle swift lady love, whose hideaway he is swiftly approaching—though it is concealed and mysterious.

GREECE.

Lyric imagination and its historical setting

In the present section we return to the so-called Archaic stage of Greek culture, when the establishment of Homeric poetry in writing was already a fact, the spread of literacy, writing, and accordingly individualism was starting to make itself felt, and the economic and social structures of the fifth century B.C. polis were anticipated on the horizon. Archilochus (seventh century B.C.) and Sappho (late seventh--middle sixth century B.C.) will be among our guides into this transitional world, and into the world of lyric expression, which is the surest indicator of social and cultural change. But there will be many more poets to guide us into this period, for in fact we are stepping into a uniquely fertile era for Hellenic self-expression. We are, 'suddenly,' face to face with distinctive and passionate *individuals,* and though they are addressing us in meters as formalized as those of the epic hexameter, these individuals are not channeled by the Muse, but are in some regards clearly exposed to us.

The present point is complex, and unfolds into one of the mysteries of the Hellenic achievement. Archilochus, for instance, tells us about his love for Neoboule, his casting away a spear in battle, the experience of an eclipse. We incline to take these professions at face value, and in some cases—like that of the eclipse—it seems plausible to stick with face value. But, as the French poet Mallarme was to say, two and a half millennia later, 'a poem is made of words' and the poet's first responsibility is to words, the way they fit together, their sounds—to *those* kinds of honesty. 'We must be on guard, when we draw conclusions about matters of fact, from verbal artifacts—especially from those composed 'long ago.'

Whatever the driver of the lyric, and however complex the lyricist, it will strike us all that there was a veritable explosion of this kind of self-expression in the Arcbaic Age. It is as though a hunger for fresh verse forms was asserting itself throughout the Eastern Mediterranean.

Archilochus (7th Cent. B.C.)

Archilochos as lyric presence. We have stressed the importance of the dactylic hexameter (in Homer and Hesiod). With Archilochos (and the other lyric poets we discuss here) we come into a pluralistic metrical world, in which, though there is 'direct expression' of the individual, there are multiple prosodic vehicles for that expression: the *iambic* meter (often, in Archilochos, used for 'attack' or 'invective' poetry); and various lyric meters, declarative (*trochaics*), *anapestic* (tripping and springing), and *dactylic*, an echo from the epic.

A**rchilochos and the remains of his work**. We know one date in Archilochos' life, 648 B.C., the occasion of a total eclipse of the sun over the Aegaean: 'Nothing in the world can surprise me now….for Zeus, father of the Olympians, has turned midday into black night by shielding light from the blossoming sun, and now dark terror hangs over mankind…' Apart from that event, what we know of Archilochos comes from his own poems—and in that he hardly differed from the Athenians of the fifth century; their lives have largely to be reconstructed by much later comments from others, often embedded in texts/papyri reduced to a line or two. The evidence we deduce from Archilochos' poems suggests he was a mercenary soldier, that on one occasion he had thrown away his shield and fled from battle, that he had a great love for Neoboule (not 'romance'), that he preferred short tough individualistic fighting men to aristocratic pretty boys, and so on: from his remaining poems and fragments we can create the profile of a Thasian fighting man with such and such traits. Yet as we are looking at the lyric of personal expression, here, we had better take a sharp look. It is true that, in his lyrics which are mostly incomplete, Archilochos gives us content-lines which purport to be autobiographical glimpses, but self-expression in the lyric is not that transparent. The reliability of information given in a lyric is always open to question, and must be read in terms of the speaker and the tone of the whole piece. In most cases, if we look closely at the ancient lyric, we will find many reasons to question how it is personally revelatory. Finally, what do you think you can learn about a man from a little poem like the following?

The fox knows many tricks, the hedgehog only one.
One good one.

Solon and Heronda: The Political Lyrics

Solon and Herondas. What joins them? With these two poets, we press to the limits the checkerboard quality of the timeframe of this course. But we can turn the oddity into an advantage, by highlighting the dramatic changes Athens underwent from the mid-seventh to mid-sixth century (Solon) to the first half of the third century (Herondas.). In other words, from the very beginning of the Classical Period to the late Hellenistic wind-down of classical Hellenism. We have already looked at the cultural chasm separating, say, the mind of Hesiod (seventh century B.C) from that of Plato (d. 348 B.C.) three hundred years later. What did we find there? Hesiod works wholeheartedly inside an integral, archaic and formalized tradition of expression, while Plato—and this appears even in our limited readings, *The Apology* and *The Republic*—works out into a wide ranging and daring topography of new thoughts and theories, his voice, even through the dialogue form, coming across as subtly aware of the 'modern person-world.' Something of the same contrast links Solon and Herondas, both of whom were poets, and concerned, though very differently, with the landscape of social behavior. Solon, as distinguished lawgiver/poet, wrote in curried elegiac couplets about the new laws he instituted for the city of Athens, and the benefits he brought to civil order, self-control and rule of law—all of which he actually did; while Herondas, long after Athens had shown what a marvelous democracy it was capable of mounting, though for a brief century, looks with a jaundiced *oeil critique* at the foibles and oddities of his own time, as they are reflected in his home island of Kos and (probably) in travels to Egyptian Alexandria, a center of culture and trends.

Herondas. Like Solon, Herondas, writing three centuries later, has his creative eye on the social scene. But while Solon was a poet/law giver/ reformer Herondas is a sophisticated observer, worldly to the last iamb. Mime One, which is fascinatingly translated by Douglass Parker in Knox, pp. 566-571, shows you how Herondas touches the depths of society, bawdiness, lust, and innuendo flowing through every word. In his manner of presenting this material, Herondas speaks for an artistic age, the Hellenistic, which pushes the limits of art, addresses the retro, self-involved pleasures of the artist in an age which f*ollows* the great achievements of classical culture. The work of Herondas is baroque, as distinguished from Renaissance, or camp as distinguished from naïve, or postmodern as distinguished from modern. Herondas is creating at a time when genre *sculpture* abounds. Hellenistic sculptors portrayed subjects unknown in the high classical period….foreigners (such as the dying Gaul), drunkards, battered athletes, wrinkled old people. The pristine age of idealized nude sculptures has given way to the unique/eye-catching, just as the lyric of Solonian Athens, grave and yet artful, has given way to the mime poetry of an age full of curiosity, libido, and *interest*.

Discussion

Would Herondas' kind of camp social critique have been possible at an earlier stage of Greek culture than his, or was his critique tied to the sophisticated, 'post-classical' high-culture tone of the Alexandrian Age? What about reversing the question, to apply to Solon? Would his fairly stark, though artful, poems about justice and civil war have been possible at the time of Herondas? Or were they tied to the formative stage of the Greeks when a father-figure thinker was needed to lead the way into a new cultural stage?

Are you convinced that early epic and early philosophy spring from the same root? Or do you see the epic and the philosophic imaginations as from the beginning seriously different?

Do you see a connection between Socrates' thought and that of the Pre Socratics? What is it?

To what extent do the early Greek lyric, and the political poetry of Solon and Herondas, give insights into the personalities of their creators?

Poem

Solon is not gifted with wisdom and sagacity
God put good things into his hands but he failed to grasp them.
He cast his net and caught his fish
But in his wonder and delight
He did not draw it in
Both his courage and his wit were unequal to the occasion.
If I could seize the power, acquire vast wealth,
And be lord of Athens for but a single day
I would give my body to be flayed for a wineskin
And consent to the annihilation of my race.

Analysis Irony at his own expense is a Solon trademark, and a portal to rich human confidence. Homeric heroes seldom dabble in self-critique, for after all they are living advertisements for themselves; yet when you compare the heroes of, say, the *Niebelungenlied*, to those of Homer you find a characteristic complexity/humanity, on the Greek side, which foretells the kind of human maturity we read above in Solon. Would it be a figure like Job or Ezekiel, who would play with the notion of human rottenness to whom we would need to go for a parallel to Solon? As with all irony, of course, the present instance doubles back on itself, as a covert form of self-praise. For me to be in a position to tell you how badly I performed, in face of a particular challenge, I need to be addressing you from some kind of exalted confidence post, looking down at my instructee. A hint, here, to the hidden pitfalls of analyzing the lyric, which crafts its details in small performances, rewarding us for the loss of the tale, which expatiates, or the drama, which undertakes to screw the reader's attention into a tight vise of attention. The lyric is distinctive. It is different, as we shall see later, from narrative or dramatic poetry.

Alcaeus (Late 7th Cent. B.C.)

Alcaeus was from the North Aegean island of Lesbos, living in its capitol, Mytilene. He was from one the leading aristocratic families, and was deeply involved in the politics of the island, which was a powerful commercial and naval hub directly communicating with the Hellespont and Asia Minor, and for such reasons a direct competitor with Athens. (We are in that formative period of Greek democracy, when power was not yet predominately grounded in Athens; though the impetus given Athenian democracy by Solon, whom we just visited, was starting to drive history toward the Athenian polis.) Alcaeus' life, both as an active participant in island politics and as an exile, played directly into his lyrics, indeed into such lines as the historian Herodotus later recalls, in which Alcaeus is cited throwing away his shield in the midst of battle, so that he can come out unscathed. This incident, in fact, fits with the Alcaeus who pens such lines as the following drinking song:

> *Let's drink! Why are we waiting for the lamps? Only an inch of daylight left.*
> *Lift down the large cups, my friends, the painted ones;*
> *for wine was given to men by the son of Semele and Zeus*
> *to help them forget their troubles. Mix one part of water to two of wine,*
> *pour it in up to the brim, and let one cup push the other along*...

The Lesbos where Alcaeus created brought him into direct contact with his age mate, Sappho, with whom he plausibly became acquainted at a poetry ceremony—intertwined with religious ritual—at which she was performing in Mytilene. He was struck with her beauty and grace, virtually a god-like being he thought and said in fragmenrts, and shared with her not only friendship but distinctive metrical styles—the Alcaic and the Sapphic meters were used interchangeably by both poets. It is a measure of the sophistication of local states, in this period following upon the looser clan cultures of the epic period, that such a brilliant island culture developed its own distinctive styles and cultural postures. We are firmly launched on that developmental history of a Greek culture which is eminently fragmented into small political units, often conforming to the divisory landcape of a mainland/coastal/island diversity, thus of an area where inter-regional communication was difficult.

Callinus (ca. 650 B.C.)

Callinus, from Ephesus in Asia Minor, was a contemporary of Solon, and might be coupled with him in thought, as a fellow lyricist of public spirited vigor—and of course poetic skill. (As we proceed with this section of post-epic lyrics, which pressed for a hearing in the seventh and sixth centuries, you will be noting how deeply this movement tracks the course of change in Greek society. Whereas the epic world, clannish and local, for centuries turned around prowess and wealth—as well as the grand outwardliness of the epic tradition—the lyric age, which sets in roughly on the heels of the Peisistratean Recension, and the 'outing' of Homer into print, battens on the new communal values of the early polis, with its increasing freedoms of expression, its receptiveness to individual moods and tones, and its stimulus to public artistic competitions.) Like Solon—and Alcaeus and Tyrtaeus (# 16))—Callinus seems to have been martial in spirit, and happy to contribute his work to the defence of his own community. Like Alcaeus and Sappho he created a signature meter—the elegiac couplet.

The following—in a version patched together from broken papyri—are a few lines from the longest whole version of a Callinus poem:

> *With no thought of retreat, with no terror confessed,*
> *Hurl your last dart in dying, or strike your last blow.*

Oh, 't is noble and glorious to fight for our all,--
For our country, our children, the wife of our love!
Death comes not the sooner; no soldier shall fall,
Ere his thread is spun out by the sisters above.

The translation is dated, but the thrust of the sentiment is clear. Little seems left to explain, and yet there is everything yet to discuss, about the tone the poet establishes. The 'thread' that is 'spun out' is that measuring thread to which each of our lives is attached, and which is at the mercy of the Three Fates, the three Sisters who snip off our life lines at their whim or will. The concepts themselves, the 'noble' and the 'glorious,' are thin counterparts of the Greek t*ime* and *aglaon*. *Time* is the meaning-encrusted code word for the entire honor system of the warrior, while *aglaon*, which means essentially 'bright' and 'glowing,' has a metaphorical richness not easily reached with a faded English word like 'glorious.'

Anacreon (582 B.C.-485 B.C.)

Anacreon was born in Teos, in Asia Minor, to a prosperous family. At a young age he was forced to flee to Thrace, in Northern Greece, for his community was brought under heavy pressure from the advances of the Persian ruler, Cyrus. (Such incursions from the Persians were already common among the Greeks in Asia Minor, many decades before the actual Persian Wars would begin.) In Thrace the refugees from Teos founded what was to be an important city, Abdera. While growing up in Abdera Anacreon became to polish his precocious poetic skills, which included lyre performances as well as skilled metrics with his own tweak, later called *anacreontics*; he wrote exclusively in the ancient Ionian dialect. From Abdera Anacreon was summoned to the court of Polycrates on the island of Samos, where he shone as a brilliant light of the King's sophisticated entourage. (Anacreon performed his best work in the setting of a court, where his capacity to bring forth subtle and desired praise of the royal was appreciated and remunerated.) From Samos Anacreon was invited to Athens, where the ruler Hipparchus reigned at the center of a talented group of artists, among whom the poet Simonides, whom Anacreon came to know. Ultimately, in the course of a long life, Anacreon returned to Teos, where he was buried, leaving behind him a legacy of elegant poems of which some, not all, were of *the eat, drink, and be merry* sort.

The reputation of Anacreon for high living was probably quite wrong—look at his lifespan!—and in fact, though he dealt with a vigorous love of life, he hated nothing more than debauchery, which he excoriated as a barbarian vice. He remains truly Greek in this respect.

Horns to bulls wise Nature lends;
Horses she with hoofs defends;
Hares with nimble feet relieves;
Dreadful teeth to lions gives;
Fishes learn through streams to slide;
Birds through yielding air to glide;
Men with courage she supplies;
But to women these denies.
What then gives she? Beauty, this
Both their arms and armor is:
She, that can this weapon use,
Fire and sword with ease subdues.

Alcman (seventh century B.C.)

Alcman carries a foggy biography with him. In many references—these are the papyrus fragments or later Greek scholia (references to authors which are typically about other topics)—he is said to have been from Sardis, in Lydia, in Asia Minor. (Sardis was a sophisticated city, known for its wealth and culture.) Alcman is also claimed by Sparta, and the dialect of his poetry supports that claim. (On such slim threads hang the identities we can reconstruct for ancient Greek literary figures.)

What we know of Alcman's poetry is typically a tale of loss: we know that there were six books of Alcman's choral poetry—poetry written for dancing and reciting teams—which were themselves lost at the beginning of the Middle Ages, but then that new work of Alcman was discovered in a tomb near the second Pyramid of Saqqara in Egypt, in 1855. (Chance discoveries like this continue to intertwine the findings of archeology with the history of achievements in the arts.) From that papyrus we inherit, though in battered and fragmentary state, one hundred lines of a *partheneion* of Alcman; a choral dance poem written for unmarried young women. The following is a sample of the not easily graspable energy of this poetry:

There is such a thing as the vengeance of the gods:
That man is blessed who devoutly weaves to the
End the web of his day unweeping.
And so I sing of the brightness of Agido; I see her
Like the sun, which Agido summons to shine on us as
Our witness.

Who Agido was we don't know, but that this maiden dance song belongs to a tradition of harvest-promoting and broadly generative cult themes we have some reason to believe. Throughout these poems of Alcman, which originally included a great many 'hymns,' we find implications of homoeroticism, and in contexts where the fertility of the land seems to be implicated as well as human desires. We have no reason to doubt that this was the larger ritual framework, into which the eroticism of the early Greek lyric fitted. Eros was, and remained, for the Greeks a relational force, bringing together individuals but also the forces of fertility in the world at large.

Tyrtaeus (mid seventh century B.C.)

Tyrtraeus represented the militant voice of his polis, Sparta. The fragments of his work—one is below—exhort his fellow citizens to plunge into the fray, and protect their community. (We are in the early stages of the formation of the severe Spartan ethos, which was to become so instrumental to the warfare and conflicts of the fifth century classical period. In its archaic inception the finesse of Spartan culture lay in its excellence of handiworks, metallic art, clothing, but—as we see with Tyrtaeus—the pressure of military conflict began quickly to transform the ethos of the polis.) Among the few details we know, of Tyrtaeus' life, is that he was viewed as the writer of a Constitution for Sparta (the *Eunomia),* which quite naturally he composed in elegiacs, dactylic lines (as in Homer) divided up into couplets. Like Solon, Tyrtaeus was a public figure committed to the interests of the polis.

> *Let a man learn how to fight by first daring to perform mighty deeds,*
> *Not where the missiles won't reach, if he is armed with a shield,*
> *But getting in close where fighting is hand to hand, inflicting a wound*
> *With his long spear or his sword, taking the enemy's life,*
> *With his foot planted alongside a foot and his shield pressed against shield,*
> *And his crest up against crest and his helm up against helm*
> *And breast against breast, embroiled in the action—let him fight man to man,*

Holding secure in his grasp haft of his sword or his spear!

This relatively intact poem replicates in its syntax the ferocity of hand to hand fighting, as the Greeks knew it. In the last four lines there are five noun repetitions calculated to enforce the clash of the referents—*foo*t, *shield*, *crest*, *helm, breast*—against one another. The patterns of sounds reinforce the entire point of the poem.

Like Archilochus, Tyrtaeus writes of the military experience, and does so in carefully crafted poetry. This is remarkably Ancient Greek. We can imagine a military person, today, who writes wonderful poetry, but it is hard to imagine such a person incorporating into that poetry the experience of actual military action.

Mimnermus (fl. 630-600 B.C.)

Mimnermus was born in either Colophon or Smyrna, in Asia Minor, but beyond that fact nothing firm is clear about his life. What we know of his work is scattered in fragments, though a couple of wholes remain; we know that he was admired in ancient tradition as one of the greatest lyric poets. (The eminent British classicist, Sir Maurice Bowra, considered Mimnermus and Archilochos the most talented ears in the Greek lyric corpus.) We are clear that Mimnermus preferred short poems, frequently tailored thematically for drinking parties, and that the jewel like perfection of these poems exercised a strong influence on the Hellenistic Greek poet, Callimachus (#67), as well as on the Roman lyricist Propertius. The fact is, it seems that Mimnermus' poems were not—just as Anacreon's poems were not—clarion cries to the hedonist in each of us. Mimnermus is too subtle for that, and, as in the poem below, is careful to define the kind of hedonism he values—a hedonism free of the aches and pains of old age, a longing for bodily health, a longing which the poet Solon criticizes as cowardly. And yet it is not to be forgotten that Mimnermus lived in an age when the sexual could be addressed head on; witness, in his case, a poem which works through thematic variations on the proverbial notion that 'a lame man makes the best lover.'

What is life, what is sweet, if it is missing golden Aphrodite?

Death would be better by far than to live with no time for
Amorous assignations and the gift of tenderness and bedrooms,

All of those things that give youth all of its covetted bloom,
Both for men and for women. But when there arrives the vexatiousness

Of old age, even good looks alter to unsightliness
And the heart wears away under the endlessness of its anxieties:

There is no joy anymore then in the light of the sun;
In children there is found hate and in women there is found no respect.

So difficult has old age been made for us all by God!

Bacchylides (524 B.C.-451 B.C.)

Bacchylides was born on the island of Ceos, in an environment of high Ionian culture, one more of those extraordinarily rich island cultures which generated the lyrics of, for instance, Archilochos and Sappho. He was born of a distinguished literary family—his uncle was the more famed poet, Simonides-- and Bacchylides traveled widely throughout the Aegean, competing in poetry contests, participating at poetry festivals. While he composed in many genres and prosodies, he was remarkably skilled at choral lyrics, which he offered up in dance competitions throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. Like his chief rival, Pindar (#22), Bacchylides was invited by Hieron of Syracuse, in Sicily, to create praise poems for competitors in the famed horse races of the island. It was for this kind of contest that Bacchylides produced the vivid lyric below, in which the challenge is to find an appropriate way to honor Hieron the regent:

> *...Quickly*
> *cutting the depth of air*
> *on high with tawny wings*
> *the eagle, messenger of Zeus*
> *who thunders in wide lordship,*
> *is bold, relying on his mighty*
> *strength, while other birds*
> *cower, shrill-voiced, in fear.*
> *The great earth's mountain peaks do not hold him back,*
> *nor the tireless sea's*
> *rough-tossing waves, but in*
> *the limitless expanse*
> *he guides his fine sleek plumage*
> *along the West Wind's breezes,*
> *manifest to men's sight.*
> *So now for me too countless paths extend in all directions*
> *by which to praise your [i.e. Hieron's] prowess...*

One notes above all the indirectness and sustained metaphorical power of the approach Bacchylides adopts, toward the celebration of Hieron.

We will shortly come to Pindar, the rival of Bacchylides, and comment on the syle differences between the two poets. We can for the moment settle for noting that Bacchylides is an occasional writer, in the highest sense, praising on public occasions. That he is also more than that, a writer in many forms, only came to light in the late nineteenth century, when a packet of his poetry was discovered in Egypt, and overnight Bacchylides became a major figure in the lyric canon. So it often is, in the formation of literary fames in antiquity; a chance papyrus, by a newly discovered Egyptian pyramid, may well vault an obscure Greek poet into front honors.

Simonides (566-468 Cent. B.C.)

You will be reflecting, that the biographies, and indeed the broad historical settings, of the earliest Greek poets are hard to reconstruct in any detail. The fact is that the detail available is usually drawn from comments in later authors, often Hellenistic, or from Byzantine commentaries like the *Suda*, a tenth century A. D. Byzantine encyclopedia, or from papyrus fragments. It is from such sources that we 'know' of Simonides that he was not only an internationally prolific poet of choral dance songs—a specialty of the island of Ceos, where he was born—but a much sought after writer of epigrams, like the following supremely famous three liner attributed in the poem to the voice of the Spartan who fell defending his homeland against the Persians at the Battle of Thermopylae in 476 B.C.

Four thousand of us fought three million.
When you visit Sparta, tell them:
Here, the soldiers kept their word.

The terseness and valor of the words struggle to come through in English, but one gets the point. The ingenious author of such concise pieces was also known for a number of unusual achievements. He was apparently the first Greek lyric poet to charge for his creations, which could include preparing a dance troupe to perform his work. (The reverse of this fact is noteworthy; that for most of its history Greek literature was a public/social act, often intended for performance, but rarely commercialized.) He was later 'mythologized' as having been surpassingly wise, ingenious—he is said to have invented four new letters, which were accordingly added to the Greek alphabet, and to have devised a mnemotechnic system which was to be taken by the oral poets of antiquity as an invaluable aid in their memory-based creations. (In an oral or mixed oral/written culture the art of memorization and recital was essential.) It might finally be mentioned that Simonides was famed as a miser, one who—ironically?—insisted that money-making was the only pleasure that old age did not take away from him.

Theognis (6th Cent. B.C.)

Of Theognis there is much and little to say. The much derives from the fact that an extraordinarily large amount of Theognis' work is preserved, more than that of any other Greek lyric poet of the archaic age; the little from the fact that with one exception we have trouble understanding the fundamental thrust of his work. That exception is this: Theognis is clearly a pessimist---see the evidence below--

> *Best of all for mortal beings is never to have been born at all,*
> *Nor ever to have set eyes on the bright light of the sun.*
> *But, since he is born, a man should make utmost haste through the gates of Death*
> *And then repose, the earth piled into a mound round himself…*

and comes into that attitude from a particular historical setting. Though we are not sure where this poet was from—Megara, in Attica, seems the leading candidate—we know that his inherited world view was aristocratic, that he addressed many of his poems to an (unknown) Kyrnos, and that he deeply resented the incursions of class mixture and lower class values into the aristocratic social world he belonged to. In other words, he was clearly a disillusioned aristocrat, was deeply sensitized to the class struggle which everywhere marked that tendency in Archaic Greece—lying between the epic world and that of the 'democratic' polis—to break down accepted values. We also know, as we read between the lines of his elegiacs, that he was not averse to eugenic thinking:

In rams and asses and horses, Cyrnus, we seek the thoroughbred, and a man is concerned therein to get him offspring of good stock; yet in marriage a good man thinketh not twice of wedding the bad daughter of a bad sire if the father give him many possessions, nor doth a woman disdain the bed of a bad man if he be wealthy, but is fain rather to be rich than to be good. For 'tis possessions they prize; and a good man weddeth of bad stock and a bad man of good; race is confounded of riches and it is no surprise that of all later commentators on this poet it is Friedrich Nietzsche, the brilliant philosopher of race, who found Theognis most congenial.

Pindar (522 B.C.-443 B.C)

The *Odes.* Epic, in a sense, the vision of Pindar certainly is. This Theban poet (522-443 B.C.), born well over a century after the writings of Hesiod, and perhaps twice that since the 'Pisistratean recension' that recorded the works of Homer at the end of the eighth century, is in one sense the new individual of the Athenian fifth century, a distinctive stylist, a praiser of glory in the individualist games and races that focused the attention of his contemporaries, and yet at the same time a celebrant above all of the heroic commitment to excellence, and of the heroic male ideal underlying that commitment. The in-between position of Pindar is illustrated by the use he makes of myth in his poetry.

The texts and performance of Pindar. The remaining texts of Pindar have come to us from many manuscripts and palimpsests, and though what remains to us constitutes work carried out over a long period (498-444 B.C.), the totality of what is left is only a fragment of Pindar's huge 'output,' work firmly lodged in the age of writing and parchment replication, and continuously expanding through Pindar's life-role as an invited praiser-poet at games, races, and regal celebrations. (His work was largely occasional, and devoted to praising the *arête*/excellence of victors in contests; doing so for audiences of the educated and wealthy, who were the ones able both to support his creativity and to read and understand his difficult work.) It will not be a surprise, given this performative nature of Pindar's work, on-the-spot and admirative, that the language structures of that work differ profoundly from those required for Homer and Hesiod, who were (very differently from one another) retailing the epic perspective to audiences far removed from the events or ideas about which they were hearing.

The conditions of production*.* We have mentioned the dactylic hexameter as the vehicle of epic in its initial phase, but in Pindar we face a complex metrical world suited to the music and dance which (we gather) were the production-setting of Pindar's work. The melding of that distinctive metrical world with the thematics of a Pindaric ode represents a new societal world, in which not only were great tales told, but were told in a manner germane to a discursive and democratic society.

First Olympian Ode of Pindar. The language of this performance, first of all, is not based on a single kind of 'foot,' like the dactyl, but on a counterpoint of iambs with anapests. This counterpoint is distributed by a dance chorus according to the dance steps performed by the presenters of the ode, which is designed to celebrate the victory of Hiero's chariot in a major chariot race. (It is not the charioteer but the chariot owner who receives the praise here.) The distribution of the contrasting metrical patterns is coordinated with the moves of the dance—during which the ode in question is recited. Those moves are triadic, consisting of three different turns—*strophe* (meaning *turn*), *antistrophe* (meaning *a turn in the opposite direction*), and *epode*, a *stationary summative choral move* in which the tale being narrated/presented is advanced to a new theme.

The Content of Pindar's First Olympian Ode. In the case of Pindar's First Olympian Ode the challenge is to celebrate the victory of Hiero in a major chariot race at Olympia—one of the first Peloponnesian sites at which the greatest games and festivals of Archaic Greece were held. The ode consists of four triads—four combinations of the three dance modes—and moves through them with a daring brilliance of allusion, which—*please note this carefully*—refers extensively to the nature and fate of the divine Pelops, name giver to the Peloponnesus, whose ivory shoulder is explained in detail, in such a fashion that the divine background of Pelops is brought to an explanation of his own astounding gifts as a charioteer, gifts which, we are given to understand by the end of the ode, apply equally to the charioteer of Hiero, on whom the implications of more than human skill rub off. The conclusion of this ode, noble praise of both King Hiero and of the poet himself, raises the mortal events of a horse race to an epic level--celebrating human greatness which intersects with the immortal. What requires attention here is the elaborate embedding of the victor-praise in a myth setting in which the mortal and the 'divine' bleed into one another. Byzantine allusive references tie together the parts of this verbal tapestry; a complex brilliance peculiar only to the greatest lyric poets, like William Butler Years.

Poems from Bedford Volume 1

Sappho.

P. 794. It's no use

Analysis. Sappho's love for 'that boy' has totally distracted her, and she complains to her mother that she cannot finish her weaving. It is the subtly simulated voice of a teen age girl.

P. 794. Sleep, darling

Analysis. Sappho emits—almost as though in a single lyric breath—the depth of her love for her daughter, whom no earthly value could rival. We are brought back, here, almost to the primal sense of the lyric, a breath of emotion.

P. 795. Don't ask me what to wear

Analysis. A crafty account, of mother-daughter secrets of hair adornment, which leads to the expression of great joy in her daughter's golden hair, which needs no adornment beyond flowers.

P. 795. Lament for a Maidenhead

Analysis. Two voices address maidenhood, one before the breaking of the hymen, one after. The unavailable; the available. The luring; the opened out. Only a stain left.

P. 796. He is more than a hero

Analysis. Is it a poem about true adulation of the 'heroic man,' or is it entirely about the poet's love for her beloved? The latter, probably, and thus what we have, here, is a craftily indirect way of expressing Sappho's own homoerotic passion. No shame in this passion, that's for sure. The aristocratic Greek island society, from which Sappho was writing, accommodated the Lesbian style with no difficulty.

P. 797. You know the place; then

Analysis. A formal invitation to (genital born) Aphrodite, to join Sappho and her erotic comrades in the holy groves of Lesbos. The goddess should pour forth the nectar of love! All will be suffused with the incense of love!

P. 797. I have had not one word from her

Analysis. Sappho's implores her lover, who has left, failing to keep in touch with her, to remember the wonderful sweetness of the love coterie to which they had bloomed on Lesbos.

ROME

Horace , (65 BC-8 BC)

Horace was born in southern Italy, son of an ex slave, who had rehabilitated himself, become a pillar of his community, and was eager to provide the best education available for his son. Accordingly he sent his son to Rome, first—accompanying him all the way—then to Athens, to study at Plato's Academy, and by the age of 20 dad had shaped a young man of high social potential and the best possible education. Horace went on to a robust military career, and a socially prominent life, friend of Caesar, most admired of Roman writers.

Spring

Fierce winter slackens its grip: it's spring and the west wind's sweet change:
the ropes are hauling dry hulls towards the shore,
The flock no longer enjoys the fold, or the ploughman the fire,
no more are the meadows white with hoary frost.
Now Cytherean Venus leads out her dancers, under the pendant moon,
and the lovely Graces have joined with the Nymphs,
treading the earth on tripping feet, while Vulcan, all on fire, visits
the tremendous Cyclopean forges.
Now its right to garland our gleaming heads, with green myrtle or flowers,
whatever the unfrozen earth now bears:
now it's right to sacrifice to Faunus, in groves that are filled with shadow,
whether he asks a lamb, or prefers a kid.
Pale death knocks with impartial foot, at the door of the poor man's cottage,
and at the prince's gate. O Sestus, my friend,
the span of brief life prevents us from ever depending on distant hope.
Soon the night will crush you, the fabled spirits,
and Pluto's bodiless halls: where once you've passed inside you'll no longer
be allotted the lordship of wine by dice,
or marvel at Lycidas, so tender, for whom, already, the boys
are burning, and soon the girls will grow hotter.

Romans. The Romans didn't exist except as possibilities of the Greeks themselves, not as factors that would have contributed to the Greeks' sense of having an historical existence. (Those same Greeks—think of Herodotus here—had a noteworthy sense of their own predecessors, Hesiod and especially Homer, but while the Homeric world served as a point of reference, it was not the living texture of a daily world in which the Greek lyric poets created. Horace, however, works inside a shaping historical setting, which though not clairvoyant contained on the face of itself a deeply felt sense of the weight of its own history—the long march that directly interjoined Horace's moment of Imperial setting to the monarchical, republican, now Augustan benchmarks, as well as the sense of institutional dignity and continuity which bore promise of large communal shapings ahead. The sense of historical placing, in Horace's Ode, above, is domineering: the poem is perfused with the gorgeous ineluctability of the seasons. Pale death refuses to allow us to settle for the wonder of ripening, intrudes on our summer, refuses us even health, yet—and here is the perennial gift even in the remorseless skein of death—sexuality smashes back through. the surface of time, enriching the weight of historical time with genital heat.

Analysis. Horace is historical; Solon Sappho and Archilochos are ancient, to us, but express themselves out of the fresh newness of experience: Solon out of the vagaries and risks of law construction in a new world, a world in which reputations have not yet been fixed and locked in; Sappho out of that perennial refusal of time which young love is. (That is, love that fiercely excludes the antiquity of the erotic). Archilochos out of a fuck-the-shield attitude for which there is no past.) These three will die, did die, but none of them, in whatever sense they wrote for us, was historical in the sense in which Horace is historical. So in what sense is Horace historical? Consult your historical time chart. The Greeks preceded the Romans. The Greeks didn't know this, because for them the Romans didn't yet exist—except by some deep structure perspective, in terms of which Greek culture contained Roman culture as an element of itself.

Catullus

Catullus (84 B C -54 B.C.) was born of a socially prominent Roman family, was blessed with contacts like the Emperor Augustus, and grew up privileged, like Horace, among the up and coming young men of his society. Of greatest account, for his writing life and his fame, was his dramatic and long lasting love affair with the lady he calls Lesbia, and who became a beacon of his adult work.

He was keenly educated in Roman cultural history, and in the process of its maturing. This latter taste led him to the kinds of inquiry we find in the genre poem below.

This boat you see, friends, will tell you
that she was the fastest of craft,
not to be challenged for speed
by any vessel afloat, whether
driven by sail or the labour of oars.
The threatening Adriatic coast won't deny it,
nor the isles of the Cyclades,
nor noble Rhodes, nor fearful Bosphorus,
or the grim bay of the Black Sea
where, before becoming a boat, she was
leafy wood: for on the heights of Cytorus
she often hissed to the whispering leaves.
The boat says these things were well known to you,
and are, Amastris and box-wood clad Cytorus:
she says from the very beginning she stood
on your slope, that she dipped her oars
in your water, and carried her owner from there
over so many headstrong breakers,
whether the wind cried from starboard
or larboard, or whether Jupiter struck at the sheets
on one side and the other, together:
and no prayers to the gods of the shore were offered
for her, when she came from a foreign sea
here, as far as this limpid lake.
But that's past: now hidden away here
she ages quietly and offers herself to you,
Castor and his brother, heavenly Twins.

Analysis. The battle with historical weight is all over the work of Catullus. This poet is famed for direct erotics, even body attacks in language, slashing this whore here, that pimp there, and making us dance with delight, but all the time occupying a sense of his immediate presence to himself. Being-here, as he so inimitably is, shakes loose from Catullus its own reverse, his sense that we will not always be here.

Monumentality. That sense lies subtly but heavily all over the following poem, which tracks the weight of history in a miniature instance. An old boat—like an old pair of slippers, or a guy's long not employed fishing tackle—grows rich with the weight of long use, many associations, and the owner's own aging. The boat becomes an object compacted by time into a dense symbol, which contains in it unspoken reference to benchmarked time, the centuries of historical development, the decades of personal development. An embeddedness in time, the time of the monumentality of the Roman Empire, the time of growing up through the stable institutions of education, discipleship, official offices, ranks, honors, and for the artist in the culture laurels of fascinated approval: this kind of embeddedness is the first level of Roman presence to self, and sets itself aside from the Greek lyric, as both a newcomer to, and a veteran of, the process of history.

Martial

Martial (41-104 A.D.) was a Roman poet from Spain, best known for his epigrams, and for the wit that generated them One of a number of remarkable Hispanic Roman poets—notably the Elder Seneca and the Junior Seneca preceded him to Rome--Martial found himself profiting from the patron largesse of a number of the Maecenas-type poet patrons who welcomed him in Rome. He was known to tire easily of life among artificial patrons, and increasingly to have enjoyed exercising his caustic wit on them.

He, who had been the one to whom I had
Recited my poems and then he wrote them down
With his faithful scribal hand for which already
He was well known and had been justly praised,
Demetrius has died. He lived to be
Fifteen years old, and after that four summers.
Even the Caesars had heard how good he was.

When he fell sick and I knew he was going to die,
I didn't want him to descend to where
The Stygian shades are, still a slave, and so
I relinquished my ownership of him to his sickness.
Deserving by my deed to have gotten well,
He knew what I had done and was grateful for it,
Calling me his patron, falling free,

Down to those waters that are waiting there.

Analysis. No matter how much was done—and a lot was done—to make the final end meaningful for Demetrius, right up to the point of making him a free human being—he was inevitably pulled down into the devouring final waters. The maw of history was waiting for him. He became historical. Perfusion of an historical sense is noteworthy throughout Roman culture, and stresses itself on many levels of ordinary experience. This perfusion relates, for one example, to the profusion of memorials and monuments throughout Roman cities and towns, in military camps and in the countryside; the Roman cultural landscape. (The Greeks had fewer such monuments and a far more fragmented political existence, with city-states profusely scattered here and there.) Historical time defined the present, in Roman culture. The stages of life lyric were systematically celebrated in Rome.

Contexts. We have sampled lyrics from three major poets who were more or less contemporaries with one another, and who wrote comparable kinds of lyric poetry. Sappho, Solon, and Archilochos wrote in the verse forms at hand for their place and culture, and among them gave us a quick view of their expressivity: a dismissive weapon loss in battle, a moment of blinding erotic jealousy; a wry and mocking self-evaluation, by a distinguished statesman. We have little more to go on, from the three Greek poets in question—a few wisps of love poems from Sappho and even less from the two men—plus, of course the proximity of a few other excellent contemporary Greek lyricists—Mimnermus, Callinus, Alcaeus, the great praise singer of the Olympics, Pindar, or the hedonist Anacreon.

Samples. The sample is rich, no less than that of the lyric writing poets around Horace, Catullus, Martial seven hundred and fifty years later. Juvenal, Petronius, Ovid all belong to essentially the same culture world as Horace and Catullus. Imperium, patronage, desire, strong class consciousness; all these traits marked the sensibilities of these greatest of Roman lyricists. So potent is the cluster of Roman lyric preoccupations, especially if 'desire' is given its fulness of meaning, that we begin to see how strongly the lyric is shaped by the culture world it is set in.

Poems from Bedford Vol 1

Catullus

P. 1168. O, sweet sparrow

Analysis. The poet envies his lover's recourse, of fond play with her sparrow, which enables her to disregard the heavy pains of love. A sparrow game is a minimizing of the art of amorous suffering, and heralds the poetic presence of Catullus, who is a brilliant coterie poet, writing for sophisticates.

P. 1169. Dress now in sorrow, O all

Analysis. The sparrow my lover loved is dead, and for the suffering this death has imposed on the lover, the poet curses hell and the cruelty of death. The literary mode, of arch exaggeration, might be compared to the exaggerated artifices of an Elizabethan poet like John Lyly, in *Euphues,* or to some of the work, a century later, by Donne or Marvel.

P. 1170. Come Lesbia, let us live and love

Analysis. In the previous poem we heard Catullus damn death; now he repeats his curse, by exaggerating his indifference to the worst that love can do. In the face of this impending loss, let us kiss recklessly, to the maximum of our passion for each other, and let us drool our scorn over all the midle class prudes who reproach us.

P. 1170. Poor damned Catullus, here's no time for nonsense.

Analysis. Catullus berates himself, for having been such a spineless skirt chaser, forever dependent on the moods of his lover of the moment. Those were the good old days, he admits, but now he is a new and tougher lover, and if you want him, you'll have to go find him. Catullus' genius in poet-audience dialogue is remarkable. He is talking to the ladies, to himself, and to the audience listening to him talking to these other two parties.

P. 1171. Furius, Aurelius, bound to Catullus

Analysis. Catullus addresses buddies, who like him have travelled far and wide in the course of Empire, and invokes their aid in telling the world that his girl is a whore, a sleep-with-anybody, and to be STRICTLY AVOIDED.

P. 1172 He is changed to a god, he who looks on her

Analysis. Catullus voices his own version of Sappho's most famous love poem. He mimes Sappho's own meter, testifying to his awe in face of his Greek model, and in part translates Sappho's poem. Note the last stanza, which illustrates the difference between the Greek original, and Catullus' coda. Catullus thinks colossally about how totally annihilated he is by the image of Lesbia, who renders his as powerless as an ancient kingdom foundering.

P. 1173. If a man can find rich consolation

Analysis. Catullus reviews his life, in a spirit of modern sharpness, and concludes that he has, yes, much to say for himself, for his eventual loyalty, his ability to support his friends, his fidelity to his gods. Why, he asks himself, has he wasted so much of his life on a fruitless love, a love that was 'desolate and wasted.' To the gods he addresses his final words: 'ease me of love and its pains.'

P. 1173. I hate and love

Analysis. Catullus gives himself up to his fate, to be eternally tortured by his senses—his desire, his longing—in which one dominant drive is hatred. He is tossed from side to side.

P. 1174. Dear brother, I have come these many miles.

Analysis. At the grave of his brother, Catullus declares that he has travelled far for this duty: he crosses seas and oceans to reach the simple grave containing the ashes of this tie to his early life. He offers the ancient ritual gift of a handful of lentils, and says good bye, with as much intensity as he has once expressed his love and lust.

CHINA

Poems from Bedford Vol. 1

The Book of Songs

P. 1576. Plop fall the plums

Analysis. This poem, I learn, is modelled on the basis of love divinations of the type of 'loves me, loves me not.' The saucy 'plop,' of course, mimes the intercourse which the narrator is thinking of. Does she perhaps invoke a good screw for herself, in the process of wondering whether she is loved? Note the fine live translation by one of the world's masters, Arthur Waley.

P. 1577. I beg of you Chung Tzu

Analysis. Chinese subtlety, for sure, this and the plum-plopping poem. Arch indirections, from a lady in search of lovers, good lovers, indicating her availability but, in the poem to Chung Tzu, cautioning about good overnight behavior. She realizes she must keep on her parents' good side, and that if she fails to control her ardent boyfriend, he will be cut out of her life. She is walking on eggs.

P. 1577. The cock has crowed

Analysis. We continue with the theme of the nightly tryst, the maiden's plans for a married future, and the lady's expression of control over the destiny of her man. These archaic songs all have something to do with the magic spell, which is especially potent at night, and brought to its most dangerous under the moon. These pieces, in *The Book of Songs*, range in time of composition from prior to 1000 B.C. to the Zhou dynasty, while in the 4th century B.C. the poems of the *Book of Songs* were ennoblingly classified as one of the *Five Confucian Classics.* For contrast, cf. the love poetry of Tang Dynasty Chinese poets, a millennium later.

P. 1578. The Lady: The cock has crowed

Analysis. This time the lady is in no mood to have the lover spend the night, and tells him to get out. Is she afraid he will blow their game, or is she fed up with the language game by which he tries to convince her that the night is young? The uncertainty is the careful poem itself.

P. 1578. Shu is away in the hunting-fields

Analysis. A subtle nursery rhyme gambit, designed to highlight the unusual beauty and bravery of Shu. Compare Sappho's poem on her beloved, whose beauty she can only declare indirectly, by reference to the man standing directly face to face with Sappho's lady love.

P. 1579. In the wilds there is a dead doe

Analysis. Is the dead doe not a raped lady? If so, what is the tone of the dialogue in the last three lines? Is it a come on to the seducer/rapist or a cry for help? Understatement carries the complexity and richness of archaic poems, which at their best approach the nature of riddles.

P.1579. Tossed is that cypress boat

Analysis. The narrating lady—note how impersonal, universal are these poetic figures in archaic poetry—is in turmoil, and needs to imagine several facets of her place in the world; she is on the whole disparaged for her behavior. On the whole she is harassed by 'small men,' her brothers are angry with her, and
'sorrow clings to me like an unwashed dress.' The wounds done to this archetypal woman are struck home repeatedly through the *Song of Songs*.

P. l580 We plucked the bracken

Analysis. The narrator speaks as from a soldier on campaign, endlessly living off the land, watching the seasons turn as he is indefinitely kept away from his home. He has eaten off the dry land, and seen the snow, and now has little idea of how this will end. The poet does not ultimately complain. He will remain true to his lord. The worst is that no one wants to listen to him. His situation resembles that of the complaining narrative lady in the preceding poem. People resent her.

P. 1582. We bring out our carts

Analysis. A common foot soldier, in the army of Nan-chung, declares the hardship of service to his lord, but also his own deep respect for the power of this master. By poem's end the narrator is home again, relieved, and proud of having done his part. He feels himself an element in a large and effective enterprise. The voice of the narrator is brilliantly captured, convincingly little-guy, inconspicuously lofty.

P. 1583. How can you plead that you have no wraps?

Analysis. A simple but ardent statement, by a soldier on the line to his comrade, that he will share with the guys all of his cloaks and warm cloths, so that they will both be warm on their military sally. Note the ritual effectiveness of the slight modifications, stanza by stanza, of the kind of equipment or covering the narrator guarantees to share.

P. 1584. They clear away the grass, the trees

Analysis. This harvest poem is extremely simple, in metrics, word choice, and in narrator view-point. The American admirer of the classical poetry of Ezra Pound will recognize here the perspective adopted by that (sometimes) subtle exponent of ancient traditions and closed societies. 'Dainty are the wives' is the only point at which the harvest-focused litany breaks to let in the wider society. A brilliantly calculated poem, intended to imitate the simplicity of the old world.

P. 1585. The big field brings a heavy crop

Analysis. Another song of praise to the abundance of the fields in an agricultural society. The appropriate sacrifices are performed, to the gods of grain and harvest, and the expected prayers are heard, for future bounty. The old agricultural world is thus made available to our imaginations, of a past that once nourished us, in peace. Easy to forget, if you are an Iowan, how much pre modern culture has had to be eradicated, in order to acquire the kind of peace treasured in this carefully paced poem.

P. 1586. Ting ting goes the woodman's axe

Analysis. The woodman's axe forms a background tone of busy husbandry, against which we see the workmen preparing their sacrifices of celebration and praise. The axe is the melodious symbol of the music of money, sweat, and order.

P. 1587. She who in the beginning gave birth to the people

Analysis. The she is Chiang Yuan, who was barren until the gods permitted her to give birth, to an infant and to the Zhou Dynasty. The child she gave birth to was a wonderful world-husbandman, the crops grew, our rich societies grew. Appropriate sacrifices were returned, in praise of the miraculous creation of the Zhou dynasty.

P. 1589. King Wen is on high.

Analysis. This lengthy poem takes up again the theme of order and piety toward rulers, in this case toward the legendary founder of the Zhou dynasty. Great care must be taken, to preserve what Wen has made possible , a kingdom of order and self-discipline, which profits from these virtues.

Tao Te Ching

P. 1605. One

Analysis. One can not date a poem like this, though the 4th-3rd centuries seem probable; but like many early poems in Chinese this one went through various recensions. Its argument is timeless Tao. The origin of all is nameless, whereas what can be named is part of the multiplicity of creation. The origin, what cannot be named, is the Tao itself, 'the way.'

P. 1606. Fifteen

Analysis. The ancient masters of the Tao are unfathomably wise,
and are best characterized by the effort to describe them. The poem characterizes these ancient men in their guises of readiness for their identity—alert, reserved, ready for action, courteous, yielding, simple. What they think is what they are.

P. 1606. Sixteen

Analysis. The Tao belongs to theology. It is there when you let complete silence take you over. It is there when you die, going on forever. Be open to it
and it will do the rest. Note how cunningly the conceiver of these 'poem' things makes an artistic unit out of the simple thoughts, and thoughts about simplicity, which are at the heart of his 'philosophy.'

P. 1606. Nineteen

Analysis. A startling recommendation for world betterment; give up morality, ingenuity, profit, wisdom, for then what will be left will be love and its colleagues. This radical poem speaks to a kind of positive withdrawal, which denies the world in the fashion of Henry David Thoreau. Is it poetry? Or sets of adages?

P. 1607. Twenty

Analysis. Like the early Christian father, Tertullian, Taoism pours scorn on learning, which is a portal to pride and self-deception. I should rather be a pre-smile baby than a wise man, for if I am alone, without a place to go, I am happy and free,

P. 1607. Twenty-Eight

Analysis. Be the stream of the universe, woman not man. Modify the world as little as possible, in order to give it as much as possible. 'A great tailor cuts little,' masters the material by remaining in the hollows of it, rather than 'having ideas about what to do with it.' We wondered what a poem is, remember? Can we say that it is brief expression in which you are sharply disappointed by your expectation of the normal.

P. 1608. Twenty-nine

Analysis. The universe is perfect. It cannot be changed without harming it. Never intervene. Excess follows from trying. Are we creating philosophy or poetry here? No one disputes that Ludwig Wittgenstein was a philosopher. He asked foremost what can be asked about the universe. He raised the question of what kind of statements make sense to make. The poet makes statements that include feelings about his statements.

P. 1608. Thirty-six

Analysis. Everything contains its opposite inside it. No need to think about the fact that everything changes into its opposite and back. How do we get from here to the startling injunction that a country's weapons should not be displayed? The truth is always latent. Never express it.

P. 1609. Forty-two.

Analysis. The Tao is never a friend of multiplicity, so those who are most plunged in the manifoldness of the world, like the rich and powerful, are especially vulnerable to the sense of imbalance, of ‘something’s out of kilter.’ ‘A violent man will die a violent death!’ equates violence with excessive indulgence in the anti-Tao of the multiple. Is this a poem, or does it verge toward ‘being a text.’

P. 1609. Forty-three

Analysis. The poet of these lines knows the value of non-action, softness which can overcome the hardness of the universe. To teach without words is to do what usually we cover over with words.

P. 1610. Forty-seven

Analysis. Because the Tao is the center of the world we can work, and accomplish, without doing anything. In fact, ‘doing something’ is messing up the world. How profoundly different this standpoint is, from the perspective of a westernized modern culture, in which change and redoing are the essence of the game.

P. 1610. Seventy-four

Analysis. Essentially there is no use in trying to ‘change things.’ Do what the nature of your skills and situation present to you, One guy is a great painter, one is a master at preparing canvas for paintings. Neither achieves more or exhibits greater talent.

P. 1610. Eighty-one

Analysis. The desire to come out on top, to succeed, to be right, is counterproductive. To lose is to win. The question is raised whether the eastern systems of practice and discipline, such as we find in Confucianism as well as Taoism, are ‘religions,’ or just ‘moral pointers.’ I think TaoIsm qualifies as a relig Ion, for, like the Abrahamic religions, it stresses the power of less over more, of loss over acquisition, of giving over getting.

SECTION II: **Postclassical Period**
(Europe – India – China – Arabia – Japan)

EUROPE

.

Lyric poetry has a history, but as it were a history of fragments, unlike the history of the epic or the novel, or of an architectural style, like that of the great structures of the classical tradition. Lyrics are small pieces of thought and especially feeling, and certain ground rules, which vary from era to era, define the effectiveness of different kinds of lyrics. The character of each individual lyric, through the ages, will vary with the individual poet. We are now , with the Christian Middle Ages, moving the field of our attention five hundred years further into the future from the world in which three Roman literary trend setters, copying Hellenic metrical models, immersed their sensibilities iin the growing force of historical time, and expressed a kind of being-historical which was never to have been part of the Greek experiential record.

1.Christian Poets

We will test this thought further, if we jump three or four centuries ahead to the first of the great Christian poets (and thinkers, and homilists) who reaches to the full and never before exercised emotions that came to promise with the Christian Catholic dispensation. We will be pulling one lyric of Augustine, in the fifth century, and another a century later from a pagan Roman offical whom fate, imprisoning him, was about to put to death, but who, turning fear to profit, wrote a prison volume called *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, which in its spirituality soared to the heights of the finest Christian texts, and became, with the work of Dante and St. Francis of Sales, the most beloved 'Christian' text of the Middle Ages.

Time. The passage of time, clearly, makes for new and previously unknown perspectives. What Boethius and Augustine meant to convey, about the pressures for spirituality, would hardly have signified for Horace, while Horace's profound blending of a seasonal fate-view, with the burning of sexuality, would not have translated into the emotional world of Sappho or Solon. Vertical scratch marks on a Neandertal cave in Spain, according to my internet message from the BBC this morning, remind me that on occasion –like this one—only research can reveal the difference between artistic intent and rough accident.

Saint Augustine (354-430 A.D.)

Saint Augustine was born in North Africa, and raised by his mother, who was a loving and lifelong friend to him. He found himself well educated in matters of Roman literary culture, made his way to Rome, and inevitably found himself caught up in the same libertine involvements which, three centuries earlier, had snared such as Horace and Catullus. His developmental life, under these circumstances, took very different directions, from those of his literary forebears—prayer, the intercession of his mother at crucial moments, and acquaintance with rising Church luminaries like Saint Ambrose, these factors led Augustine to a deepening acquaintance with the maturing Christian cult. As we know from his many homilies, *The City of God*, or *The Confessions*, the thought Augustine opens up touches realms of sensibility which would have been inaccessible to the Roman writers discussed in the previous section. Why? Were they less able to grasp the whole of the human experience than was Augustine, who in the poem below—and everywhere in his writings—exercises a direct and vivid sensitivity to his whole emotive creatureliness? Or is it that Augustine has benefitted from the new and liberating insights made possible by the intervention (intrusion? Illumination? Confusion?) of Christ's intervention into the very historical sequence from which so much Roman culture derived its power and grandeur.

The emphasis we place, in interpreting the meaning of Augustine's historical intervention, and of the vast influence he exercised over the entire mediaeval period will best be expressed in the terms of 'permission.' The new Christian dispensation, is authorized by the revered model of the sacrificial savior, by no means an unprecedented figure among the mystery cults of the early Christian era, in Rome and the Mediterranean basin, but a compelling model, in whose image the elite as well as social outcasts gradually found new ways to realize themselves, and become whole persons.

Late have I loved you,
Beauty so old and so new:
Late have I loved you.

And see, you were within
And I was within the external world
And sought you there,
And in my unlovely state
I plunged into those lovely created things
which you made
The lovely things kept me far from you
Though if they did not have their existence in you
They had no existence at all.

You called and cried out loud
And shattered my deafness
You were radiant and resplendent,
You put to flight my blindness.
You were fragrant,
And I drew in my breath and now pant after you.
I tasted you,
And I feel but hunger and thirst for you.
You touched me,
And I am set on fire to attain the peace which is yours.

Analysis. The poet who finds beauty calling on him is unlovely to start with—'in my unlovely state'—and yet though his state is unlovely he is unable to find his way back toward what is calling him---God, peace--except through the hunger and thirst he feels for these sources of his being. Late has he discovered this you who is at the origin of the weakness he has for whatever beauty leads him toward. The beauty things he finds in the external world have meaning only because of their source, which is really what they are.

The argument of the above poem, noteworthily melodic in the Latin, is close to the Neoplatonic thinking which will armor one important strand of mediaeval thinking, and which, in a different register, we will find below in a poem of Boethius. In Augustine's sensibility, Plato's idea that the radiance of being—the Creator, Demiurge, God—underlies all the seemingly meretricious beauty of the fallen world—is of course calculable in the aesthetic terms we have seen at work in Greek and Roman lyric, though both the expressiveness and the historical gravity of those ancient lyrics flourished before what we are calling the 'permission' given the Christian intrusion, to a new freedom of soul. We have now entered a cultural zone in which—though many artists in many media work outside the Christian perspective—and that perspective is extremely variable, too—the permission to tackle the created universe in empathy and belief has acquired a rare freedom.

Boethius (477-524 A.D.)

Born forty years after the death of Saint Augustine, Boethius was a distinguished Roman official, neither a Christian nor an officer of the Christian Church, like the Bishop of Hippo, Augustine. Interestingly enough, though, it was Boethius' literary destiny, in his immensely popular *On the Consolation of Philosophy* (514 A.D.), to rival Augustine as a leader of the Christian Church. The same poem we commented on above, in connection with the argument of 'Late have I loved you,' outlined an aesthetic idealism. The movement of the celebratory poem by Augustine, in which he hailed the beauty at the center of things, is implicit in the background of Boethius's 'Captive Bird' which like Augustine's poem draws a rich analogy from the experience of nature. We might say that while Augustine writes of the search for the true beauty within ourselves, for which we hunger. Boethius writes of the hunger of nature to be free—or, viewed from another angle, of the juxtaposition of our dual natures, bound and unlimited.

Captive Bird

This bird was happy once in the high trees.
You cage it in your cellar, bring it seed,
Honey to sip, all that its heart can need
Or human love can think of: till it sees,
Leaping too high within its narrow room
The old familiar shadow of the leaves,
And spurns the seed with tiny desperate claws.
Naught but the woods despairing pleads,
The woods, the woods again, it grieves, it grieves.

Analysis. It was Boethius' fate to fall out with the Emperor of his time—we have moved far into the post-imperial setting of Rome, the barbarians are in charge of the former state, and yet the trappings of Empire remain. Imprisoned, within this perilous transition. Boethius turns increasingly to the solace he can get from philosophy, especially from the kind of loosely Platonic thought we find in the poem of Augustine, above. The captive bird may of course simply represent Boethius himself, the imprisoned, but it may be the soul itself, which so ebulliently rises from the prison house of life.

2. **Carmina Burana**

Poem from Carmina Burana.

In the tavern; burning inside: BOTTOMS UP!
Look at me,
young men!
Let me please you!
Burning inside
with violent anger,
bitterly
I speak my heart:
Created from matter,
of the ashes of the elements, I am like a leaf
played with by the winds.
Good men, love
women worthy of love!
Love ennobles your spirit and gives you honor!
If it is the way
of the wise man
to build
foundations on stone,
then I am a fool, like
a flowing stream, which in its course never changes.
Hail to you world,
so rich in joys!

Consider me your servant.
The pleasures you offer
fit me exactly!
Look at me, young men!
I am carried along
like a ship without a steersman, and in the paths of the air
like a light, hovering bird; chains cannot hold me
keys cannot imprison me,
I look for my brothers
and in drink join the wretches!

***

A flowing jovial, life loving, bitter salute to the joie de vivre of fallen mankind,
Created from matter,
of the ashes of the elements, I am like a leaf
played with by the winds

Who is this man who picks up the mediaeval theological theme, of the individual blown in the wind of god's power, who looks to no saving haven—as did Boethius and Augustine, who turned to God and Plato—in life's storms, but who, instead, rather seems to like his swashbuckling fellow fallens. What KIND OF BOTTOMS UP SONGSTERS DOES HE SURROUND HIMSELF WITH? The brazen culture-mix of the God bound but swaggering singer, of the song before us, is among the chanters of the 254 dramatic texts and poems which make up the Carmina Burana, an anthology of sarcastic, anti-clerical, jocular, sometimes genuinely religious texts collected in the thirteenth century at the Monastic Abbey of Beuron in Bavaria. Anti-clerical? These Carmina, songs, were created in various clerical settings, sometimes among faithful monks taking a breather, sometimes among jokers and disbelievers, often from tavern habitués, believers in the universally offered Catholic dispensation, who were disposed, as believers in all religions on occasion are, to cut up, make fun, and take a Mardi Gras pause from expected behavior. From the large assortment of chiefly anonymous hailstones raining down on the walls of the caskets of the Middle Ages, we inherit, thanks to the composer Carl Orff, the splendid cantata called Carmina Burans, mediaeval Latin at its fieriest, passionate prayers to Virgin or slut, whichever, and a reminder (in l936) of our spiritual proximity to the mediaeval mind.

3. **Courtly Love Lyrics**

The whiplash of literary history, which startles us as we enter the world of the Carmina Burana, takes a mollifying turn, as we look around us, at the Courtly Love Traditions growing up on all sides of higher mediaeval culture in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Whereas the Carmina Burana had their roots both in monastic life and on the streets—one is tempted to look as far ahead as the early Renaissance, to a figure like Francois Villon—the courtly love traditions sprang up at the same time among the regional knightly courts, which were forming the seedbeds of higher culture in Western Europe. These courtly literary (and musical) traditions brought to the fore, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the voices of individual men and women who were swept up in the high mediaeval cultural movements of the Crusades, the maturest thinking of the Schoolmen—Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica (1458)—and the architectural visions who were to make possible the achievements of Romanesque and then Gothic architecture. We are talking of such lyric creators as Guillaume d'Aquitaine (1071-1127), Marcabru (1129-1150), Bernard de Ventadorn (1120-1150), or the Countess of Dia (fl 1160). it was among these literary forerunners, active both individually and in courtly milieux, that both lyric and love poetry found voices with more promise, than the Carmina Burana, for the future of literary development.
The lyrical work of these courtly poets is both intensely physical and spiritual—devoted to the idea of love. Take the case of Guillaume d'Aquitaine, who is often credited with being the first troubadour. He was a man of vast holdings, a castle and court, and the ability to assemble fellow artistic knights around him. (He was also—but how these strains of traditional learning established themselves, in this case and that of all these home-educated mediaeval poets, we hardly know. Fragments of classical Latin? Oral tradition?) Among Guillaume's twelve poems are two that illustrate the range of sentiments he was free with: In his 'My companions, I am going to make a vers that is refined,' he gives his lust free reign, expatiating on the two lovely fillies who are his, two chicks he can have intercourse at will, one of them, in

fact, the fruit of the droit du seigneur, the right of the lord of the manor to have a first crack at the bride. But in his later ‘Now when we see the meadows once again’ Guillaume writes like a mellow gentleman he heaps on lines of praise of the gentleness of love, he declares that ‘surely no one can ever be Love’s perfect man unless he gives it homage in humility.’ A woman of plain talk, a demander of rights and satisfaction, the Countess of Dia declares that ‘if oniy I could lie beside you for an hour, and embrace you lovingly, know this that I’d give almost anything to have you in my husband’s place, but only under the condition,that you swear to do my bidding.’ Ample evidence, the Countess, that women of determination and wit were lusty participants of the troubadour perspective.

Poems in Bedford, Vol. 2 pp 655-669)

Guillaume (William) IX, Duke of Aquitaine. (1071-1127)

My companions, I am going to make a vers that is refined (p. 657)

Analysis Gullaume expresses the poet’s machismo; he has two lively mares under his control, and he loves to ride them both, though they are wild at times. One of them actually has another owner—he refers to the lady’s husband-- but by his droit du seigneur, the writer has first choice of riding the lady, and can take his good time. He, Guillaume, is proud to be the master of these two wild fillies, who hate one another, and are glad to be bound to him by oath. Guillaume, often considered the first troubadour, does it fact, as he promises, write a well curried line, with subtle rhyme and metric. He is a rare blend of machismo with art.

Now when we see the meadows once again (p. 658)

Analysis. In this later poem, William shows us an almost totally new face. No longer is he the powerful lord of the manor, flaunting his erotic power, and neglecting the respect due to women and the laws of love. Now William is a contrite suppliant seeking women’s love. He has learned that there are laws to love, and honestly wonders whether his previous abuse of those laws has disqualified him from any future love. It is as though, in both of the William poems we have read, he seems to be a role playing, if skillful, artist. He is enacting different registers of poetic skill.

Marcabru. (floruit 1129-1150)

By the Fountain in the Orchard (p. 660)

Analysis. Marcabru was of lowly birth, not a troubadour, and espoused a view of love very different from that of Guillaume, who (especially in his second poem, above) declared himself a follower of the laws of love. Marcabru fashions an imagined scene, in which he speaks with a grieving young woman, whose beloved is away at the Crusades. The poem is deepened by the lady’s humiliation at the Christian defeat in recent Crusades, but Macabru also admittedly humiliates himself, by inappropriately desiring the maiden. A subtle poem, with twists and turns on the theme of love.

Bernard de Ventadorn (1150-1180)

My heart is so full of joy (p. 661)

Analysis. The poet declares his love, and, like Guillaume d’Aquitaine, prefers her value to the wealth of the city of Pisa, in fact declares that he could walk naked through the streets, and incur no trouble of pain, as long as he is clothed in her love.Yet he modifies this argument by declaring that love has its laws which must be obeyed, and that perhaps the truest mark of his love for this lady is his ability to remain absent from her, when desired. We can see this elegant poet struggling to discover thematic pathways in which to sustain the praise of love, which is mandatory in troubadour poetry.

Raimbaut, Count d’Orange (floruit 1162-1173)

Listen Lords…but I don't know what (p.664)

Analysis. Raimbaut was a wealthy youg man, inheritor of vast estates, but died very young in an epidemic. The poem before us is. a love poem, of course, and one in which he complains that he has been waiting far too long for a response from his lady. In the course of making this complaint, the poet pretends to have lost his voice, forgotten how to write a love poem, and raised the whole question of what a love poem is. There is humor here, a flash of the postmodern.

Countess of Dia, floruit 1160

I've lately been in great distress (p. 666)

Analysis. The countess , widely considered the finest female voice among the troubadours, is insistent on her own values and satisfaction in a love relationship. Her complaint, in the present elegant poem, is that her (prospective) lover has left her because she refused to sleep with him. In lodging her complaint she passes on the unusual rider, that she would rather sleep with her lover than with her husband. This is a free swinging feminist one thousand years ago.

Of things I'd rather keep in silence I must sing. (p. 667)

Analysis. This is a simple but passionate lament from the Countess. She knows her worth, and knows that her lover, who is a true aristocrat, values her, but instead of showing it, he turns his head away from her, and ignores her. Has he forgotten their earlier times together, and the love filled writing they exchanged? She wishes, above all, that he will understand how much harm pride does to him. So the Countess, sure of her own inward value, claims recognition from a fellow aristocrat.

Castelloza *Fl 1212*

My friend, if I found you welcoming (p. 668)

Analysis. In a ragged metric, which gives full range to a complex love-attitude, Castelloza, who was born a generation later than the Countess of Dia, brings the modern tone charging into her verse. She is gloomy about the prospects of love, for she finds her lover both her inferior and irresistible. She anticipates dealing as skillfully as possible with her love, for she wants to be the one of the two who thrives in God's sight. While reveling in this world, she is in part, already, a citizen of heaven.

INDIA

Tamil Anthology. Bedford Vol. 2. Pages 217-224

What she said P 217. # 25

Analysis. The woman absolves herself of all responsibility for the loss of her virginity. The rapist, who stole her, may say something else, but it will not be credible. The only witness to the crime is a silent heron, looking for his own prey.

What she said P. 218. #. 68

Analysis. The bean root is the female genitalia, the marauding deer
crowd to the feast. Reverse English, on this chewed and dewy morning, drives my mind to my man's chest, as bare and pink as the bean root. My mind is devoured by erotic surfaces and by longing for them.

What he said P. 218. #131

Analysis. All is about imagery and longing, in these poems. Robbery (of virginity), consumption (of tender roots), plowing (of a beautiful woman.) Rape, penetration, potency are approached obliquely, the

better to be seen. In this case more the more keenly the lover feels his lust, the more distant from it are the thoughts of the beloved.
one.

What she said P.218. #325

Analysis. She took him up on his threat to leave. Immediately she regretted her action, and was overwhelmed by how much he meant to her. The poet's challenge: how to maximize the description of her feeling of loss? Again the herons, as in # 25. Does the heron still signify effectively? Is too much being demanded of the 'tear pool' image? Is the 'feed on fish' effective or too conventional?

A King's Double Nature P. 219. #60

Analysis. The King is a friend of war, even massacre. He loves to destroy. But he is also a giver. He is two sided. The poet then turns to the singers, whom he will guide. He will take them to the King, who is in a complex forest—as complex as he is, rich in fruits and refreshing foliage, but enclosed by rigid and fierce warriors, stiff as herons. The King is a fierce man himself, but lives in florid beauty. Like the rapist or the plowman, drawn to the beautiful, the King too strives to embrace both harshness and bounty.

A King's Last Words P. 220. #. 74

Analysis. The androgynous King of # 60, who both gives and massacres, seems to have found his way into the sentiment of the present poem. (Can poems, even by different authors, bleed into one another?) The present King is on the verge of killing himself, for he sees the dreadful fate that awaits royalty. The edge of intuited sadism follows this poem—'a mere gob of flesh,' 'like a dog at the end of a chain…'—as it had sharpened the pain of rape, marauding, and cruel separation in other poems.

Mothers P. 220. # 8

Analysis. Tamil poems rarely overstate, characteristically present their points indirectly, and often unexpectedly. We must guess at the reason why the woman appears at the writer's door. (Notice the predilection, in the Tamil poems, for bare pronouns—he, she, the King, mothers—around which utterances form that need, but may not get, clarification.) We do know, with minimum detail, what the speaker's attitude is, to the question about the location of her son. She is rejecting the aggressive inquiry of her visitor; pretty clear that the visitor considers the son responsible for some negligence, as far as her daughter (we guess) is concerned.

A Chariot Wheel P. 221. #. 87

Analysis. More of the implicit. The poet's challenge is this: to make us feel, tangibly on our flesh, the power and danger presented by 'our warrior.' A chariot wheel is an object for motion and the very mention of one makes you feel it is coming at you. The more care goes into its construction, the more devastating it promises to be. The carpenter at work in the present language is striving for maximum ergonomic power in his new chariot wheel. How better could the power of that wheel be shown than by the dramatic contrast between the work spent on this wheel and that spent on the wheels for a routine chariot?

His Hill P. 221.

#. 109

Analysis.

We have met a king of double nature, # 60, who was both a savage warrior and a giver. The king of # 74 is suicidal and morose, clearly sharing some bipolar issues with the 'double nature' king, although the two kings were created by different poets. (The Tamil canon welcomed monarchs as various and complex as Shakespeare's.) The king of the present hill, # 109, is fortified by the exuberance of nature, so rich that you will never take his hill by direct attack. Don’t try. Tamil kings are subtle. Attack him with dancing and lute girls. He’ll fall.

A Woman and her Dying Warrior P.222 #255

Analysis. The Tamil poet is forever staging small dramas inside others—he or she or the king or the woman or the widow—and yet doing so from the stability of themselves, their own I. These small dramas are sparsely populated. In this vignette, of a woman and her dying warrior, A few lines (the last five) suffice to put us in both the despair and the weakness of the characters. They enact the play of life and death between themselves.

A leaf in love and war P. 223. # 271

Analysis. The present sinister and erotic poem picks up the sharp sadistic tones which run through our Tamil selection. We trace the course of a fragrant leaf from the genitals of the beloved lady, her mound, to the bloody mutilated battlefield form of the lady’s warrior, who is bleeding across the once fragrant leaf. The leaf becomes the bond between the two individuals. The ‘sadism,’ the bond of suffering, which has stamped these Tamil poems, here acquires full symbolic expression.

Mothers. P. 223 # 278

Analysis.
The horrible pleasure of pain, which hovers over several of these Tamil texts. The ancient mother was shamed and tortured when her neighbors jested that her son had proven a coward in battle. She sought out his body from among the piles of corpses, on the battlefield. She found her son, carved up, dead meat. How delighted she was! He had died giving his all. His death overjoyed her!

CHINA

Bedford Vol. 2. *From the collapse of Han Dynasty through the Tang dynasty.*

Tao Qian.

p. 307. 1 *Substance to Shadow*

Analysis. In appearance, nature is changeless. Even an organic presence, like a plant, withers and is restored—grows again in spring, follows ‘a constant rhythm.’ Man, the sharpest sensibility of all, is unable to persist like a plant, but as soon as he leaves the earth he is permanently gone. He is forgotten, only the things he uses remind us of him. Change overwhelms me. I cannot transcend it. I have been sketching a canvas for you, so you can see man and his context. Given that bleak and transitory context you may be wondering what to do. Here’s my advice, drink some wine. Wine is a portal to mindfulness. It puts us in the stream of things, their infinite turning on the axis of themselves. It helps us flow.

p. 308. II *Shadow to Substance*

Analysis. Speaker has no distinctive identity, is just there, language, declaring. Now argument flows from shadow **to** substance. (It was substance to *shadow* in # 1.) Immortality, substance at its most stable, is beyond our reach. You and I have never been permanently separated, and that’s a gesture toward a permanent condition, a kind of move toward immortality, but that was chiefly when we were in shade—that is not substantial-- and bounteous nature, the sunniness of nature,rushed to keep us together. Our closeness to one another, our mutual approach to the stable condition of immortality, is destined to fail with the failure of our bodies, and or our reputations. (Reputations were a way others could convey onto us at least an artificial immortality.) Clearly we want some relief from our shadow state, which is all about passing away forgotten and from our reputation, what others will say of us, but the relief we get will not last. What will do most, to consolidate a substantiality, is works of love, which will outlive you.

p. 308. III. *Spirit's solution*

Analysis. Note speaker allows himself no personal identity. Just is, a voice. Even, on a par with, the presence of the Great Potter, who equally has no personality. Just is. I am part of the whole, rank with the heavens because I am. I am one with you, because I am alive, and I cannot refuse to tell you what I know. We are the same, whether we are drunk or sober, smart or stupid; in short there is no difference. Yet it is a matter of importance that we do good. There, we are back to the issue of #2, works of love. They are important. Are they pathways to immortality? No, they are good. 'Just surrender to the cycle of things.' No fuss. Drink some wine, but with no thought that if you do so you are doing good or evil.

p. 309. *Back home again chant*

***Analysis*.** The prose preface stresses the longing of the poet to return home, after a long period of working as a bureaucrat in the city, a dusty job he has come to hate. Familiarizing himself again with the unchanging routines of home folks, natural scenery, the wine jar there to sip from, he drifts back into the old ways of home, his family around him. He is only forty but he is at peace with finality. 'This form I am in the world cannot last much longer.' 'I'll ride change back to my final home.' The Taoist/Buddisht tradition could not be put more simply. In a sense, these poems of Tao Qian repeat each other, but because they do they themselves become the point that they make, the point that change is impossible, the point made almost a millennium earlier by the Greek philosopher, Parmenides,

It needs must be that what can be spoken and thought is; for it is pose sible for it to be, and it is not possible for what is nothing to be…For this shall never be proved…that the things that are not are.

p. 311. *Home again among gardens and fields*

***Analysis*.** Colloquial and yet highly disciplined couplets reflect simplicity of thought which is integral to Tao Qian's Taoism/Buddhism. The language is minimal and the formulation of it clear. Thus the reading of successive poems is not boring; the repeated topics and topic attitudes are expressions of the oneness in things. The conversation among substance, shadow, and spirit, with which we began, addresses the metaphysical setting of human being here, while *The Back Home Again Chant* and *Home again among Gardens and Fields* actualize the mind-actions through which the writer is discovering the nature of reality. Shadow, substance, and spirit are the actors of the meaning of being home. (Martin Heidegger, the twentieth century German philosopher for whom home is a metaphor of imagined depth and personal homecoming, arises from thought traditions which skirt the mind work of Taoism.)

p. 312. *A Reply to Secretary Kuo*

Analysis. The last line demonstrates the quiet writer's refusal to release his argument from the obligation to surprise.

Lute, books, wine, leisure: what more could the retired poet, once bureaucrat, desire. And a distant cloud, the calm immensity of what is. The new generation, his little son, is waiting, full of promise, to find out how to pronounce the world. The past is still present—there is still some of last year's grain in the kitchen—but it is a fragile presence:

How deep my yearning is for ages past.

That's the last line.
What buttresses it, in the poem?
Where does it come from?
The poet's retirement is clearly part of a clearing of vision, a sweep of the eye onto distant clouds.
But where does the *temporal* insight come from?
Is it a spillover from the earlier dialogue of shadow with a substance which seems of a unique stability?
Like a kind of 'timelessness?'
Or is it that the ancestral, of 'ages past,' simply **connotes**

Peace and stability?

p. 313. *In the sixth month of 408, Fire*

Analysis. The memory of a fire which destroyed Tao Qian's thatched house becomes a trigger to a sharp sense of the passing of time. That sense seems to open the heavens above the poet and to place him in the whole. (Note the specificity of the date, in the title.) On the other hand, his sharp awareness of having reached forty, of having 'been here' so long, makes the timelessness of his own personality newly clear to him. He has never changed, he is still the small child he once was, and which is standing beside him, his own, waiting to pronounce the world. Present and past intersect.

P. 314. *Reading The Classic of Mountains and Seas*

Analysis**.** We pursue the polarity of time and space, which have come to the center of these poems. These poems were initially concerned with immortality/stability and change/transience. Now they are concerned with time and space, the chief coordinates of our presence here, though also frameworks for change measurement, like stability and transience. Time and space are visible, adjuncts to our alignments with the whole. Curiously, these self-locational thoughts impact the writer as he reads of the marvelous adventures of the Emperor Mu. Tao Qian is a fond reader, wine sipper, and nature observer; he is where joy needn't move an inch to find itself.

P. 315. *Elegy for myself.*

Analysis. Tao reflects on his life, which he is near the end of. He recognizes that he has always taken his own path, and been unconcerned with reputation. He finds he has had a long life, one hundred years, and resents nothing. Absence, something unlike presence, returns to him. His wife's family makes preparations for his burial. He anticipates a simple burial, no pomp. He didn't plan for a great ending, he sees life as being great trouble, although he has made it clear that he enjoyed his simple pleasures. There is no trace, here at the ending of life, of desire to live forever, or for that matter of fear of death.

TANG POETS

Wang Wei. (699-761)

P. 329. *To Sub prefect Chang*

Analysis. Depth and stillness rather than complex ideas govern this poem. But how to express depth, of all things? It is by finding correlates in nature, which connote depth. 'Familiar woods,' to which the poet wants to return, remind us of the longing for homecoming in Tao Qian. These woods are where the soul is at peace. They are also where pine winds—the fragrant hillside breezes color this imagery, loosening the tight formal clothing cities impose on us. I am silent and in depth. The natural world even objectifies me—the moon shines down on me as I play my lute—I am observing myself now—but a passing fisherman'song suffices, to carry me down with it into the depths of the lake.

P. 329. *Huatzu Hill*

Analysis. This cut-jewel poem illustrates the poet's daring. He takes us by the neck. We were lost into space, color, and time—the repetitive over and over of climbing a single hill—when the sadness of our being here felled us. In repetition we eat the inescapability of our condition.

P. 329. *Deer Park*

Analysis. A most acute frozen image. All is only suggestion, yet all is precise. We draw on a composite inner sense. Silence and cold sharp light, here on the mountain, barely audible human sounds, below in the distance. The sharp edges of refracted light, cut in panes from the mountain slope above the poet. Is it visual, or is it a picture in sound, like depth?

P. 330. *At Lake Yi*

Analysis. Nature provides its own thought painting, plunging to a depth only illusion could generate. I depart from the shore, but the optical illusion left behind holds me rivetted to the lake I have just left.

P. 330. *Bamboo Mile Lodge*

Analysis. Once again the moon reifies the solitary lute player, deepening the mysteriousness of the woods in which he hangs out. These are 'woods that no one knows,' as were the woods in 'To Sub prefect Chang, the silence of which can be deeply penetrated by a fisherman's song. Wang Wei moves his language across a sparse inner landscape of realities: woods, lake, mountains, lute, light. Are these terms of language, or the things themselves, denoted by the words?

P. 330. *Hermitage at Chung-Nan Mountain*

Analysis. The key issue in understanding is 'emptiness.' Wandering alone In the southern mountains, with all their splendor (of natural beauty), I find that things remain *empty*. (They constitute a living whole, without inherent distinctions or differences.) I climb farther, up to the headlands, where clouds rise as if from nothing, inserting their difference into the field of emptiness. We sustain the awareness of a sudden content emerging from the empty. Then guess what happens. A new breach of emptiness, another person. We are a universe between us, a new whole. We came from nowhere. That's what's funny, why we laugh. We are surprised out of things. We are people.

P. 331. *Crossing the Yellow River*

Analysis. Opens with familiar setting of small boat, waves, vast purview of sky filling (or emptying) the distance. Then a swash of painterly intrusion, as a large city appears, intersecting the sky and waves; ten thousand houses, towns and fruit plantations. Then a familiar ploy. (Like a turning back, or a hearing in the distance, or the sudden appearance of a person.) Look back…a command. There is the other forming, waters, mist, clouds, all the city is not.

P. 331. *Seeing someone off*

Once again the mystery of human relations. We meet we part. A couple of lives encapsulated. A loser returns to rest in some beloved homeland peaceful and unchallenging. No questions asked, but much exchanged. Once again the clouds close the scene down, rising and drifting like people. Here is that tone of sadness we hear in 'Huatzu Hill.' No tragedy, sadness. That's enough.

Li Bai 701-762

P. 333. Going to visit Tai-T'ien Mountain's Master of the Way without finding him

Analysis. Painting, with surprises, it might be titled, though this simple eight line poem actually establishes a narrative. In the first couplet, the speaker is still within range of society—barking dog. In the second he spots deer; he is farther into the landscape, and is out of range of the temple. The barking dog he could hear, but not the bells. A distant landscape of sky, mountains, and stream marks the further separation from busy citylife. By now, on level four, you are not to be found, you're far from society. You've found pines to lean against. But what was that word 'still,' at the beginning of the last sentence? Does it mean, 'despite my seeming drive to get away from town, one part of me still wants to go back?

P. 334. *Ch'ang-kan Village Song*

Analysis. 'Two little people without suspicions.' The still teen age narrator, who was to marry her village sweetheart, at age fourteen, and then to see him go off to war and leave her, at age sixteen, comes to realize how much she wants him home—please write a letter—and how deep their initial innocent love had been. At the end the narrator lets out all her feelings, by saying, in essence, that she would gladly go to the moon to meet her husband. Where is it that the strange ritual dignity of time imposes itself in this narrative? The pain of temporality accumulates around the paragraph of the butterflies, ll. 23-24, whose fluttering loveliness equals the 'longing love in the narrator's heart.' 'They fly in pairs and it hurts.' Then she speaks of 'the bloom of youth in my old face.' She comprehends the painful life curve of her life, and of her love, and measures that of which she has been permanently robbed.

P. 335. *Drinking alone beneath the moon.*

Analysis. The poet rejoices in a triangulation, that brings together the moon, his wine, and his shadow (himself, trailing him.) Sober, the three of them are good friends together, but drunk

We scatter away into our own directions
Intimates forever; we'll wander carefree
And meet again in Star River distances

The distances traversed in Star River commence with the rivers flowing eastward into the sea and from there, in a grand arc, into the Milky Way, from which they will eventually emerge to recommence their flowing path on earth, from west to east. Wine is the trigger to this disequilibration, cosmic flow, and restored circularity.

Three cups of wine, he continues, is transporting.

'A jarful and I've merged with occurrence appearing of itself.'
Wine is a pathway into the streaming flow of which the universe is made. What-is, the unplanned or undesigned that simply is, is my presence to the whole.

The last element of the triad reminds us of T.S. Eliot's observation, in *The Waste Land,* that 'April is the cruelest month.' Eliot does not propose a remedy, for this nature based sadness, but for Li Pai the best answer is wine. We cannot change our personal fates—and the Taoism and Buddhism Li Pai espouses are theologically mute—but wine can 'even out life and death.' It is essential to stream; wine takes us there.

P. 337. *Searching for Master Yung*

Analysis. Li Pai recycles in words the wanderings along the cliffs and the jade sky. Understanding grew, at that altitude, with the cranes and the wildflowers, and by day's end, with the river sunset, he descended through the chilly mist. He had learned. He had lived on intimations of the Ancient Tao, the Way.

P. 337. *Seeing off a Friend.*

Analysis. The paratactic style of Chinese poetic language, staccato, impressionistic, allusive. Nature still and at peace, Mountain air, floating clouds, the usual props. Parting from an old friend is best chilly, muffled. The sentiment tightly packaged into things of the air and sky. Emotional poem with no feelings.

P. 337. *Teasing Tu Fu.*

Analysis. Humor, dry and mordant, runs through Tang poetry. Poetry, as in this two liner, can be viewed as a kind of purgative. Philosophy, it is said, buries its own undertakers. Cannot the same be said of the effective poem, that in its self-awareness it was there in advance of any critique you might make of it? The poem can always reproach you by being the question—do you think I didn't know that about myself?

P. 338. *Drinking in the Mountains with a Recluse*

Analysis. One wants to bring only so much pressure on a recluse, even when it comes to inviting him to a wine and lute session, which you both enjoy. 'If you think of it' is the right note. Tang poetry iths about nature and nature is what joins us flowingly to one another and even to the heavens. Clint Eastwood recalls one precious adage from the reservoir of acting adages: 'Don't Act!'

P. 338. *Sent to my two little children in the east of Lu*

Analysis. Three years away from his young children, Li Pai writes of how much he misses them. Nature, passing through its cycle of years—three now—offers up its detail, to emphasize the passing: mulberry leaves ripen; silkworms pass through three life cycles. The silent underbeat of cyclical time passes almost unnoticed, except when loss, the dark side of separation, envelops the mind.

Du Fu. 712-770

P. 341 *To Li Po on a winter day.*

Analysis. Li Po is sorely missed, in this letter of friend to friend, in the winter. The poet speaks of wine, which could warm the distance between them. But Du Fu cannot himself take the trip through wine, toward that 'endless life' Li Po longs for. He must rest content with half-finished aspirations: build a home where he could be together with Li Po. The Confucian, speaking to us, knows too much, about control and order, to live into the imaginary world wine triggers.

P. 342. *P'eng-Ya Song*

Analysis. Our focus is lyric poetry, brief expressive developments of thoughts or feelings. Many of the Chinese poems we have read, especially from the Tang Dynasty, have fit this description. But there is also a narrow line between the brief and resonant lyric—think of Ezra Pound's *spring/gongula/too far* poem in which he simulated the three word passion consigned to papyrus by an Egyptian lover whose sweetheart has 'not come back' –and a long short poem like the present, by Du Fu, which so masterfully compacts intense single feeling into a narrative enriched by thoughts about friendship.

P. 343. *Moonlit Night*

Analysis. Bathed in moonlight, from his distance, the poet thinks of his wife in their bedroom, of how precious she is to him, and of his small children who cannot understand his absence. When will the moon shine down on them both together, shedding its light on their tear stained faces? How differently Du Fu and Li Pai deal with the moon. For the latter the moon is a waystop on the pathways of ecstasy, part of cosmic meaning—and drunken meaning. For Tu Fu the moon is tender pathos.

P.344. *Dreaming of Li Po*

Analysis. This poet pushes the limits of absence, friendship, and the dream world in which we become another person we love. (Irrelevant thought: Bergman's shadowy *Persona* drifts along similar passageways.) (The spirit of his exiled friend, far away among Yangtze's maples approaches Du Fu in dream, comes so far as the poet's moon filled bedroom, but is ensnared in nets of birdwings, and dragon hungry waves. This moon is not Li Pai's portal of wine, but is the pock marked moon of astronomy

P. 344. *Restless Night*

Analysis. A perfect simulation of a calm night—birds at rest on the water, dew falling, a scattering of stars—but no ease. 'All these lie within the shadow of the sword.' 'Powerless I grieve.' Is the sword war, is it death, is it the anxiety that is there when we are perfectly alone with ourselves?

P. 345. *Flying from trouble*

Analysis. The trouble in question is that of ‘restless night.’ We live in a modish world, today, where mindfulness, yoga practices, and soft meditation have captured the field of bourgeois sedatives. It’s not enough, though. We pace up and down in our wrapped up bones. We have trouble ‘believing.’ We have trouble believing anything believes in us.

P. 345. *Spring night, delighted by rain*

Analysis. A brief painting, sketching the joy of the clearing skies, the rain washed air, the bathed reds of the dawn. Du Fu exhales, dwells in the beauty of the world he is given.

P. 346. *Thoughts, traveling at night*

Analysis. Once again, a fractured image of a night travel, a time when the susceptible, as Du Fu keenly is, feel anxiety, proximity (of friends or calamity), or absence. The ’lone sand gull’ pierces the night, as the river boat eases its way out into the night, ‘beneath foundering stars.’ Du Fu, ready as often to be overcome by the inherent sadness of life, reflects on the ruins of his health and career. Like other great poets, East and West, Du Fu turns to poetry as an antidote. Interesting that the poetry antidote he favors includes, for accompaniment, either the lute or the koto, sad and undeclaiming undertones.

Bo Juyi. 772-846

P. 348. *Watching the Reapers*

Analysis. The present poem, in which Bo Juyi both paints a picture and expresses an attitude—of sorrow, guilt, embarrassment—toward it, differs from the self-observant Tang work we have been reading. We are now in social critique. The writer feels shame when he observes how hard the reapers are working, how little profit they get for their farm labor, and how relatively comfortable he is in his government job. We have mentioned differing versions of lyric. Perhaps the present piece should be called a descriptive-didactic-self-inspective lyric.

P. 349. Passing T’ien men Street in Ch’ang-an and seeing a distant view of Chung-nan mountains

Analysis. …*not one man*. What a gift a great poem is. In this splendid four liner we see two views. First the poet looks at the hustle and bustle of a vast city. Blue of the thawing mountains. Brown streets. Horsemen, coaches, pedestrians. Then the slightest move of the head. Peripheral vision. A glimpse of the inhuman, the human-free, mountain. Attitude? What is the poet’s attitude? Is it that of the poet, Robinson Jeffers, who said that ‘I’d sooner kill a man than a hawk, if it weren’t for the penalties?’

P. 349. *An old charcoal seller*

Analysis. Bo Juyi, we read, honed his poems by reading them to old peasant women in the market place. Whatever they didn’t understood he reworked until it was clear to them. Do you see that here? Can you imagine how many times the poet had to work at in the four liner above before he found just the perfect frame to bring out ‘not one man’? Can you see how nimbly the poet has worked to create the whiplash query which concludes the following poem, driving us to interpret the attitude of the envoy? and the defense system available to the charcoal seller, for dealing with his loss.

P. 350. *Buying flowers*

Analysis. Another whiplash--after the stolen charcoal cart, the bleak slab of mountain, the grain tax on farmers--these slashing details by which Bo Juyi tweaks his masterly life paintings. Once again he ‘makes us think.’ It seems benign and oh so charming for the city dwellers to dote on the market spring flowers, but not to do so—and this is what the old farmer does--calculating the cost of a bunch of flowers against farmers’ land tax. Once again Bo Juyi smashes into the societal, and the inherent injustices we have learned to disregard.

P. 351. *Winter Night*

Analysis. Aging, Bo Juyi sleeps less, counts the nights he has lain in his cold room, watched the seasons change and the snow return, his mind prey to manifold excursions past this and that, the debris of memory; while his body is steadfast firm in position, inert. Finally he counts the nights, one thousand three hundred nights. He is being worn down by something, but what?

P. 351. *On the boat, reading Yuan Chen's Poems.*

Analysis. Reading a close friend's poems, Bo Juyi uses a kerosene wick to light the night. When it goes out, in the middle of the night, he is left alone in the backwash of his reading. Waves slap the sides of the boat he is riding. The poems he has been reading settle down into his mind's silence.

P. 352*. Idle Song*

Analysis. That old poetry demon intrudes, just as the poet's empty gate dharma practice has enabled him to free himself of restlessness. Pricked by this demon, the poet spontaneously begins singing an old song to himself. The mind is so easily distracted. The idle intrudes so easily on the purposeful.

P. 352*. Madly singing in the mountains*

Analysis. The **I** of 'idle song,' who is prey to outbursts of singing and humming just after having cleared his mind into total silence, is also the I who will burst out into song while all alone high in the mountains. Is there a demon inhabiting us, as Bo Juyi says? Is it a vestige of some still unspoken truth that we are trying to give freedom to?

P. 353. *Autumn Pool*

Analysis. The demon of poetry, as in the preceding poem, is forever voicing self inside us. Or is it a demon of deep self-understanding, which knows so much more than we do, and insists on being heard? I have a memory of a protected cove on the island of Delos. I worked and read there for months seventy five years ago. I am there now. I was always there.

ARABIA

Imru al-Qays *D. 540*

P. 368. *The Mu'allaqah*

Analysis. Behind the present lyric/ode, lies a millennium of development in pre-Islamic poetry, most of it oral, and all of it, it seems, difficult to translate. (The couplet form--long syllabic line followed by brief counterpoint—

My companions, halting there
Their mounts for me
Say, do not perish out of grief!
Control yourself!

Deposited into a single rhythmic pattern, enriched by references to customs, places, and events referred to by the autobiographical poet , the *Mu'allaqah*may in detail remain obscure to the western reader, and emotionally puzzling, although the dashing tale we encounter, in this portion of the poem, is in broad outline easy to follow. The *quasidah*form opens with a six verse introduction, in which the narrator—a manifest sower of wild oats, an *enfant terrible*and a bit of an Arabic Wild West cowboy, recounts the time of great sorrow when he lost a woman he greatly loved, and was consoled back to life by his comrades. The bulk of the poem, the journey portion, recount the extravagant adventures, mostly amorous, which have taken up the poet's years of riding, fighting, and drinking in the desert. The extended finale, to this more than three hundred line ode, is the recall of a violent storm which poured down onto the desert, promoting a powerful rejuvenation of desiccated nature; a dramatic coda bearing the largeness of experience and passion which have triggered comparisons between Imru al-Qays and Wordsworth or Shelley.

Ibn Hazm (994-1064)

P. 645. My beloved comes

Analysis. The feast of colors and shapes, culminating in the brilliance of a peacock's tail, passes from the delicate to the explosive, like the love making act.

Ibn Farai. D. 976

P. 646. Chastity.

Analysis. The brief poem probes at cross purposes to itself, and does so through the voice of a person devoted to abstinence, but at the same time insistent on provoking its own desire. The poetic strain of impeded longing, which is destined to flower into the ascetic and adorational in western Mediaeval poetry, is sharply present in 'Chastity.' The poet pretend-praises himself, at the end, by scorning those who 'take gardens for pastures.' A subtle and developmental stage in the making of such later poetries as those of John Donne, eight centuries later.

Ibn Zaydun. 1004-1070.

P. 648. Written from Al-Zahra'

Analysis. The poet returns—and allegedly writes the present poem—to a legendarily beautiful garden near Cordova, where he fell in love with his adored lady, Wallada, who is no longer with him. By dwelling on the garden, with its beauty and healing power, the poet is enabled to ease his soul. In the end, however, he must live with the fact that she left him, and that he was the only one loyal to the relationship.

Wallada. D. 1077

P. 650. To Ibn Zaydun.

Analysis. Ibn Zaydun and Wallada form a classically incendiary pair of lovers.

Wait til the darkness is deep;
Be then my guest.
Night knows how to keep
Love's secret best.

While Ibn Farai, we have seen, pretends shyness, to accumulate the powers of love, Wallada drives head on into her nighttime passion. Many language games of love are traded and refined in these largely upper class poem games.

Judah Ha-Levi. 1075-1141

P. 651. The Apple.

Analysis. Ha-Levi, a Jew who travelled from Andalusia to Jerusalem, on a holy pilgrimage, was richly educated in both Hebrew and Arabic literary traditions, and in the present lyric The simple but perfect beauty of an apple suffices to console him for the loss of his beloved: her breast and cheeks are as delightful as the fruit charming even to the Christians, for whom it was the portal of evil.

Ibn Al-Labbana. D. 1113

P. 652. He who has charged the eyes

Analysis. The sensuousness of the present love poem startles us, as it picks up a formulaic strategy, known to the Andalusian poets of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Ahmed is addressed in the most erotic/baroque terms, as an adorable love object, and then in a final stanza a women intrudes, addressing her lover in her own sensuous voice, and throwing as it were a wild card into the middle of the deck.

Ibn Quzman. 1080-1160

P. 653. I am madly in love.

Analysis. The style of poetry favored by Quzman has its roots in Mozarabic sensibility, and plays out, here, as a special kind of play with the image of himself. Quzman—who seemingly was not this kind of person at all, mocked himself up, in his poems, as a reprobate and an extravagant, while his chief intention was to ridicule the notion of courtly love.

JAPAN

Kakinomoto Hitomaro (Fl. 680-700)

P. 1024. *When he passed the ruined castle at Omi*

Analysis. The legendary founder of the Japanese state (660-585 B.C.) had this imperial castle built at Omi one thousand years before the lifetime of the poet, who admires the tenacious continuity of the structure, and of its symbolic power. Why, the poet wonders, would any ruler have left this splendid domain? Why would any ruler have left thme 'hills of Nara, beautiful in blue earth'? Gazing on the great palace, the mighty halls 'rank with spring grasses,' the poet is sad. Such beauty, such loss. In conclusion, with great simplicity, the poet laments that he will never meet 'the men of ancient times.' After it all, in other words, what the poet misses is the 'men of ancient times.'

P. 1025. *At the time of the temporary enshrinement of Prince Takechi at Kinoe*

Analysis. The longer poems of the *Man'yoshu*, the classic anthology of the Nara period in Japan (700-784), are frequently devoted to laments for a noble past, as well as for the passing of the world's splendors. The present *choka*—a style of long poem common in the Nara period—devotes its lament to the passing away of Prince Takechi. After pacifying the land of its rebellious subjects, and after 'his reign flourished,' he died, and his courtiers, who were crushed with grief, were put to the sad labor of constructing his ceremonial shrine. 'I turn to gaze on it, as I would at the heavens.

P. 1028. *When he parted from his wife in the land of Iwami;*

Analysis….Laments for the imperial past, and for the fading of greatness into history, have saddened the tone adopted by Hitomaro. He has had to recognize that man's greatest works are temporary. But in the present poem he must recognize that love is as threatened by time as are great monuments. He has parted from his wife. (Have they separated? What is she longing for?) He adores her through the seaweed that beaches in the cove before him, that reminds him of her body beside him in sleep, her body which

swayed to my side in sleep
like sleek seaweed
swaying to and fro with the waves.

P. 1029. *On the death of his wife: I and II*

Analysis. The poet puts his love so frankly. He is hesitant to put too much pressure on the family of his fiancée; reluctant to seem aggressive. But he is hopeful that one day they will meet like tangling vines. Then a messenger arrives, to announce poetically that the fiancee is gone, dead, has perished. The tone of the announcement is fleeting, and formal. The poet is left in despair. His love is gone like 'the scarlet leaves of autumn.' The messenger vanishes, the lover haunts the market which once his love had frequented. But no trace of anyone who resembles her. The one hint he receives, about her whereabouts, leaves him confused and leaves him lost. He is not the romantic lover of western tradition, torn by loss, but the destroyed life-weary despairing man, who sees no direction to turn. The movements of pain are formally and precisely parsed out in his lament for lost life.

P. 1033. *Upon seeing a dead man lying among the rocks on the island of Samine.*

Analysis. The poet returns to the question of the dead, and of the loss it imposes on the living. Death, in the present picture, is startling and unexplained, and manifests itself suddenly. The corpse is just there, on the beautiful island. Given this poet's concern with death, wife loss, and romantic love--say as it relates to his own two wives--it is no wonder his mind turns to the wife of the corpse in the present poem, and to her alarm at his absence. It is no small matter, that Hitomaro retails his discursive laments, for lost love, in the rangy and informal*choka*metric, which is so sharply at variance with the classical *tanka* brevity.

P. 1023. *Written in his own sorrow as he was about to die in Iwami*

Analysis. The poet projects an image of his death high in the mountains. He projects more than that, for he writes as though he were in his mind, missing him. He writes as though he is a dead man, writing and missed, who wants to be sure his wife can find him. Hitomaro's poetry concerns death, or the crumbling away of the great monuments of man's achievement.

Yamanoue no Okura. (660-733)

P. 1035. *A Lament on the Evanescence of Life*

Analysis. We continue with the reading of choka metrics ,
with their loose but capacious range for the expression of feelings. And a single dominant feeling is what we get, that life is short, time passes relentlessly.

And whence did they come,
Those wrinkles that settled in?...

Already now those who were maidens and youths
Must use walking sticks…

And watch as others avoid them…

The poet wishes he could be a rock in eternity, unchanged forever…

But writing itself is dating yourself, is being part of the act by which you separate from your own past, and see yourself in the rear view mirror. To lament is to have lost the present.

P. 1037 *Dialogue between poverty and destitution*

Analysis. Which of the two men is more wretched? Both of them suffer the dregs of life, but the destitute man seems more deeply plunged in intolerable responsibilities—to his parents, to his children—which he cannot fulfill, and which greatly increase his misery. There is no talk, here, of the solace of self-expression; indeed there are only two bright moments in this dialogue: one glimmer ignites when the poor man suddenly boasts to himself:

Where is there to be found
A better man?

Which burst of inappropriate self-confidence is immediately cancelled by the return to lamentations, the very term of which evokes texts of the Hebrew Old Testament, like the Books of*Lamentation*or of *Job*, or for that matter of much of the prophetic matter pertaining to the relations of the Jewish people to their god, Jahve. The other moment of light occurs in the discussion, by the destitute man, of a point of ontological luck. He has been allowed to live a life as a human being, which means he is rising on the ladder which leads to Enlightenment.

P. 1039.   *Longing for his son Furushi*

Analysis.   The poet and his wife have lost their beloved child. Many innocent rituals had held the threesome together, but suddenly a mighty stormwind blew up, and took the child in its blast. He was no longer able to resist, and passed away, leaving his devastated parents. There was nothing left for it, except to pray for his speedy trajectory into heaven.

The three poems we have read by Yamanoue Okura are of a monolithic bleakness. They seize upon the painful strains of the human condition, and without irony, humor, or self-reflection, onto what a poem is, bemoan their condition. As poem forms they lack complexity, and yet upon close inspection of their message giving, even in translation, we can see that the *choka*form, in which many of our Japanese poems are embedded, is supple and forceful. One can return to the first lines of the speech given by the representative of poverty. The interspersing of longer with shorter lines, the quasi repetition of signifiers—*wind*in line 2, *rain* in line four—and the constant simulation of everyday conversation—'but I'm cold all the same,' 'how is it that you manage to keep going at all'—these stylistic moves afford the poet a modest daily discourse in which to pour his feelings out before us.

Otomo Yakamochi.   (718-785)

P. 1042. *Lament addressed to his son-in-law, Fugiwara Nakachiko*

Analysis.   This voluminous poet, and provincial governor, was known to dislike the busy-busy of court life, and therefore relied on messengers to bring him news of court life. Among the missiles he receives, often from women admirers, he was particularly overwhelmed by the news of the death of the mother of his son-in-law. The lament before us is a highly disciplined, structurally fluid, wonderfully balanced formal response. We are used to the theme of death and the brevity of life, in classical Japanese poetry, but are struck by the prolonged verbal protocol that introduces the note of death, in the present poem. When we reach the description of the lady limp as seaweed, powerful in her dying, we are invited to weep, like the poet, for a beautiful individual's death, and for our own.

Kokinshu

Four court appointed editors took responsibility for the collection of the present anthology of Japanese poetry, the *Kokinshu*, which follows the work included in the earlier collection of the *Many'oshu*, from which we have drawn the eighth century poems of Yamanoue and Hitomaro. With tthe present collection we enter the new waters of Japanese poetry, which has passed through Chinese phases—both in cultural influence and in orthography—and is finding voice registers which herald the greatest period of Japanese poetry, the Heian period. In the following, we track typical themes of the Kokinshu collection.

P 1051   *Spring*

In these brief poems, four aspects of spring are summoned up, with characteristic finesse: in breath-controlled tanka meter we inspect moods generated by spring ponds, flowers, and rains. Melancholy and drenched sleeves provide the background.

P. 1052. *Summer*

Analysis. One short sample, but carrying the mark of moods of unexpected sadness which we have seen from the beginning in Japanese poetry. Spring blossoms fade; summer love grows heavy.

P. 1053. *Autumn*

Analysis. Lonely rich colored leaves fall on the autumn mountains. Their depth is reflected from the bottom of pools of standing water. The poetic discovery that less is more—part of the disclosure of these limpid *tanka*poems, drives a modern poet to think of William Carlos Williams, or of Imagists, like Amy Lowell, who mastered the art pf 'showing just enough.'

P. 1053. *Poems of Parting*

Analysis. The poet struggles with a delicate problem, to identify the color of parting, and comes up with the rarefied account of a dyed hue. Inquiries of such finesse befit the self-expressions of courtiers, for whom there is leisure to be precise.

P. 1053. *Travel poems*

Analysis. A pinpoint image of the sadness of loss. Geese go north in the autumn; one does not return when the pack returns in the winter. The writer—we surmise—traveled north with her husband, but returned alone.

P. 1054. *Love Poems (from Book XII)*

Analysis. Various riffs on love: the lover as phantom, dream, ghost; the loiver who 'sleeps with her robes turned inside out, awaiting him…'; the hidden love, deeply concealed by the waters, lying there waiting like jewel weeds. Nature is the reference of preference, for these courtly poets: a land of endlessly cultivated and captivating streams, mountains, and moving banks of mist.

P. 1055. *Love Poems (from Book XIII)*

Analysis. These fine textured meditations on love testify both to passion and to evanescence, and in the latter sense question even the reality of 'a night of love.' Not surprisingly, this turn of inquiry, into the reality of love, arouses discussions of the nature of reality, classic issues for the Buddhism to which many of these poets subscribe. #644 catches the Buddhist paradox: the more the lover tries to detain the love night experience, as it is occurring, the more decisively th at experience fades.

P. 1056. *Love Poems (from Book XV)*

Analysis. Two new love themes here. 'How sorrowful the autumn of man's heart in the world of love'; like the lonely ears of grain,' I too will remain unharvested.' There is passion throughout these poems, but in the end it is downed by time, loss, and aging. Dpes the mode take us back to the ancient Greek lines:

What is anyone?
What is no one"
Man is the dream of a shadow.

P. 1057. *Poems of Grief. (from Book XVI)*

Analysis. **#861** goes to the heart of much we have been reading. It fiddles with tense structure—*there is a road we all must take, and I am taking it yesterday*—means that the long road leading to death begins before we know it exists.

P 1058 *Miscellaneous Poem (from Book XVIII)*

Analysis. Can one imagine a more indirect—or at the same time explicit--response to an invitation to visit?

P. 1058. *Miscellaneous Poem (from Book XIX)*

Analysis. Passion which is too intense self-destructs. One might think of Racine' (or Euripides') Phaedra, whose passion for Hippolytus burns her up, so that she cannot act reasonably or control the expression of her emotions.

SECTION III: **EARLY MODERN PERIOD**
(England – France – Italy – Spain – North America)

EUROPE

ITALY

Petrarch

Francesco Petrarch was born in 1304 in Arezzo, Italy; he spent most of his childhood living in Florence, Tuscany, and Avignon. He chose to study law, then classics, all against his father's wishes. After briefly studying law in Bologna in 1320, Petrarch decided to abandon the field, to begin studying the classics and take up a religious life. In 1326 Petrarch took minor ecclesiastical orders, which allowed him to travel and write freely. His interest in Latin literature and poetry grew significantly during this time period, and he was later able to share his love for the humanities with Giovanni Boccaccio, a fellow poet and humanist. In 1327, Petrarch attended a mass in Avignon and saw Laura de Noves, for the first time He fell in love at first sight, and she became the object of all his subsequent love poetry.

Petrarch continued to travel around Europe performing diplomatic missions for the Church and Cardinal Colonna in the 1330s, and soon became a well-known scholar and poet. His poetry, mainly composed sonnets focusing on the intense love and admiration he has for Laura, became immensely popular, and in 1341 he was crowned the poet laureate of Rome. In the years after his coronation, Petrarch traveled around France, Germany and Spain holding various clerical positions, researching the writings of Cicero, and exploring Greek history and literature.

Influenced by his interest in the classics, many of Petrarch's poems are highly allegorical and constructed using Italian forms such as *terza rima*, *ballate*,*sestine* and *canzoni.* His poems investigate the connection between love and chastity in the foreground of a political landscape, though many of them are also driven by emotion and sentimentality . He died in 1374 in Padua, Italy.

You who hear the sound, in scattered rhymes,
of those sighs on which I fed my heart,
in my first vagrant youthfulness,
when I was partly other than I am,
I hope to find pity, and forgiveness,
for all the modes in which I talk and weep,
between vain hope and vain sadness,
in those who understand love through its trials.
Yet I see clearly now I have become
an old tale amongst all these people, so that
it often makes me ashamed of myself;
and shame is the fruit of my vanities,
and remorse, and the clearest knowledge
of how the world's delight is a brief dream

By huge leaps—Augustine, Boethius, *Carmina Burana,* Troubadours and courtly love poetry, Petrarch--we have tried to put the poetry of literary Middle Ages—we talk six or seven centuries--into one intelligible section. It is of course impossible. It will suffice if we can track the mindset of Boethius into that of the courtly poets, and of their world into that of Petrarch. Ideally, the listener will come out of this Mediaeval Unit with some hints at the broad character of the poetry of the cultural period opened by the Fall of Rome, and closed by, say, the work of Cervantes and the advent of the North Italian city states. He or she may, if our structure is cogent, find incremental levels of difference among

1 The allegorical Platonic expressiveness sets of Augustine and Boethius

2 The dark cynical dynamic of the narrator of the Carmen…
3 The Romantic (as well as the lustful) tone of the Troubadours.

4 The sad/Romantic nostalgic tone of the short love lament of Petrarch.

Examples three and four show the mediaeval perspective phasing over into the softness of love, Virgin Mary inspired, or weeping over from the Platonic which was never expunged from the Medieval mind.

P. 80. Canzoniere. 1. Oh You, who in these scattered rhymes may find

Analysis. Like his predecessor, Dante, Petrarch writes his major ppetry to a woman with whom he will have a lifetime romantic relation, though we know so little about her, we may almost suspect that she is a creation of imagination. In both cases the poet works along the mediaeval image of the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus, who served as the western archetype for the sanctity of woman. The present song introduces the complexity of Petrarch's attitudes both to his lady love and to love itself. Love itself is cruel and merciful—carries with it 'harsh delight, soft pain', while his lady is a tantalizing image, real and ideal at the same time.

P. 81. Canzoniere 3. It was the very day the sun's own light

Analysis. The poet first encountered Laura's birthday on the day (in the liturgical calendar) when the death of Jesus Christ takes place. The coincidence is an awesome marker, and an historical acknowledgment of the pain that touches both events: the one an agony of crucifixion, the other, caused by Laura herself, her relative indifference to how intensely Petrarch fell for her. A priceless mediaeval theme—the intertwining of grace and pain with one another—is introduced. Note; the Petrarchan sonnet, so called, is built around an overbalanced (eight line) octave, and an underweighted (six line) sestet, another element of the dissymmetrical imagination of the mediaeval mind.

Page 82. Canzoniere 90. Sometimes she'd comb her yellow braids out loose

Analysis. The beauty of Laura's hair is like that of the sun, and stays when much has faded. He worshipped her beauty, but feared her goddess like power and scrutiny, which virtually incinerated him. When she spoke, he heard the angels speaking. Aging she was, like him, but fatally wounded he was, by the arrows with which she had transfixed him. There is a real portrait in here, a portrait painted by a late to post medieval gentleman, who in his early document on climbing Mount Ventoux had depicted a crisp reality we would later feel comfortable considering 'modern.'

Page 82. Canzoniere 148. Not Tiber, Tesin, Po, nor Arno, Rhone

Analysis. The poet's consolation is a modest river near Vaucluse in southern France, where he passed as much time as he could. It was there, in this spot where he had planted a green laurel tree, that he wishes to write poems. What a package of indications he opens! While we have reason to believe he planted a 'real' laurel tree there, he also planted the name of his beloved, the name of the flower sacred to poetry in antiquity, and the name of the wreath that crowned the heads of victors in the poetic contests of ancient Athens.

Page 83. Canzoniere 164. All silent now lie earth and wind and sky

Analysis. The absolute calm of the elements is not enough to ensure the poet a peaceful night, for he wakes, turns, and is tortured by the thought of his love. She it was who healed him, by the touch of her hand, but by the same hand she wounded him, deprived him of all peace. 'I am a war,' the poet declares, unable to restore peace even when the surrounding world offers him total calm. 'I am swept far from any salvage of my soul,' though 'it is in her image I find peace.' Even the words of a popular song of yesterday refer to love as a 'pleasant ache,' and add, in consolation to those who have been struck by the bug, that 'you're not sick, you're just in love.'

Page 83. Canzoniere 292. Those eyes I raved about in ardent rhyme

Analysis. The lady, who was the poet's entire life and meaning, dies, leaving him 'wracked by the storm,' on an open sea which once before has served as the ultimate of calm. It is the end of art, for Laura was the source of his art, and there will be no more love songs. Like Dante, Petrarch perforce deals with this disastrous loss by rediscovering the presence of his beloved in heaven. He had spoken of Laura's angel voice; now he must address her as a partisan of God.

Page 84. Canzoniere. 320. Wind comes leading into warmth and light

Analysis. Springtime has in the past always brought joy and beauty to the poet, with blue skies, smiling meadows, and enchanting birdsong. Those days, however, ended with the death of his beloved. Since that time the songs of the birds, yellow meadows, and 'lovely women, generous and wise, ' have all lost their charms. Her death took away forever the keys to Paradise. As with Dante, whose Beatrice seems more a metaphysical principle than a flesh and blood woman, so Petrarch seems to surrender, at Laura's death, not just her presence—if that at all—but the world she illuminated.

Page 84. Canzoniere 333. Go forth, my elegies, to that hard stone

Analysis. In search of his lost Laura, the poet takes his laments to the very edge of the Laura's tomb, which contains 'only rotting flesh and bone.' The tomb is hard stone, and unresponsive. All the poet can do is write 'these scattered pages,' on which he can tell the world how greatly Laura added to its wealth and beauty. May er reward to him be the gift of peace. He would gladly die, to join her, if he could. With the reference to his writings as 'stepping stones away from grief,' he allows in the dynamic idea that to write is to take a stance forward into your time as personality, a notion we can position in our own culture today.

Gaspara Stampa

Page 96. Love, having elevated her to him, inspires her verses

Analysis*.* *Love, having elevated her to him, inspires her verses*. Gaspara confronts the lover with a challenge: that her love for him has elevated her above him, a paradox in which the male becomes both the beloved and the enabler. We step farther into the complex Renaissance perspective on love, in which the selves of the lover and the beloved become increasingly intertwined. We are in a sixteenth century, now, in which there is a profusion of handsome and brilliant court women, who compete brilliantly with their male fellow writers.

P. 97. She does not fear amorous pain but rather its end

Analysis. Gaspara is a warrior of love, and does not doubt she can compete with any lover, in enduring the struggles and pains of love. Her only fear is that the quality of her love may not suffice, that 'her fire may prove to be a fire of straw.' Love,in Stampa's poems, is a battle for finesse, and ultimately for conquest—but the conquest love makes possible for love. Perhaps without realizing it, we move, here, into an extravagant new deification of Platonic love.

SPAIN

Garcilaso de la Vega

Page 92.   While there is still the color of a rose

Analysis.   'Before time ravages with angry snow the beauty of your head,' take advantage pf that beauty and vitality of yours, and 'gather together….fruits that are sweet.' With Garcilaso we track the life long narrative of Petrarch in its regional development, here, from a Spanish poet born two hundred years after Petrarch, but who was still on the cusp of the mediaeval mindset. We recognize that Garcilaso is picking up the ancient Roman *carpe diem* theme—enjoy life while you can—but can we identify the position he is adopting, which by his time—1501-1536—we would like to consider that of a Renaissance man? He works the same sonnet tradition—octave, sestet; subdivisions within them—as Petrarch, and enjoys the same kind of opportunity to counterpose joy with sadness, the polarity that makes the poem. To those commonplaces, however, he adds his private app: he heralds in the advent of winter and death, yet reserves, to a final line, 'lest our desire should change old age instead,' an ascription, to the power of art to transform, which Petrarch would have converted into the notion of Laura the angelic singer.

Page 92.   Your face is written in my soul

Analysis.   The interiority to one another, of the poet and the beloved in the foregoing poem, is intimate, for it includes the thought their mutual love might counteract old age. Their intimacy is the more profound, in the present poem, for in it the poet concedes that he is born out of the beloved and is in fact there to die for the beloved. We are moving into a period of literary positioning where there is a far more sustained probing of the mysteries of consciousness, than there had been in older poetries, late mediaeval and earlier, in which sentiments we might call heraldic or ritualized predominate.

Lope de Vega

P. 103.   Woman is of man the best

Analysis.   Woman is the best part of man, as well as the poison that kills him; woman is an ungrateful angel, and sometimes a devil; like a bleeding (by leeches; common procedure at the time) she sometimes cures and sometimes cures. We note, seeing this line of paradox, that the intellectualizing of the relation of the two genders, which we note already in the work of Petrarch, for whom love is both painful and joyful, is being carried over, into complex interrelations between the two genders and their romantic relations to one another. To track the roots of this love tradition would mean to read back into Plato's *Symposium*, where man and woman are envisaged as two parts of a single whole, forever yearning for their separated half.

P. 103. Stranger to love, whoever loves not thee

Analysis.   The poet praises his Spouse, an ideal of beauty, and he berates himself for 'mortal loves befriending,' when he could instead have been immersed in the ideal. The theme of ideal beauty, expressed throughout the Rennaissance (and Baroque) in terms of purity and the highest refinement, is frequently thought embodied in works of sculpture or (later) painting, where the ideal morphs into forms of neoclassicism, such as we see in Fragonard or Watteau in the eighteenth century. To be noted: the beloved's lips are compared to 'lily-flowering fountains,' distilling 'rich torrents to the dawn.'

P. 104.   A sonnet all of a sudden

Analysis.   We have earlier read poetry which shows its maker's consciousness about the act of writing. Now we go farther, and follow the poet into a detailed journey through writing a sonnet which his beloved has ordered him to complete for her. The construction process is signaled to us by the poet's attention to the number of sonnet lines he has laid down behind him—as though he was building a house line by line.

Though this jeu d'esprit has in It the marks of a witticism, with romance thrown in, it heralds comically a widespread implication of the Romantic movement, two centuries after Lope's death, that writing can be viewed as an heroic testimony to our existential presence.

Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz

P. 118 Love, at first, is fashioned of agitation

Analysis. Sor Juana, Mexico's finest level of academic brilliance and creativity, in her time, was an astute analyst of love. Like Shakespeare, she dwelt deeply on the cruelties dispensed by lovers, and in the present poem she urges a lover—her own?—to realize that love, in leaving him, simply ran its customary course, permitting jealousy or offense to destroy what had seemed perfection and harmony.

P. 119. In which she restrains a fantasy, satisfying it with decent love

Analysis. Neither the lover nor the one loved are real; the (deceitful) love that binds them is a fantasy. Thus we are also faced with this question: is the love which binds them together a real or a Platonic one? Is the love which binds purely elusive? This point leads to the thought that love, whether ideal or real, is of very fragile nature. If I've 'imprisoned you in my fantasy…it matters not to flee my arms impassioned.' The metaphysical challenging of the nature of love, becomes in this sonnet a radical doubt about the whole nature of the romantic enterprise.

P. 119. The Rhetoric of Tears

Analysis. 'I fell to weeping tears which sorrow poured.' Having failed, by any means available to her, to convince her lover of the truth of her love, Sor Juana succumbs to weeping. 'My molten heart caught up between thy hands, ' the extreme and persuasive evidence of her love, brings Sor Juana's love-truth deeply to the heart of her beloved. The imprint of her true passion will suffice to convince her lover and to drive away 'vile jealousy…with foolish shades.'

ENGLAND

Sir Thomas Wyatt

Page 93. Whoso list to hunt

Analysis. A warning poem, tracking the dangers of treading on the feet of the monarch, Henry VIII, who has fastened his gaze on the young Anne Boleyn, and has her marked for his bride. She has *noli me tangere*, *do not touch me*, written all over her, and Wyatt takes care to spread the word. The poem is a backwards love poem, a deft tribute to what is implied to be the fascinating beauty of Anne.

Page 94. They flee from me

Analysis. A bitter poem, about changes in loyalty, fickle friends, and a lover who has drifted into a 'strange fashion of forsaking.' Note the gifted metrical system: *abab cdd* rhyme scheme, and the variance of four with five lines throughout the poem. One might say, speaking for this poem and many others from the Early Modern/Renaissance repertoire, that it allows the poet ample flexibility to 'adjust' and even 'play with' his pattern, while guaranteeing the listener's ear sufficient stability for trust.

William Shakespeare

P. 105. Sonnet l8

Analysis. 'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?' The immediate answer is, that a summer's day leaves us with much to complain about: the wind, the heat, the universal inclination toward deterioration—in things In general. 'But thy eternal summer shall not fade, and you will not lose control of those wonderful gifts nature has given you. Death cannot brag that he has possessed you by his dark shadowy presence. What I am writing now, the poet goes on to declare,will preserve your beauty and greatness for all time, undying. We wonder, as usually in Shakespeare, at the conviction he brings to his belief in the healing power of language.

P. 105. Sonnet 116

Analysis. Once again, an impassioned and unwavering defence of love, which is steady, lasting, and unwavering. Love 'bears it out, even to the edge of doom. The language seems to restore the full meaning to the Apostle Paul's words, about 'faith, hope, and charity (love),' which endure all things, and of which love is the greatest. Shakespeare, as we see in this sonnet, understands love to be the greatest of the virtues, as he says in the first lines, and has no place intruding on the marriage of 'true mind,' of the minds of people who love each other. One has ample pictures of the power of love—in Cressida, Juliet, Viola, or Cleopatra—to know how unyieldingly love takes up its determinant role in the hearts of true lovers.es

P. 106. Sonnet 129

Analysis. Lust is the theme of this sonnet, which describes the consequences of 'lust in action,' in plain terms sexual desire acted on. (The material, precisely, of Shakespeare's narrative poem, *The Rape of Lucrece*, which brought down a family, destroyed a woman's reputation, and ruined the life of a (once) noble soldier.). The temptation to this abuse of honor and love reverse-drives our senses into a fresh understanding of the sacredness of love. With Shakespeare we have moved into the first decades of the seventeenth century, early modern if you like, but far closer to us than thinker-creators like Louise Labe, Gaspara Stampa, or Lope de Vega, for whom love still nestles in the sophisticated and courtly niceties with which it first came clothed into the Early Modern world.

P. 106. Sonnet. 130

Analysis. Shakespeare frees the everfresh vigor of his love, in this extraordinary poem, in which he forces us to endure the denigration of his mistress' value—compare her with the other in nature or person—in order to discover how supreme she is. This tour de force has its roots, clearly, in the formal play with the beloved, which is so clearly essential throughout the post Petrarchan development of the sonnet. Artistry, carried to exaggeration, lies at the summit of the mountain of hyperboles, which lead to the elevation of the beloved. Because Shakespeare was a genius at surpassing the traditions he visited, he was able to sign the present game with life force.

John Donne

With John Donne (!572-1631)we surface into a culture world we must settle with viewing as the very air we breathe; it is early modern in the many senses we have just described : the free flowing market world is beginning to dominate , international trade and relations are starting to declare themselves, academic, business, and cultural lives are starting to flourish. Multiple characters like John Donne--churchman, libertine elegant poet--are being cast up on the shores of culture.

John Donne was born in l572 to a wealthy ironmonger, who devoted his considerable resources to the education of his son—music lessons, ancient languages, dancing—and then was replaced by a second husband, who continued to instill in John the sense of his own social worth. John made his way to Hart College, Oxford, and from there found himself in close proximity to many of the leading culture movers of his time. From Oxford John went on to study law at the Inns of Court, where he continued avid reading in history, poetry, and theology. It was at this point that he began writing poetry. He fell in love, too, with the daughter of a man who roundly disliked Donne, and after the two were married the girl's dad had Donne jailed for breach of canon law. From here on Donne wrote abundant poetry, and sermons, and by stages, which included many years of penury, Donne made his way, again through a personal connection, to the highest office he could have wanted, Dean of Saint Paul's Cathedral.

The poem with which we herald him and the early forms of our own time is rich and subtle, in fact the maximum in-tradition work, but the point he makes—*I'll be back, parting is sweet sorrow; don't fre*t—is from the universal repertoire of human emotions. And from Donne, a complex mix of traditional and rare, the universal cannot fail to invite a unique expression. This brilliant wordsmith, ultimately Dean of Saint Paul's Cathedral, and one of the great homilists of British tradition, in his day a notorious lover and eroticist, had passed years in penury, struggled to support a family of (at its peak) twelve, written brilliantly in all verse forms, and finally come into his full respect in the twentieth century—this perplexing figure challenges us to discover the deep difference between early modern and late mediaeval, the world, say, of the *Carmina Burana*, in which the Christian Catholic backdrop also played a defining role, but one so venerated 'that it could be deeply mocked without irreverence.' In the following poem we find a very secular emotion—a G.I. saying good bye to his fiancée, as he heads into his next assignment—clothed in artifice which serves to enshrine the moment. Here, we might say, is an updating of that Neoplatonism we saw in Boethius and Augustine, the Christian of secular love wound thickly through the feeling.

A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning (1633)

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

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 th' earth brings harms and fears,_
  Men reckon what it did, and meant;_
But trepidation of the spheres,_
  Though greater far, is innocent._

Dull sublunary lovers' love_
  (Whose soul is sense) cannot admit_
Absence, because it doth remove_
  Those things which elemented it._

But we by a love so much refined,_
  That our selves know not what it is,_
Inter-assured of the mind,_
  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._

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 opposit,_
  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 th' other foot, obliquely run;_
Thy firmness makes my circle just,_
   And makes me end where I began._

Analysis. *Chin up, says the poet to his love.* Then he goes ahead to tell her why she need not dread their parting. Their parting is in fact not possible, for they themselves are linked by unity of soul—their ‘love cannot admit absence’—as were souls and values in the Neoplatonism of Boethius and Augustine, which we discussed above. The ‘trepidation of the spheres’ is innocent, that is the sensitive jelly of the cosmos is fixed in value, and cannot be shaken by a departure. We are ‘inter-assured of the mind,’ one in essence. Our souls interfuse like ‘gold to airy thinness beat,’ interform each other, like the souls of lovers in the thought of Plato. The final stanzas of the poem develop the indivisibility theme in terms of the metaphor of a compass, which illustrates how the two loves, of himself for his beloved, and of her for him, are as inseparably interlocked as the arms of a compass. Such loves precede, through depth, any attempt to disrupt them.

The compass metaphor, around which the present poem turns, is evidence of both the availability of a new ‘scientific’ outlook on the account of affairs of the heart, and a recourse to the old thinking of Neoplatonism, which we have swoseen at work expressively in poems of Augustine and Boethius. In other words, Donne’s metaphor is also a benchmark for the compatibility of the mediaeval—actually the classical Platonic as well—with the ‘early modern.’

P. 108. The Good Morrow

Analysis. The poet and his lover discover one another by love making, and by sleeping together, in which they become one another The poet emphasizes the fineness of the bedroom, which is a world for those to whom love allows them to explore their private space. Others may travel by sea or widely by land, for that is the kind of space they need, but not John Donne and his love, for whom a small space is a world of its own.

P. 110. A Valediction forbidding mourning

Analysis. John Donne, with whom we vault fifty years forward from Shakespeare, into the midst of the metaphysical venture in the lyric—stress on conceits, complex sonnet structures, and witty structures—carries us into a zone of self-conscious lyric, of which we might say, that in it the poet turns in on himself **.**

Chin up, says the poet to his love. Then he goes ahead to tell her why she need not dread their parting. Their parting is in fact not possible, for they themselves are linked by unity of soul—their ‘love cannot admit absence’—as were souls and values in the Neoplatonism of Boethius and Augustine. The ‘trepidation of the spheres’ is innocent, that is the sensitive jelly of the cosmos is fixed in value, and cannot be shaken by a departure. We are ‘inter-assured of the mind,’ one in essence. Our souls interfuse like ‘gold to airy thinness beat,’ interform each other, like the souls of lovers in the thought of Plato. The final stanzas of the poem develop the indivisibility theme in terms of the metaphor of a compass, which illustrates how the two loves, of himself for his beloved, and of her for him, are as inseparably interlocked as the arms of a compass. Such loves precede, through depth, any attempt to disrupt them.

The compass metaphor, around which the present poem turns, is evidence of both the availability of a new ‘scientific’ outlook on the account of affairs of the heart, and a recourse to the old thinking of Neoplatonism, which we have seen at work expressively in poems of Augustine and Boethius. In other words, Donne’s metaphor is also a benchmark for the compatibility of the mediaeval—actually the classical Platonic as well—with the ‘early modern.’

P. 111. To his mistress going to bed,

Analysis. Donne’s eulogy of the bedroom, in ‘The Good Morrow.’ Is anatomized and refined in the present long lyric, in which the poet verbally undresses his sweetheart, one by one removing the delicate and complex articles of clothing—

Off with that happy busk, which I envy,
That still can be, and still can stand so nigh.

In the end, of course, there remain two naked bodies:

What needs't thou have more covering than a man?

That Donne was later to be Dean of St. Paul's Cathedra., and a man of faith obsessed with death, a brilliant homilist whose finest theme was 'ashes to ashes, dust to dust,' should hardly confuse us. Paradox ruled Baroque thought, and underlies the Christian perception that only the fall could have brought us grace.

P. 113. Holy Sonnet 14

Analysis. In working through a sonnet designed to exalt God's power, the poet invites his creator to break him down, like an assaulted city in the hands of a ruthless foe. It is only in this kind of loss that the poet can find himself, and at the same time realize the freedom that captivity to God can procure. God is serving the function, here, of the beloved in the numerous sonnet poems we have been reading. The complex and overwhelming power of the beloved has overcome the ardor of the lover, the poet, as God himself can do. Sappho, in her famous indirect love poem to her lover, must allow a third party, the Jesus in the adoration of God, to mediate to her the brilliance of her lovely creator.

Andrew Marvell

P.115. To his coy Mistress

Analysis. Most of the twenty three rhymed couplets, of this bitterly humorous, but stark, diatribe are devoted to complains at the slowness of his lover, who is putting off his love too long, and leaving them trapped in an infinity of foreplay. Her 'long preserved virginity' is driving him crazy…

Thus while we cannot make our sun
stand still, yet we will make him run…

The bite of such humor crouches and strikes often, throughout the development of the Early Modern lyric—as distinct, we will see, from the development of the Romantic lyric, a century and more later, in which paradox, irony, and distant-presence play little role in the formulation of relationships.

FRANCE

Maurice Sceve

Page 95. The day we passed together for a while

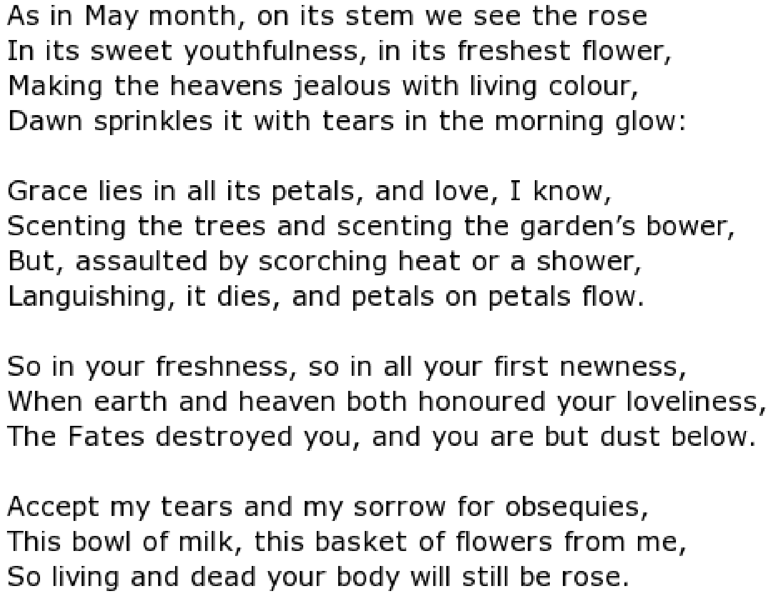
Analysis. The poem before us is characteristic of the *dizain* (ten line) poems, adorned with a complex rhyme scheme, which were Sceve's staple compromise with formality. Are we not reminded of Petrarch, and his anxiety over the loss of the beloved, as well as of that intimacy of persons in the love poem of Garcilaso? The absence of his lady, which is the nub of the poem, is the weight which burdens him down, so that he finds himself buried in shadow, like a rabbit cocking his ears for orientation signals.

Pierre de Ronsard

Pierre de Ronsard. (1524-1585)

Ronsard was born (two hundred years after Petrarch, into an aristocratic family, well educated at a private College, and sent, while still a youth, as an aide on several diplomatic missions—traveling to Scotland

and England. He was busy with writing while he was still young, found his way into the company of congenial fellow poets, who were to form the nine-writer circle of the Pleiade, a landmark collection of writers who were to establish the modernity of the creative language of French. Ronsard was prolific in his writing, often by royal command. Working with that Pleiade group, but soaring ahead of most of the French poets of his time, Ronsard became a favorite of King Charles IX, and the top master of a Romantic poetry which increasingly resembles love poetry in the modern sense.



As in May month, on its stem we see the rose
In its sweet youthfulness, in its freshest flower,
Making the heavens jealous with living colour,
Dawn sprinkles it with tears in the morning glow:

Grace lies in all its petals, and love, I know,
Scenting the trees and scenting the garden's bower,
But, assaulted by scorching heat or a shower,
Languishing, it dies, and petals on petals flow.

So in your freshness, so in all your first newness,
When earth and heaven both honoured your loveliness,
The Fates destroyed you, and you are but dust below.

Accept my tears and my sorrow for obsequies,
This bowl of milk, this basket of flowers from me,
So living and dead your body will still be rose.

From the first stanza we enter a poetic world in which the poet and his theme adopt an intimate and sensuous inter-relationship; the sensuousness, of the rose 'making the heavens jealous,' of falling victim in freshness, to the Fates, the 'bowl of milk' as a loving resource, your capacity to be living and dead to me. To call this early modern is to say that the sense of art as performance has been modified by a new and frank acknowledgment that art is experience. That experiential cachet in the arts is part of the discovery of modernity, in poetry and painting. It would be naïve to say that a new 'realism' enters the art creating mind, with 'early modernity.' In a broad sense, though, that is what happens. Without minimizing the achievements of both ancient and mediaeval science, we recognize that by the sixteenth century there is an incremental growth of 'real-world' based adaptations of humanity to its environment: material constructions—roads, buildings, military hardware; medical know how, medical equipment; clothing and its styles; means of transportation; legal systems; empirical discoveries of and in the world at large—explorations, navigational accomodations; judicial innovations, and their growing relevance to real world social issues. It is within this framework of human development, which includes the corresponding growth of the imagination, that we begin to appreciate the change possible to the verbal form of the lyric.

P. 99. To Cassandre

Analysis. Ronsard, the brightest light of *La Pleiade*, a knot of highly talented poets who led brilliance of sixteenth century French literature. (Montaigne and Rabelais, near contemporaries, completed the picture, in prose that the French have never since rivalled.) The poem opens with a commonplace of Renaissance lyric, that the beauty of the beloved will fade like a fresh bouquet of roses. Time will slay the flowers, but time itself will not be slain, and will 'go on without us.' We will be left behind, under the tombstone, so let's make the most of our love while we can.

P. 99. To Helen

Analysis. By a perfect conceit, Ronsard fantasizes a time when his beloved will be old, sitting in her rocking chair by the fire, musing on the time when Ronsard praised her beauty, and made all heads turn. The fantasy continues in a blend of sad humor and remorse—for, as it appears, Helen spurned Ronsard when they were young, and the pair of them lost their opportunity for consummated love. By the time you grasp your dilemma it will be too late. I will be long since dead, 'buried in the shade of the myrtle overhead.'

Louise Labe.

P. 101**.** Kiss me again, again, kiss me again

Analysis. **Lik**e other talented Renaissance women writers, Louis Labe was of highly reputed beauty, immense versatility—she loved passionately, she fought, in disguise, with the French army, she was a widely read intellectual, an admired archer and horsewoman. In the poem before us, she rivals Catullus in her passion for the kiss, then goes on to enlarge her point. She must sally outside herself, in order to complete herself, and each of us, my lover and I, can grow by the addition of the other.

P 101. Oh, that I could be crushed to that dear breast

Analysis. The poet imagines the bliss of double encirclement, she in her lover's arms, he in hers, 'as the tree is by the ivy all embraced.' The poem turns on various senses of 'die' which in its Renaissance sense means 'to have sex.' To 'die willingly,' in Labe's perspective, is to 'die more than alive, contented.'

Bedford. Book 3.

P. 924. Life without Hari is no life, friend

Analysis. Mirabai (1498-1546) is devoted to Krishna, and lived in love with this deity, for whom she gladly sacrificed the expected duties of the upper class wife; she refused to pay homage, or even courtesy, to her mother-in-law, and from appearance—she had no children—she refused to take interest in her husband, a prominent warrior and ruler, to whom her marriage had been pre arranged by the families involved. Her talent was intense love poetry for Krisna, and in the expression of it she gladly sacrificed the demands of her class. 'How can I abandon the love I have loved in life after life'?

P. 925. Today your Hari is coming

Analysis. A spring time festival is on, in honor of the handsome young god, Hari Krishna, the all-supreme, trickster, compassionate, and passionate god. These lyric praises express the direct adoration of the deity. One has to think of the parallel between the god-devoted young woman and a religious version of an Emily Dickinson or Jane Austen, who were devoted heroines of the imagination-; Mirabai found her sacred zone in a daring love zone of the erotic-reiigious.

P. 925. The Bhil woman tasted them, plum after plum

Analysis. Mirabai tells of a simple woman searching for a gift worthy of her god expression, Ram, the emanation of Vishnu which overflows with virtue and chivalry. . The woman is poor and afraid she will find nothing worthwhile to offer, but she decides on the tastiest plum she can afford. She took a chance on the best plum she could find, and presented it as an offering to Ram.

This was a woman who loved the taste of love,
And Ram knows no high, no low.

Ram's response was joy.

Quick as a flash she mounted a chariot
And sped to heaven to swing on a swing

Tied by love to god.

It is a Hindu version of the tale of the widow’s mite, which appears twice in the Christian New Testament (Mark and Luke)

P. 926. I have talked to you, talked

Analysis. Mirabai wants her god, Krishna, to understand what kind of sacrifice she wants to make to him. She invites him verbally into the courtyard, where an ‘auspicious’wedding is taking place, and she announces to him, Krishna, that she—‘the servant who clings to your feet through life after life!-- offers to him her body and mind. The depth of her devotion palpitates through the rider, ‘through life after life,’ which removes from her proposal any element of the transitory, and plants her firmly inside the very being of the god.

P. 926. I donned anklets and danced

Analysis. Mira is mad, said the court people, when she ‘donned anklets and danced,’ proudly expressing the ardor proper to the worship of the noble, compassionate, but antic Krishna, who like Herakles in Greek tales was self-aware enough to take chances with his image. Her mother-in-law was scandalized, the King tried to poison her, but she drank his poison with a smile and was fine. At the feet of Hari she has all the protection she needs.

P. 927. Who can understand the grief?

Analysis. Is this romantic/erotic poetry, or is it spiritual poetry? The language of religious love often turns erotic, as the pathway to expressing the intensity of its love. The present poem is Mirabai’s declaration of love for Hari Krishna, which she generates by explaining the pain of his absence. What is she to do about this unbearable pain? It is not a positive condition but the absence of a positive condition. Is that the reason for the puzzling line, # 5,

The physician is present within the patient.

The remainder of the poem, in which we are waiting for the physician’s answer—either Hari? Or self-reflection?—bears no more comfort, for the poem pursues its bitter theme of absence and loss. The poet grows more uncompromising, in her insistence on her loss. After all, she is driven like a ‘mad cow roaming the forest,’ or Io, in Aeschylus, fleeing Hera’s vengeful pursuits.

P. 927. Shri Krishna has entered my heart

Analysis. The poet describes the surging storm inside her—clouds, thunder, terrifying lightening—as the god Krishna enters her heart.

Frogs croak, the cuckoo sings,
And the cry of the peacock is heard

Three different animal sounds are heard, in a chorus of excitement at the advent of the god. Nature and mortals are equally responsive to the pan-cosmic advent of the deity. To complete the obeisance of this poem,

My mind has gone to thy lotus feet

This is the proper spot for commencing a worshipful adoration of the god.

P. 928. Do not mention the name of love

Analysis. To her simple-minded companion, Mirabai requests that he (or she) should not mention the name of love, for when you offer your love your body is crushed at the first step, and there follow any number of dreadful consequences—you are beheaded, go mad, or suffer the self-destructive fate of various animals or birds. What can you do? 'Offer your mind to the lotus feet of the Lord Krishna,' in other words worship what is beautiful, lasting, and true and offer it to the source of power and beauty in the world.

P. 939. 'Oh God with matted hair,' she cried

Analysis. The girlfriend of the heroine of this pleading poem begs the god Shiva to have mercy on the poet/crier. In succeeding stanza she begs the divinity to pity the desire-enflamed heroine. The erotic touch of the god has made of this woman the object of slander, the victim of the diseases of love, and you have stripped her of her noisy bracelets. The defilation of the young worshipper lover, at the hands of this theological abuser, might turn the western critic to thoughts of Charles Baudelaire, and *Les Fleurs du mal*, a world in which love and violation are virtually synonymous.

P.941. Karma cannot touch

Analysis. Fatedness, impotence to modify your own destiny, in short karma, cannot touch those who know how properly to address the Lord of the gods, Krishna. The language of such adoration is a protective weapon against the reckless erotic spirituality of the god.

P. 942. An earring of bright new gold glows on one ear

Analysis. In the bhakti tradition of Indian love poetry it is a matter of received opinion that the deity is pan-erotic, readily assuming both female and male characteristics. As such the god wears the earrings conventional for both sexes, matted hair on one side, women's curls on the other. Are we not driven to recall the *Sonnets to Orpheus* of Rilke, tributes to the brilliant potential of the hermaphrodite.

P. 942. See the God!

Analysis. The believer is exhorted to see the god Shiva, who 'bathes in milk and ghee,' who wells up as honey In the 'heart-lotus of his lovers….It is hard to imagine a god more deeply plunged in the sensual existence of rich polytheism. The poem is both an admonition to observe—perhaps a visual representation of the god—and to worship that image. What is the 'unattainable treasure'? The lotus-heart of Shiva.

P. 943. The unholy town where no temple stands

Analysis. A brief and passionate defense of the value worship brings to civilization. In fact a town without temples, festive worship, sacred conches, sacred songs, sacred dances is a 'mere wilderness.' The bhakti tradition promotes fervor and intensity and the exaltation of the worshipper, and sacrifices all for the god Shiva.

P. 943. Why was I born

Analysis. The poet reflects on his past of indifference to the god Shiva, and repents of having ignored his duty to his fellow man, as well as 'my ambrosia, the world's beginning and end.' Now he berates himself for babbling like a fool, and having forgotten

That he was once a slave of past karma,
I failed to remember my Lord.

P. 944. Life Is an illusion

Analysis.

Life is an illusion
All things end in dust,
The sea of birth is a waste…
The body is a trap made of hunger and disease…

This indictment of the human condition compares potently to the world-evaluation of the Abrahamic religions, in the west. On Ash Wednesday in the Christian Catholic tradition, the worshipper is reminded that 'dust thou are and unto dust thou shalt return…' This severe admonition is accompanied, in the broader theology, by the exalting expectation of a post-life life, in which the dust is resurrected. The Hindu position is far more condemnatory toward mortal life, though the present poem urges us to 'do good deeds without delay.'

P. 945. I will think of the day on which

Analysis. The poet thinks of the day of his death, when his senses will fail, and he will be washed away in the cool waters of the Ganges.

Even if I should forget you, my tongue
Would still say 'Hail Shiva!'

Life itself is eternal praise to Shiva, and death will not remove that act of honoring the god.
P. 947. You can't just do

Analysis. A Kannada song to Shiva, all metaphor, no narrative. The grain of things is the path they take, and it cannot be modified. Interesting to note the agents of following the grain, in the present emission. You can't just do, but must follow the grain, and to go with it you cut or invite it to cut—to saw back and forth as it goes, to give the viper its head.

P. 947. Melt my mind, O Lord

Analysis. Shiva is invited to process the mind of the poet. He should hammer it out fine, and reduce to pure thin gold. (One thinks of John Donne's *Valediction forbidding Mourning).*

'like gold to aery thinness beat…')

The culture tweak, from Donne to Basavanna, comes in here. Donne wants his mind and that of his beloved to fuse in finesse. Basavanna wants Shiva to beat the fine gold of her mind into anklets, an exquisite product of art, like the golden earring worn on a Shiva worshipper in an earlier poem, page 942 above.

P. 948. Feet will dance

Analysis. The poet/worshipper is on fire with praise of the god—with her feet, her song, her tongue, her hands, and

I worship with full hands.

Violently enough, finally, what the worshipper wants is to burst the belly of her god, to enter Shiva; to become the deity himself. This daring longing builds on a fit of praises, mimes an oddity of the sex act, and extends the repertoire of loving acts inspired by the worship of Shiva.

P. 949. What of it that you have read so much?

Analysis. The true Brahmin is one who has deserved the name by his virtue and honor. His maturity does not depend on the amount he has read or can recall, but

He becomes a twice born by his deeds.

Religious traditions agree that what is in your heart is what you truly think and act on. Your god sees straight through into your heart. You cannot fool god.

P. 949. He'll grind you into tiny shape

Analysis. The poet/worshipper presents a purely sensual metaphorical proposition, a piece of theological science. You are meant to live on the granular level, in this thought, and to realize your preciousness to the god Shiva. You are meant to feel yourself being ground and rubbed. You are meant to be barely intelligible, and what you are, of the intelligible, is to be left entirely in the hands of Shiva.

P. 950. Mother, what news shall I tell?

Analysis. The woman informs her mother that her lord will have nothing to do with her, unless she washes completely, but that her lord has just made love to her, because she has satisfied the cleanliness demand; this woman is speaking, surely, about her supreme god, Shiva, and the state of her soul, which she needs to keep pure and ready for him.

P. 950 Like a silkworm weaving

Analysis. A sharp edged metaphor of the silkworm enables the poet to intimate how tightly he feels himself burning with love for the self he is within. He calls on his lord to show him the way out of the tight bind of his love, which he is prepared to call greed.

P. 951. He bartered my heart

Analysis. The woman in love with her god has sold out all to him, given her own pleasure to him as a tribute, stood by while he looted her flesh. As you read these short poems, do you wonder if there are other bhakti traditions, in which love of the supreme being (or beings) totally takes over the lover, conquering that lover absolute, and in the most intimate fashion? What about the Hebrew *Song of Songs*? What about the six millenia old Mesopotamian *Song of Inana*?

P. 951. Husband inside

Analysis. The lover is the outside seeking the woman within, while the woman within is preoccupied with the husband who is interior to her. Too much to handle. Penis and testicles, too much eros around and within her. Now I want to ask you another question. Is the erotic a self-evident key to the understanding of the relation of humans to the 'divine'? Is theology simply the working out of an infinitely rich bedroom drama?

P. 952. I love the handsome one

Analysis. The handsome one, the true god or lover

Has no death,
decay nor form,
No place or side…

rather he is white as jasmine, infinitely preferable to husbands who die and decay. As for them:

Feed them to your kitchen fires!

P 954. From Careless Krishna

Analysis. Radha, a p. ay and love mate for Krishna, is jealous of him, for he is a tease and a seducer. The refrain of this brief salute, from the twelfth century poet, Jayadeva, enforces the tone of Kirishna the god: as Radha felt her hold on her lover-God slipping, he enjoyed the more, twisting the strings of her envy:

My heart recalls Hari here in his love dance,
Playing seductively, laughing, mocking me…

Does it remind you of the playful, contentious, even joking interrelation of the gods in Olympus, in the always surprising second Book of Homer's *Odyssey*?

P. 955. From Bewildered Krishna

Analysis. Krishna is bewildered because he, after all a pancosmic god, is paying the penalty, with his divine girlfriend Radha, for having ignored and teased her.

Damn me! My wanton ways
Made her leave me in anger.

Greek and Hindu gods share a risky humanity, while remaining ultimate objects of worship. Would you explain this peculiarity, of the two great polytheisms, by the cultures in which they grow? Is there any element of 'divine laughter' in the Abrahamic religions?

P. 956. From Ecstatic Krishna

Analysis.

Narayana is faithful now. Love me Radhika

Krishna hammers in this refrain with a series of imprecations, that the goddess should give in to his love.

Throbbing breasts aching for loving embrace are hard to touch!
Rest those vessels on my chest! Quench love's burning fire!

Let emotion rise to a joyful mood of love in sensitive men!

The subtext, of course, is cosmic. This is the language of the fiery origins of the endless and infinite love that is the cosmogenesis we worship.

P. 960. There was a shudder in her whispering voice

Analysis. Radha, the ultimate faithful lover of Krishna, teeters on the brink of the divine love making, yet this night she is shy, and holds back as long as possible. In the end, while lifting her own skirt to cover her breasts, she leaves her genitalia open. The world is once more reconstructed.

P. 961. O Friend, I cannot tell you

Analysis. Krishna's lover speaks, expressing the dramatic immensity of being loved by the god:

I felt a river flooding in my heart
Like a shining moon,
I devoured that liquid face……

I could hear my ankle bells
Sounding like bees.
Drowned in the last waters of dissolution

I knew that this was not the end..

This was not the end, but the end of a world-cycle, at which point, after a wipe -out deluge, next world-cycle commences.

P. 961.   Her hair, disheveled

Analysis.   The poet, Vidyapati, creates a word picture of Radha's wanton face, at the height of lovemaking with Krishna, as she rides him aggressively in passion.

Her hair veils the beauty of her face
As evil shadows eat the glowing moon…

The world-sustaining act of intercourse assumes a sinister but prolific face, and sexuality 'comes out on top,' as the force that drives the world sweeps all resistance away.

P. 962.   When they had made love

Analysis.   Radha comes to after particularly intense love making, and finds Krishna gone. In fact though he is not gone, but she has tucked him in the fold of her sari, and cannot find him. She suffers instantly from the paradox of absent presence, the feeling that what is nearest you has disappeared.

P. 963   The marks of fingernails are on your breast.

Analysis. Love has been made. The two lovers yearn for identity with one another, and find that 'only their bodies are apart.'

But mine is light
And yours is dark.

We are sensuous magnetizers of one another.

P. 964. Let the earth of my body be mixed with the earth

Analysis.   Radha longs to be united with her lover, Krishna.

Let the fire of my body be the brightness
In the mirror that reflects his face.

Identity with the god may be sexual, or may be corporeal-spiritual. Hindu bhakti poems play out over a cosmic view of oneness, identity of creator with all created beings, and of all created things with one another. In ancient Greek philosophy, the monist Plotinus argued that all things are identical to each other, but that they differ only In degree of intelligibility. For the Hindu bhakti worshipper, there is ideally no intelligibility among expressions of the creator's world.

P. 964. How can I describe his relentless flute?

Analysis.   The poet-beloved is drawn to the 'relentless flute' of the god, as he plays his seductive tunes throughout nature. Once again a parallel with ancient Greek culture, and the music which Bacmchus and his band of night women brought crashing into the tight Creonian world of Pentheus. A conflagration of beauty seems the necessary prelude to the incandescent created world.

P. 965.   My mind is not on housework

Analysis.   The poet can think only of the love inspired in her by the god. As a follower of the totally free hip god, Krishna, she has been drawn away from all social approval.

He has bereft me of parents, brothers, sisters,
My good name.

In fact the simple bamboo flute has been the god's way of pouring poison into her veins.

P. 966. I brought honey and drank it mixed with milk

Analysis. I brought the sweetest of beverages but still the taste inside me was bitter gall. My heart is on flame within me, and though an external fire is visible—like a California wildfire—an internal fire of passion ls invisible and simply does its destructive work. That work is heat, for sure, but it is also bitterness, the bitterness of heat.

P. 968. Go naked if you want

Analysis. The poet Kabir was a relatively untaught, eclectic spiritualist, with a deep indifference for traditional erotic or philosophical perspectives, and a sense of the independence of each individual, in establishing his relation to God. The simple point of the present poem: there are no shortcuts to union with the divine; each of us must find his or her way.

P. 969. Pundit, how can you be so dumb?

Analysis. For Kabir, the supreme god, Ram, is all you need to know and carry with you, simply the one god presence that holds you together. Kabir feels content without sages or wisemen. Kabir says

You better go and lose yourself in Ram,
For without him, brother, you drown.

The pompousness and heavy learning of the wise men is intolerable!

P. 970. The river and its waves are one surf.

Analysis. The river and its waves are identical, as are the many worlds that are being told like beads within the Supreme Brahma.

Look upon that rosary with the eyes of wisdom

And you will find your way to peace. Forget about the distinctions among the many paths that lead the way to God. You have them all inside of you.
.
P. 970. I do not know what manner of god is mine

Analysis. Kabir writes from his Muslim foundations, and expostulates on the audibility to Allah of all that is audible in creation. The search for replies, to such questions as the above, will be fruitless unless you abandon your restriction to the rules and regulations of this or that cult, and realize that you hold in your hands a deadly weapon with which you are free to kill god.

P. 971. I don't know what sort of a god we have been talking about

Analysis. Back to theme of simplicity and purity in worship. Don't bother with the matted hair your cult expects of you, or the paint spots on your forehead, for if –as in fact is the case—you are carrying a loaded gun, with which to slaughter the Absolute, your fussy practice will do you no good.

P. 972 I laugh when I hear that the fish in the water is thirsty

Analysis. At first glance, yes, it might seem paradoxical that the fish might be thirsty, even though finding himself deep in the waters of the ocean. The fact is, though, that what we are deepest in might quite naturally be the central element in us. Our true salvation may well lie inside us, though we feel we have to travel many miles, to god knows how many shrines, before making this basic discovery.

NORTH AMERICA.

Anne Bradstreet

P. 114. A letter to her husband, absent upon public employment.

Analysis. Like John Donne, in his 'Valediction' poem, Anne Bradstreet stresses the inseparability of her and her husband, always and especially while he is 'absent on public employment.' While, in a sense, this lyric transports us into a semi 'modern' world—'away on business' seems in itself a descriptor belonging to the new commercial world of the late seventeenth century, not even to the turn of the century world of Shakespeare.

SECTION IV: **19^{TH} CENTURY**
(England – France - Germany – Italy – Russia – North America)

Bedford Book V

ENGLAND

William Blake.

P. 214. How sweet I roamed from field to field

Analysis. Note the rhymed tetrameter lines, which divide the poem into tightly self-enclosed quatrains. This is the metric Blake favors in his early *Songs of Innocence and Experience,* and in the present poem he almost convinces us that he is carrying us with him on a merry journey through the countryside. He is then entrapped by the prince of love, who imprisons him in a golden net, a silken cage. We are still puzzled by what seems a sunny experience, until we find out that the prison is for real and that the poet is a prisoner being mocked for his loss of freedom. The historical moment of the poet, l789, the date of the poem, is one of French Revolution and the abolition of slavery, themes crucial to the European consciousness of the time.

P. 215. To the Muses

Analysis. The same deceptively charming bubbles of sound, which lead us on from joy to dread in the previous poem, lead us here, too, to an inevitable sense of our loss of the greatness of the mythological world picture, with its power for inspiration. Blake's poems make apparent from the start that their creator deplores the heavy hand of materialism and industry, which dominate the spiritual climate of his own time.

P. 216. Introduction to *Songs of Innocence*

Analysis. The poet meets a child along the road, and is asked to pipe a merry song which will be a source of happiness for the children. At that the child piper vanishes, leaving a simple injunction:

Piper sit thee down and write
In a book that all may read…

Songs of innocence are thus written out for the child in each of us to love.

P. 217. The Lamb

Analysis. The lamb, the piper, the boy: who are the characters ?
who populate the surface of these apparently simple poems? They are simple offspring of the much more complex figure who offers us these poems, and who seems to be the master of their meaning. Only that deeper figure is able to ask the ultimate questions, like *who made you, lamb?* And only the poet can pose an answer, presumably 'Jesus Christ,' which fits the implications of the lamb in the poem.

P. 217. The Little Black Boy

Analysis. In the background one reads a surface of contemporary issues—colonialism, Englishness, the inner-outer inverse interrelationship of blackness and whiteness, the radiance latent in us all. Blake, a visionary and radiation lover, was only occasionally disposed to a Christian perspective, but, in all his fascination with his home grown mythography, he left room for a wide horizon of presence, in which values of many sorts could comfortably be inserted.

P. 218. The Chimney Sweeper

Analysis. We have to wait a little, til we are sure of the irony coming our way, but when it arrives! We may have thought the way had truly been cleared for chimney sweeps, that the black coffins, in which our narrator had entombed them, and from which an angel had freed them, were going to be freed

And wash in a river and shine in the sun.

Yet In the end, Mr. Blake, you have left us with small consolation, a world in which what we learn is that if you do your job and keep your mouth shut.

If all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

P. 219 Holy Thursday

Analysis. Once again Blake pillories the Christian pretence of love and mercy, and exhorts the believer to remain sensitive to pity 'lest you drive an angel from your door.' To note: while Blake is critical of the kind of anti-religious thinking prominent among the French Revolutionary ideology—Voltaire, Rousseau—he shares their irony, even cynicism, about the actual practice of Christianity in a time of revolutionary change.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

P. 220. Introduction

Analysis. The poet calls on the earth through its sacred singers, to return from its misty origins, and to embrace

The starry floor
And watery shore

Which are granted to us 'til the break of day.' The return of being through the dissipating mists is for Blake an 'originating' perception, digging far into the human consciousness of 'being here on earth.'

P. 220. Earth's answer

Analysis. The earth aspires to respond to the call of the Bard, to shake off primeval sleep and despair,

To break this heavy chain
That does freeze my bones around…
To free Love with bondage bound…

Blake is forever on the side of energy, of the dance of joy that lies latent among people in bondage. Of what other poet has it been said that he sang with joy on his deathbed?

P. 221. Holy Thursday

Analysis. A direct plea, in the face of the growing industrialization of labor, and the low age of laborers, for 'mercy on babes.'

Is this a holy thing to see
In a rich and fruitful land,
Babes reduced to misery,
Fed with cold and usurous hand?

The clash of rich land with poverty among its people is a chronic theme of Blake's poetry, and his contempt for the new world of capital is never hidden. He sees these evils with the eyes of vision and energy, rather than in those of the nascent political ideologies just enforcing themselves at his time.

P. 222. The Chimney Sweep

Analysis. Blake is at times ironical, at times furious. His bitterness is evident in the present poem.

A little black thing among the snow
Crying weep, weep, weep in notes of woe.

The chimney sweeper can borrow whiteness—always an angelic color for Blake—from the snow, but because they need his work money, his parents turn him over to the blackest profession, chimney sweeping, while they go to church and make sure all is right with the world.

P. 223. The sick rose

Analysis. The rose symbolizes purity in Christianity—the Virgin Mary is *rosa mystica*—yet it is in the rose that the deadliest cancer.

The invisible worm…has found out thy bed.

The Fall, the evil that floods *The Songs of Experience*, burrows into the heart of the rose. Would we reflect on the difference between the fall for John Milton and the fall for Blake? Step back a half century to the world of Cromwell!

P. 223 The Tyger

Analysis*.*

Tyger tyger burning bright
In the forests of the night…

Blake moves into his poems with total confidence. Who is speaking and to whom? It is the magisterial voice of a higher power, addressing an element of the world which is almost too hot to handle.

What the anvil, what dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

Only some

immortal hand or eye
could shape the fearful symmetry

of this fiery beast. Is this beast the fiery, dangerous, joy of universal being, latent always in the silence and peace of ordinary life?

P. 223. London

Analysis. A sickness as deep and internal as that of the Rose inheres in the streets of London, where the chartered streets and the chartered (privileged) river Thames are full and busy. Everywhere are ‘marks of weakness, marks of woe.’ Infants cry with fear, the chimney sweeps blacken the streets with the dirt of their trade, and even whores bring down their curses on new born babes, befouling the streets. It is Holy Thursday indeed.

P. 224. The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

Background. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* was composed between 1790-1793, shortly after *The Songs of Innocence and Experience,* continuous with the spiritual energy and ecstasy that mark the *Songs*. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is satiric, vitriolic, and prophetic—in the spirit of Old Testament prophets—‘The Prophets and Isaiah and Ezekiel dined with me…”—made of long, free, basically iambic lines, and giving Blake ample room to develop his favorite wisdom themes and points of acid conflict with his own time. His preferred whipping boy in argument is the Swedish visionary Emanuel Swedenborg, whose *Heaven and Hell* was published in 1758, and lays out—foolishly, in Blake’s view—the foundations of a prophetic vision of the senses and of the ecstasies that lie latent in them. Noteworthy: Blake accompanied the prophetic texts, of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, with his own engravings, so there is from start to finish, in the written text, a visual correlate which builds the whole as completely as does Blake’s language.

William Wordsworth

From *Lyrical Ballads*

P. 242 Expostulation and Reply.

Analysis. The poet invites the reader to consider a set of questions to a man, Wordsworh himself, who is just sitting on an ‘old gray stone’ not ‘doing anything.’

Why, William, sit you thus alone?

The questioner elaborates: why are you just sitting there, not reading, not enriching your mind with the thoughts people have consigned to books?

Up, up, and drink the spirit breathed
From dead men to their kind.

P. 243. The Tables Turned

Analysis. In which the sitter responds that we can read all we need or want to know in the book of nature, as it opens before us. (It is the same point established in the expostulation of the previous poem.) The secret of learning is in the ‘wise passiveness’ revealed to us through nature.

One impulse from a vernal wood
Can teach you more of man
Of moral evil and of good
Than all the sages can.

P. 244. I wandered lonely as a cloud

Analysis. The perfection of metrical simplicity—six line stanzas, iambic tetrameter lines, *ababcc*—a simplicity with virtually no variation, a child's romp of language, yet a fitting amplitude of percepts and concepts—an overall effect of the identity of the poet's soul with nature in the form of beauty. As often in Wordsworth, the deep point of a natural experience becomes apparent later, as in the present instance, when

They (the daffodils) flash upon that inner eye
Which is the bliss of solitude…

P. 245**.** Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey

Analysis. The pentameter lines, of this 169 line meditative poem, flow on seamlessly like the natural scenes of the Lake Country. The poet has returned to this rugged but verdant high country, deeply familiar to him. from childhood, after five years of absence.

He has returned with his sister Dorothy, to whom he speaks interiorly as though she was simply his own voice within him. His thoughts murmur over the rich maturity of nature, particularly of natural scenes to which he was once deeply present, but into which he finds himself once more absorbed. As he feels himself drawn back into this familiar mood of nature, the poet hears inside himself

The still sad music of humanity
Of ample power to chasten and subdue

After experience aplenty of the indifference of the bustling world, the poet finds himself hearing, once again

that all which we behold is full of blessings.

Nature has become for Wordsworth a living adage for the mediaeval words of Julian of Norwich:

That all shall be well, that all manner of things shall be well..

P. 249*.* Ode: Intimations of Immortality

Analysis*.* Wordsworth's Ode was written between 1802 and l804, and in some ways makes us think back to his 'Tintern Abbey,' for like that earlier work the Ode takes as his themes our presence in nature, our intimations of 'higher meaning' as we give ourselves passively to the disclosures of nature. (All these now familiar drawings of depth from nature were implicit in the poem 'Expostulation and Reply,' which we looked at above, and which came out on the side of the passive William, who just sat on a stone and let nature teach him in 'wise passiveness,' rather than turning to the books written for him by dead men.) Whereas 'Tintern Abbey' concentrated on the disclosures made to mad ankind by nature herself when we achieve 'wise passiveness,' the Ode before us is concerned with the development of the mind (or soul) after it enters the world, our world which is not really ours, but which glistens as it likes with moments of reminiscence of the 'original world' we come from. The Ode traces our path through the secular, as our remembrances of our true home flicker In and out, and by gradual accommodation to this state of affairs we develop within us the 'philosophical mind,' the mindset which grows skillful at tracking the cross over points at which we see heaven intimating itself. The mutual inter coherence of Wordsworth's nature poems takes us back, within the growth of the Romantic perspective, to the originary thinking of Blake, whose Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience played off against each other, like the blissfully fresh and the grizzeldly cynical in human world views.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

P. 260. Kubla Khan

Analysis. Both Blake and Wordsworth did some of their best poetic work from deep and free floating regions of their subconscious creativities. Blake not only descends into those regions—consider for instance his prophettic thinking, or his case for meditating on nature rather than reading books, but in individual poems like 'The Tiger,' he takes us into mysterious realms of presence and ecstasy, work of the mystic in Blake. Wordsworth takes us frequently into a fusion of mind with nature, from which he acquires insight into the structure of the created world. Coleridge works similar veins, and does so through boosters like laudanum, no stranger to higher culture in his time, on the wings of which he makes profound excursions into the depths of mystery; excursions we know in poems like *Kubla Khan* or T*he Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

Under laudanum Coleridge enters the decree of the l3th century Mongol Emperor, Kubla Khan, that a 'stately pleasure dome should be built'

Where Alph the sacred river ran

Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.

The poem tracks the descent of the adventurer, a man of mystery and an outsider,

For he on honey-dew hath fed
And drunk the milk of paradise.

What this wild eyed outsider found, on his descent,

Was a miracle of rare device
A sunny pleasure dome with caves of ice!

P. 262. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Analysis. The taste for exotic journeys, rare spiritual adventures, and unknown experiences thrives on the Colonial mentality in 19th century Britain. In the present long narrative lyric—the combination of genres is heady—Coleridge takes a mind dive as profound as Blake's into the meaning of innocence and evil, or Wordsworth's into the power to transform us latent in unspoiled nature. The Ancient Mariner recounts a tale in the course of which he meets, upon return from the South Seas, a wedding guest ready to hear him out. The Mariner has been far and experienced deeply, has come back to land deeper and wiser, and though the tale he recounts sounds eery to the wedding guest the mariner persists, until we realize that the whole voyage to the South Seas has been transformative for the Mariner. At the heart of his account, following on the stalling of the schooner, in the South Sea doldrums, lies the disastrous and unnecessary killing of an albatross by the Mariner, and the consequent foundering of the travel mission. From that point on, a transformative tale, relying on the Mariner's capacity to make amends, frames the narrative as a whole, as an escape from the jaws of death, into the more human climates of peace and self-understanding.

John Keats

P. 285. On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer

Analysis. Romantic genius takes over with this poem, Keats' first great success. Dining with a former teacher, he borrows Chapman's text for an overnight, is transformed by the 'world of Homer,' which he finds in Chapman's seventeenth century translation, and returns the next morning to his host. What translation of poetry can exceed the effect of this dated but brilliant Chapman? Keats' response manages to address Homer's genius, while addressing that of Chapman.

P 286. La Belle Dame Sans Merci: a Ballad

Analysis. This haunting poem, of 1820, picks up on a mediaeval poem by the fourteenth century French poet, Alain Chartier, and carries with that 'mediaeval' enchantment, to which the Romantic period often expressed its sympathy—as in domestic decoration, architecture, and clothing. The poem falls under the spell of

A lady in the meads
Full beautiful—a faery's child
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

It is the spell of this lady, who enchants the knight who addresses us from the outset, and who is 'alone and palely loitering,' that settles onto the poem, and leaves us feeling in the presence of narcotic language, and unmanning by sex.

P. 288. Ode to a Nightingale

Analysis. *La Belle Dame sans Merci* was able to enchant an armored knight, depriving him of all his powers, and leaving him a prisoner in the 'elfin grotto' where, at the end of the poem, 'no birds sing.' If any bird would have been able to sustain the life impulse, in that environment, it might have had to be Keats' nightingale, whose nature environment was the kind of muffled and lonely sadness in which a 'romantic immortality' was born. What else, after all, are we offered by Keats' nightingale:

Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird,
No hungry generations trod thee down…

A bird, this nightingale, which has so enchantingly sung the beauty of death that the poet himself has fallen for her, for the immortal in beautiful dying song.

P. 291 Ode on a Grecian Urn

Analysis. The still beauty of the painted figures on the Grecian Urn, exists somewhere on the margins of Keats' consciousness, where it is passing into a still quasi-immortal realm of beauty. It is in this kind of realm that Keats has exulted while enchanted by 'la belle dame sans merci' or while listening to the nightingale piping its otherworldly, yet still worldly, tones. These border passages, where the enchanted mind stretches out into realms of beauty…

Beauty is truth, truth beauty,
That is all ye know on earth
And all ye need to know…

are passages by which we follow the impulses of our nature into the finally beautiful world that has been created for. Keats is not about saying that imagination creates these luscious and powerful crossing points, but that imagination is a way of finding those states that
border on immortality and that await our discovery.
.
P. 293. To Autumn

Analysis. A portrait of a season, full with its fruits and possibilities. This time Keats places a model average human being at the center of the experience he is describing.

Thee sitting careless on a granary floor
The hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind

Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep…

The comatose condition, in which dream passes through beauty to union with its mysterious object—the nightingale, the belle dame sans merci, the Grecian urn—is here laid square in the middle of a painting, one of the realized fruits of time.

Alfred Lord Tennyson

P. 389. From *In Memoriam*

The poet, British poet laureate for most of the second half of the l9th century, wrote a long series of reflections on the life of his friend, Arthur Hallam. In these reflections Tennyson dwelt on the stirring issues of his day, a day when Charles Darwin's work had opened the floodgates of both religion and science, to widespread and intense social interest. *What is the meaning of human life*? became the question of the moment.

Edgar Allen Poe

P. 397   Sonnet—to Science

At the age of twenty, Poe, who will become a writer of bejeweled and ornate poetry, raises the question of the value and meaning of science. The present poem, written in 1829, reflects the same kind of questioning of science which we noted in the poem by Tennyson, above.

William Wordsworth

P. 670. The world is too much with us

Analysis. Wordsworth is not only at the center of the Romantic rediscovery of nature, but at the same time at the center of the modern discovery of the ills of materialistic society. The loss of nature, in fact, is the greatest penalty for our infatuation with the industrial and high capital; we forget the underlying spirit that drives even our impulse toward materialism.

FRANCE

Charles Baudelaire

P. 416.   To the Reader

Analysis. The first poem in *Les Fleurs du Mal* (*The Flowers of Evil*), published 1857, 'To the Reader' invites that reader to admit his or her complicity with the poet himself, as a fellow hypocrite, who is reluctant to admit his vices, his evil thoughts, and his scorn for his fellow man.

P. 418.   The Albatross

Analysis. A brilliant extended comparison: a magnificent high
flying ocean bird, which, when it falls onto the deck of a ship is a clumsy creature, barely able to walk, teased by the sailors; compared with the poet, himself a high flyer, who when he lands on the earth is the joke of the populace.

P. 419. Correspondences

Analysis.

Nature is a temple whose living colonnades
Breathe forth a mystic speech in fitful sighs;
Man wanders among symbols in those glades
Where all things watch him with familiar eyes….

Baudelaire was not immune to the Romantic world's perspective; onto the harmonies of nature to which, for example, we find Wordsworth so keenly sensitive. Baudelaire's nature, however, is sensuous and richly perfumed, a force that can grow ill.

P. 419. Hymn to Beauty

Analysis. Beauty is a rich composite of evil, sick sensuousness, and the ideal, the uncorrupted. Baudelaire's aesthetic is drenched with his powerful resistance to what came to be viewed as the neoclassical in art, the sculpture, architecture, and painting (Rubens) in which the ideal is prioritized. We see why poets of our own moment are likely to view Baudelaire as the 'first modern poet.'

P. 420. Her Hair

Analysis. 'Her hair' is that of a sexy and sultry lover's tresses, dark recesses of memory, both of other deep sensuous loves and of the exotic world 'out and over there,' on southern oceans and in mysterious Asia.

I'll plunge my head, enamored of its pleasure, in this black ocean where the other hides….

P. 421 Carrion

Analysis. Baudelaire's taste for the grotesque, the rotten, the revolting in nature and in human society, is carried to its limit here. A swollen corpse, rotting in the sun, tests the poet's capacity to characterize the spleen which he finds a constituent part of the world around us. The worst that lies ahead, for his own 'queen,' is no worse than this bloated corpse, which will end up feeding the maggots.

P. 423. Spleen

Analysis. The poet's cat, not to mention his mournful old loves, groans inwardly with the damp, lifeless fog settling down on the world, which is itself swamped with the bilious, splenetic mood of existence here on earth.

A wet log wrapped in smoke
Sings in falsetto to the wheezing clock…

P. 423. Spleen

Analysis. The individual, deep in depression we might say, on whom

Grief plants his black banner on my drooping skull…

becomes a standard bearer for the gloomy meaninglessness of the world, in which hope flutters directionless against the constricting walls. This is a true portrait of one optic onto the world Baudelaire brings to life—or is it to death?

P. 424. The swan

Analysis. The poet develops here a complex attitude toward the urban life in which he lives embedded. On the one hand he expresses a rare sympathy for those who are ground down by city life, and he settles on the exemplar of a swan, who had escaped his cage, and who was padding through city streets on his pathetic webbed feet. The poet groans at the wretched world he finds himself in, but at the time expresses an uncharacteristic pity for mankind, who must endure this world.

P. 426. The Voyage

Analysis.

To the child, in love with maps and pictures,
The universe is vast as his appetite.

Ah! How immense the world is by lamplight!
How small the world is in recollection.

This extraordinary long poem shows off the mature complexity of world view that marks Baudelaire's spirit. There is in us, he observes, a realm of pure desire—to travel, to learn, to discover--but that is not a drive toward the good or wise—or their opposites. It is the simple expression of the desire for pleasure and enjoyment.

A great many religions like our own. All scaling heaven…

GERMANY

JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) was born in Frankfurt, then with the success of his first novel, *Werther* (1774) he settled in Weimar. His close contact with the Duke of Saxe Weimar, by whom he was employed as a court administrator, led to his multi-sided life as a businessman, theater producer, scientist, and above all writer—of great world achievements like *Wilhelm Meister* and *Faust.* He died in Weimar at age 82.

What fun, dashing across the centuries of poetry, and especially when the selection field is as vast as it is here, where we must leapfrog over Marvell, Racine, Milton in order to reach the next of our four early modern selections. At the end, impossible but tempting, we will see what larger overviews we can manage, onto the lyric as a form and history of human expression—as we catch it at this moment. Meanwhile, we choose for third, of our early modern instances, the German polymath—scientist, poet, dramatist, statesman—Goethe. With him we come on a figure in touch with those cultural revolutions destined to mark the full blown early modern, and to usher in the first developments of the industrial modern world. With Goethe—and we see it nowhere more vividly than in the present poem—we are on the cusp of Revolutions, of saviors of mankind who will use their reason to protect the human race, saviors like the Prometheus whom Zeus expelled from the skies, and nailed to a rock in the Caucasus. This savior will continue to act as a shield against the vengeful pursuit of Zeus, and will continue to do what he can, to back up his scorn for the Olympians, and his determination to further the arts and sciences of humanity.

Prometheus *(1819)*

Cover your heaven, Zeus,
With cloudy vapours,
And test your strength, like a boy
Beheading thistles,
On oaks and mountain peaks;
Yet you must leave
My earth alone,
And my hut you did not build,
And my hearth,
Whose fire
You envy me.
I know nothing more paltry
Beneath the sun than you, gods!
Meagrely you nourish
Your majesty
On levied offerings
And the breath of prayer,
And would starve, were
Not children and beggars
Optimistic fools.
When I was a child,

Not knowing which way to turn,
I raised my misguided eyes
To the sun, as if above it there were
An ear to hear my lament,
A heart like mine,
To pity me in my anguish.
Who helped me
Withstand the Titans' insolence?
Who saved me from death
And slavery?
Did you not accomplish all this yourself,
Sacred glowing heart?
And did you not – young, innocent,
Deceived – glow with gratitude for your deliverance
To that slumber in the skies?
I honour you? Why?
Did you ever soothe the anguish
That weighed me down?
Did you ever dry my tears
When I was terrified?
Was I not forged into manhood
By all-powerful Time
And everlasting Fate,
My masters and yours?
Did you suppose
I should hate life,
Flee into the wilderness,
Because not all
My blossoming dreams bore fruit?
Here I sit, making men
In my own image,
A race that shall be like me,
That shall suffer, weep,
Know joy and delight,
And ignore you
As I do!

Analysis. The poem itself develops after a simple pattern, as a peroration by the rebellious Titan against the inhuman, even anti-human fact of mortality. Look how various are the narrator' options available to the lyric poet: the elder statesperson of Solon….and, in a different register Goethe; the enraptured and timorous lover, Sappho; the compassionate and humane dweller in time, like Martial; the ethereal and soul entrusting locutor like Boethius, Augustine, or Donne. Goethe impersonates the proud Prometheus, whose only flaw is to have stood up for mortals—giving them fire and the arts of civilization. Goethe masters his impersonation of Prometheus, who tells us of his innocent early confidence in the gods, surrogate parents, then of his wising up, trusting his own 'sacred glowing heart,' on which he had relied for courage in the past, then expatiating on his pride in humanity, for which he will fight to time's end.

Heinrich Heine

P. 321. A spruce is standing lonely

Heinrich Heine, who lived and wrote through the first half of the nineteenth century, was a poet and activist, with a livewire contentious mind that kept him deeply involved with those same issues -- Revolution, freedom, national independence—which preoccupied Wordsworth, Blake, and Shelley. In his earlier poetry Heine gave a Romantic tweak to these social-political issues which. were sweeping the

Europe of the time. In the present poem he embraces the stark spirit of polarity and inversion, dynamics of the political process, and material, as it turns out, for many of the songs written and based on Heine's early poetry.

P. 322. The Grenadiers.

Analysis. Heine puts himself dialogically into the minds of two French grenadiers, who are returning from the wars in Russia, which saw the colossal defeat of the French, and capture of their leader, the Emperor Napoleon. We read into the loyal minds of the defeated, who, though their master has been sent into exile, will believe up to and beyond the grave, that Napoleon will forever be their Emperor.

P. 323. The Minnesingers

Analysis. A snapshot of the mediaeval poetry contests, in which two poets compete, powerfully in the ideal, for the love of a lady they will never. The power of art is central here, and the power and beauty of fidelity like that the Grenadiers devoted to their Emperor.

P 324. The Lorelei

Analysis. A seductress maiden, as evil as she is beautiful, watches from the cliffs of a mighty river, until a distracted boatman, making the rocky curve, catches sight of her and cannot pay attention to the fatal rocks which will, and do, crush his ship. How dangerous is beauty!

P. 325. The Silesian Weavers

Analysis. A simple ballad, set squarely in the originating years of German Marxism, and celebrating the indifference of the German weaver-employers to their voiceless laborers. The refrain 'we're weaving, we're weaving' lends the musical ballad a dooming and agonized tone.

P. 327. The Slave Ship

Analysis. All the fury of William Blake, against the hypocrites of capitalism, the employers of chimney sweeps, the pious greedy of Holy Thursday, all this vitriol, teased into ballad form, gushes into Heine's savage portrayal of slave ship business. The captain of the slave ship, and the ship's physician, calculate profits (and losses) while the slaves dance on shipboard, not far from the hungry mouths of the passing sharks.

P. 331. The migratory rats

Analysis. A blunt and vicious satire on the predatory rats of capitalism, who are everywhere, foaming at the mouth and assaulting us in droves. The poet thinks he will not much longer be able to keep them away from his door.

P. 333. Morphine

Analysis. Heine's fake benign account--as his own life fades away-- of the reasons why sleep and death compete for the most effective way to ease us out of life. Conclusion: sleep is good, death better (more 'stern' and 'aristocratic'), but the best, as the Greek poet Theognis said, is never to have been born.

ITALY

GIACOMO LEOPARDI

The conclusion of the early modern period may be benchmarked by the life and work of the brilliant Italian poet, Giacomo Leopardi, 1798-1837, who was both an ardent defender of the new, post Napoleonic Italy, at the brink of the nineteenth century, and at the same time a learned appreciator of the world of classical literature and learning, and, relevant to the thematics of this survey, of a naturally neoplatonic bent—without in the least turning away from the new science of his day, or the issues of the new world forming inside new Europeans of the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the work of this poet-philosopher we find, as in the poem below, incalculable variations on the theme of romantic love, which has palpably haunted several of the poets now familiar to the present survey, and which is a rich portal into the multiple perspectives opening out from our steps into the ‘modern world.’

To His Lady. (1823)

Beloved beauty who inspires
love in me from afar, your face obscured
except when your celestial image
stirs my heart in sleep, or in the fields
where light and nature's laughter shine more lovely—
was it maybe you who blessed
the innocent age called golden,
and do you now, blithe spirit,
fly among men? Or does that miser fate
who hides you from us save you for the future?

No hope of seeing you alive
remains for me now,
except when, naked and alone,
my soul will go down a new street
to its unknown home. Already at the dawn
of my dark, uncertain day
I imagined you a fellow traveler
on this arid ground. But there's no thing
that resembles you on earth. And if someone
had a face like yours, in act and word she'd be,
though something like you, far less beautiful.

In spite of all the suffering
fate decreed for human time,
if there were anyone on earth
who truly loved you as my thought depicts you,
this life for him would be a blessing.
And I see clearly how your love
would lead me still to strive for praise and virtue,
as I used to in my early years.
Though heaven gave no comfort for our troubles,
yet with you mortal life would be
like what in heaven leads to divinity.

In the valleys, where the song
of the weary farmer sounds,
and when I sit and mourn
the illusions of youth fading,
and on the hills where I recall
and grieve for my lost desires
and my life's lost hope, I think of you
and start to shake. If only I, in this
sad age and unhealthy atmosphere,
could keep hold of your noble look; for since the real thing's
missing I must make do with the image.

Whether you are the only one
of the eternal ideas eternal wisdom
refuses to see arrayed in sensible form
to know the pains of mortal life
in transitory spoils,
or if in the supernal spheres another earth
from among unnumbered worlds receives you
and a near star lovelier than the Sun
warms you and you breathe benigner ether,
from here, where years are both ill-starred and brief,
accept this hymn from your unnoticed lover.

Analysis. The author goes for the jugular, our curiosity; we enter the work feeling we know this blithe spirit from yore, in a thousand expressions, and most touchingly in such gracious work as we have seen before, and that European love poetry seems founded to showcase. (Whitehead's observation, that western thought is a series of footnotes on Plato, applies magisterially to the tradition which celebrates female spirituality.) The more we read in this (loosely named) neo platonic tradition of *adoratio mystica feminae,* the more diverse the signals we find ourselves receiving. Is the woman of beauty, we ask, a real woman transformed, is it the spirit of women, on occasion consenting to appear to mortal eye? And then what is the mystery of a future which may (or may not?) be reserving the clarification of these mysteries.?

The poem above, though clearly alluding to the approach of death—Leopardi lives his whole life under the shadow of serious ailments, from near blindness to Pott's disease—helps clarify a central question: the lady pursued here will never be realized in a 'real person,' and the poet (and all of us) may have to await death before this lady appears to us. The chances of finding this lady on earth are minimal, but her reality is not thereby lessened, for her spirit may well pervade the astral intersections of the universe itself. Leopardi, appropriately enough, was enthralled by that universe, having from youth on been a fervent student of astronomy and celestial math, a devotee of the real-world actualities we began to discuss, in connection with the poem of Ronsard with which we opened this section. Bertrand Russell, one of the masters of math and science in the twentieth century, observed that 'I consider Leopardi's poetry and pessimism to be the best expression of what a scientist's credo should be.'

Prospect. The larger frame, in which to view Goethe's fascination with the creative power of man, and new forms of imagination accompanying that power, is what was to become the movement of Romanticism, which stamped its mark on so much of the finest lyrical work produced in Western Europe during the first half of the nineteenth century. Inside such a frame we might well slip the preceding poem, by Giacomo Leopardi, which though far from 'revolutionary'—in fact as archaic as Saint Augustine, in his search for the true beauty within—gives free rein to imagination in a manner hardly discovered to this point in European sensibility.

This ambitious point, resting at this stage on the limited evidence of the present essay, could be enlarged ad libidem as we take our discussion over the borders of the nineteenth century. We will by that point, in Leopardi, still be arguing ourselves into the Neoplatonic of Donne or Augustine, but with a subtle and intensely passionate extension of sensibility. We will be hearing echoes of surrounding voices—Blake, Shelley, Wordsworth, Gerard de Nerval, Novalis—for whom the new climates of nineteenth century culture are bracing. Wordsworth's *Prelude* (1850) will be reminding us that 'nature hath ample power to chasten and subdue,' that we have a deep hidden ally in the natural landscape. William Blake's 'How sweet I roamed from field to field' (1783) will open the boundaries of that Nature Wordsworth frees in us—

How sweet I roamed from field to field
And tasted all the summer's pride,
Til the prince of love beheld,
Who in the sunny beams doth glide.

He shewd me lilies for my hair,

And blushing roses for my brow.
He led me through his gardens fair
Where all his summer roses grow.

With sweet May dews my wings were wet
And Phoebus fired my vocal rage;
He caught me in his silken net,
And shut me in his golden cage.

He loves to sit and hear me sing,
Then , laughing, sports and plays with me
Then stretches out my golden wing,
And mocks my loss of liberty.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the close working companion of
Wordsworth, will invite us into zones where we have nothing to support us
But imagination

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure dome decree,
Where Alph the sacred river ran
Through caverns measureless to man.

Is it not our prospect here, as we enter the portals of the nineteenth century, with its suggestions of bold new poetic climate, that we should at the same time be discovering great fresh poetry, *and* the social, economic, and cultural changes that shape and abet that poetry. Is it not in fact true, that an art like poetry is generated and inspired by the social conditions that surround it?

Another question of equal difficulty intrudes at just this point, as we slip into the modern period. What is the nature of tradition in lyric poetry? Is there a continuous thread running through European poetry? Does it run from Archilochos to Leopardi and on…and on? Is this thread a recognizable correlate of developments in the material social world? Or is the lyric a constantly self-rearranging mode of expression, which picks up the meanings of one period after another, reflecting back the always changing present?

RUSSIA

Alexander Pushkin

P. 339. The Bronze Horseman

Analysis. Composed in l833, this dramatic narrative poem stretches our mind to an evaluation of two distinct types, the visionary Emperor (Peter the Great) and the small clerk in the unpitying big city environment, the world of St Petersburg, initially the visionary achievement of Peter the Emperor. This ample narrative, depicting the extremes of the new ‘grand city’ of the modernizing Russia, leaves us to form our own opinions about its meaning. Do we pity the clerk, who is ground down by his pathetic status in the machinery of what are becoming ‘modern times,’ or do we think in awe of the creative genius of Peter the Great, and his movement of society toward ‘the modern.’

NAMERICA 5

African American Folk Songs

P. 806. Go Down, Moses

Analysis. The words before us are simple—and were often rendered to singing of the highest quality, of international admiration—but in their simplicity are loaded, too. We are intended to hear, inside the injunction to Moses to 'go down' from Egypt, the implication that the song-hearer should emulate Moses by going North and thinking about taking the Underground Railway.

P.809. Deep River

Analysis. We have seen the hidden meaning of Go Down, Moses; similar coding breaks out in Deep River, where the river in question has more than one meaning—the River Jordan, over which Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt; the river in which Jesus is baptized by John the Baptist, in the Christian New Testament; the Ohio River, which separated the South from the North of the United States. To deep bass tonalities, texts of this layering could be of the highest persuasion.

P. 810. Follow the drinkin' gourd

Analysis. The 'drinkin gourd' is the Big Dipper, in the sky, a guide to the North Star—the direction for escape from the south through the underground railway. The codes in these texts are obvious enough, for the enslaved listener, but may well have passed under the slavemasters' radar.

P. 810. Sometimes I feel like a motherless chile

Analysis. This spiritual looks ahead to the blues and to later folk music. An expression of total need.

P. 811. Hold on!

Analysis.

Keep your hand on a dat plow!

The refrain, which stamps the song as a work song, itself part of the
laboring process, morphs onto the religious-spiritual plane—Noah, Sister Mary—as part of a Biblical exhortation to endure.

P. 812. John Henry

Analysis. John Henry seems to have been a 'real African American man,' whose job at hammering into the rock face of a mountain—perhaps in West Virginia, just after slavery ended —required enormous strength, in fact so much strength that he outperformed a steam drill operator in penetrating rock for the tunnel construction. The challenge was too much for John, who died after beating his opponent. He remained a legend, though, multiply fed into the larger picture of Afro- American strength and endurance.

N AMERICA

Walt Whitman

P. 882. Song of Myself

Analysis.

I too am untranslatable,
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

The portion of *Leaves of Grass* (1855) which is *Song of Myself* , is rightly called 'Whitman's epic.' The ambition and the execution are epic, although the poet's manner of construction is on the whole detailed. Whitman is a friend of catalogues—of the marvelous given things of the world, the things we are, eat, do, think, fear, love, hate, you name it—and above all of such things as poetry, which are the record of our praise of being here. You see why he is untranslatable? He is himself a translation of what is here.

P. 897. Passage to India

Analysis. The epic spirit of Whitman's soul is given free rein in his *Song of Myself*, though primarily in its self-subsistence, not in its expansion into history. In 'Passage to India' Whitman celebrates the explosion of human historical advance, with special attention to the completions of The Suez Canal and the trans-Pacific railroad in Utah, both huge moments of human development, and both of them achieved in 1869. From these achievements Whitman fortified his sense that humanity was en route to establishing a growing oneness, and was beginning to foresee the indescribable power ahead of it.

P. 906. Facing West from California's shores

Analysis. Again, Whitman reaches out beyond the western shores of America, in his quest to find the origins of civilization in the. 'mysterious east.' India is the true cradle of the human adventure. But something in the final query of the poem leaves us uneasy. Has the poet been able to relate his Eastern discovery to his understanding of what it is to be American?

Emily Dickinson

P. 911. I know that He exists

Analysis. Dickinson kept her poetry out of sight, worked quietly in her upstairs bedroom, and even when she wrestled with 'the big issues' took a delicious pleasure in mystery and indirection. She believes in the existence of God, but not necessarily of a kindly god—for why would a kindly god rob us through death? Is he a burglar or banker?

P. 912. I never lost as much but twice

Analysis. Two previous deaths pained the writer as greatly as the one driving the present terse quatrains. Though she has been impoverished again, by the old burglar in the sky, she hopes she will once again be saved by the advent of angels.

P. 912. A Narrow Fellow in the Grass

Analysis. The devil plays in the grass, disguised as the quintessential slithering serpent, aucker for bare feet, and Houdini-quick escapes. The poet is rapier sharp in portrayals of nature at work.

P. 913. Split the Lark—and you'll find the Music

Analysis. The sceptic will insist on dissecting the lark, to make sure that the music is in that breast. He cuts the breast open, to explore the truth of the matter. He has to take the bird's life, in order to believe that the music was in it; but by that time the music is gone.

P. 913. In winter in my room

Analysis. Alone in her winter room the writer comes on a gentle worm, which morphs into

A snake with mottles rare

Which grows in rage and nightmarishness until it forces the dreamer awake.

P.914. They shut me up in prose

Analysis. To be shut in prose means to be 'made still,' to be put in a closet, but in fact the active mind, which we are, will not be quieted. Think of Emily's counterpart, Walt Whitman. Don't they share a similar kind of fierce inner life?

P. 915. Much madness is divinest sense

Analysis. Public opinion determines whether a person is sane, or mad. The criterion is , from the public standpoint, whether or not you conform to society's expectations. Emily D. herself will have been the best example of her point, honest to the point of shocking, reclusive to the point of blaring directness.

P. 915. I like a look of agony

Analysis. Death is the true test of honesty. No fooling around, there. With a tweak the poet, here, might be an African adage -moulder, chiseling wisdoms out of hard rock.

P. 915. Wild-nights—wild Nights

Analysis.

Might I but moor—Tonight—
In Thee.

A very explicit love poem, or a cry for excess, in which the truth has no place to hide? Like the hidden away dreamer-artist, Emily D. burns with the sharpest demands on passion.

P. 916. My Life had stood—a loaded gun

Analysis. The gun comes into its own, in this poem, only when its limitations are clarified, at the end. The gun has been able to kill, thus protecting its master, but it is itself paradoxically lifeless.

P. 917. The Soul has bandaged moments

Analysis. 'Some ghastly fright' lies behind the dread and horror which are constituent elements of the life of the soul.

The soul has moments of escape…
She dances like a bomb, abroad,
And swings upon the Hours…

Moments of escape, moments of facing the Horror of Life.

P. 918. Success is counted sweetest

Analysis. The loser knows the sweetness of the victory which did not become his own. To win is bland. For this poet, as for a tragedian like Aeschylus, there is no wisdom—or joy—without suffering. Now we have a contrast to Whitman.

Bedford V India

Ghalib (1797-1869)
P. 965. How murderous is the false faith of the rose!

Analysis. The premier modern poet of Urdu, Ghalib, was brought up as a privileged Muslim child in colonial India, and throughout his life, which was later filled with all manner of financial insecurities, he moved among the educated and creative. His poetry, the greatest of which was created while he was still in his early twenties, proved to be a shining instance of the *ghazal*, a couplet-based string of pearls—three to seven couplets by ghazal, with an accordingly complex rhyme scheme.

The ghazal before us, a hypnotic address to the moods and tones and ideal potentials of the rose, presents the archetypal ghazal, in which the linkage of couplet to couplet is more nearly auditory-mnemonic than conceptual.

P. 966. The happiness of the drop is to die in the river

Analysis. The present poem embodies the exquisite moments of transience, for instance just that sense of passing away or through, that the drop feels as it dissolves into the river. (Note the succeeding couplets only loosely insert themselves into this reigning theme; *although the way they insert is the whole name of the game*.)

P. 967. Waterbead ecstasy: dying in a stream

Analysis. In the present (Fitzsimmons) version of the poem 'the happiness of the drop,' the ghazal has been left relatively rough/literal, as in the treatment of the greening of the mirror. Each translation of these evanescent poems is distinctive.

P. 967. The drop dies in the river

Analysis. A much different version of the ghazal. No attempt is made to preserve the couplet structure, the rhyme scheme, or the mirror polished in the wind. Does it work? Is thia attempt at contemporary American poetry useful, pleasant?

P. 968. When the sky clears

Analysis. The ghazal is formally mimed, but does either the exquisite tension of the first couplet of the poem, or the visual discovery of the last couplet come through?

P. 969. Why didn't I shrink in the blaze of that face?

Analysis. A brilliant love poem—note especially the third couplet—using the suggestion of a ghazal in order to drain rare English out of the structure.

P. 969. Is it you, O God?

Analysis. The western reader of Rich's brilliant translations benefits from her fairly explicit couplet-linkages—mirror-speck of dust; nightingale-desire—but loses, obviously, some of the inherent and fascinating 'foreignness' of the ghazal.

P. 970. It is a long time since my love stayed with me here

Analysis. Note the effective use of 'again' as a linkage word. What do you think of the final couplet? Does it seem inappropriately drawn from the Romantic playbook of the West?

P. 970. There are a thousand desires like this

Analysis. The point is clear. But translations of the ghazal must be multi factorial, and in particular attentive to rhyme and repetition. Should this translation have gone farther in those directions?

P. 971. Don't skimp with me today

Analysis. Editor's opinion: the translator reaches out, here, for a blend of the ghazal, with its many strictures, and the looser, less metrical and more fluid translation; a blend striving to enrich the western aural tolerance, without overstraining it. A success?

P. 972. A Lamp in a strong wind

Analysis. To some degree the translations we are reading press the ghazal toward the condition of intelligibility—western style. That pressing minimizes the role of formalities in the construction of the lyric. Do we appreciate this gesture toward what we have come to call 'blank' or 'free' verse?

P. 972. The Sword Wound

Analysis. A cruel 'she' emerges at the center this poem, but the nature of her glance is deftly deflected onto issues of sword and knife play. The lover looks dangerous. But then, the poem concludes, danger is part of the affair. Does the translation conclude with a western-recognizable flow, in which metrical and iterative jamming are reduced to the minimum?

SECTION V: **20TH CENTURY**

(England - France – Germany - Poland – Russia –Spain- China – Japan – Arabia - North America - Latin America – Africa)

Bedford Book 6

EUROPE

ENGLAND

Rudyard Kipling

P. 104. The White Man's Burden

Analysis. The tight packed stanzas, and obsessive rhymes, are evidence of Kipling's cultural assurance, and overconfident attitude toward the 'less developed cultures' of the world, in his own time of high colonialism. The assumption was widespread, among the peoples of Western Europe and the United States in the nineteenth century, that the cultures of Africa and (often) Asia were sharply inadequate, and could not get by without the white man's aid and superior experience.

William Butler Yeats

P. 188. The Lake Isle of Innisfree

Analysis. Echoes of Wordsworth are unmistakeable here, both in the earlier poet's meditations on nature and in his frequent complaint that 'the world is too 'much with us,' that complaint with which Yeats completes the present poem. The poem to Innisfree is written 'on the roadway,' or 'on the pavement grey,' which to the young Yeats are perfect images of urban ugliness.

P. 189. Who Goes with Fergus?

Analysis. The legendary Irish poet and philosopher, Fergus, is set up here as a model to follow, not only for his spiritual pursuits, but for his decision to spend the last part of his life in the woods, in seclusion. We see Yeats closing in on his own preferences for art and aesthetic as maximal reaches for the human mind.

P. 190. Easter, 1916

Analysis. The 1915 uprising against Colonial Britain, which brought together Irish nationalists and many of Yeats' ultimately dearest friends, provoked the poet to declare absolute fidelity to the kind of political determination shown by the uprising. The repetition of

A terrible beauty is born

adds fierce power to Yeats' testimony, as does the fact that most of the committed men and women, in the uprising, were executed.

P. 193. The Second Coming

Analysis. The Second Coming suggests the Biblically based, and throughout Christianity much formulated, belief that Jesus will return to earth again, after his death. Yeats lays a dire reading onto this piece of theology, predicting that after twenty centuries human history is in fact about to explode irnto a destructive second coming—think Hitler, Stalin, Hiroshima, planet destruction —which will threaten the existence of our history as a species.

What rough beast, its hour come round at last
Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?

P. 194. Sailing to Byzantium

Analysis. In his sixties, when Yeats was beginning to give up on his nationalist hopes for Ireland and his personal hopes for a politically influential life, Yeats consigned to Byzantium his dreams of a city of ancient and multiple cultures— 'monuments of unageing intellect'-- artistic to the fingertips, in which the freedom conferred by art was foremost. Yeats feels, in the durability of Byzantium, today's Istanbul, a remedy for his own aging.

P. 195. Leda and the Swan.

Analysis. As in 'The Second Coming,' Yeats comes again, in this poem, to predict the dreadful twentieth century mankind is preparing for itself. The present poem shapes such an argument by anchoring it in a seminal event of ancient Greek mythology, in which Zeus builds historical disaster by raping Leda, who was to be the mother of Helen of Troy and Clytemnestra, dire factors in the Trojan War, and in the House of Agamemnon; a rape fraught with disaster for all order, and an active reminiscence of the 'rough beast' we saw slouching toward Jerusalem in 'The Second Coming.'

P.196. Among School Children

Analysis.

A sixty year old smiling public man…

Yeats describes himself, as he walks through the classroom of young children. His mind is on his own aging, the pathos of imagining what he was like as a youth, and of what he is reduced to now. He imagines the dreams and hopes that fill the minds of the youngsters before him, and his own entrapment now in the world of ideas and self-reflection, which cuts him off from the beauty of oneness with his original nature. We can compare Wordsworth's Intimations of Immortality,' with its discussion of the older 'philosophic man,' and the insights that man gains, into the original nature he once was.

P. 199. The circus animals' desertion

Analysis. As in 'Among School Children,' Yeats shows his sensitivity to aging, and is driven by it to consider the major themes of his life, reviewing them in terms of narratives from Irish cultural history. He regrets, surely, that he did not always take the path of effect and influence.

Players and painted stage took all my love
And not those things that they were emblems of.

For all his struggles at understanding what he has been, the poem must ultimately lie down with the rest,

In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart.

Wilfrid Owen

P. 514. Dulce et decorum est

Analysis. The title, *Noble and Sweet it is to die fighting for one's country,* introduces the bitterest, most pitiless account in poetry, of the destruction of human beings as they return home from war: ragged, maimed, blind, hopeless, and filthy.

The children ardent for some desperate glory will feel nothing but horror, as they watch these progenitors stumble home destroyed.

P. 515. Anthem for doomed youth

Analysis. A requiem for the young men who have fallen in the war. The only music befitting their demise is the

Shrill demented choirs of wailing shells…

P. 515 Strange meeting

Analysis. The poet descends into a subterranean tunnel, ‘some profound dull tunnel’; he comes on dead men, and one in particular who turns to speak with him:

By his dead smile I knew we stood in hell…
Now men will go content with what we spoiled…

The response of the poet to the dead man:

I am the enemy you killed, my friend…
Let us sleep now.

Isaac Rosenberg

P 517. Returning, we hear the larks

Analysis. As one of the survivors of the Great War, Rosenberg pays a moment of attention to a moment of remission, when, larks have descended over the camp with their charmed song. Rosenberg greets the song with joy, but remains wary—

Death could drop from the dark
As easily as song,
But song only dropped…

But the next time?

P. 518. Dead Man’s Dump

Analysis. The poet is in a dump vehicle for (in this case) conveying and then throwing out enemy corpses. A gruesome scene unfolds, played out by the writer, who can feel the flesh and bones being crushed below him, and can feel the lives turned to dust and powder.

Burnt black by strange decay
Their sinister faces lie
The lid over each eye…

GERMANY

Rainer Maria Rilke

P. 252. Autumn Day

Analysis.

Who has no home now will not build him one, says Rilke of *autumn*, building into the Keatsian version of Romantic melancholy an existential dread—of loneliness, isolation—which is picked up by the image of homelessness, and of 'writing long letters' to friends and acquaintances who are inevitable marks of one's separation from all that is familiar and comfortable.

P. 253. The Panther

Analysis. Rilke was fascinated by the life animals lead within them, by 'in-seeing' through which we can reconstruct the world the animal lives in. From this perspective Rilke reconstructs in language the world of the panther, whose silent sleekness makes him seem dangerous—because we fear him, rather than knowing him. His world seems to consist of

a thousand bars, and behind the bars, no world.

P. 253. Archaic torso of Apollo

Analysis. The dazzlingly compact inwardness to himself, with which the archaic god-torso presents itself, is both radiant and sexual, resembling the intense impaction of the panther. (Note that the statue's skin stone 'glistens like a wild beast's fur.') The amazement of the poem is in the injunction attributed to it at the end:

you must change your life…

No place in this transparent work of marble does not see you, charging your attention, setting you on fire.

P. 254. Leda

Analysis. Unlike Yeats, for whom Leda and the swan in interwove at an historically critical moment, opening multiple tragic events, starting with the Trojan War, Rilke reduces the history of the famous rape to the question of the rape itself, to the nitty gritty of a divine mortal rape. Zeus the divine rapist became 'swan in her lap,' unrejectable.

P. 254. The Buddha in the Glory

Analysis. A salute to a Buddha statue outsisde his window. With awe the poet observes the figure expand until it fills the cosmos. The Buddha becomes something which

Longer than the suns shall burn.

As with the archaic statue and the panther, Rilke practices his penetrative 'in-seeing' on the statue of a god whose figure aspires to align in meaning, with the universe itself.

P. 255. The First Duino Elegy

Analysis. Rilke develops the fabric of daily being here on earth, and in our position vis a vis death and the ongoing life of history. He explores the relation of the dead to living men, and the importance to each community that they should 'work together.'

Of course it is strange to inhabit the earth no longer,
And to unlearn the habits of presence here…

Being dead is hard work
And full of retrieval before one can gradually feel
A trace of eternity…

A long and rolling narrative free verse carries this torrent of intramundial reflections right to the reader's doorstep, and delivers them carefully to the point where death becomes the simple fruit of life.

P. 258. Sonnet to Orpheus 1.1

Analysis. Rilke's fascination with Orpheus morphs into his sensitivity to the silences of the animal kingdom, and the sensitives of the ear to the vibrant world around us. Orpheus himself is the essence of the sensual world, a great savior, capable of descending into the underworld itself, on a salvational mission (Eurydice), but at the same time commanding the concentrated attentions of the created world,

a tall tree in the ear

P. 259. Sonnet to Orpheus. I.2.

Analysis. The ear continues to ground the poem. In the poet's ear a girl enters, beds and sleeps, and 'she slept the world.'

Singing god how was that first
Sleep so perfect that she had no desire
Ever to wake?

The image of the all sustaining and awakening god persists in the girl, wakes in her.

P. 259. Sonnet to Orpheus. 1.3.

Analysis. Orpheus, because a god, and one of lightness and music, cannot be accessed by the shadow crossed inquiries of mortals. All is light in Orpheus, not murky as are we, in the shadow of life.

P. 260. Sonnet to Orpheus. 1.5.

Analysis. Orpheus cannot be touched, but is the poetry that is the world, present only when transcending presence. We cannot look for him, let alone find him.

Though he himself is afraid to disappear
He has to vanish. Don't you understand?
The moment his word steps out beyond our life here
He moves where you will never find his trace.

Bertolt Brecht

P. 525. When Evil-Doing comes like falling rain

A long time foe of the Nazi rise, and a friend to later Communist Regimes in East Germany, Brecht writes in this poem about the evil which had continued to crush the German people from Hitler's rise to power through the second World War.

When crimes begin to pile up they become invisible. When sufferings become unendurable the cries are no longer heard. The cries, too, fall like rain in summer.

Nellie Sachs

P. 526. O the chimneys

Analysis. Nellie Sachs survived Nazi persecution and then escaped to Sweden in the late thirties. There she continued her career of translation and writing, winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1966. The crematoria, in the concentration camps, became a forceful image of extermination, in her work…

O you chimneys,
O you fingers
And Israel's body as smoke through the air.

AUSTRIA

Georg Trakl

P. 512. Eastern Front

Analysis.

Wild wolves have poured through the gates…

With these words Trakl, thrown into a war he was poet enough to experience in almost hallucinatory terms, heralds what will be his second, and successful, suicide attempt.

P 513. Grodek

Analysis. In this last poem Trakl wrote, tne meaningless horror of war leads the poet to reflect on the damage being done to later generations, by this expatiation of hatred.

Today a great pain feeds the hot flame of the spirit
The grandsons yet unborn.

SPAIN

Federico Garcia Lorca

P. 573. The Faithless Wife

Analysis. A gypsy ballad, in which the fiery married lady is taken by her macho abductor, who overpowers her, though in the end respects he marital situation, because when he had first encountered her she had told him she was a married woman.

P. 575. Ode to Walt Whitman

Analysis. Lorca tracks the streets of Walt Whitman's New York, taking in all the thrills of the neon lighted metropolis, casing as he goes the bands of gays, extravagants, cross dressers, the rich debauched world which peoples this crossroads of cultures and risks.

P. 579. Lament for Ignacio Sanchez Mejias.

Analysis. This long open verse, free flowing expression of grief, for the death of a dear friend and renowned bullfighter, brings out the Andalusian passion, dignity, and honor-sensibility in face of the machismo of the bullfight. The ultimate in Lorca's inimitable flamenco-art riskiness is brought to the fore, in this test of art with animal pride.

POLAND

Wislawa Szymborska

P. 533. The Terrorist, He Watches

Analysis. The terrorist watches from across the street to track the seconds until the bomb goes off, in the bar where he has placed it. He watches, to see who is entering and who is leaving the bar, thus whose fate is presently being determined. A brilliant piece of breathtaking, and a perfect instance of the horror poetry can evoke.

RUSSIA

Andrei Voznesensky

P. 534. I am Goya

Analysis. We note In how many ways the horrors of war are depicted, in the WW poems read from Bedford. We can think back to the fragments of Isaac Rosenburg, Wilfrid Owen, Ryuichi, Nellie Sachs—each of whom gives us a different kind of glimpse of the hopelessness of battle and the attendant misery. The poem before us illustrates the horror of war from the visions of the l9th century Spanish poet, Francisco de Goya. Like Ryuichi, in his poetry from the midst of war, Goya is here fitted out with the very mindset of war itself.

Anna Akhmatova.

P. 558. Voronezh

Analysis. In this brief intense poem, Akhmatova triangulates several historically powerful moments, a couple of monumental victories of Peter the Great, in the fourteenth century, and the painful exile of her own dear friend, the poet Osip Mandelstam. Note the brilliant evocation of palatial culture in the imperial period.

P. 559. To the memory of M.B.

Analysis. Dedicated to Akhmatova’s much admired friend, Mikhail Bulgakov, the poem celebrates the discipline and sobriety of this artist’s approach to death. Only shortly before he passed, Bulgakov was the one giving her advice on life and its management.

P. 560. Requiem

Analysis. An ample 208 line poem, in which one of Russia’s greatest twentieth century poets uses Christian liturgy, and sacred history, to dwell on the sacrifice which the twentieth century has brought onto the Russian people, and to bewail her own private losses of a husband and son, during the ghastly Terror imposed by Stalin in the thirties and forties.

ASIA

CHINA

Bei Dao

P 548. The Answer

Analysis. In this brilliant poem the poet answers himself about how he sees the earth. He replies robustly that he does not believe in anything, and that he is waiting for the ‘watchful eyes of future generations’ to answer the future’s unknown response to the question of belief.

P. 549. Declaration

Analysis. The poet, who says

I am no hero
In an age without heroes
I just want to be a man

refuses to kneel to authorities or torturing powers, for if I kneel
I make the other look taller and more powerful.

P. 549. An End or a Beginning.

Analysis. A wide ranging, pessimistic, skeptical survey of a culture undergoing violent upheavals in its search for a new face. The poet has been immersed in Maoism , which with Mao's death began slowly to morph into the kind of 'socialist capitalism' we associate with Deng Xiaoping, and so on until our very day, into a techno-capitalism with a socialist face. The poet, as he says of himself, is simply a replacement for another person who has been murdered.

JAPAN

Tamura Ryuichi

P. 529. October Poem

Analysis. In a broken metric, that suggests the stress and dislocation of this poet's life, Ryuichi tells us that
I
Crisis is my nature
There is a fierce hurricane of feelings
Under my smooth skin…

The poet is replete with every illness the world can provide.

P. 530. A Vertical Coffin

Analysis. In this mini epic, gesturing toward the despair and anomie of the world of Eliot's *Wasteland, the poet finds that life is death, and death life. He is an outcast, for he is dead in* living.

We do not have love
We have nothing but the love of a sick person…

MIDDLE EAST

ARABIA – PALESTENIAN

Fadwa Tuquan

P. 539. Enough for me

Analysis. An ardent Palestinian nationalist, but alert to the developments of the world forming today, Fadwa strikes in this small piece the deep root of the nationalist perspective, for which adherence to one's very soil seems already a sufficient form of belonging.

P. 540. Song of Becoming

Analysis. A tale of praise for the 'heroes' of Palestine, who were once its boastful and daring young men,

Fencing with branches, assuming the roles

Of great heroes in history.

These young men, once our boisterous children, are now, dead, our heroes.

Mahmoud Darwish

P. 544. Identity Card

Analysis. This free narrative verse tale builds up brilliantly, with the poet suggesting aspects of his identity, including personal details and features, and moving on to identity traits like 'being an Arab,' and 'being an Arab whose land and possessions have been taken away from him. At the end, the poet includes the following bitter identity factor, that

If I were to become hungry
I shall eat the flesh of my usurpers….

P. 546 Victim Number 18

Analysis. A man on his way to visit his sweetheart is stopped on the way, The lorry of workers is diverted, turned in another direction, and we are led to expect the worst for the lorry and its passengers, which include the poet. 'Blame me not if I'm a little late,' he concludes by dreaming toward his dear. We believe the worst.

ISRAELI

Yehuda Amichai

P. 541. Sort of an Apocalypse

Analysis. A bitter poem, which foresees the end of human conflict
In eventual inanition. The end will come as the result of excessive beating of swords into ploughshares:

Perhaps from being beaten thinner and thinner,
The iron of hatred will vanish, forever.

P. 542. God has pity on kindergarten children

Analysis. God will take pity on the very young, and perhaps on those who take care of the very old. If God does not care for these caregivers, perhaps we ourselves will have to take care of them

So that their own kindness will protect us
Now and on other days.

N AMERICA

T.S. Eliot

P. 482 The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.

Analysis….When he was twenty-three, in post war Britain, and doing so with a British wife with whom he was entirely uncomfortable, Eliot went through a period of serious depression, which undoubtedly plays out in 'Prufrock.' This clerk or banker type, who lacks all self-assurance, and is as careful as possible not to ruffle people's attentions, forms risky ideas of reality of the reality of social world; he is a side-focus image of the Eliot who brings him to birth, and who is throughout the poem struggling with his own self and identity. Eliot often thought large, so when Prufrock asks;

Shall I part my hair behind, do I dare to eat a peach?

The caricature stands not only for Eliot but for a trait of a timid age which has forgotten how to believe or act.

P. 486. The Waste Land

Analysis. In *The Waste Land*, as in a smaller way, *Prufrock,* Eliot inspects the downfall of Western culture as he finds it around him, deeply destroyed after the First World War, without much support from any of the traditional beliefs or archaic practices—vegetation cults, ritualized societies, mystery quests like that of the Grail—with little emotional or spiritual direction. Eliot's 'highly critical inspection' takes the form of a long poem (434 lines), divided into a half dozen major sections, devoted—in the course of the first half of the poem—to scenes of the vulgarity and degradation of a vast western city (London), and of both its meaningless elite presence and the broken shards of its fallen social structures. In the second half of the poem we turn to highly evocative reminders of great historical moments, like the Vedic wisdom cultures of India or the mediaeval Christian Grail Quest. The panels of the poems are laid out in evocative chunks and created in a prosodic medium Eliot made freshly his own, disconnecting syntax patterns into jagged shards, and insertintg pregnant texts from world literature and culture.

James Weldon Johnson

i

P. 873. O Black and Unknown Bards

Analysis. A couplet-based, full throated paean of praise to the Black oral singers who brought the great salvational imagination, of Afro American singing, from ignorance in slavery to the glory of Afro -American gospel.

Claude McKay

P. 875. To the white fiends

Analysis. From 1912 on, McKay was an aggressive voice praising Black poetry and song, for which he was to become one of the strongest proponents. His own self-confident attack-poetry, which earned him the reputation of being the founder of *negritude*, Senghor's militant pro black poetic movement, gave him pre eminence among international black writers.

P. 876. Harlem shadows

Analysis. McKay observes the black prostitutes—often young and undernourished, and virtually barefoot—padding through the streets of Harlem, looking for customers and a few dollars.

…the sacred brown feet of my fallen race…

P. 876. Outcast

Analysis. McKay laments that he was placed, by history, in the white man's world—he was in fact born in Jamaica—far from the deeper, richer world of Black Africa, where he believes he belongs.

Something in me is lost, forever lost,
Some vital thing has gone out of my heart.

Langston Hughes

P. 878. The Negro speaks of Rivers

Analysis. The poet, raised in St. Louis near the Mississippi River, has travelled widely, in Europe and Africa, and exposed himself to many deep rivers, which have enriched and deepened his own soul.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers…

P. 878. The weary blues

Analysis. A subtly musical poem that mimes the sad singing of a blues singer on Lenox Avenue, playing out his shuffly rhythm, until, as the night grows late, he decides to go home and sleep, turning in his mind the thought that he wishes he were dead…sleepy dead…

He slept like a rock or a man that's dead…

P. 879. Jazzonia.

Analysis. A verbal snapshot of cabaret jazz being played by six musicians, in the presence of a 'dancing girl whose eyes were bold.' We jump back to Cleopatra and Eve, and the soft luscious tale of longing.

Countee Cullen.

P. 880. Heritage

Analysis. The poet, in formal rhymed couplets like those of Claude MacKay, sets the theme, of this long lyric, with the following self-description:

One three centuries removed
From the scenes his fathers loved,
Spicy grove, cinnamon tree,
What is Africa to me?

So much the heritage of this black man torn between his Christian faith and his deep allegiance to the Africa in his blood.

P. 883. Yet do I marvel

Analysis. In crisp musical quatrains, Cullen reviews many of the inscrutable traits of his God, who is, he knows, beneficent, but who is seemingly cruel to mankind in many ways. Of all the puzzling ways that God plays with mankind, the oddest, thinks Cullen, is this:

Yet do I marvel at this curious thing,
To make a poet black, and bid him sing!

Gwendolyn Brooks

P. 902. To the Diaspora

Analysis. Brooks had made two significant trips to Africa, at the time of writing this, and in the course of them discovered who she was and her own blackness. Africa becomes, for her, the self she
Has not yet known.

Adrienne Rich

P. 994**.** Aunt Jennifer's Tigers

Analysis. With this poem, from 1951, we are far from the world-addressing mega poems with which Eliot, Pound, and later Wallace Stevens **m**ade themselves the shapers of the World War generation, and the spokespeople of their literary age. Rich's personal history-- brilliant and successful with her writing from the age of twenty—has long been concentrated on the question of her personal identity, and particularly on the issues of feminism and gender responsiveness. We seem to see a morphed representation of Rich's own struggles, in the depiction of an aunt beset by a wedding band, yet true to art, and defiantly herself.

P. 995. I dream I'm the death of Orpheus

Analysis. Picking up the ancient Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, the poet situates herself as

A woman in the prime of life, with certain powers…

Who is prevented from realizing herself, and whom her lover descends even into hell to rescue. She is glad to be his conqueror, as he rummages the underworld to try to find her.

P. 996. Diving into the wreck

Analysis. Rich picks up on the thematic of underwater oceanic investigation, but turns it into a sea quest for herself, the wreck at the bottom of the ocean, the ruined figure whom we must restore to the surface, with all her courage…

I came to see the damage that was done
And the treasures that prevail…

P. 999. Twenty-One Love Poems: 1: Wherever in this city, screens flicker

Analysis*.* As a city walker, the poet knows that the flicker of night time television screens means porno, cop shows with violent outcoimes, red flashing police car lights. All her natural passions leap up and long for expression, and dream of being creatively rooted in the city itself.

No one has imagined us. We want to live like trees.

P. 999. *3:* Since we're not young, weeks have to do time

Analysis. The poet reflects on the fact that she and her lover are not young—are not twenty but forty—and must take serious note of their love, which is of peculiar sweetness, 'has to do time,' for all it has missed.

…each of us will help the other live…
Each of us must help the other die…

P. 1000. 4. I come home from you through the early light of spring

Analysis. Prompts from daily life drive the anger of the present piece. The author is returning through the city to her apartment, in the early light of a spring morning. She is full of the presence of her lesbian lover. A man is rude to her in the elevator, a piece of mail makes her angry, for its reminder of men's addiction to war. She blows up inwardly.

…they still control the world, and you are not in my arms….

P. 1000 6. Your small hands, precisely equal to my own—

Analysis. The poet salutes female (probably her lover's) hands, valuing their abilities, to perform the heaviest or the most delicate of practical tasks, the work equally of either gender. She implies the limitations placed on women in the exercise of their powers, and speculates—in muted fury—on the kinds of violence women could be capable of performing.

Martin Espada

P. 1346. Bully

Analysis. The Puerto Rican poet, his roots both in the island, and in Brooklyn, reflects on the ambiguous status of his background, victim of the bullying of such super yankees as President Theodore Roosevelt, and the international politics which have denied governance and statehood to the Puerto Ricans.

P. 1347. From an island you cannot name

Analysis. Espada studies a US army photograph that depicts a daughter's dad as 'not negro,' as 'other.' The photo emblem, attached to a mirror in the daughter's house, memorializes the pathetic sadness of 'being nothing' In the world.

P. 1348. Revolutionary Spanish Lesson

Analysis. The author is pissed off, to the limit, by hearing his name mispronounced. He mocks out a fantasy revenge he would like to carry through, against a
.
busload of Republican tourists from Wisconsin

Joy Harjo

P. 1364. Remember.

Analysis. An exhortation, grounded in a Native American view of the world, to remember our oneness and our mutual embeddedness in our own earth.

Remember the dance that language is, that life is,
Remember.

P. 1364. New Orleans

Analysis. The author wanders through a fantasmagoria New Orleans, sampling the raw collage of oddities, objets d'art, historical memories, and when possible thinking her way into the minds of her ancestors, the Creeks, or into that of the Spanish conquistador, De Soto, who led the Spanish Expeditionary Force in Louisiana. (The Creeks, it seems drowned De Soto in the Mississippi).

P. 1367. She had some horses

Analysis. The poet lets herself go on the issue of the horse as a profound symbol of inner needs, feelings, moods. The horses she hates are the horses she loves. For horses are multi form presences to her, under the one life-shaping guise of horse.

She had some horses.

P. 1369. I give you back

Analysis.

Come here, fear,
I am alive and you are so afraid of dying…

The writer has at last conquered fear.

You were my beloved
And Hated twin, but now I don't know you
As myself.

What a freeing of self!

Jimmy Santiago Baca

P. 1381. What we don't tell the children

Analysis. The writer speaks from the standpoint of a local, plunged in the semi desert survival world, dissing the artsy couple who moved in next door, but who are appalled by the way the author's dogs massacre the newcomers' cats. A Standoff. A good way for the writer to mock the desire of the newcomers to find a 'primitive' place to settle.

P. 1383. Family Ties

Analysis. Writer reports on an afternoon party, many family members present, too much food and drink and the writer decides to take his family on a mountain hike. They do this. On the drive home, later, the guy sleeps off his rum, the wife drives, and the two realize how much too little money they have to stage parties or up their living style.

As I stare out the window
At no trespassing signs white flashing past.

P. 1384. Work we hate and dreams we love

Analysis. The writer's brother works at his carpenter job, but in the tools he uses to cut and measure or dream, or gesturally be, he became the hunter warrior of three thousand years before, wh o inhabited exactly the land where he is now acting out his job,

Uttering a sound we do not understand.

P. 1385. Meditations on the South Valley

Analysis. A young man's bitter expostulation before an elder, a jefe, on whose death certificate the 'authorities' have scribbled that his race was White. The author is outraged and substitutes 'trying to be White' as the 'cause of death.'

Naomi Shihab Nye

P. 1386. Blood

Analysis. The author is part Arab, part American, and is steeped in the wit and proverb of her father's culture. She is patriotic, but ironic about all the clichés of nationalism, and ends up with calling out

who calls anyone civilized?

P. 1387. My father and the figtree

Analysis. The writer's dad lived mostly in the United States, but
from his Arab childhood on he retained the memory of the most delicious fruit in the world, fresh figs. At the end of his life he planted a fig tree near his house in Dallas, part of

a world that was always his own.

P. 1388. Arabic

Analysis. A splendid subtle poem by an Arabic American writer who has never been able to learn her father's language. Having been taught that 'an Arab carries sorrow in the back of his head,' she realizes that she is missing a lot in that paternal language. She goes out into the street, thinking to hail a taxi by shouting PAIN

and it stopped in every language and opened its doors.

LATIN AMERICA – CHILE

Pablo Neruda.

P. 677. Ode with a Lament

Analysis. Neruda flirts with the conventions of a love ode, but in so doing slips in any number of 'intentional misreads' of that Latin-romantic tradition.

O girl among the roses, o pressure of doves,
O citadel of ashes and rosebushes,
Your soul is a bottle full of dry salt,
And your skin is a bell full of grapes.

Neruda has caught our attention, and we are on our guard.

P. 678. Sexual water

Analysis. The surrealist/imagist current in Neruda's sensibility is at its most foregrounded in this and the preceding poem, where he privileges the role of language to create its own repertoire of meanings. In the present piece there is no sequential narrative, but a constant dislocation of suggestive meaning.

I see a long summer and a death rattle coming out of a granary,
Cellars, cicadas,
Towns, stimuli…

P. 680. Alberto Rojas Jimenez comes flying

Analysis. The death of a dear friend is memorialized in a myriad of quatrains, each ending in the refrain, 'you come flying…'

You come flying, alone, solitary,
Alone among corpses, forever alone,
You come flying without a shadow, nameless,
Without sugar, without a mouth, without rosebushes,
You come flying.

P. 683. Ode of the Sun to the People's Army

Analysis. A salute, best performed orally and in passionate vocal mode, a song of forward march to the honest simple fighters on behalf of the people's democracies of South America, on behalf of their native soils and in opposition to the Fascist forces of Franco, which were then, in Spain, struggling against the common man.

P. 685. Hymn and return

Analysis. In l939, with the defeat of the Spanish Republican Army, Neruda decided to return to Chile, and in the present poem salutes the noble homeland, the 'future of the race.'

P. 686. The United Fruit Company

Analysis. A direct and headlong attack on one of the most virulent North American companies to prey on the natural richness of Chile. Neruda is prosaic and blunt here, far more direct than in his playful or surrealist work.

P. 688. The Heights of Macchu Picchu

Analysis. The sixth section of this long poem tracks the poet's life-restoring journey back into the most splendid refuge of Incan culture, which represented the social and architectural grandeur of mediaeval Chile.

The ladder of the earth…
High citadel of terraced stones…

P. 689. Ode to Salt

Analysis. Neruda celebrates the realities of the world we inhabit, its elementary presences. Down to earth salt is, for sure, yet at the same time the essential mineral of organic life. We praise

not only your domestic whiteness
But the inward flavor of the infinite.

P. 690. Poet's obligation

Analysis. The poet, as Neruda wishes to conceive it, brings freedom wherever he makes himself read or listened to. He slips into jail cells, crowds in offices, far from the sea, love affairs that are stifling. It is the poet's obligation to sustain this enlightening and inspiring function.

So, through me, freedom and the sea
Will make their answer to the shuttered heart.

Caribbain Islands

Derek Walcott

P. 1116. A Latin Primer

Analysis. A colonial educated Carib, Walcott finds himself teaching classics at a public school, and wondering at its relevance.

The discipline I preached made me a hypocrite

The youngsters before him in class are far from the time and place of ancient Roman culture. The answer to his sense of alienation is the observation of a frigate bird, which with flappy V-shaped wings sails in and out over the harbor, sketching out, in nature itself, the shapes of the Latin letters and accent marks.

P. 1120. White Magic

Analysis. The poet, a native of St. Lucia, from which his career, his still privileged life, have inevitably separated him, takes the native bus through town on a Saturday night after the markets have closed. He sees beautiful black women who awe him with their belonging to the place and its smoky islandish nature. He know he has abandoned these people and their world, yet still feels one of them.

P. 1121. The Light of the World

Analysis. The poet opens by describing a stunningly beautiful black woman, deeply a part of the island culture the writer is himself abandoning, as it is itself abandoned by economy and time. It is market day, full of the rich life of nature and chatter…and the poet has resigned all this for the sophisticated life. He bewails his decision.

P. 1125. For Pablo Neruda

Analysis. Walcott launches his poem from the sands of his own Caribbean island, extending his arms and thought toward Chile, and the spiritual master of Latin American poetic culture, Pablo Neruda. He acknowledges his huge debt to this giant of the Latino perspective.

You became, for us, a benign rigorous uncle.

AFRICA

Senegal

Leopold Sedar Senghor

P. 885. Black woman

Analysis. The poem establishes a composite of supremely sensual African beauties, whom the poet addresses as the perfection of *negritude.*

Gazelle with celestial limbs, pearls are stars
Upon the night of your skin…

And indeed the only inquietude you arouse is that Fate may
Reduce this beauty to ashes, ‘to nourish the roots of life.’

P. 886. Prayer to the Masks

Analysis. Senghor calls on the ancestral masks, which align with the powers of clan and tribe, and in which the secret powers of his land are embedded.

Who else will teach rhythm to the world,
Deadened by machines and cannons?

Uganda

Otok p’Bitek

P. 894. From *Song of Lawino*

Analysis. The wife addresses her arrogant westernized husband, accusing him of scorn and contempt for her and her country ways.

Ocol says he is a modern man,
A progressive and civilized man.
He says he has read extensively and widely
And he can no longer live with a thing like me
Who cannot distinguish between good and bad.

He says I am only wasting his time.

P. 897 *From.* Song of Ocol

***Analysis*.** Ocol, who had come in for a lashing from Otok, strikes back angrily at the notion that Africa could be of any value. Home of superstition, cults, ignorance, dancing and music without reason—Africa is not worth the attention of a modern person.

Why was I born black.?