

A WORKERS ANTHOLOGY

Edited by

Louis Zukofsky

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Editor's Preface

This anthology illustrates the presence of revolutionary struggle and ideas in some of the *best* poetry of 2000 years. Lenin has said that art must unite the feelings, thoughts and wills of the masses, and awaken and develop the artist in them. The excellence of these selections should help to develop the artist in the worker, and awaken the class conscious artist to the possibilities for excellence in poetry for the masses.

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N.Y.C.

43 B.C.-A.D. 17

OVID

Amorum III - from Elegia 7
translated Christopher Marlowe
c.1590

Gold from the earth in steade of fruits we pluck,
Soldiers by blood to be inricht have luck.
Courts shut the poore out; wealth gives estimation,
Thence grows the Judge, and knight of reputation.
All they possess: they governe fields, and lawes,
They manadge peace, and raw warres bloody jawes,
Onely our loves let not such rich churles gaine,

* * *

43 B.C.-A.D. 17

OVID

from *Metamorphoses* - Book I
translated by Arthur Golding
1567

Then sprang up first the golden age, which of itselfe maintaine
The truth and right of everything unforst and unconstraine.
There was no feare of punishment, there was no threating lawe
In brazen tables nayled up, to keepe the folke in awe.
There was no man would crouch or creepe to Judge with cap in hand,
They lived safe without a Judge in every Realme and lande.
The loftie Pynetree was not hewen from mountaines where it stood,
In seeking straunge and forren landes to rove upon the flood.
Men knew none other countries yet, than where themselves did keepe:
There was no town enclosed yet, with walles and ditches deepe.
No horne nor trumpet was in use, no sword nor helmet worne.
The world was such, that souldiers helpe might easily be forborne.

* * *

Of yron is the last

In no part good and tractable as former ages past.
* * * and men began to bound,
With dowles and diches drawen in length the free and fertile ground,
Which was as common as the ayre and light of Sunne before * *
The spurres and stirrers unto vice, and foes to doing weel.
Then hurtfull yron came abrode, then came forth yellow golde
More hurtfull than the yron farre, then came forth battle bolde
That feights with both, and shakes his sword in cruel bloody hand.

c.1308-1318

FROM A MS. IN ANGLO-IRISH DIALECT

written apparently in Gray Abbey,
a Franciscan house, in Kildare

Lollai, lollai, lital child
 Whi wepistou¹ so sore?
 Nedis mostou² wepe
 Hit³ was iyarkid⁴ the yore
 Ever to lib in sorrow,
 And sich⁵ and mourne evere,
 As thin⁶ eldren did er this,
 Whil hi alives were.
 Lollai, lollai, lital child,
 Child, lolai, lullow!
 Into uncuth world
 Icommen so ertow.⁷

The cry of the enslaved folk is in these verses, though religion is smothering it. Considering their basis in fact it is hardly a coincidence, but a proof of their poetic validity, that their cadences are similar to those of the negro song, beginning “Forty-leben days gone by / Sence last time ah slept in bed,” and including the lines “Money thinks ahm dead,” “Ah don' ast fo' chain an' ball” “Lawd always wanderin' 'bout” – collection of Lawrence Gellert, *New Masses* 1931.

1 weepst thou
 2 must thou
 3 It

4 ordained
 5 sigh
 6 thine

7 art thou

c.1369

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

from "Nero" – The Monkes Tale
The Canterbury Tales

Now fil it so that fortune list no lenger
 The hye pryde of Nero to cheryce;
 For though that he were strong, yet was she strengere;
 She thoughte thus, 'by god, I am to nyce
 To sette a man that is fulfild of vyse
 In heigh degree, and emperour him calle.
 By god, out of his sete I wol him tryce;
 When he leest weneth, sonest shal he falle.'

The peple roos up-on him on a night
 For his defaute, and whan he it espyed,
 Out of his dores anon he hath him dight
 Alone, and, ther he wende han ben allyed,
 He knocked faste, and ay, the more he cryed,
 The faster shette they the dores alle;
 Tho wiste wel he hadde him-self misgyed,
 And wente his wey, no lenger dorste he calle.

The peple cryde and rombled up and doun,
 That with his eres herde he how they seyde,
 'Wher is this false tyraunt, this Neroun?'
 For fere almost out of his wit he breyde;
 And to his goddes pitously he prayde
 For socour, but it mighte not bityde.
 For drede of this, him thoughte that he deyde,
 And ran in-to a gardin, him to hyde.

And in this gardin fond he cherles tweye
 That seten by a fyr full greet and reed,
 And to thise cherles two he gan to preyde
 To sleen him, and to girden of his heed,
 That to his body, whan that he were deed,
 Were no despyt y-doon, for his defame.
 Him-self he slow, he coude no better reed,
 Of which fortune lough, and hadde a game.

c.1440

possibly by Richard Rolle of Hampole

Erthe out of erthe is wondirly wroghte,
 Erthe has geten one erthe a dignite of noghte
 Erthe appon erthe hase sett alle his thoghte,
 How that erthe appon erthe may be heghe broghte.

Erthe appon erthe wolde be a kinge;
 But how erthe to erthe sall, thinkes he nothinge.
 When erthe bredes erthe, and his rentes home bringe,
 Thane schalle erthe of erthe hafe full hard partinge.

Erthe appon erthe winnes castells and tourres,
 Thane saise erthe unto erthe 'This is alle ourres';
 When erthe appon erthe hase bigged up his bourres,
 Thane shalle erthe for erthe suffere scharpe scourres.

Erthe gos appon erthe as golde appon golde.
 He that gose appon erthe gleterande as golde,
 Like as erthe never more go to erthe scholde,
 And yit schall erthe unto erthe ga rathere than he wolde.

Now why that erthe luffes erthe, wondere me thinke,
 Or why that erthe for erthe scholde either swete or swinke
 For when that erthe appon erthe is broghte within brinke
 Thane shall erthe of erthe hafe a foulle stinke.

c.1465

FRANCOIS VILLON

Epistle in Form of a Ballad to his Friends
translated by Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1878.

Have pity, pity, friends, have pity on me,
 Thus much at least, may it please you, of your grace!
 I lie not under hazel or hawthorn-tree
 Down in this dungeon ditch, mine exile's place
 By leave of God and fortune's foul disgrace.
 Girls, lovers, glad young folk and newly wed,
 Jumpers and jugglers, tumbling heel o'er head,
 Swift as a dart, and sharp as needle-ware,
 Throats clear as bells that ring the kine to shed,
 Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there?

Singers that sing at pleasure, lawlessly,
 Light, laughing, gay of word and deed, that race
 And run like folk light-witted as ye be
 And have in hand nor curren coin nor base,
 Ye wait too long, for now he's dying apace.
 Rhymes of lays and roundels sung and read
 Ye'll brew him broth too late when he lies dead.
 Nor wind nor lightning, sunbeam nor fresh air,
 May pierce the thick wall's bound where lies his bed;
 Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there?

O noble folk from tithes and taxes free,
 Come and behold him in this piteous case,
 Ye that nor king nor emperor holds in fee,
 But only God in heaven; behold his face
 Who needs must fast, Sundays and holidays,
 Which makes his teeth like rakes; and when he hath fed
 With never a cake for banquet but dry bread,
 Must drench his bowels with much cold watery fare,
 With board nor stool, but low on earth instead.
 Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there?

Princes afore-named, old and young foresaid,
 Get me to king's seal and my pardon sped,
 And hoist me in some basket up with care:
 So swine will help each other ill bested,
 For where one squeaks they run in leaps ahead.
 Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there?

15TH CENTURY

*God be with trewthe where he be!
I wolde he were in this cuntre.*

A man that schuld of trewthe¹ telle
With grete lordes he may not dwelle.
In trewe story as clerkes telle,
Trewthe is put in low degree.

In laydies chamberes cometh he not;
There dare trewthe setten none² fot²
Thow he wolde, he may not
Comen among the heye mene.³

With men of lawe he hath non spas;⁴
They loven trewthe in none plas
Me thinketh they han a rewly⁵ grace
That trewthe is put at swich degree.

In holy cherche he may not sitte;
Fro man to man they schuln him flitte.
It reweth me sore in mine witte,
Of trewthe I have gret pite.

Religious, that schulde be good,
If trewthe cum there, I holde him wood,⁶
They shulden⁷ him rende cote and hood,
And make him bare for to flee.

A man that schulde of trewthe aspice
He must seken esilye
In the bosum of Marie
For there he is for sothe.

The anonymous poet did not identify truth with Divine law above material order. "Marie" at that time was appealed to as the friend of the poor. The verses thus assume revolutionary significance.

1 truth
2 no foot

3 meinie, company
4 space

5 pitiable
6 mad
7 would

15TH CENTURY

Carol

This ae nighte, this ae nighte
Every nighte and alle
Fire and sleet and candle-lighte
And Christe receive thy saule.

If ever thou gavest hosen and shoon
Every night and alle
Sit thee down and put them on
And Chirste receive thy saule.

If hosen and shoon thou ne'er gav'st nane
Every nighte and alle
The whinnes sall prick thee to the bare bane
And Christe receive thy saule.

The morality exceedingly Christian goodness is evident.

15TH CENTURY

Ballad - Robin Hood Rescuing Three Squires

'Though your clothes are of light Lincolne green
And mine gray russett and torne,
Yet it doth not you beseeme
To doe an old man scorne.'

'I scorne thee not, old man,' says Robin,
'By the faith of my body;
Doe off thy clothes, thou shalt haue mine,
For it may noe better bee.'

But Robin did on this old mans hose,
The were torne in the wrist;
'When I looke on my leggs,' said Robin,
'Then for to laugh I list.'

But Robin did on the old mans shooes
And the were cliit full cleane;
'Now, by my faith,' says Litle John,
'These are good for thornes keene.'

But Robin did on the old man cloake,
And it was torne in the necke;
'Now, by my faith,' said William Scarlett,
'Heere shold be set a specke.'

But Robin did on this old mans hood,
Itt gogled on his crown;
'When I come into Nottingham,' said Robin,
'My hood it will lightly downe.'

15TH CENTURY

also from Robin Hood Rescuing Three Squires

'But bend your bowes, and stroke your strings
Set the gallow-tree aboute,
And Christs curse on his heart,' said Robin,
'That spares the sheriffe and the sergiant!'

When the sheriffe see gentle Robin wold shoote
He held up both his hands;
Sayes, 'Aske, good Robin, and thou shalt haue
Whether it be house or land.'

'I will neither have house nor land' said Robin,
'Nor gold, nor none of thy ffee,
But I will haue those three squires
To the greene fforest with me.'

'Now marry, God forbott,' said the sheriffe,
'That ever that shold bee
For why, they be the kings ffelons,
They are all condemned to dye.'

'But grant me my askinge,' said Robin,
'Or by the faith of my body
Thou shalt be the first man
Shall flower this gallow-tree.'

1601

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

from *The Phoenix and the Turtle*

Here the anthem doth commence:
 Love and constancy is dead;
 Phoenix and the turtle fled
 In a mutual flame from hence.

So they loved, as love in twain
 Had the essence but in one;
 Two distincts, division none:
 Number there in love was slain.

Hearts remote, yet not asunder;
 Distance, and no space was seen
 'Twixt the turtle and his queen:
 But in them it were a wonder.

So between them love did shine,
 That the turtle saw his right
 Flaming in the phoenix' sight;
 Either was the other's mine.

Property was thus appalled
 That the self was not the same;
 Single nature's double name
 Neither two nor one was called.

Reason, in itself confounded,
 Saw division grow together,
 To themselves yet either neither,
 Simple were so well compounded;

That it cried, How true a twain
 Seemeth this concordant one!
 Love hath reason, reason none,
 If what parts can so remain.

cf. Marx's emotional attack on the rationale of property: "Property, because each of them disposes exclusively of his own. Jeremy Bentham, because each of the pair is only concerned with his own interest etc," *Capital*, vol. I, end of Chapter 4 [end of Part Two]. Shakespeare, in these verses, seems to have anticipated Marx's irony with greater accuracy than just poetic instinct.

1601

JOHN DONNE

The Progresse of the Soul - Stanzas XXXIII & XXXIV

He hunts not fish, but as an officer,
 Stayes in his court, at his owne net, and there
 All suitors of all sorts themselves enthrall;
 So on his backe lyes this whale wantoning,
 And in his gulfe-like throat, sucks every thing
 That passeth neare. Fish chaseth fish, and all,
 Flyer and follower, in this whirlpool fall;
 O might not states of more equality
 Consist: and is it of necessity
 That thousand guiltlesse smals, to make one great, must die?

Now drinkes he up seas, and he eates up flocks,
 He justles Ilands, and he shakes firme rockes.
 Now in a roomefull house this Soule doth float,
 And like a Prince she sends her faculties
 To all her limbes, distant as Provinces.
 The Sunne hath twenty times both crab and goate
 Parched, since first lauch'd forth this living boate;
 'Tis greatest now, and to destruction
 Nearest; There's no pause at perfection;
 Greatnesse a period hath, but hath no station.

Denoting ironically one of the changes in the “progresse of a deathlesse soule,” whose ultimate corruption was to be contained in Elisabeth, Queen of England, these stanzas of Donne’s unfinished poem seem to presage the octopus of Imperialism; – the consequent “relation of a proletarian revolution to the State at a time when the States, ... their swollen military apparatus in a whirlwind of Imperialist rivalry become monstrous military beasts devouring the lives of millions of people in order to decide whether ... this or that group of finance capitalists should dominate the world.” (Lenin's *State and Revolution*)

1607

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

King Lear - IV, i

Here, take this purse, thou whom the heavens' plagues
Have humbled to all strokes: that I am wretched
Makes thee happier. Heavens, deal so still!
Let the superfluous and lust-dieted man,
That slaves your ordinance, that will not see
Because he doth not feel, feel your power quickly;
So distribution should undo excess
And each man have enough.

1607

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

King Lear - IV, vi

The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
Show scarce so gross as beetles: half way down
Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade!
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head:
The fishermen that walk upon the beach
Appear like mice; and yond tall anchoring bark
Diminished to her cock; her cock, a buoy
Almost too small for sight: the murmuring surge
That on the unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes
Cannot be heard so high.

Shakespeare did not minimize the immensity of labor's risk.

1607

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

King Lear - III, iv

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them
And show the heavens more just.

1607

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

King Lear - IV, vi

And the creature run from the cur? There thou mightst
behold the great image of authority: a dog's obeyed in office.
Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!
Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back;
Thou hotly lust'st to use her in that kind
For which thou whip'st her. The usurer hangs the cozener.
Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear.
Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;
Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.
None does offend, none, I say, none; I'll able 'em:
Take that of me, my friend, who have the power
To seal the accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes,
And, like a scurvy politician, seem
To see the things thou dost not.

1608-1651

THOMAS FULLER

The Faithful Minister

My starveling bull

Ah! woe is me!

In pasture full

How lean is he!

1647

JOHN FLETCHER

from The Beggar's Bush

Hang all officers, we cry
And the magistrate too, by!
When the subsidy's increased
We are not a penny sessed;
Nor will any go to law,
With the beggar for a straw.
All which happiness, he brags,
He doth owe unto his rags.

17TH CENTURY

Anonymous

His jacet John Shorthose
Sine hose, sine shoes, sine breeches;
Qui fuit, dum vixit,
Sine goods, sine lauds, sine riches.

1648

ROBERT HERRICK

To Keep a True Lent

Is this a fast, to keep
The larder lean,
And clean
From fat of veals and sheep?

Is it to quit the dish
Of flesh, yet still
To fill
The platter high with fish?

Is it to fast an our
Or ragged to go,
Or show
A downcast look, and sour?

No; 't is a fast, to dole
Thy sheaf of wheat
And meat
Unto the hungry soul.

It is to fast from strife,
From old debate
And hate;
To circumcise thy life;

To show a heart grief-rent;
To starve they sin,
Not bin.
And that 's to keep thy Lent.

1662

SAMUEL BUTLER

from *Hudibras*

He knew the seat of Paradise,
 Could tell in what degree it lies
 And, as he was disposed, could prove it
 Below the moon or else above it:
 What Adam dreamt of when his bride
 Came from her closet in his side,
 Whether the devil tempted her
 by an High-Dutch interpreter,
 If either of them had a navel,
 Who first made music malleable
 Whether the serpent at the fall
 Had cloven feet or none at all,
 All this without a gloss or comment
 He could unriddle in a moment
 In proper terms such as men smatter
 When they throw out and miss the matter

* * *

Whate'er men speak by this new light,
 Still they are sure to be i' th' right,
 'Tis a dark lanthorn of the spirit
 Which none see by but those who bear it.

* * *

A light that falls down from on high
 For spiritual trades to cozen by,
 An ignis fatuus that bewitches
 And leads men into pools and ditches
 To make dip themselves and sound
 For Christendom in dirty pond,
 To dive like wild fowl for salvation
 And fish to catch regeneration.

c.1670

JOHN WILMOT (EARL OF ROCHESTER)

from Ode to Nothing

Great Negative! how vainly would the wise
 Inquire, define, distinguish, teach, devise?
 Didst thou not stand to point their dull philosophies.

Is, or *is not* the two great ends of Fate
 And, true of false, the subject of debate,
 That perfect or destroy the vast designs of Fate;

When they have rack'd the politician's breast,
 Within thy bosom most securely rest,
 And, when reduc'd to thee, are least unsafe and best.

But Nothing, why does Something still permit,
 That sacred monarchs should at council sit,
 With persons highly thought at best for nothing fit?

Whilst weighty Something modestly abstains
 From princes' coffers, and from stateman's brains
 And nothing there like stately Nothing reigns.

Nothing, who dwell'st with fools in grave disguise,
 For whom they reverend shapes and forms devise,
 Lawn sleeves, and furs, and gowns, when they like
 thee look wise.

French truth, Dutch prowess, British policy,
 Hibernian learning, Scotch civility,
 Spaniards' dispatch, Danes' wit, are mainly seen in thee.

The great man's gratitude to his best friend,
 Kings' promises, whores vows, towards thee they bend,
 Flow swiftly into thee, and in thee ever end.

c.1670

JOHN WILMOT (EARL OF ROCHESTER)

from A Letter from Artemisa in the Town,
To Chloe in the Country

"Dispatch," says she, "the business you pretend,
Your beastly visit to your drunken friend,
A bottle ever makes you look so fine;
Methinks I long to smell you stink of wine.
Your country drinking breath's enough to kill;
Sour ale corrected with a lemon-peel."

* * *

In Easter-term she gets her a new gown,
When my young master's worship comes to town,
From pedagogue and mother just set free,
The heir and hopes of a great family;
Who with strong beer and beef the country rules,
And ever since the Conquest have been fools;
And now, with careful prospect to maintain
This character, lest crossing of the strain
Should mend the booby breed, his friends provide
A cousin of his own to be his bride.

1687

PHILIP AYRES

On a Fair Beggar

Barefoot and ragged, with neglected hair,
She whom the Heavens at once made poor and fair,
 With humble voice and moving words did stay,
 To beg an alms of all who passed that way.

But thousands viewing her became her prize,
Willingly yielding to her conquering eyes,
 And caught by her bright hairs, whilst careless she
 Makes them pay homage to her poverty.

So mean a boon, said I, what can extort
From that fair mouth, where wanton Love to sport
 Amidst the pearls and rubies we behold?
Nature on thee has all her treasures spread,
Do but incline thy rich and precious head,
 And those fair locks shall pour down showers of gold.

1784

ROBERT BURNS

from Holy Willie's Prayer

What was I, or my generation,
 That I should get such exaltation,
 I wha deserve sic just damnation,
 For broken laws,
 Five thousand years 'fore my creation,
 Through Adam's cause!

When frae my mither's womb I fell
 Thou might hae plungèd me in hell,
 To gnash my gums, to weep and wail,
 In burnin' lake,
 Where damnèd devils roar and yell,
 Chain'd to a stake.

Yet I am here, a chosen sample,
 To show Thy grace is great and ample.
 I'm here a pillar in Thy temple,
 Strong as a rock,
 A guide, a buckler, and example
 To a' Thy flock.

Lord! mind Gawn Hamilton's deserts,
 He drinks, and swears, and playes at cartes,
 Yet has sae mony takin' arts,
 Wi' grit and sma',
 Frae God's ain priests and people's hearts
 He steals awa'.

And when we chasten'd him therefor,
 Thou kens how he bred sic a splore,
 And set the world in a roar
 O' laughin at us:
 Curse Thou his basket and his store,
 Kail and potatoes.

But, Lord, remember me and mine
 Wi' mercies temporal and divine,
 That I for gear and grace may shine,
 Excell'd by nane,
 And a' the glory shall be Thine.

1786

ROBERT BURNS

from Address to the Devil

Hear me, auld Hangie, for a wee
 An' let poor damned bodies be;
 I'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,
 E'n to a deil,
 To skelp an' scaud poor dogs like me,
 An' hear us squeel!

Lang syne, in Eden's bonnie yard,
 When youthfu' lovers first were pair'd,
 And all the soul of love they shared,
 The raptured hour,
 Sweet on the fragrant, flowery swaird
 In shady bower.

Then you, ye auld sneak-drawing dog!
 Ye came to Paradise *incog.*,
 An' play'd on man a cursed brogue
 (Black be your fa!)
 And gied the infant world a shog,
 'Maist ruin'd a'.

And now, auld Cloots, I ken ye're thinkin'
 A certain Bardie's rantin', drinkin',
 Some luckless hour will send him linkin',
 To your black pit;
 But faith! He'll turn a corner jinkin'
 And cheat you yet.

1794

WILLIAM BLAKE

The Little Vagabond, Songs of Experience

Dear mother, dear mother, the Church is cold,
But the Ale-house is healthy and pleasant and warm;
Besides I can tell where I am used well,
Such usage in Heaven will never do well.

But if at the Church they would give us some ale,
And a pleasant fire our souls to regale,
We'd sing and we'd pray all the livelong day,
Nor ever once wish from the Church to stray.

Then the Parson might preach, and drink, and sing,
And we'd be as happy as birds in the spring;
And modest Dame Lurch, who is always at Church,
Would not have bandy children, nor fasting, nor birch.

And God, like a father, rejoicing to see
His children as pleasant and happy as He,
Would have no more quarrel with the Devil or the barrel,
But kiss him, and give him both drink and apparel.

1794

WILLIAM BLAKE

London, *Songs of Experience*

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

How the chimney-sweeper's cry
Every black'ning church appals;
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

1795

ROBERT BURNS

"Is there for honest Poverty"

Is there for honest Poverty,
 That hings his head, an' a' that;
 The coward slave – we pass him by,
 We dare be poor for a' that!
 For a' that, and a' that,
 Our toils obscure an' a' that,
 The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
 The Man's the gowd for a' that.

What though on hamely fare we dine
 Wear hoodin grey, an' a' that';
 Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
 A Man's a Man for a' that:
 For a' that, an' a' that,
 Their tinsel show, an' a' that;
 The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,
 Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie ca'd a lord,
 Wha struts, an' stares an' a' that;
 Tho' hundreds worship at his word,
 He's but a coof for a' that:
 For a' that, an' a' that,
 His ribband, star, an' a' that:
 The man o' independent mind,
 He looks an' laughs at a' that.

A prince can mak a belted knight
 A marquis, duke, an' a' that;
 But an honest man's aboon his might,
 Guid faith, he maunna fa' that!
 For a' that, an' a' that,
 Their dignities an' a' that;
 The pith o' sense, an' pride o' worth,
 Are higher rank than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may,
 (As come it will for a' that,)
That Sense and Worth, o'er a' the earth,
 Shall bear the gree, an' a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
 It's coming yet for a' that,
That Man to Man, the world o'er,
 Shall brothers be for a' that.

1810

GEORGE CRABBE

from *The Borough*, XVIII
 ["all our poor to know"]

Here is no pavement, no inviting shop,
 To give us shelter when compell'd to stop;
 But plashy puddles stand along the way,
 Fill'd by the rain of one tempestuous day;
 And these so closely to the buildings run,
 That you must ford them, for you cannot shun;
 Though here and there convenient bricks are laid,
 And door-side heaps afford their dubious aid.

* * *

Lo! yonder shed; observe its garden ground
 With the low paling, form'd of wreck, around:
 There dwells a fisher; if you view his boat,
 With bed and barrel 't is his house afloat;
 Look at his house, where ropes, nets, blocks, abound,
 Tar, pitch, and oakum – 't is his boat aground:
 That space enclosed, but little he regards,
 Spread o'er with relics of masts, sails, and yards:
 Fish by the wall, on spit of elder, rest,
 Of all his food, the cheapest and the best,
 By his own labour caught, for his own hunger dress'd.

Here our reformers come not; none object
 To paths polluted, or upbraid neglect;
 None care that ashy heaps at doors are cast,
 That coal-dust flies along the blinding blast:
 None heed the stagnant pools on either side,
 Where new-launch'd ships of infant sailors ride:

1840

THOMAS HOOD

from Miss Kilmansegg and her Precious Leg

Tradition said he feather'd his nest
 Through an Agricultural Interest
 In the Golden Age of Farming;
 When golden eggs were laid by the geese
 And Colehian sheep wore a golden fleece
 And golden pippins – the sterling kind
 Of Hesperus – now so hard to find –
 Made Horticulture quite charming.

A Lord of Land, on his own estate,
 He lived at a very lively rate,
 But his income would bear carousing;
 Such acres he had of pasture and heath,
 With herbage so rich from the ore beneath,
 The very ewes' and lambkins' teeth
 Were turned into gold by browsing.

'Twas said that even his pigs of lead
 By crossing with some by Midas bred,
 Made a perfect mine of his piggery.
 And as for cattle, one yearling bull
 Was worth all Smithfield-market full
 Of the Golden Bulls of Pope Gregory.

He had rolled in money like pigs in mud,
 Till it seem'd to have enter'd into his blood
 By some occult projection:
 And his cheeks, instead of a healthy hue,
 As yellow as any guinea grew
 Making the common phrase seem true
 About a rich complexion.

These verses recall Catullus CXV, 2000 years earlier:
 Mentula has something like thirty acres of grazing land, forty of plough-land:
 the rest is salt water. How can he fail to surpass Croesus in wealth, who
 occupies so many good things in one estate, pasture, arable, vast woods and
 cattle-ranges and lakes as far as the Hyperboreans and the Great Sea? All this
 is wonderful: but he himself is the greatest wonder of all, not a man like the
 rest of us, but a monstrous menacing Mentuta. – Catullus, 87-45? B.C. – Prose
 translation by F. W. Cornish, The Loeb Classical library.

1841

ROBERT BROWNING

from *Pippa Passes* - Act II

Give her but a least excuse to love me!
 When – where –
How – can this arm establish her above me,
 If fortune fixed her as my lady there,
There already, to eternally reprove me?
 ('Hist!' – said Kate the queen;
But 'Oh' – cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
 'Tis only a page that carols unseen,
'Crumbling your hounds their messes!')

Is she wronged – To the rescue of her honour,
 My heart!
Is she poor? – What costs it to be styled a donor?
 Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part.
But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her!
 ('My, list!' – bade Kate the queen;
And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,
 'Tis only a page that carols unseen,
'Fitting your hawks their jesses!')

This tragedy of caste is sharp with implicit censure of its stupidity. The poem is one of the few written in the 19th century to be sung, because (not in spite) of its energies.

c.1846

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

Epithalamium

Weep Venus and ye
Adorable Three
Who Veus for ever environ.
Pounds, shillings and pence
And shrewd sober sense
Have clapt the strait wasitcoat on * * *

Off Lainot and Turk
With pistol and dirk,
Nor palace nor pinnace set fire on,
The cord's fatal jerk
Has done its last work
And the noose is now slipped upon * * *

Asterisks by the author

1865

H.C. WORK

The year of Jubilee

Say, darkeys, hab you seen de massa,
 Wid de muffstash on he face,
 Go long de road some time dis mornin',
 Like he gwine leabe de place?
 He see de smoke way up de ribber
 Whar de Lincum gunboats lay;
 He took he hat an' leff berry sudden,
 And I spose he's runned away.
 De massa run? ha! ha!
 De darkey stay? ho, ho!
 It must be now de kingdum comin',
 An' de year ob Jubilo.

He six foot one way, two feet tudder,
 And he weighs tree hundred pounds,
 His coat so big he couldn't pay de tailor,
 And it won't go half way round.
 He drill so much dey call him Cap'an,
 An' he get so drefful tann'd,
 I spec he try an' fool dem Yankees
 For to tink he's contraband.
 De massa run? ha! ha!
 De darkey stay? ho! ho!
 It must be now de kingdom comin'
 An' de year ob Jubilo!

De darkeys got so lonesome libb'n
 In de log hut on de lawn
 Dey moved dere tings into massa's parlor
 For to keep it while he gone.
 Dar's wine an' cider in de kitchin,
 An' de darkeys day hab some,
 I spec it will be all fiscated,
 When de Lincum sojers come.
 De massa run, ha, ha!
 De darkey stay, ho! ho!
 It mus' be now de kingdum comin',
 An' de year ob Jubile!

De oberseer he makes us trouble,
An' he dribe us roun' a spell,
We lock him up in de smoke-house cellar,
Wid de key flung in de well.
De whip am lost, de hun'-cuff broke,
But de massy hab his pay:
He big an' ole enough for to know better
Dan to went an' run away.
De massa run, ha, ha!
De darkey stay, ho, ho!
It mus' be now de kingdom comin',
An' de year ob Jubilo.

Sung by the negro troops they entered Richmond, 1865.

1868-9

ROBERT BROWNING

from *The Ring and the Book* - II

These wretched Comparini were once gay
And galliard, of the modest middle class:
Born in this quarter seventy yeas ago
And married young, they lived the accustomed life,
Citizens as they were of good repute:
And, childless, naturally took their ease
With only their two selves to care about
And use the wealth for: wealthy is the word,
Since Pietro was possessed of house and land –
And specially one house, when good days smiled,
In Via Vittoria, the aspectable street
Where he lived mainly; but another house
Of less pretension did he buy betimes,
The villa, meant for jaunts and jollity,
I' the Pauline district, to be private there –
Just what puts murder in an enemy's head,
Moreover – here's the worm i' the core, the germ –
O' the rottenness and ruin which arrived, –
He owned some usufruct, had money's use
Lifelong, but to determine with his life
In heirs' default: so, Pietra craved an heir

1830-1886

EMILY DICKINSON

(first published, 1929)

Revolution is the pod
Systems rattle from;
When the winds of
Will are stirred,
Excellent is bloom.

But except its russet
Base
Every summer be
The entomber of itself;
So of Liberty.

Left inactive on the
Stalk,
All its purple fled,
Revolution shakes it
For
Test if it be dead.

1898-1918

GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE

an arrangement from the poems

(Morgue)

And all together arms over arms under
Trilling military airs

At last I have the right to greet beings I do not know

I am no longer
Myself
I am the fifteenth
Of the eleventh

– Machines
Luxury and beauty which are only their spray

Passing me on the street the nigger Sam MacVea
Grieved that I was so much blacker than he

A Final Chapter

All the people will hurry to the square
Whites and blacks and yellow men and a few red
Workers from factories whose chimneys will
not be smoking because of the strike
Masons with plaster on their clothes
Butcher boys their hands still bloody from
the meat
Journeyman bakers pale with the flour sprinkling them
And the rank and file of clerks and the shopkeepers
who once employed them
Women terrible to look at carrying
children and some with others gripping their
skirts
Poor women without shame in make-up
and nodding strangely
The crippled the blind the maimed the
one-handed the limping
Even some priests and a few dressed with
elegance
And on the outskirts of the square the city
will seem dead even to its old trembling

translated by L.Z.

1919

ANDRÉ SALMON

an arrangement from *Prikaz*

The Hermitage is on fire, the Museum of Alexander
 Warms its grief in its cinders;
 In an attic in the Kameny quarter
 A coming honeymoon is blessed by a dying father.

The colonel and his five daughters
 Go bathing each Tuesday
 At the navel of Nadine
 The cold of a carabine
 Under the wheels of the telegas
 Your breasts of coral, Olga.
 The youngest is Daicha –
 Drowned to be fished up again.

Perfection!
 And sublime enormity!
 The train without direction,
 The train without schedule,
 The train sped by a fool student pursuing his studies.

The navel of Nadine
 Quavers like a cow-bell
 At the pearl belly of Sophie
 Gazes love which she defied.

A Lett soldier
 Tears her hair, crushes her under his boots, and cries
 “All things are wrecked by women!”

A council of soldiers is held at the Opera.
 A black and gray crow followed by rats
 Crosses the Neva lined with tilted reflectors;
 for the downfall begins.

They hoist the black flags of danger on the tower of the
Newsy,
The Kchessinska passes in her droshky.
Halt! a little sergeant
Infantile, glowing rose and blond,
Makes a sign to his men, peasants and workers in arms –
Allow me, the noble watch of the proletariat –

If they have shed blood, they have banished the lie!