

Poetry in *To The Lighthouse*

Compiled by Kim Provost McBee



"Sirens' Song" by William Browne

STEER, hither steer your wingæd pines,
All beaten mariners!
Here lie Love's undiscover'd mines,
A prey to passengers—
Perfumes far sweeter than the best
Which make the Phoenix' urn and nest.
Fear not your ships,
Nor any to oppose you save our lips;
But come on shore,
Where no joy dies till Love hath gotten more.

For swelling waves our panting breasts,
Where never storms arise,
Exchange, and be awhile our guests:
For stars gaze on our eyes.
The compass Love shall hourly sing,
And as he goes about the ring,
We will not miss
To tell each point he nameth with a kiss.
—Then come on shore,
Where no joy dies till Love hath gotten more.

To view one of the only online text links to the poetry of William Browne:

<http://www.bibliomania.com/Poetry/OxfordEnglishVerse/obev068.html>



"The Castaway" by William Cowper

Obscurest night involved the sky,
Th' Atlantic billows roared,
When such a destined wretch as I,
Washed headlong from on board,
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,
His floating home for ever left.

No braver chief could Albion boast
Than he with whom he went,
Nor ever ship left Albion's coast,
With warmer wishes sent.
He loved them both, but both in vain,
Nor him beheld, nor her again.

Not long beneath the whelming brine,
Expert to swim, he lay;
Nor soon he felt his strength decline,
Or courage die away;
But waged with death a lasting strife,
Supported by despair of life.

He shouted: nor his friends had failed
To check the vessel's course,
But so the furious blast prevailed,
That, pitiless perforce,
They left their outcast mate behind,
And scudded still before the wind.

Some succour yet they could afford;
And, such as storms allow,
The cask, the coop, the floated cord,
Delayed not to bestow.
But he (they knew) nor ship, nor shore,
Whate'er they gave, should visit more.

Nor, cruel as it seemed, could he
Their haste himself condemn,
Aware that flight, in such a sea,
Alone could rescue them;

Yet bitter felt it still to die
Deserted, and his friends so nigh.

He long survives, who lives an hour
In ocean, self-upheld
And so long he, with unspent pow'r,
His destiny repell'd;
And ever, as the minutes flew,
Entreated help, or cried-"Adieu!"
At length, his transient respite past,
His comrades, who before
Had heard his voice in every blast,
Could catch the sound no more .
For then, by toil subdued, he drank
The stifling wave, and then he sank.

No poet wept him: but the page
Of narrative sincere,
That tells his name, his worth, his age,
Is wet with Anson's tear :
And tears by bards or heroes shed
Alike immortalize the dead.

I therefore purpose not, or dream,
Descanting on his fate,
To give the melancholy theme
A more enduring date:
But misery still delights to trace
Its 'semblance in another's case.

No voice divine the storm allayed,
No light propitious shone,
When, snatched from all effectual aid,
We perished, each alone :
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelmed in deeper gulfs than he.

For a great link to other William Cowper poetry and hymns:
<http://www.puritansermons.com/poetry/cowpindx.htm>



“Luriana Lurilee” by Charles Elton

Come out and climb the Garden path
Luriana, Lurilee.
The China rose is all abloom
And buzzing with the yellow bee.
We'll swing you on the cedar bough,
Luriana, Lurilee.

I wonder if it seems to you,
Luriana, Lurilee,
That all the lives we ever lived
And all the lives to be,
are full of trees and changing leaves,
Luriana, Lurilee.

How long it seems since you and I,
Luriana, Lurilee,
Roamed in the forest where our kind
Had just begun to be,
And laughed and chattered in the flowers,
Luriana, Lurilee.

How long since you and I went out,
Luriana, Lurilee,
To see the Kings go riding by
Over lawn and daisy lea,
With their palm leaves and cedar sheaves,
Luriana, Lurilee.

Swing, swing, swing on a bough,
Luriana, Lurilee,
Till you sleep in a humble heap
Or under a gloomy churchyard tree,
And then fly back to swing on a bough,
Luriana, Lurilee. +

+from *Another World Than This...*: an anthology compiled by V. Sackville-West
and Harold Nicolson 1945 p109

*He was related by marriage to Lytton Strachey. This is why Virginia Woolf
knew this unknown poem and quoted in *To the Lighthouse* (1927).
cf. VW's letter to Philippa Strachey (13 Dec. 1927)



"Sonnet 98" by William Shakespeare

From you have I been absent in the spring,
When proud-pied April, dress'd in all his trim,
Hath put a spirit of youth in every thing,
That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leapt with him.
Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
Of different flowers in odour and in hue,
Could make me any summer's story tell,
Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew:
Nor did I wonder at the lily's white,
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose;
They were but sweet, but figures of delight,
Drawn after you, you pattern of all those.
Yet seem'd it winter still, and you away,
As with your shadow I with these did play.

A great link to other Shakespeare sonnets:

<http://www.shakespeares-sonnets.com/index.htm>



“The Charge of the Light Brigade” by Alfred Lord Tennyson

I.

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
'Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!' he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

II.

'Forward, the Light Brigade!'
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
Some one had blunder'd:
Their's not to make reply,
Their's not to reason why,
Their's but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

III.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell
Rode the six hundred.

IV.

Flash'd all their sabres bare,
Flash'd as they turn'd in air
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wonder'd:

Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right thro' the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reel'd from the sabre-stroke
Shatter'd and sunder'd.
Then they rode back, but not
Not the six hundred.

V.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came thro' the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

VI.

When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wonder'd.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!

A great link to other Tennyson poetry:
<http://tennysonpoetry.home.att.net/ci.htm>

Sources

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