A Chapbook Anthology of Female Romantic Poets Writing in English

Collected and edited by
students in English 427
Topics in the Romantic Period
Summer 2020
Simon Fraser University

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Introduction

Nicky Didicher, Simon Fraser University

This chapbook anthology of poems by female-identifying Romantic-era poets writing in English is the product of a senior-year seminar in English literature at Simon Fraser University in the Summer term of 2020. Each student found a poet and poem that interested them and contributed a section to the chapbook: each section contains a headnote with biographical/other contextual information, an edited version of the poem, and explanatory footnotes.

We hope that you will enjoy the range of poets and poems in our selection, arranged chronologically by birth year. We have included mainly English poets but also Anglo-Irish, Scots, Canadian settler, and enslaved African American. Of the thirteen poets in the anthology, five died before the age of fifty and four lived into their eighties. Some of the poems we chose have a domestic and suitably feminine focus (by the standards of the time), including elegies and poems about nature and children. Some, however, focus on politics, warfare, and social justice. Some of their names were well-known in their own day—e.g. Charlotte Smith, Felicia Hemans, Mary Robinson, Hannah More—and some were and are next to unknown. For example, "the Widow Fleck" is someone we know nothing about, only what she chooses to share with us on her title page. If you find a poet here whose poem/life intrigues you, we encourage you to seek out her other work.

Editorial Practices

For each of these poems, we have attempted to find the earliest print copy to use as a copy text. In cases where the poems were published long after their composition, we attempted to use online photo facsimiles of manuscripts where available. The overall editorial practice has been 1) to retain original indentation and capitalization patterns and 2) to retain original spelling and punctuation except where they might be confusing to readers (for example, in one instance "your'e" was changed to "you're").

Because we created this chapbook anthology in the summer of 2020, COVID-19 restrictions meant that physical library buildings were off limits, and it was not possible to check student choices of poems and student-authored footnotes against those in existing print anthologies. Any resemblance between our footnotes and those that may be found in print-only anthologies we could not access is coincidental, and we regret not being able to check for any unintentional plagiarism.

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Anna Seward

Jacob Goldbeck, Simon Fraser University

Anna Seward was born in 1742 in Derbyshire, England, though her family moved shortly thereafter to Lichfield, where she would spend most of her life. Thomas Seward, her father, was the canon of the Lichfield Cathedral, and encouraged the young Seward to study literature and theology. Her poetic talents were evident early on, though she would not publish her first poem until 1780 with her "Elegy on Captain Cook." The "Elegy" was widely acclaimed, and Seward would go on to pursue a highly successful career as a poet, admired for her knowledge of English literature and her powerful, patriotic verse: Henry F. Cary once called her the "immortal muse of Britain." Seward was also known as a public intellectual and literary critic, engaging in debates with James Boswell and participating in literary and scientific circles with Samuel Johnson, Erasmus Darwin, and Walter Scott. Seward died in Lichfield in 1809. She left behind several unpublished poems, amongst them an unfinished epic titled "Telemachus," and voluminous correspondence.

Seward's "Philippic on a Modern Epic" (1797) is a piece of poetic criticism, written in blank verse, critiquing Robert Southey's epic *Joan of Arc* (1796). A celebration of both French historical triumphs and the ongoing French Revolution, of which Southey was an enthusiastic supporter, *Joan of Arc* blends his politics with the history of the Hundred Years' War and the military success of Joan of Arc. Seward's "Philippic" is a denunciation of his radical politics, accusing Southey of besmirching the English participation in the war and the achievements of monarchs such as Edward III and Henry V. Seward celebrates famous English victories such as Agincourt and Crécy, using this nationalistic backdrop in order to vilify France and its revolutionary efforts. However, her criticism is intermingled with an appreciation for Southey's talent; she regrets his politics, but she calls him a "sun-born Genius" and describes his poetry as possessing "dire splendor."

Southey responded to Seward's poem, writing venomously that it demonstrated "an acquaintance with at least the language of poetry." Though they would trade words about their political beliefs, the two grew to share mutual respect and would later meet in person in Lichfield in 1808. Southey wrote of Seward that she was "not so much over-rated at one time, as she has since been

unduly depreciated," and claimed that in her writing there were "unquestionable proofs of extraordinary talents and great ability."

Seward also believed Southey to be an excellent poet, notably after the publication of his epic *Madoc* (1805), which she lauded, and she would later come to respect his character as well as his talents. She later added a footnote to her "Philippic" in which she agreed with some of Southey's anti-English rhetoric, writing that her government was a "sanguinary system" and claiming that Southey's *Joan of Arc* "proceeded from benevolence to the human race." Seward's footnote provides a powerful alteration to the "Philippic," and allows for several new readings. Southey also underwent a political change of heart, cooling in his radical thinking as he aged and eventually becoming an ardent English patriot. Southey would come to revise *Joan of Arc* nearly forty years after its initial publication, cleaning up the verse but also significantly softening the fierce Revolutionary commentary which pervaded the text. Though Seward's footnote is not so complete a revision, it provides the "Philippic" with a similarly new dimension as a poem changed retroactively by its author's political evolution.

Further Reading

Blanch Serrat, Francesca. "'I mourn their nature, but admire their art': Anna Seward's Assertion of Critical Authority in Maturity and Old Age." *ES Review: Spanish Journal of English Studies*, vol. 40, 2019, pp. 11–31.

Pratt, Lynda. "Is He 'Well-Authenticated'? Robert Southey and Anna Seward." *Literature and Authenticity, 1780-1900*, ed. Ashley Chantler, Michael Davies, Philip Shaw, Routledge, 2016, pp. 25-37.

Raimond, Jean. "Southey's Early Writings and the Revolution." *The Yearbook of English Studies,* vol. 19, 1989, pp. 181–196.

"Philippic on a Modern Epic"[1]

Base is the purport of this epic song,
Baneful its powers;---but O! the poesy!
(What can it less when sun-born Genius sings?)
Wraps in reluctant ecstacy the soul
Where poesy is felt;---tho' here it paint
In all the lurid traits of Nero's heart,
The high heroic spirit of that prince
Who graced the crown he wore; Britannia's boast,
Harry of Monmouth![2] ---he, who ne'er exposed
His ardent legions on the deathful plain
Where flamed not his broad shield, nor his white plumes,
Play'd in the battle's van.---What claim'd he then
From France, at the sword's point, but ceded rights
Howe'er perfidiously with-held, when pledg'd
For aye to England, after the proud day
Of Cressy's thundering field?[3] Then Gallia's star
Sunk, and the planet of the argent shores
Rose glittering on the zenith's azure height,[4]
What time upon the broken spears of France,

---

[1] First published in 1797 as "Lines Written after Reading Southey's *Joan of Arc*" and republished later as "Philippic on a Modern Epic." The text and footnotes I use here are taken from the 1810 edition in *The Poetical Works of Anna Seward; with Extracts from Her Literary Correspondence*. I use the later edition specifically for the inclusion of Seward's revelatory footnote, and the text has no substantial differences from its earlier publication.

[2] Henry V, king of England from 1413 to 1422 and known for his military achievement in the Hundred Years' War.

[3] Edward III routed Philip VI at Crécy despite being outnumbered some two-to-one.

[4] Seward uses an astronomical metaphor in which France is "Gallia's star" and England is the "planet of the argent shores," the "argent" or silver shores perhaps referring to the White Cliffs of Dover.

And prostrate helms, immortal Glory stood,
And with the lilies of that vaunting clime,
Like a gay bridegroom, wreath'd the victor brows
Of her great Edward.[5] ---O! unnatural boy!
O beardless parricide![6] thy treacherous Muse
In the dire splendour of Medusa's charms
Balefully deck'd, an impious task essays,
Lab'ring to turn to deadliest aconite
The laurel wreaths of Agincourt;[7]---to brand
The hallow'd lustre of the British name
With slavish meanness, with rapacious avarice,
And the wolf's rage. Britain, whose martial fire
Applauding ages have pronounced adorn'd
With fair munificence, and temper'd still
By God-like mercy's sway,---O, dark of heart,
As luminous of fancy! quit, for shame,
Quit each insidious pretence to virtue,
To Christian faith, and pity!---Dry thy tears
For age-pass'd woes, they are the crocodile's,
And o'er the murder of the royal victims,
And o'er the Christian faith's apostacy,
Witness'd in France, cry, "Vive la Liberte!"
Dip thy young hands in her o'er-flowing chalice,
Brimm'd with the gore of age, infants, and beauty,

[5] Edward III, who ruled England from 1327-1377 and who started the Hundred Years' War when he laid claim to the French throne in 1337.
[6] The "beardless parricide" is Southey, though the exact meaning of the phrase is unclear. It may be accusing Southey of "slaying" the "fathers of the nation" in Henry and Edward.
[7] Henry V scored a famous victory at Agincourt where he defeated a numerically superior French army. "Aconite" is a poisonous plant, also known as monkshood.

And, throwing thy red cap aloft in air,[8]
Laugh with the fierce hyena![9]

[8] The "red cap" is a reference to the *bonnet rouge* or the red Phrygian cap commonly worn by French revolutionaries.

[9] [Author's note] Cooler reflection, and a long experience of the mischiefs resulting from the sanguinary system which this government has unwarned pursued through the last 14 years, have justified this Poet's representation of Henry the Fifth's conduct in invading France, and convinced me that the deprecation in JOAN OF ARC of monarchical ambition and rapacity, under that proud and specious term *Military Glory*, proceeded from benevolence to the Human race, and from a spirit of justice too firm to be warped by the vanity of national enthusiasm.

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Anna Laetitia Barbauld

Yumna Parker, Simon Fraser University

Anna Laetitia Barbauld was a Romantic poet born in Kibworth Harcourt in Leicestershire, England on June 20th, 1743. The village Barbauld grew up in did not give her a female companion. Barbauld's parents, John and Jane Aikin, were her teachers. Her mother ingrained feminine shyness and bashfulness into her, causing her to be reserved in front of men. This seclusion paved her path in education. She was shaped into a poet by her father's library. The poet is known for works such as "The Mouse's Petition" and "The Rights of Woman." Although Barbauld was outspoken in many of her poems, current critics are divided as to whether we should consider her a feminist. Barbauld died on March 9th, 1825.

Her niece who edited her poetry posthumously in 1825 identifies "To the Poor" as written in 1795. Barbauld had somewhat reduced social status as a Dissenter – a Protestant who does not take communion in an Anglican church—but was not poverty-stricken. Although the poem is specifically addressed to the poor, the reader of her collection is going to be in the middle and upper classes. Read from this point of view, the poem would be not so much advice to the poor to put up with oppression, but criticism of the upper classes for that oppression.

"To the Poor" is a didactic poem that inspires the reader to act on behalf of those who are crushed by those with affluence and power. The poem is in iambic pentameter couplets and uses the pronoun "thou" instead of "you," giving a formal tone to a somber poem with a dangerous message of hope for the poor and condemnation for the priests and kings who have consistently harmed them. According to Brad Sullivan, the poem "brilliantly walks a razor's edge." He also says the poem "turns the simple injunctions of the privileged on their heads, suggesting to them just how absurd they are," while recognizing "that the problems will not simply be *fixed* – particularly by rebellion" (Sullivan). "To the Poor" describes the absurdity of the privileged and the helplessness of the poor.

Further Reading

Barbauld, Anna Laetitia. *The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld: With a Memoir*, 1825, edited by Lucy Aikin, vol. 1, Cambridge University Press, 2014. doi:10.1017/CBO9781107589148.

McCarthy, William, and Olivia Murphy. "Riddling Sibyl, Uncanny Cassandra, Barbauld's Recent Critical Reception." *Anna Letitia Barbauld: New Perspectives*, edited by Professor William McCarthy, and Olivia Murphy, Bucknell University Press, 2013, pp. 235-251.

References

Sullivan, Brad. "'Cultivating a 'Dissenting Frame of Mind': Radical Education, the Rhetoric of Inquiry, and Anna Barbauld's Poetry." *Romanticism on the Net*, no. 45, Feb. 2007.

"To the Poor"[1]

CHILD of distress[2], who meet'st the bitter scorn
Of fellow-men to happier prospects born,
Doomed Art and Nature's various stores to see
Flow in full cups of joy[3]—and not for thee[4];
Who seest the rich, to heaven and fate resigned,
Bear *thy* afflictions with a patient mind;
Whose bursting heart disdains unjust control,
Who feel'st oppression's iron in thy soul,
Who dragg'st the load of faint and feeble years,
Whose bread is anguish, and whose water tears;
Bear, bear thy wrongs—fulfill thy destined hour,
Bend thy meek neck beneath the foot of Power;
But when thou feel'st the great deliverer nigh[5],
And thy freed spirit mounting seeks the sky,
Let no vain fears thy parting hour molest[6],
No whispered terrors shake thy quiet breast:
Think not their threats can work thy future woe,
Nor deem the Lord above like lords below;—
Safe in the bosom of that love repose
By whom the sun gives light, the ocean flows;

---

[1] Copytext from 1825 posthumous publication, edited by Lucy Aikin.
[2] The poem addresses poor people as the product of/inheritors of distress.
[3] "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows" (Psalm 23:5).
[4] The poor person is doomed to see both human-created resources and natural resources go to the rich.
[5] Death, God, or Jesus: e.g. "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob" (Romans 11:26).
[6] Pester or harass aggressively.

Prepare to meet a Father[7] undismayed,

Nor fear the God whom priests and kings[8] have made.[9]

[7] God.

[8] King George III was the King of Great Britain and Ireland circa 1760 to 1820. The king of England is the head of the Church of England (also known as Anglican or Episcopal).

[9] [Lucy Aikin's note (1825)] These lines, written in 1795, were described by Mrs. B., on sending them to a friend, as "inspired by indignation on hearing sermons in which the poor are addressed in a manner which evidently shows the design of making religion an engine of government."

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Hannah More

Lindsay Ho-Sekimoto, Simon Fraser University

Hannah More (1745-1833) was a writer and philanthropist dedicated to Abolition and education for all. Born in Bristol, England, she was the fourth of five daughters to Mary Grace and Jacob More. More was engaged at twenty-two, but like all her sisters never married, and they maintained a close sibling relationship. In an era when women were expected to be domesticated, More's mother and schoolmaster father rebelled against gender roles by educating their daughters in academics from a young age. William Turner, a wealthy landowner twenty years More's senior, broke off their engagement in 1773 after postponing their wedding three times in six years. The two-hundred-pound annuity More received from Turner for breaking their engagement enabled her to retire from teaching at her family's school and dedicate her time to writing. In 1773 More published the first play she had written eleven years earlier at the age of seventeen: *The Search After Happiness: A Pastoral Drama for Young Ladies* (1762). More wrote two more plays, *The Inflexible Captive* (1774) and *Percy* (1777), before turning to religious writing with *Sacred dramas: chiefly intended for young persons: the subjects taken from the Bible. To which is added, Sensibility, a poem* (1782).

After hearing a sermon by John Newton in 1787, More became a member of the Clapham Sect, a group consisting of wealthy philanthropist evangelicals. In the Clapham Sect, More was introduced to William Wilberforce, a British politician and active leader in the Abolitionist movement. Their friendship inspired her devotion to the Abolitionist cause. In 1788 More wrote *Slavery, a Poem* in support of Wilberforce's parliamentary campaign to pass his Slave Trade Act. Widely distributed as propaganda throughout Britain, this poem contributed to the end of slavery in the British empire. Written in iambic pentameter, the condensed epic juxtaposes civility with barbarity, to appeal to intellect, emotion, and morality. In just under three hundred lines, the poem poses rhetorical questions and invokes divinity, writers, explorers, geographic locales, and the mistreatment of slaves. The simple heroic couplet rhyme scheme echoes the poem's direct humanitarian call to end slavery. For forty-five years after 1788 More dedicated her life to Abolition and followed in her family's footsteps to open her own schools to educate impoverished children. More survived all her sisters and lived to see the passing of the British Slavery Abolition Act of 1833.

She passed away a few months later from health complications at the age of eighty-eight.

Further Reading

"Hannah More (1745-1833)." *British Women Poets of the Romantic Era: An Anthology*, edited by Paula R. Feldman, John Hopkins University P, 1997, pp. 468-482.

Carey, Brycchan. "Slavery and Romanticism." *Literature Compass*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2006, pp. 397-408. Wiley Online Library, doi: 10.1111/j.1741-4113.2006.00327.x.

Prior, Karen Swallow. *Fierce Convictions: The Extraordinary Life of Hannah More: Poet, Reformer, Abolitionist*. Nelson Books, 2014.

Slavery, a Poem[1]

IF Heaven has into being deign'd[2] to call
Thy light, O LIBERTY! to shine on all;
Bright intellectual Sun! why does thy ray
To earth distribute only partial day?
Since no resisting cause from spirit flows
Thy penetrating essence to oppose;
No obstacles by Nature's hand imprest,
Thy subtle and ethereal beams arrest;
Nor motion's laws can speed thy active course,
Nor strong repulsion's pow'rs obstruct thy force;
Since there is no convexity[3] in MIND,
Why are thy genial[4] beams to parts confin'd?
While the chill North[5] with thy bright ray is blest,
Why should fell darkness half the South[6] invest?
Was it decreed, fair Freedom! at thy birth,
That thou shou'd'st ne'er irradiate *all* the earth?
While Britain basks in thy full blaze of light,
Why lies sad Afric quench'd in total night?
    Thee only, sober Goddess![7] I attest,
In smiles chastis'd, and decent graces drest.[8]

[1] Published in 1788, reproduced in *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online*. This poem was later revised and published in *The Works of Hannah More, vol. 2* (London, 1830). The 1830 version is retitled "The Black Slave Trade. A Poem" and expanded to 356 lines.
[2] To do something considered undignified.
[3] State of being not straight.
[4] Characteristic of natural ability.
[5] Britain.
[6] Africa.
[7] Aequitas, Roman goddess of equity and fairness.
[8] Older form of "dressed."

Not that unlicens'd[9] monster of the crowd,
Whose roar terrific bursts in peals[10] so loud,
Deaf'ning the ear of Peace: fierce Faction's tool;
Of rash Sedition[11] born, and mad Misrule;
Whose stubborn mouth, rejecting Reason's rein,
No strength can govern, and no skill restrain;
Whose magic cries the frantic vulgar draw
To spurn at Order, and to outrage Law;
To tread on grave Authority and Pow'r,
And shake the work of ages in an hour:
Convuls'd[12] her voice, and pestilent[13] her breath,
She raves of mercy, while she deals out death:
Each blast is fate; she darts from either hand
Red conflagration[14] o'er th' astonish'd land;
Clamouring for peace, she rends the air with noise,
And to reform a part, the whole destroys.
    O, plaintive Southerne![15] whose impassion'd strain
So oft has wak'd my languid Muse in vain!
Now, when congenial themes her cares engage,
She burns to emulate thy glowing page;
Her failing efforts mock her fond desires,
She shares thy feelings, not partakes thy fires.

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[9] Lacking formal permission and control.
[10] Reverberating sound, as of thunder.
[11] Speech inciting rebellion.
[12] Involuntary contraction.
[13] Causing fatal disease.
[14] Vast fire destroying a great deal of land.
[15] [More's note] Author of the *Tragedy of Oronoko.* [my note] Thomas Southerne (1660-1746) adapted Aphra Behn's (1640-1689) novella *Oroonoko* (1688) for the stage in 1696. In Southerne's adaptation Oroonoko's lover, Imoinda, was changed from a Black slave to white middle-class woman.

Strange pow'r of song! the strain that warms the heart
Seems the same inspiration to impart;
Touch'd by the kindling energy alone,
We think the flame which melts us is our own;
Deceiv'd, for genius we mistake delight,
Charm'd as we read, we fancy we can write.
Tho' not to me, sweet Bard, thy pow'rs belong,
Fair Truth, a hallow'd[16] guide! inspires my song.
Here Art wou'd weave her gayest flow'rs in vain,
For Truth the bright invention wou'd disdain.
For no fictitious ills these numbers[17] flow,
But living anguish, and substantial woe;
No individual griefs my bosom melt,
For millions feel what Oronoko[18] felt:
Fir'd[19] by no single wrongs, the countless host
I mourn, by rapine[20] dragg'd from Afric's coast.
Perish th' illiberal[21] thought which wou'd debase
The native genius of the sable race![22]
Perish the proud philosophy, which sought
To rob them of the pow'rs of equal thought!
Does then th' immortal principle within
Change with the casual[23] colour of a skin?

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[16] Consecrated.
[17] Metrical period or feet in poetry.
[18] The character name of an African prince sold into slavery who risks death for love.
[19] Inflamed.
[20] Violent seizure of property, which can include kidnapping and rape.
[21] Bigoted.
[22] A description Phillis Wheatley used in "On Being Brought from Africa to America" (1773): "Some view our sable race with scornful eye" (line 5).
[23] Random.

Does matter govern spirit? or is mind
Degraded by the form to which 'tis join'd?
    No: they have heads to think, and hearts to feel,
And souls to act, with firm, tho' erring zeal;
For they have keen affections, kind desires,
Love strong as death, and active patriot fires;
All the rude energy, the fervid flame,
Of high-soul'd passion, and ingenuous shame:[24]
Strong, but luxuriant virtues boldly shoot
From the wild vigour of a savage root.
    Nor weak their sense of honour's proud control,
For pride is virtue in a Pagan soul;[25]
A sense of worth, a conscience of desert,[26]
A high, unbroken haughtiness of heart;
That self-same stuff which erst[27] proud empires sway'd,
Of which the conquerors of the world were made.
Capricious fate of man! that very pride
In Afric scourg'd, in Rome was deify'd.
    No Muse, O[28] Qua-shi! shall thy deeds relate,

---

[24] A description Thomas Gray used in "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751): "To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame" (line 70).
[25] A description Phillis Wheatley used in "On Being Brought From Africa to America" (1773): ""TWAS mercy brought me from my Pagan land, / Taught my benighted soul to understand" (lines 1-2)
[26] Deserving, not a landscape lacking water.
[27] Before.
[28] [More's note] It is a point of honour among negroes of a high spirit to die rather than to suffer their glossy skin to bear the mark of the whip. Qua-shi had somehow offended his master, a young planter with whom he had been bred up in the endearing intimacy of a play-fellow. His services had been faithful; his attachment affectionate. The master resolved to punish him, and pursued him for that purpose. In trying to escape Qua-shi stumbled and fell; the master fell upon him: they wrestled long with doubtful victory; at length Qua-shi got uppermost, and, being firmly seated on his master's breast, he secured his legs with one hand, and with the other drew a sharp knife; then said, "Master, I have been bred up with you from a child; I have loved you as myself: in return,

No statue snatch thee from oblivious fate!
For thou wast born where never gentle Muse
On Valour's grave the flow'rs of Genius strews;
And thou wast born where no recording page
Plucks the fair deed from Time's devouring rage.
Had Fortune plac'd thee on some happier coast,
Where polish'd souls heroic virtue boast,
To thee, who sought'st a voluntary grave,
Th' uninjur'd honours of thy name to save,
Whose generous arm thy barbarous Master spar'd,
Altars had smok'd, and temples had been rear'd.
Whene'er to Afric's shores I turn my eyes,
Horrors of deepest, deadliest guilt arise;
I see, by more than Fancy's mirror[29] shewn,
The burning village, and the blazing town:
See the dire victim torn from social life,
The shrieking babe, the agonizing wife!
She, wretch forlorn! is dragg'd by hostile hands,
To distant tyrants sold, in distant lands!
Transmitted miseries, and successive chains,
The sole sad heritage her child obtains!
Ev'n this last wretched boon their foes deny,
To weep together, or together die.
By felon hands, by one relentless stroke,
See the fond links of feeling Nature broke!

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you have condemned me to a punishment of which I must ever have borne the marks: thus only I can avoid them;" so saying, he drew the knife with all his strength across his own throat, and fell down dead, without a groan, on his master's body. Ramsay's *Essay on the Treatment of African Slaves.* [my note] Published by the Reverend James Ramsay, M.A. Vicar of Teston, In Kent (1784).

[29] Imagination.

The fibres twisting round a parent's heart,
Torn from their grasp, and bleeding as they part.
    Hold, murderers, hold! nor aggravate distress;
Respect the passions you yourselves possess;
Ev'n you, of ruffian heart, and ruthless hand,
Love your own offspring, love your native land.
Ah! leave them holy Freedom's cheering smile,
The heav'n-taught fondness for the parent soil;
Revere affections mingled with our frame,
In every nature, every clime the same;
In all, these feelings equal sway maintain;
In all the love of HOME and FREEDOM reign:
And Tempe's vale,[30] and parch'd Angola's sand,[31]
One equal fondness of their sons command.
Th' unconquer'd Savage laughs at pain and toil,
Basking in Freedom's beams which gild his native soil.
    Does thirst of empire, does desire of fame,
(For these are specious crimes[32]) our rage inflame?
No: sordid lust of gold their fate controls,
The basest appetite of basest souls;
Gold, better gain'd, by what their ripening sky,
Their fertile fields, their arts[33] and mines supply.
    What wrongs, what injuries does Oppression plead

[30] A valley between southern Olympus and northern Ossa in Greece. The setting is used in Robert Bland's poem *The Four Slaves of Cythera, a Romance in Ten Cantos*: "In Thracian snows, or Tempe's sunny vale" (London, 1809, p.31).
[31] In the years 1701-1800, the Portuguese used the West African coast as a major hub for slave export.
[32] Outwardly attractive but intrinsically superficial.
[33] [More's note] Besides many valuable productions of the soil, cloths and carpets of exquisite manufacture are brought from the coast of Guinea.

To smooth the horror of th' unnatural deed?
What strange offence, what aggravated sin?
They stand convicted—of a darker skin!
Barbarians,[34] hold! th' opprobrious[35] commerce spare,
Respect *his* sacred image[36] which they bear:
Tho' dark and savage, ignorant and blind,
They claim the common privilege of kind;[37]
Let Malice strip them of each other plea,
They still are men, and men shou'd still be free.
Insulted Reason loaths th' inverted trade[38]—
Dire change! the agent is the purchase made!
Perplex'd, the baffled Muse involves the tale;
Nature confounded, well may language fail!
The outrag'd Goddess with abhorrent eyes
Sees MAN the traffic, SOULS the merchandize![39]
Plead not, in reason's palpable abuse,
Their sense of[40] feeling callous and obtuse:
From heads to hearts lies Nature's plain appeal,
Tho' few can reason, all mankind can feel.
Tho' wit may boast a livelier dread of shame,
A loftier sense of wrong refinement claim;
Tho' polish'd manners may fresh wants invent,

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[34] Ironic description for British slavers instead of slaves.
[35] Language expressing scorn.
[36] Christian belief God has created all people equal and in God's image.
[37] Not kindness, but the same kind of creature.
[38] Illogic and immorality of the slave trade.
[39] Commoditizing of people.
[40] [More's note] Nothing is more frequent than this cruel and stupid argument, that they do not *feel* the miseries inflicted on them as Europeans would do. [my note] A misguided notion that Black people were impervious to pain and thus justified physical abuse.

And nice distinctions nicer souls torment;
Tho' these on finer spirits heavier fall,
Yet natural evils are the same to all.
Tho' wounds there are which reason's force may heal,
There needs no logic sure to make us feel.
The nerve, howe'er untutor'd, can sustain
A sharp, unutterable sense of pain;
As exquisitely fashion'd in a slave,
As where unequal fate a sceptre gave.
Sense is as keen where Congo's[41] sons preside,
As where proud Tiber[42] rolls his classic tide.
Rhetoric or verse may point the feeling line,
They do not whet[43] sensation, but define.
Did ever slave less feel the galling chain,
When Zeno[44] prov'd there was no ill in pain?[45]
Their miseries philosophic quirks deride,
Slaves groan in pangs disown'd by Stoic pride.
When the fierce Sun darts vertical his beams,
And thirst and hunger mix their wild extremes;
When the sharp iron[46] wounds his inmost soul,
And his strain'd eyes in burning anguish roll;
Will the parch'd negro find, ere he expire,

[41] After colonization by Belgian King Leopold II (1835-1909) millions were enslaved as labourers for the manufacture of rubber.
[42] Longest river in Italy, serving as the main watercourse for Rome.
[43] Sharpen.
[44] 5th c. B.C.E. Stoic philosopher known for propounding paradoxes.
[45] One of Zeno's paradoxes: pain is unpleasant but not evil.
[46] [More's note] This is not said figuratively. The writer of these lines has seen a complete set of chains, fitted to every separate limb of these unhappy, innocent men; together with instruments for wrenching open the jaws, contrived with such ingenious cruelty as would shock the humanity of an inquisitor.

No pain in hunger, and no heat in fire?
    For him, when fate his tortur'd frame destroys,
What hope of present fame, or future joys?
For *this,* have heroes shorten'd nature's date;
For *that,* have martyrs gladly met their fate;
But him, forlorn, no hero's pride sustains,
No martyr's blissful visions sooth his pains;
Sullen, he mingles with his kindred dust,
For he has learn'd to dread the Christian's trust;
To him what mercy can that Pow'r display,
Whose servants murder, and whose sons betray?
Savage! thy venial error I deplore,
They are *not* Christians who infest thy shore.
    O thou sad spirit, whose preposterous yoke[47]
The great deliverer Death, at length, has broke!
Releas'd from misery, and escap'd from care,
Go, meet that mercy man deny'd thee here.
In thy dark home, sure refuge of th' oppress'd,
The wicked vex not, and the weary rest.
And, if some notions, vague and undefin'd,
Of future terrors have assail'd[48] thy mind;
If such thy masters have presum'd to teach,
As terrors only they are prone to preach;
(For shou'd they paint eternal Mercy's reign,
Where were th' oppressor's rod, the captive's chain?)
If, then, thy troubled soul has learn'd to dread

[47] Oppressive agency.
[48] Assaulted.

The dark unknown thy trembling footsteps tread;
On HIM, who made thee what thou art, depend;
HE, who withholds the means, accepts the end.
Not *thine* the reckoning dire of LIGHT abus'd,
KNOWLEDGE disgrac'd, and LIBERTY misus'd;
On *thee* no awful judge incens'd shall sit
For parts[49] perverted,[50] and dishonour'd wit.
Where ignorance will be found the surest plea,
How many learn'd and wise shall envy *thee!*
    And thou, WHITE SAVAGE! whether lust of gold,
Or lust of conquest, rule thee uncontrol'd!
Hero, or robber!—by whatever name
Thou plead thy impious claim to wealth or fame;
Whether inferior mischiefs be thy boast,
A petty tyrant rifling Gambia's[51] coast:
Or bolder carnage track thy crimson[52] way,
Kings dispossess'd, and Provinces thy prey;
Panting to tame wide earth's remotest bound;
All Cortez[53] murder'd, all Columbus[54] found;
O'er plunder'd realms to reign, detested Lord,
Make millions wretched, and thyself abhorr'd;—
In Reason's eye, in Wisdom's fair account,

[49] Personal quality or attribute.
[50] Turned away from their natural state.
[51] The Portuguese participated in the slave trade as early as the 15th century in Gambia. It became a British colony in 1765 and was handed to France in 1783.
[52] Bloody.
[53] Spanish conquistador and explorer Hernán Cortéz (c. 1485-1547) murdered Indigenous Aztec peoples in his conquest of Mexico.
[54] Italian explorer Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) initiated the Atlantic slave trade and is responsible for Indigenous genocide in America.

Your sum of glory boasts a like amount;
The means may differ, but the end's the same;
Conquest is pillage with a nobler name.
Who makes the sum of human blessings less,
Or sinks the stock of general happiness,
No solid fame shall grace, no true renown,
His life shall blazon, or his memory crown.
    Had those advent'rous spirits who explore
Thro' ocean's trackless wastes, the far-sought shore;
Whether of wealth insatiate, or of pow'r,
Conquerors who waste, or ruffians who devour:
Had these possess'd, O COOK![55] thy gentle mind,
Thy love of arts, thy love of humankind;
Had these pursued thy mild and liberal plan,
DISCOVERERS had not been a curse to man!
Then, bless'd Philanthropy! thy social hands
Had link'd dissever'd worlds in brothers bands;
Careless, if colour, or if clime[56] divide;
Then, lov'd, and loving, man had liv'd, and died.
    The purest wreaths which hang on glory's shrine,
For empires founded, peaceful PENN![57] are thine;
No blood-stain'd laurels[58] crown'd thy virtuous toil,
No slaughter'd natives drench'd thy fair-earn'd soil.

[55] British cartographer and explorer James Cook (1728-1779) charted New Zealand and the east coast of Australia.
[56] Climate.
[57] Quaker William Penn (1644-1718) founded the colony of Pennsylvania as a place for religious freedom in America.
[58] A laurel wreath is a symbol of triumph dating back to Apollo in Greek mythology.

Still thy meek spirit in thy[59] flock survives,
Consistent still, *their* doctrines rule their lives;
Thy followers only have effac'd[60] the shame
Inscrib'd by SLAVERY on the Christian name.
    Shall Britain, where the soul of Freedom reigns,
Forge chains for others she herself disdains?
Forbid it, Heaven! O let the nations know
The liberty she loves she will bestow;
Not to herself the glorious gift confin'd,
She spreads the blessing wide as humankind;
And, scorning narrow views of time and place,
Bids all be free in earth's extended space.
    What page of human annals[61] can record
A deed so bright as human rights restor'd?
O may that god-like deed, that shining page,
Redeem OUR fame, and consecrate OUR age!
    And see, the cherub[62] Mercy from above,
Descending softly, quits the sphere of love!
On feeling hearts she sheds celestial dew,
And breathes her spirit o'er th' enlighten'd few;
From soul to soul the spreading influence steals,
Till every breast the soft contagion feels.
She bears, exulting, to the burning shore

[59] [More's note] The Quakers have emancipated all their slaves throughout America. [my note] Quakers are a Christian denomination formally known as the Religious Society of Friends or Friends Church, with a strong anti-slavery stance since 1688.
[60] Erased.
[61] Annual record of events.
[62] Winged angelic creature often depicted as a baby.

The loveliest office[63] Angel ever bore;
To vindicate the pow'r in Heaven ador'd,
To still the clank of chains, and sheathe the sword;
To cheer the mourner, and with soothing hands
From bursting hearts unbind th' Oppressor's bands;
To raise the lustre of the Christian name,
And clear the foulest blot that dims its fame.
    As the mild Spirit hovers o'er the coast,
A fresher hue the wither'd landscapes boast;
Her healing smiles the ruin'd scenes repair,
And blasted Nature wears a joyous air.
She spreads her blest commission from above,
Stamp'd with the sacred characters of love;
She tears the banner stain'd with blood and tears,
And, LIBERTY! thy shining standard rears!
As the bright ensign's glory she displays,
See pale OPPRESSION faints beneath the blaze!
The giant dies! no more his frown appals,[64]
The chain untouch'd, drops off; the fetter falls.
Astonish'd echo tells the vocal shore,
Oppression's fall'n, and Slavery is no more!
The dusky[65] myriads crowd the sultry plain,
And hail that mercy long invok'd in vain.
Victorious Pow'r! she bursts their two-fold bands,[66]
And FAITH and FREEDOM spring from Mercy's hands.

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[63] Duty.
[64] Disgusts.
[65] Euphemism for Black people.
[66] Chains or cuffs.

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Susanna Blamire

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Susanna Blamire (1747-1794) was a Romantic singer, songwriter, and poet born in Cumberland, England, whose works representing the working class and rural living gained her nickname "The Muse of Cumberland." In 1767, she accompanied her sister Sarah to Scotland, where Blamire remained for several years writing poetry and songs in both Cumbrian and Scottish dialects. Her writings were not intended for publication, but instead for friends and family. Her family held on to Blamire's works after her death, and pieces were eventually published in Edinburgh in 1842. "Moonlight" appeared in that first edition of *The Poetical Works of Miss Susanna Blamire.*

"Moonlight" is a poem of English and Scottish duality. The twenty lines are written in the iambic pentameter associated with classic English poetry, but with an ABAB rhyme scheme more closely associated with the ballad stanzas of folk poetry. Readers on both sides of the border would recognize elements drawn from the Gothic and graveyard styles, as dark naturalism plays a large part in the imagery of this poem. Blamire's folkloric poems incorporate Gaelic language, while her serious political works are in standard English. However, "Moonlight" is written in standard English but topically incorporates Scottish lore, making it one of the outliers of her collection.

Scottish folklore had a longer, darker history with nature spirits than the English did their fairies. Blamire's poems caution against interacting with nature spirits, while English myth often encouraged it. Writing "Moonlight" in standard English assured it would reach a more extensive audience than a dialect poem. References to Shakespeare allow English readers to connect nature spirits with malevolence, as an educated English audience would understand the reference to the devious nature of Shakespeare's mainstream fairy characters. The first line pulls from *The Merchant of Venice*, and while it is one of Shakespeare's plays that does not include fairies, other plays such as *A Midsummer Nights' Dream* and *The Tempest* do.

The myths of England and Scotland differ, and, since Blamire lived in both countries, she had access to a variety of stories. The language she uses in "Moonlight" shows both an appreciation for the Scottish faerie lore and the impact English influence had on their image.

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"Moonlight"[1]

"HOW sweet the moon now sleeps upon yon bank,"[2]
Cried Nature's first-born,[3] and delighted saw
Her fairy elves[4] play many a wily prank,
As she sail'd on majestically slow.
Her pale beams tremble o'er the sleeping flower,
The tall trees lengthen in the sombre gloom;
Her brighter gleams now light the leafy tower,
Now show the Gothic[5] arches of the dome.
A wandering cloud will sometimes cross her way,
Her head oft bowing lets the stranger pass,
While golden stars the canopy enlay,[6]
And shadowy forms fly o'er the waving grass.
In solemn groves, where silver[7] lamps late hung,
The fear-struck traveller sees huge spectres rise;
Sees grisly ghosts and stalking phantoms come,
As darkness draws the curtain of the skies.

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[1] This edition of "Moonlight" is based on the electronic text from the *Eighteenth-Century Poetry Archive* in collaboration with the Text Creation Partnership (ECCO_TCP project) of 2005.
[2] The opening line comes from the character Lorenzo of William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, in Act 5, Scene 1. Lorenzo's speech also contains lines about immortal bodies and gentle music.
[3] Many folkloric creatures are said to be born from Mother Nature. "Nature's first born" here alludes to a faerie Queen.
[4] In Scottish folklore, nature spirits would be called by their species name such as boggarts, kelpies, or bansidhes. Elves are not part of Celtic lore, and "fairy" is an English umbrella term that includes all species.
[5] Popular in the 1790s for focusing on mystery, horror, and both the dark natural and supernatural, Gothic literature has close ties to the Romantic. A Gothic-style arch was typically for churches or cathedrals and would have been both intricately carved and intimidatingly massive.
[6] An archaic use of "inlay," or imbedding a piece of different material into another (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2020).
[7] Silver is most well-known in legends for deterring werewolves, but silver and iron are metals that continuously appear in myths as being protection against magic.

In yonder tower the meditative mind
May suit the subject to the scene around,
Find some memento murmur[8] in the wind,
Or print[9] the smallest leaf that strews the ground. 20

[8] "Memento murmur" is similar to "memento mori," a reminder of death. Translated to "remember you must die," the phrase originally referred to a skull or death's head on a Puritan tombstone. In the Victorian era, memento mori grew in popularity as objects that gave the bearer a macabre reminder of death, including skulls, hair jewelry, or photographs of the deceased.
[9] Shortened version of archaic "imprint": to press into or leave a mark on a surface (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2020). In this context, Blamire says the speaker associates a memory with the wind or the leaves.

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Charlotte Smith

Juan Aguilar, Simon Fraser University

That Charlotte Smith (1749-1806) would be most remembered for her melancholy sonnets is appropriate given the life she lived. Financial difficulties would be the theme of Smith's life from an early age. Born to a well-off family, her father was forced to agree to an early marriage for Charlotte in the face of financial problems caused by his reckless spending and the early death of Charlotte's mother. Just short of her sixteenth birthday he arranged for Charlotte to be married to Benjamin Smith, the son of a wealthy merchant, an act she would never forgive her father for. Benjamin was an abusive, promiscuous, and profligate husband, soon spending not only his wages but a sizable amount of the fund left by his deceased father to his and Charlotte's children. As a result, Benjamin was jailed for his debts in 1783, where Charlotte joined him. Here Charlotte would pen the *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784) and publish them at her own expense to pay their debts and leave debtors' prison. This work would have lasting legacies, both for the sonnet form in the English language and for her contemporary poets, especially William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Jail taught Benjamin little: he would soon encounter continued financial difficulties and left the country to go into hiding, leaving Charlotte and their surviving nine young children to fend for themselves. With what remained of the fund left to her children stuck in legal wrangling with her husband's family, Charlotte turned to more lucrative efforts to maintain her family. Though she would always consider herself foremost a poet, Smith's precarious financial position saw her attentions pulled toward the more profitable novel. While constrained by cultural notions of what a woman could and should write, Smith was able to imbue as much of her own political and feminist beliefs as the book-buying public would allow. Smith became well-known for her novels, supplemented by new editions of the *Elegiac Sonnets*, and she was one of the young Jane Austen's favourite writers.

The Emigrants (1793), a blank verse poem, balances Smith's progressive and reformist views with allusions to the plight of those forced from France for political and religious reasons. By paralleling their difficulties with her own troubled situation, Smith was able to garner positive reviews for her work. Despite this critical success, her next few novels drew fewer and fewer sales. Events had

conspired to continue to make Smith's life difficult: her early support for the French Revolution came back to haunt her as English taste for the war soured. As she aged and her income decreased, she fell prey to sickness and poverty. The last years of Smith's life saw her struggling to keep herself fed and warm, the cold only worsening her arthritis. Unable to write, she was forced to sell her precious collection of books to avoid returning to prison for debt. The death of her separated husband Benjamin in February of 1806 saw some money at last head in her direction. However, by this time Smith's condition had deteriorated. She would die only a few months later in October 1806. The trust left to her children would not be settled for seven years after her death, yet she was able to properly provide for her children until her death.

Smith's most famous work, *The Elegiac Sonnets*, is also her most anthologized work. Anthologies, however, tend to stick to the same Smith sonnets year after year, and "Sonnet III, To A Nightingale" is rarely included. Influenced by both Petrarch's and Milton's sonnets on nightingales, Smith's own take perhaps influenced John Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale." Though Keats does not explicitly allude to her poem, he was a voracious reader, and Smith's work was popular. Smith eventually included three sonnets addressed to nightingales in her *Elegiac Sonnets*, with a further three mentioning the bird in passing. Birds are a common theme for Smith within the *Sonnets*: almost twenty mentions of them occur, but the nightingale features twice as often as any other species. This is in line with many poets, as the nightingale's mythic connections made it a popular muse. In the Greek myth, Philomela is an Athenian princess raped and mutilated by her sister's husband and transformed into the nightingale after getting her revenge. The nightingale became therefore a symbol of lament, of sorrow for violence suffered, an appropriate metaphor given Smith's history. Smith's sonnet is Petrarchan in style, comprised of an octave, introducing the theme or problem of the poem, and a sestet solving it. Smith experiments throughout the *Sonnets*, attempting to be simpler and more direct in her English than Petrarch was in Italian.

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Sonnet III: "To A Nightingale"[1]

POOR, melancholy bird – that all night long[2]
Tell'st to the Moon[3] thy tale of tender woe;[4]
From what sad cause can such sweet sorrow flow,
And whence this mournful melody of song?

Thy poet's musing fancy would translate
What mean the sounds that swell thy little breast,
When still at dewy eve thou leav'st thy nest,
Thus to the listening night to sing thy fate?

Pale Sorrow's victims wert thou once among,
Tho' now releas'd[5] in woodlands wild to rove?
Say – hast thou felt from friends some cruel wrong,[6]
Or died'st thou – martyr of disastrous love?[7]
Ah! songstress[8] sad! that such my lot might be,
To sigh and sing at liberty[9] – like thee!

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[1] First published in 1784, then subsequently in editions with additional poems. The sixth (1792) is the copytext here.
[2] [Smith's note] The idea from the 43d Sonnet of Petrarch. Secondo parte. "Quel rosigniuol, che si soave piagne."
[3] The moon is often a feminine symbol. Smith regularly advocated for female rights and included female representations of independence in her works.
[4] Nightingales, native to Europe, are one of few birds to sing during the night as well as the day. Their song is loud and variable, leading to connections with artistic creation.
[5] Smith moved from London to the countryside after her husband fled England to escape debt.
[6] Smith frequently alludes to her personal life in her works, here her financial troubles.
[7] Smith's marriage was a source of great pain to her.
[8] The singing nightingale is usually female in poetry and art, when in fact it is the male who sings to find a mate and to defend his territory.
[9] Smith is not referencing the French Revolution: it would not begin until five years after this sonnet was first written.

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Joanna Baillie

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Joanna Baillie (1762-1851) was born in Scotland to father James Baillie, a Presbyterian minister, and mother Dorothea Hunter. Her twin sister died shortly after birth, but she was close with her two older siblings, Agnes and Matthew. Matthew grew up to be a successful physician, and the family lived with him after their father's death. Joanna did not receive a formal education until the age of ten, but her time at boarding school introduced her to theatre and she was a prolific playwright before she was a poet.

The short series of poems entitled "An Address to the Night" appears in Baillie's emotion-centred book, *Poems: Wherein it is attempted to describe Certain Views of Nature and of Rustic Manners; and also, to point out, in some instances, the different influence which the same circumstances produce on different characters*, published in 1790. The four poems in this series, "A Fearful Mind," "A Discontented Mind," "A Sorrowful Mind," and "A Joyful Mind," each take on a different mood and therefore a different perspective on the same environment. The poems bring attention to the ways people's emotions influence their perceptions. In each poem the speaker reflects on their surroundings as they wander through a forest in the night. "A Fearful Mind," a Romantic poem in iambic pentameter, is the first poem in the series. In it Baillie uses negative adjectives and verbs such as "uncertain," "awful," "grim," and "haunts" to create a fearful and uneasy tone. The poem's use of short words and repeated harsh-sounding consonants create the effect of moving quickly to increase feelings of anxiety and suggest the presence of danger. Changes in poetic technique enable Baillie to explore the ways in which our psychological outlook changes our response to identical stimuli, making her poetry both scientific and dramatic.

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"An Address to the Night": "A Fearful Mind"[10]

Uncertain, awful as the gloom of death,
The Night's[11] grim shadows cover all beneath.
Shapeless and black is ev'ry object round,
And lost in thicker gloom the distant bound.[12]
Each swelling height is clad[13] with dimmer shades,
And deeper darkness marks the hollow glades.
The moon in heavy clouds her glory veils,
And slow along their passing darkness sails;
While lesser clouds in parted fragments roam,
And red stars glimmer thro' the river's gloom.

Nor cheerful voice is heard from man's abode,
Nor sounding footsteps on the neighb'ring road;
Nor glimm'ring fire the distant cottage tells;
On all around a fearful stillness dwells:
The mingled noise of industry[14] is laid,
And silence deepens with the nightly shade.
Though still the haunts of men, and shut their light,
Thou art not silent, dark mysterious Night.
The cries of savage creatures wildly break
Upon thy quiet; birds ill-omen'd [15]shriek;
Commotions strange disturb the rustling trees;

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[10] *Project Gutenberg* Ebook Poems. Originally published by J. Johnson, 1790.
[11] Capitalized to personify the night.
[12] Boundary.
[13] Covered.
[14] Although the poem was written during the Industrial Revolution, here, as elsewhere in Baillie's poems, this means agricultural work activity.
[15] A bird of ill-omen, such as a crow or raven, is a bearer of bad news.

And heavy plaints[16] come on the passing breeze.
Far on the lonely waste, and distant way,
Unwonted[17] sounds are heard, unknown of day.
With shrilly screams the haunted cavern rings;
And heavy treading of unearthly things
Sounds loud and hollow thro' the ruin'd dome;
Yea, voices issue from the secret tomb.

But lo! a sudden flow of bursting light!
What wild surrounding scenes break on the sight!
Huge rugged rocks uncouthly[18] low'r on high,
Whilst on the plain their lengthen'd shadows lie.
The wooded banks in streamy brightness glow;
And waving darkness skirts the flood below.
The roving[19] shadow hastens o'er the stream;
And like a ghost's pale shrowd[20] the waters gleam.
Black fleeting shapes across the valley stray:
Gigantic forms tow'r on the distant way:
The sudden winds in wheeling eddies[21] change:
'Tis all confus'd, unnatural, and strange.
Now all again in horrid gloom is lost:
Wild wakes the breeze like sound of distant host:
Bright shoots along the swift returning light:
Succeeding shadows close the startled sight.

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[16] Complaints.
[17] Strange, unusual.
[18] Unevenly.
[19] Constantly moving.
[20] Variant of "shroud."
[21] Movements of air similar to whirlpools.

Some restless spirit holds the nightly sway:
Long is the wild, and doubtful is my way.
Inconstant Night, whate'er thy changes be,
It suits not man to be alone with thee.
O! for the shelt'ring roof of lowest kind,
Secure to rest with others of my hind![22]

[22] A farm servant or agricultural labourer. "My hind" may indicate the speaker is an employer of hinds.

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Phillis Wheatley

Simran Sahota, Simon Fraser University

Phillis Wheatley (1753-84) was an African American poet who was sold into the slave trade in North America as a child. Wheatley is best known for her work in the genre of elegy, which is a short poem occasioned by the death of a person. Elegies are meant to be reflective, as well as to show grief for the dead and offer consolation to the living. Wheatley's elegies largely focus on children. Critics have noted that the role children played in the American Revolution largely influenced how readers at the time interpreted her work (Hodgson 665). Wheatley's public presence among her audience, prior to the American Revolution, was in what Astrid Franke calls a "delicate balance" between groups such as "evangelical revivalists and more secular-minded readers" (234). Religion is as important to Wheatley's writing as social and political influences.

"A Funeral Poem on the Death of C.E. an Infant of Twelve Months" is from Wheatley's 1773 published collection *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious, and Moral.* It consists of thirty-nine poems, twelve of which are elegies, and was published in England when Wheatley travelled there in hopes of getting medical help. It was there that she met Selina Hastings, a religious leader who got Wheatley's work published. In this poem, Wheatley addresses Charles Eliot and his parents. Wheatley tries to console Charles's parents by telling them he is in a better place. The poem is written in heroic couplets, with the exception of two triplets. I have reproduced her bracket markings from the original poem.

Wheatley was sold to a family who provided her with education within the home and mentorship that gave her the ability to develop her voice as a poet and become a published writer as a young adult. Her owners emancipated Wheatley when she entered adulthood, and she married and had children before passing from long-term illness. At a time when the world needs to celebrate the success stories of African Americans amidst the reality of racially motivated injustices, it is important to bring Wheatley into the conversation. Passing on her story of triumph and excellence despite her circumstances is one that generations to come should know and appreciate.

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"A Funeral Poem on the Death of C.E., an Infant of Twelve Months"[1]

Through airy roads he wings his instant flight
To purer regions of celestial light;
Enlarg'd he sees unnumber'd systems[2] roll,
Beneath him sees the universal whole,
Planets on planets run their destin'd round,
And circling wonders fill the vast profound.
Th' ethereal now, and now th' empyreal skies[3]
With growing splendors strike his wond'ring eyes:
The angels view him with delight unknown,
Press his soft hand, and seat him on his throne;
Then smiling thus: "To this divine abode,
The seat of saints, of seraphs,[4] and of God,
Thrice welcome thou." The raptur'd babe replies,
"Thanks to my God, who snatch'd me to the skies,
Ere[5] vice triumphant had possess'd my heart,
Ere yet the tempter[6] had beguil'd my heart,
Ere yet on sin's base actions I was bent,
Ere yet I knew temptation's dire intent;
Ere yet the lash for horrid crimes I felt,
Ere vanity had led my way to guilt,
But, soon arriv'd at my celestial goal,
Full glories rush on my expanding soul."

---

[1] From *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral,* edited from the *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online* (ECCO) database.
[2] Solar systems.
[3] The highest part of heaven.
[4] A rank of angels.
[5] Before. The first published version contains what seems to be the mistaken spelling "E'er."
[6] Satan.

Joyful he spoke: exulting cherubs[7] round
Clapt their glad wings, the heav'nly vaults resound.
Say, parents, why this unavailing moan?
Why heave your pensive bosoms with the groan?
To *Charles*, the happy subject of my song,
A brighter world, and nobler strains belong.
Say would you tear him from the realms above
By thoughtless wishes, and prepost'rous love?
Doth this felicity increase your pain?
Or could you welcome to this world again
The heir of bliss? with a superior air
Methinks he answers with a smile severe,
"Thrones and dominions[8] cannot tempt me there."
But still you cry, "Can we the sigh forbear,
And still and still must we not pour the tear?
Our only hope, more dear than vital breath,
Twelve moons revolv'd, becomes the prey of death;
Delightful infant, nightly visions give
Thee to our arms, and we with joy receive,
We fain[9] would clasp the *Phantom*[10] to our breast,
The *Phantom* flies, and leaves the soul unblest."
To yon bright regions let your faith ascend,
Prepare to join your dearest infant friend
In pleasures without measure, without end.

[7] A different rank of angels.
[8] More ranks of angels. May also be a reference to Colossians 1:16.
[9] Gladly.
[10] "Phantom" and "Charles" are the only words italicized, creating a parallel between them.

Mary Robinson

Julia Kemp, Simon Fraser University

Mary Robinson was born on November 27th, 1757 in the town of Bristol, England. She moved to London, England at the age of fourteen and continued to live there for most of her adult life. Although struck with debt, disease, and poverty throughout her adulthood, Robinson was a public spectacle and something of a celebrity in the city of London. She created a career as an actress at a young age and started an affair with the Prince of Wales shortly after. The affair and its demise became the subject of intense spectacle. Despite her low-income financial situation, she spent time with the elites of London and was associated with this lifestyle in the press. This gave Robinson two different perspectives of London in coordination with class. Robinson was also disabled half-way through her life due to a rheumatic fever. No longer able to walk properly, she hired hackney-coaches to get around. This gave Robinson a different perspective of London compared to those who travelled on foot, allowing her to take in every inch of London's urban landscape and social life. Robinson died in ill health and poverty on December 26th, 1800 in the county of Surrey, England. Many of her works were at her request published posthumously by her daughter from her marriage with Thomas Robinson, Maria Elizabeth.

"London's Summer Morning" is a blank verse descriptive ode in iambic pentameter. It was written in January 1795 but was not published until after her death in *The Star* in 1812. The poem illustrates a busy morning in London's eighteenth century and daily working-class urban life. Robinson uses repetition to describe the heat and murky weather of London, displaying both the class inequality in the city and the industrialization which was emerging.

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"London's Summer Morning"[11]

Who has not wak'd to list[12] the busy sounds
Of Summer's Morning, in the sultry smoke
Of noisy London? On the pavement hot
The sooty chimney-boy, with dingy face
And tatter'd covering, shrilly bawls[13] his trade,
Rousing the sleepy housemaid. At the door
The milk-pail rattles, and the tinkling bell
Proclaims the dustman's office, while the street
Is lost in clouds impervious. Now begins
The din of hackney coaches,[14] waggons, carts;
While tinmans' shops, and noisy trunk-makers,
Knife-grinders, coopers, squeaking cork-cutters,
Fruit barrows, and the hunger-giving cries,
Of vegetable vendors, fill the air.
Now ev'ry shop displays its varied trade,
And the fresh sprinkled pavement cools the feet
Of early walkers. At the private door
The ruddy[15] housemaid twirls the busy mop,

[11] Copytext from *The Star* newspaper in 1812.
[12] Listen to.
[13] A piercing cry.
[14] A carriage for hire, the most common passenger vehicle in late eighteenth-century London.
[15] Red faced.

Annoying the smart 'prentice[16], or neat girl
Tripping the band-box[17] lightly. Now the sun
Darts burning splendor on the glitt'ring pane,
Save where the canvas awning throws a shade
On the gay merchandise. Now, spruce and trim[18],
In shops (where Beauty smiles with Industry[19]),
Sits the smart damsel,[20] while the passenger[21]
Peeps thro' the window, watching ev'ry charm.
Now pastry dainties catch the eyes minute[22]
Of humming insects, while the limey snare[23]
Waits to enthral them. Now the lamp-lighter
Mounts the tall ladder, nimbly vent'rous,
To trim the half fill'd lamp[24]: while at his feet
The pot-boy[25] yells discordant! all along

[16] Apprentice.
[17] A small, thin container which was used for storing starched collars and caps in the eighteenth century. Tripping is to walk lightly, almost dancing.
[18] Spruce and trim is neatly and attractively dressed.
[19] Hard work.
[20] Shop clerk or assistant.
[21] Of the hackney coach.
[22] Very small, with the stress on the second syllable and reference to the insects in the next line.
[23] Flytrap.
[24] Oil-powered streetlights were used in the late eighteenth century and the wick had to be trimmed regularly for proper burning.
[25] Eighteenth-century term for server or busser in a local tavern or pub.

The sultry pavement, the old cloaths-man[26] cries
In tone monotonous, and side-long views
The area, for his traffic. Now the bag
Is slily open'd, and the half-worn suit
(Sometimes the pilfer'd[27] treasure of the base
Domestic spoiler), for one half its worth,
Sinks in the green abyss.[28] The porter now
Bears his huge load along the burning way[29],
And the poor Poet wakes from busy dreams
To paint the Summer Morning.

[26] Buyer and seller of used clothing.
[27] Stolen.
[28] The clothes-man's sack.
[29] Hot pavement.

Dorothy Wordsworth

Xin Yun Cui, Simon Fraser University

Dorothy Wordsworth was born on Christmas Day, 1771, at Cockermouth in Cumberland, England. As was the custom for females in England, Dorothy received no formal education but studied French and arithmetic at home. Much to her aunt and grandparents' dismay, Dorothy grew up to be a vivacious, "unladylike" young woman. She loved nature and often "rambl[ed] about the country on foot" with her brother William Wordsworth. In 1795, the two moved into a cottage in Grasmere, later known as Dove Cottage. There, Dorothy produced many life journals and poems. Travel, nature, and familial love are common themes in her works. She had travelled both within Britain and to countries on the European continent, including Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland. She recorded her experience in her travelling journals, including *Journal of a Tour on the Continent* and *Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland*.

Dorothy never got married and had children of her own, but she was deeply involved in the care of William's children. Her poem "Loving and Liking: Irregular Verses Addressed to A Child" was first published in 1832 by her brother William in *Poems Founded on the Affections*. In "Loving and Liking," the speaker addresses an unnamed child, reprimanding them for using the word "love" colloquially instead of attending to its proper religious and Romantic meanings. It is worth noting that there exists a Dove-Cottage manuscript of the poem (copied in Dorothy's handwriting) with different phrasings and word choices. It is possible that Dorothy edited the poem herself before its first publication, but it is also likely for William to have edited it for her, since Dorothy was never confident in her abilities as a poet. The poem is presented here in its first published form in 1832 because the Dove-Cottage manuscript has lacunae.

Some of Dorothy's famous correspondents include Mary Ann Lamb and Samuel Talor Coleridge. She passed away in 1885.

Further Reading

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"Loving and Liking: Irregular Verses, Addressed to a Child"[30]

There's more in words than I can teach:
Yet listen, Child!—I would not preach;
But only give some plain directions
To guide your speech and your affections.
Say not you love a roasted fowl,
But you may love a screaming owl,
And, if you can, the unwieldy toad
That crawls from his secure abode[31]
Within the mossy garden wall
When evening dews begin to fall.
Oh mark the beauty of his eye:
What wonders in that circle lie!
So clear, so bright, our fathers said
He wears a jewel in his head[32]!
And when, upon some showery day,
Into a path or public way
A frog leaps out from bordering grass,
Startling the timid as they pass,
Do you observe him, and endeavour
To take the intruder into favour;
Learning from him to find a reason
For a light heart in a dull season.

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[30] Published by her brother William Wordsworth in 1832 in collection *Poems Founded on the Affections*, which is the copytext here.
[31] Place of residence.
[32] Referencing English folklore that toadstones are grown from the head of toads.

And you may love him in the pool,
That is for him a happy school,
In which he swims as taught by nature,
Fit pattern for a human creature,
Glancing amid the water bright,
And sending upward sparkling light.

Nor blush if o'er your heart be stealing
A love for things that have no feeling:
The spring's first rose by you espied[33],
May fill your breast with joyful pride;
And you may love the strawberry-flower,
And love the strawberry in its bower;
But when the fruit, so often praised
For beauty, to your lip is raised,
Say not you love the delicate treat,
But like it, enjoy it, and thankfully eat.

Long may you love your pensioner[34] mouse,
Though one of a tribe that torment the house:
Nor dislike for her cruel sport the cat,
Deadly foe both of mouse and rat;
Remember she follows the law of her kind,
And Instinct is neither wayward nor blind.
Then think of her beautiful gliding form,

[33] Caught sight of.
[34] A person who collects retirement pensions, meaning someone who lives off the charity of others.

Her tread that would scarcely crush a worm,
And her soothing song by the winter fire,
Soft as the dying throb of the lyre.[35]

I would not circumscribe your love:
It may soar with the eagle and brood[36] with the dove,
May pierce the earth with the patient mole,
Or track the hedgehog to his hole.
Loving and liking are the solace of life,
Rock the cradle of joy, smooth the death-bed of strife.
You love your father and your mother,
Your grown-up[37] and your baby brother;
You love your sister, and your friends,
And countless blessings which God sends:[38]
And while these right affections play,
You live each moment of your day;
They lead you on to full content,
And likings fresh and innocent,
That store the mind, the memory feed,
And prompt to many a gentle deed:
But likings come, and pass away;
'Tis love that remains till our latest day:
Our heavenward guide is holy love,
And will be our bliss with saints above.

[35] Stringed instrument from ancient Greece; symbol of poetry.
[36] To incubate or, figuratively, to cherish under wings
[37] Grown-up brother.
[38] Considering Dorothy's relationship with William's children, we may suspect that this poem addresses one of them. However, the biggest age gap between them is seven years, making it impossible for one of them to have a "grown-up brother" when they are still a child.

Lady Caroline Lamb

Ryan Elkan, Simon Fraser University

Lady Caroline Lamb was an upper-crust Regency writer and celebrity. She was born in 1785 and married the politician William Lamb in 1805. She is most known for her affair with Lord Byron, lasting from around March to November of 1812. Their relationship began when she sent Byron a love letter in March after reading an early copy of his book *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Their dalliance went up in flames in a matter of months. By the end of their relationship, Lady Caroline burned Byron in effigy at her residence, Brocket Hall. During the spectacle, a bonfire was encircled by dancing girls who tossed Byron's letters into the flames. Lamb even wrote a poem for the occasion (biographical information from Douglass). Despite the short length of their relationship, it cast a shadow for years. Even today, books and articles about Lady Caroline Lamb often mention her relationship with Lord Byron.

Byron and Lamb maintained correspondence for quite some time after their relationship ended. Lamb forged a letter in Byron's name in 1813 in order to receive a portrait of him from his publisher. Byron called her expert forgery both "a skillful performance" and "very unpleasant" (see Soderholm). She broke into his apartments soon after and slipped a note saying "Remember me!" into one of his books. Byron wrote an anger-filled poetic response called "Remember Thee," stating that she would be remorseful and remembered negatively by him and her husband. In 1815, Lamb corresponded with Michael Bruce, an acquaintance of Byron's, even during Bruce's marriage. Lamb wrote the novel *Glenarvon* in 1816—its characters thin allegories for real people. It sold well, as a wide reading public was hungry for the scandalous gossip of aristocratic authors. In 1819, Lamb wrote "A New Canto" during Byron's exile, imitating the style in the first two Cantos of his satirical epic poem *Don Juan*. She satirized and mocked Byron's writing in her anonymous publication.

In April 1824 Byron died, age thirty-six, catching Lamb off guard. Six months after his death, "Remember Thee" was published in a collection. She coped by consuming drugs (such as laudanum) and alcohol. Lady Caroline Lamb wrote the poem "Cold Was the Season of the Year" in 1825 while she was monitored by doctors and nurses. Through the poem, Lady Caroline Lamb reflects on her place in the world and her mortality, comparing herself to a rat whose mate has died in

the cold. William Lamb, her husband, had his first affair in the autumn of 1827. In Lady Caroline Lamb's letters to her husband from her deathbed in a London hospital, she tried to assuage his fears and assure him that she was in good health. She died in January 1828 due to liver problems associated with "dropsy," or edema. In her will, Lady Caroline Lamb left the portrait of Byron she swindled from his publishers to her friend Lady Morgan.

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"Cold Was the Season of the Year"[1]

Cold was the season of the year –
The sun half risen, the skies looked drear[2] –
A youth returning to his Bride
With none to cheer him by his side
looked on the frozen water nigh –
then on the glorious sun on high
and thought as he was passing on
of Hopes now crushed of pleasures gone
of Life how strange a Dream it proved
until his very soul was moved
just as he chanced to turn his eye
upon the stream he then did spy –
a Rat – of animals created
the most by Man & Woman hated
the scorn of all the love of none
the thing accursed by every one –
He paused I know not why nor care –
& asked himself why such things were –
when at the moment he perceived
the Rat was frozen & none relieved
no aid for thing so much abhorred –
could sure be given by slave or Lord –

[1] This poem by Lady Caroline Lamb was originally from an 1825 letter in the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies Office (D/Elb F/62/69). This version was edited and published by Leigh Wetherall Dickson and Paul Douglass in *The Works of Lady Caroline Lamb Vol 2*, London: Routledge, 2009 (eBook published 19 March 2020), pp. 114–115.
[2] Dreary, bleak.

its mate its wretched mate alone
came to him when all hope was gone
she drew she bit she hurt her friend
she looked imploring – none did send
a sigh for one in durance[3] taken –
a sigh for one by all forsaken –
Yet Crosby[4] who at fights could see
Men fairly strive for victory
Who with shock[5] nor Bulldog fear'd
Who never was to Rats endear'd
remembered him of one same Woman –
who like the rat was lov'd by no Man
So he did try Her life to save
of one though Rat was not a slave
& though the Rat could not recover[6]
It died at least with friend & lover.

[3] Could mean imprisonment or endurance.
[4] Referring to Mr. Crosby, one of her caretakers, who was Lamb's final object of affection. (Douglass 273).
[5] A type name for a small terrier with long hair (Belinda's lap dog in *Rape of the Lock* is called Shock).
[6] Despite Lamb trying in her letters to assure her husband of her improvement, she (like the rat) could not recover.

Felicia Hemans

Shamiza Khan, Simon Fraser University

Felicia Dorothea Hemans was a prolific poetess born on September 25, 1793, in Liverpool, England. As a child, Hemans's was taught by her mother in several languages. Hemans had published an entire volume of poetry by the age of fourteen. In her later years, Hemans became famous among her literary peers including William Wordsworth and Sir Walter Scott. Much of Hemans's work was centered in the balance between the domestic sphere and the intellectual world. Hemans herself was patriotic and devoted to the advancement of the British and the Empire. Hemans, mother of five children, also significantly valued family and faith. She passed away at forty-one years old, and her legacy remains in her most popular and well recognized poem, "Casabianca."

This was published in *The Monthly Magazine* in August, 1826. It is based on true historical events from the Battle of the Nile in 1798. Casabianca was the thirteen-year-old son of the commander aboard the French ship L'Orient. Casabianca's father was wounded in battle and taken below deck, and young Casabianca waited for his father's instructions to leave his post above. Once made aware of his father's condition, he left to be with him, and the ship exploded. Hemans's poem slightly differs from the historical event. The poem is written in the standard closed ballad stanza. The quatrains are made up of an alternating iambic tetrameter and an ABAB rhyme scheme. "Casabianca" was widely popular and taught in schools across the British Empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, where children were required to learn the poem and recite it.

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"Casabianca"[7]

The boy stood on the burning deck
    Whence all but he had fled;
The flame that lit the battle's wreck,
    Shone round him o'er the dead.

Yet beautiful and bright he stood,
    As born to rule the storm;
A creature of heroic blood,
    A proud, though child-like form.

The flames rolled on—he would not go,
    Without his Father's word;
That Father, faint in death below,
    His voice no longer heard.

He called aloud:— "Say, Father, say
    If yet my task is done?"
He knew not that the chieftain[8] lay
    Unconscious of his son.

"Speak, Father!" once again he cried,
    "If I may yet begone!

---

[7] [author's note] Young Casabianca, a boy about thirteen years old, son to the Admiral of the Orient, remained at his post (in the Battle of the Nile) after the ship had taken fire, and all the grass had been abandoned, and perished in the explosion of the vessel, when the flames had reached the powder.

[8] A military leader; a captain (definitions from *OED*).

And"—but the booming shots replied,
    And fast the flames rolled on.

Upon his brow he felt their breath,
    And in his waving hair,
And looked from that lone post of death,
    In still, yet brave despair.

And shouted but once more aloud,
    "My Father! must I stay?"
While o'er him fast, through sail and shroud,[9]
    The wreathing[10] fires made way.

They wrapt the ship in splendour wild,
    They caught the flag on high,
And streamed above the gallant child,
    Like banners in the sky.

There came a burst of thunder sound—
    The boy—oh! where was he?
Ask of the winds that far around
    With fragments strewed the sea!

With mast, and helm,[11] and pennon[12] fair,
    That well had borne their part—

---

[9] A rope attached to a ship's mast, part of the rigging.
[10] The action of twisting or contorting.
[11] The wheel by which the rudder is managed, sometimes extended so as to include the whole steering gear.
[12] A long pointed streamer or flag on a ship.

But the noblest thing which perished there,
Was that young faithful heart! 40

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Louisa Stuart Costello

Dorian Nijdam, Simon Fraser University

Painter, poet, and prolific popular writer, Louisa Stuart Costello (1799-1870) was a well-known and highly regarded professional in many fields. Costello was born in either Britain or Ireland in 1799 to Colonel James Francis Costello and his wife Elizabeth née Tootridge, likely author of the 1809 novel *The Soldier's Orphan*. Costello's eldest brother died at sea in 1813, and her father was killed in war in 1814, leaving Costello, her mother, and her eleven-year-old brother to fend for themselves. Despite receiving a small military pension, the family struggled financially, and Costello and her younger brother had to work to fill the void. Costello's artistic career began at the age of sixteen with miniature painting and manuscript illumination, but she quickly moved into prose and poetry, which proved a more lucrative niche. As critic Clare A. Simmons observes, "The image of the nineteenth-century woman writer toiling in obscurity while ignored or underappreciated by the critics does not strictly apply to Louisa Stuart Costello. She may have been almost forgotten, but in her long and varied literary career her fellow authors, both male and female, seem to have liked and respected her" (218). While never entirely comfortable financially, she was able to support her brother's military education at Sandhurst College as well as make enough to take care of her mother, keeping a modest amount for her own expenses and to pay for her travels.

Costello published in excess of one hundred works over the course of forty years, turning initial small successes into progressively greater reward and regard. Although pretty and popular, she never married, preferring instead to support herself and her family with focused creative output. Her first poetic work to garner critical attention was *Songs of a Stranger* in 1825, and from that point on she developed a loyal following of esteemed readers. Over the course of her life Costello would come into contact with many of the age's most important figures, including Charles Dickens, Thomas Moore, Lord Byron, and French King Louis-Phillipe. She worked in many genres, but her most successful and well-remembered works were her biographies and travelogues, notably *Memoirs of Eminent Englishwomen* in 1844, which "seems to have been researched mainly among the books and papers in the duke of Devonshire's library at Chatsworth" (Mitchell). Her mother passed away in 1846, and her younger brother followed in

1865. Costello retired in 1852 on a civil list pension of seventy-five pounds and spent her remaining years in Boulogne.

"On the Death of my Brother" is a poem from Costello's first published collection, *The Maid of the Cypress Isle* (1815). This poem is about the sinking of the HMS Tweed, which is otherwise recorded in just a few newspaper articles and official listings. The Tweed sank during the height of the War of 1812, but given there is no historical record of an action where it went down, it is likely that it was a victim of Newfoundland's famously treacherous waters rather than of an active conflict. The poem is written in three sestets, and it shows less subtlety and greater adherence to form than Costello's later poetry, as is often the case with an author's first publication. The poem uses a variation on ballad stanza. Every stanza ends with a couplet rhyming "thee" (referring to the brother) with "sea." Where the first stanza ends with "thee," the next two end with "sea," a structural feature which reflects the way the sea overtakes and subsumes Costello's brother in the text.

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"On the Death of My Brother, Who Was Unfortunately Lost in His Majesty's Ship Tweed, Off the Coast of Newfoundland"[13]

Where rolls the wide Atlantic's wave,
Which dashes 'gainst the shore
Of stern America's bleak clime,
With hollow deathful roar—
There, there thou sleep'st beneath the sea,
Which swallow'd all our hopes with thee!

Remorseless death, in spring of youth,
Has snatch'd that much-loved form away;
Cold! cold, thou liest! a sea-weed shroud
Now wraps thy pale and senseless clay![14]
And vain are all our tears for thee,
For low thou sleep'st beneath the sea!

Tho' lost for ever here on earth,
Oh, may thy soul ascend on high!
There, where no stormy winds assail,
Enjoy blest immortality.
May we in heaven again meet thee,

---

[13] Copytext from the Google Play Books scan of *The Maid of The Cypress Isles*, first edition.

[14] Referencing a metaphor in Isaiah 49:9 and elsewhere in the bible that describes mankind being made from clay. Also refers to "clay-cold," an adjective often used to describe dead flesh.

Tho' now thou sleep'st beneath the sea!

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Widow Fleck

Vivian Chong, Simon Fraser University

The Widow Fleck remains one of the most mysterious female poets in Canada as there is very little known about her and her work. She published a twelve-page pamphlet, *Poems on Various Subjects,* in 1833, and a second edition of it in 1835. It consists of only five poems and was printed for the author in Montreal, which meant that Fleck paid for the printing out of her own pocket in hopes of earning it back through sales. Writing under the pseudonym Widow Fleck, she portrays herself as a poor single mother. She capitalizes on her misfortune to entice readers to support her literary work. In clues from her various poems, especially the first poem "Dialogue Between a Dying Husband and His Wife," the poet indicates that her husband was named John and died of cholera. Scholars hypothesize that her husband was either John Fleck or John Fleming (Huenemann and Bannister), as men of those names passed due to cholera in the Lower Canada in 1832. However, there is insufficient evidence to prove either man to be her husband.

We do not know if the poet is writing under a false persona or writing out of genuine grief and desperation. The only contextual and biographical information readers are provided is from her dedication on the front page:

> Kind Readers,
>
> You have here the humble attempt of a Widowed Mother, to record in simple rhymes the feelings excited by the sickness and departure of the bread-winner of herself and her helpless little ones—who was snatched from her and them, by the same pestilence which must have bereaved too many of you of your dearest friends. On your sympathetic bounty, a Mother, whom that pestilence has left destitute, throws herself and her humble verses.
>
> New Glasgow, July, 1833.

New Glasgow is a small town in Nova Scotia. Founded in 1784 by Scottish settlers, the town was named after Glasgow in Scotland. It is unknown if/how long Fleck lived there for or what her cultural background was; some key words in

her poem suggest potential Scottish background, or she was simply influenced by the Scottish culture in Nova Scotia.

"In Praise of a Good Cup of Tea" is the final poem in her pamphlet, and it romanticizes the role tea-drinking plays in the speaker's life. The poem is written in ballad form with alternating iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter. Traditional ballad poems are one of the oldest forms of poetry and associated with hymns and storytelling.

In the poem, Fleck enthusiastically proclaims the benefits of drinking tea. She explains tea's ability to transform her sadness to relief, relaxation, peace, and happiness. Though the poem opens with sweet and light remarks about drinking tea, there is a shift in tone in the middle, where she recounts vulnerable emotions surrounding her husband's death. Fleck finishes the poem on her relationship with God. No longer being able to find solace in tea-drinking because of poverty, she turns to her faith and reminds herself that there is happiness to come. Despite the hardships she faces in widowhood, she is comforted by the promise of being reunited with her husband in heaven. The poem covers themes of faith, femininity, intimacy, grief, and love. Though tea is simple and unassuming on the outside, Fleck vividly illustrates the depth of a teacup by its ability to hold emotions, memories, and hopes.

Further Reading

Boghian, Ioana. "Middle-Class Women, Tea Drinking and Victorian Cultural Paradigms: Domesticity, Stability and Respectability." *Speech and Context*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2014, pp. 92- 133.

Kowaleski-Wallace, Elizabeth. "Tea, Gender, and Domesticity in Eighteenth-Century England." *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1994, pp. 131–145.

Rappaport, Erika. "Sacred and Useful Pleasures: The Temperance Tea Party and the Creation of a Sober Consumer Culture in Early Industrial Britain." *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 52, no. 4, 2013, pp. 990-1016.

References

Widow Fleck. *Poems on Various Subjects.* 2nd ed., A. Bowman, 1835. *Canada Women Poets*, Chadwyck Healey Collections.

Huenemann, Karyn and Lindsay Bannister. "Widow Fleck." *Canada's Early Women Writers*, Canadian Writing Research Collaboratory, 2018.

"In Praise of a Good Cup of Tea"[1]

Of all the joys that sweeten life,
    The very best to me,
Is when I'm wearied wet or cold—
    To take a cup of Tea.

It is the same with womankind —
    With all, as well as me;
There's nothing gives them such delight,
    As a dainty cup of Tea.

With hoeing tired, or washing wet,[2]
    What e'er their toil may be,
They'll do their task with cheerfulness,
    If they but have their Tea.

Now, husbands all, take my advice,
    From Liquors keep you free;[3]
But never grudge, with your own wife,
    To take a cup of Tea.

Without their tea they're sour and sad,
    And in your face they'll flee;

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[1] Without access to the first edition, the second edition of 1835 is the copytext here, accessed in *Canada Women Poets*.
[2] Suggests that Widow Fleck comes from a farm background. Also gives insight into her social status. Without servants to help her, she washes laundry by herself. She may have been in the upper end of the lower class or the lower end of the middle class.
[3] A strong indication that the poem relates to the nineteenth-century Temperance Movement. See Rappaport for more on this movement to encourage men not to drink alcohol.

But if you want a happy life,
Be sure give them their Tea.

They'll manage all with canny[4] care,
And aye[5] will careful be;
And if you want a thrifty[6] wife,
Deny them not their Tea.

But ah, alas! I do confess
Its altered days with me,
For since my dearest husband died,[7]
I scarce can get my Tea.

When he was well, I tell the truth,
He was both frank and free,[8]
And ever said, with cheerful face—
"You're welcome to your Tea."

And when that he came home at night,
So cold and tired was he,
It made him glad with me to sit,
And take a cup of Tea.

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[4] Originating from Scottish, Northern English, and Irish-English, the OED defines this as "knowing, wise; judicious, prudent; wary, cautious."
[5] Originating from the Scottish dialect, meaning always and continually.
[6] Prosperous, successful, flourishing.
[7] Though not mentioned within the poem, Fleck's other poems suggests that her husband passed due to cholera. First edition was published with a note that it was "written by a lady… whose husband was carried off by the cholera (1833)."
[8] To live lavishly; generous, liberal.

Then he would sit a winter's night,
For sensible was he,
Talk of politics, commerce, Arts,[9]
Cheer'd by his cup of Tea.

And when I indisposed was,
Or headache troubled me,
He knew right well that woman's cure,[10]
Was a good strong[11] cup of Tea.

But now he's dead whom I did love,
The tear's still in my e'e;
For many comforts I must want,
Besides my cup of Tea.

But what sits heaviest on my mind,
Is my poor family;
If they but get their daily bread,[12]
I must not mind my Tea.

But I adore that heavenly power,
That orders all for me;
And humbled low before him[13] bow,
Though he deny me Tea.[14]

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[9] An interesting detail, as many men did not talk politics with their wives.
[10] May refer to a woman's time of menstruation.
[11] Sharp contrast against a "dainty" cup in line 8.
[12] Reference to the Lord's prayer, "give us this day our daily bread."
[13] Traditionally, subject pronouns referring to God are capitalized. However, Fleck does not.
[14] God taking her husband away.

And well I know that pleasures pure,
Remain in store for me,
When I arrive in that blest land,[15]
Where there's no need for Tea.

I would advise all widows poor,
To come along with me,[16]
Where the least pleasure there enjoyed,
Is better far than Tea.

[15] Heaven.
[16] Follow her example by having strong faith in God, as that will lead to salvation.

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