



*English Poetry
of Landscape*

An Anthology 1370-1928

Compiled by Emmet Lynam

**English Poetry of Landscape:
an Anthology 1370 to 1928**

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Introduction

This anthology focuses on the poetry of English landscape from the late 14th to the early 20th century. It covers works by 54 poets, all of which are in the public domain in the UK (i.e. by authors who died before 1946).

Specifically English, rather than British landscapes, are the subject of this collection; and in the main, only English-born poets have been included. For this reason, there are no works by Robert Burns or James Thomson (both Scottish): no W.B. Yeats (Irish), nor the Welshmen W.H. Davies and John Dyer. However, exceptions have been made for a few poets such as Joanna Baillie and John Denham, who, though born elsewhere, lived much of their lives in England and wrote primarily about English scenes.

How has the English landscape altered over the 600 years spanned by this collection? Arguably, it has changed less than might have been thought. Although much of England was originally forested, and woods and trees figure prominently in these poems, by the 14th century most of the wildwood had already long been cleared to allow farming. The countryside was largely tamed, and the landscape was taking on its current archetypal character: a gentle tableau of lush patchwork fields, small woods, low rolling hills and plentiful rivers and streams.

However, some wilder areas still remained. There were about sixty royal hunting forests scattered throughout the country, (although “forest” did not necessarily mean woodland, but rather areas where deer and boar would flourish.) Additionally, the moorland and high fells of west and northern England were less amenable to farming and relatively inaccessible. In *Gawain and the Green Knight* these regions were regarded as wilderness.

In the 14th century most people lived on the land, and towns were small. London, the largest, had a population of about 45,000. From 1348, many settlements disappeared entirely, as plague devastated the country to such an extent that it is thought that the population may have almost halved. It took a good two hundred years for it to recover to its former levels.

Land at this time was owned primarily by the king, the Church and the nobility, whose estates were objects of pride and admiration. Some freemen were also landowners; but about forty per cent of people were peasant labourers who possessed no land, but were granted the right to farm in exchange for rent or work. In addition, they could use large tracts of common land for grazing their animals.

From the 17th century onwards, new farming methods brought higher yields, which allowed the population to grow dramatically. At the same time, the increasing enclosure of common land meant that it could no longer be used for grazing by small farmers, who struggled to earn a living. With the coming of the Industrial Revolution, people migrated to rapidly-growing towns and cities, turning for their livelihoods from farming to factory work. The countryside became remote from the lives of many city dwellers.

Around this time, gardens, which had been a feature of wealthy properties since Roman times, became a more highly-crafted version of the countryside with the rising popularity of landscape gardening in the 18th century. There was a vogue for the picturesque, which increasingly included wild and untamed landscapes: ruins came into fashion to such an extent that some landowners built their own. With the Romantic period, attitudes towards the countryside can be seen to shift; natural and ancient landscapes (like those of the Lake District in Cumbria) were sought out by tourists and took on a mystical significance. However, cityscapes were also seen as food for poetry. A few cityscape poems of various dates are included here.

This anthology is not arranged thematically but in chronological order of the poets' birthdates. (The grouping by century in the list of contents is, of course, approximate.)

The changing attitudes to landscape can be traced in many of these poems. After the early wonder at wilderness and forest, the land became a symbol of wealth in the 16th and 17th centuries, when John Denham and Aemelia Lanyer eulogised about the tamed landscapes of great landowners. 18th century poets such as Crabbe, Gray and Goldsmith wrote of rustic communities and everyday pastoral life. With the Romantic poets, the English countryside became once again an awe-inspiring and mysterious presence: for Wordsworth, landscape took centre stage as he explored how the physical surroundings of his youth shaped his mind and influenced his life.

In the 19th century, landscapes became the focus of intensely personal feeling – for instance, in Emily Bronte's work; while Gerard Manley Hopkins imbued them with overtly religious significance. From being purely descriptive, landscape poetry became a means of exploring states of mind and the human condition. And as the early 20th century brought greater changes, many poems were tinged with nostalgia for a vanishing pastoral life.

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Emma Laybourn
MA PGCE

Anonymous (late 14th Century)

From Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Book II

N.B. As this poem was written in a medieval dialect, a translation into modern English follows each section.

The Green Chapel is thought by some scholars to be based on Lud's Church, a natural rock formation in Northern Staffordshire.

Here, Sir Gawain has set out to ride through North Wales and North-west England in search of the Green Knight:

Bi a moute on the morne meryly he rydes
Into a forest ful dep, that ferly watz wylde,
Highe hilles on uche a halue, and holtwodes under
Of hore okes ful hoge a hundreth togeder;
The hasel and the haghthorne were harled al samen,
With roghe raged mosse rayled aywhere,
With mony bryddez unblythe upon bare twyges,
That pitosly ther piped for pyne of the colde.

Translation:

*By a mount in the morn merrily he rides
Into a forest full deep, that was wonderfully wild,
High hills on each side, and holtwoods under
Of grey oaks full huge, a hundred together.
The hazel and the hawthorn were all tangled together,
With rough ragged moss growing everywhere,
With many birds unhappy upon bare twigs,
That piteously there piped for pain of the cold.*

From Book IV

Thenne gyrdes he to Gryngolet, and gederes the rake,
Schowves in bi a schore at a schawe syde,
Rides thurgh the roghe bonk ryght to the dale;
And thenne he wayted hym aboute, and wylde hit hym thocht,
And seghe no syngne of resette bisydes nowhere,
Bot hyghe bonkkes and brent upon bothe halve,
And rughe knokled knarres with knorned stones;
The skwez of the scowtes skayned hym thocht.
Thenne he hoved, and wythhylde his hors at that tyde,
And ofte chaunged his cheer the chapel to seche.
He segh non suche in no syde, and selly hym thocht,
Save, a lyttel on a launde, a lawe as hit were;
A balw berw bi a bonke the brymme bysyde,
Bi a fors of a flode that ferked thare;
The borne blubred therinne as hit boyled hade.
The knyght kaches his caple and com to the lawe,
Lightes doun luflyly, and at a lynde taches

The rayne and his riche with a roghe braunche.
Thenne he bowes to the berwe, aboute hit he walkes,
Debatande with hymself quat hit be myght.
Hit hade a hole on the ende and on ayther syde,
And overgrouen with gresse in glodes aywhere;
And al was holw inwith, nobot an olde cave,
Or a crevisse of an olde cragge - he couthe hit nocht deme
with spelle.
'We! Lorde,' quoth the gentyle knyght,
'Whether this be the grene chapelle?
Here myght aboute mydnyght
The dele his matynnes telle!

Translation:

*Then he spurs Gryngolet (his horse) and takes up the path,
Shoves in by a bank at a wood's side,
Rides along the rough slope right to the dale.
And then he looked about, and he thought it wild,
And saw no sign of shelter anywhere nearby,
But high slopes and steep upon both sides,
And rough knuckled crags with gnarled stones;
The skies were grazed by the rocks, he thought.
Then he stopped and held his horse back at that time,
And often changed his cheer the chapel to seek.
He saw no such nearby, and he thought it strange,
Save a little mound on a lawn, a knoll as it were,
A smooth barrow by a slope beside the water,
By the fall of a river that ran there;
The stream bubbled as if it had boiled.
The knight urges on his horse and comes to the mound,
Alights down agilely, and at a linden tree attaches
The rein and his worthy horse to a rough branch.
Then he goes to the barrow, about it he walks,
Debating with himself what it might be.
It had a hole on the end and on either side,
And overgrown with grass in patches everywhere;
And all was hollow within, nothing but an old cave
Or a crevice of an old crag – he could not work out which.
"Well! Lord," said the gentle knight,
"Can this be the green chapel?
Here might about midnight
The devil say his matins!"*

Geoffrey Chaucer (c.1343-1400)

Nb. Some spellings have been modernised or clarified.

From The House of Fame

The narrator has been carried up into the sky by an eagle, who tells him to look at the view below. The eagle speaks first in this excerpt.

“How farest thou?” quod he to me.
“Wel,” quod I. “Now see,” quod he,
“By thy trowthe, yond adown,
Where that thou knowest any town,
Or house, or any other thing.
And when thou hast of ought knowyng,
Looke that thou warne me,
And I anon shall telle thee
How far that thou art now therefrom.”

And I adown gan looken thoo,
And beheld fieldes and plaines,
And now hilles, and now mountaynes,
Now valleyes, now forestes,
And now unnethes great beastes,
Now riveres, now citees,
Now townes, and now grete trees,
Now shippes sailyng in the sea.

But thus soone in a while he
Was flownen from the ground so high
That all the world, as to mine eye,
No more seemed than a prikke;
Or else was the air so thikke
That I ne mighte not discernen.
With that he spake to me as yerne,
And saide, “Seest thou any town
Or ought thou knowest yonder down?”
I saide, “Nay.” “No wonder nys,”
Quod he...

From The Book of the Duchess

The poem's narrator has followed hunters into the forest; and is led further in by a dog.

...I was go walked from my tree,
And as I wente, there came by mee
A whelp, that fawned me as I stood,
That hadde yfollowed and koude no good.
It come and crepte to me as lowe
Ryght as it hadde me yknowe,
Helde down hys head and joyned hys ears,

And laid all smoothe down hys hairs.
I woulde have caught it, and anon
It fledde and was from me gone;
And I hym followed, and it forth wente
Down by a flowery greene wente
Ful thikke of grass, ful softe and sweet.
With flowers fele, faire under feet,
And litel used; it seemed thus,
For both Flora and Zephirus,
They two that make floweres growe,
Had made her dwellynge there, I trowe;
For it was, on to beholde,
As though the earthe envye would
To be gayer than the heaven,
To have more flowers, suche seven
As in the welken starres be.
It had forgete the povertie
That wynter, through hys colde morrows,
Had made it suffre, and his sorrows;
All was forgotten, and that was seene,
For all the woode was waxen greene;
Sweetnesse of dew had made it waxe.

It is no neede eke for to axe
Wher there were many grene greves,
Or thikke of trees, so ful of leaves;
And every tree stood by hymselfe
From other well ten foot or twelve—
So great trees, so huge of strengthe,
Of fourty or fifty fathom lengthe,
Cleane withoute bough or stikke,
With croppes broad, and eke as thikke—
They were not an inche asunder—
That it was shadowe overall under.
And many a hart and many a hinde
Was both before me and behynde.
Of fawnes, sowes, bukkes, does
Was ful the woode, and many roes,
And many sqwirelles that sate
Ful high upon the trees and ate,
And in their manner made feastes...

Henry Bradshaw (c.1450-1513)

From The Life of Saint Werburge of Chester

The poet is describing the ancient kingdom of Mercia in central and western England. The punctuation is as originally printed.

Many royal ryvers / were contained in the same
With sundry kindes of fysshes / swete and delycyous—
It were tedyous to shewe / of them the dyvers name
In ryvers and in pooles / swymmynge full plenteous;
Also forests / parkes / chases large and beauteous,
And all beestes of venery / pleasaunt for a kynge
To cours at lyberte / be founde there pasturynge.

Also this royall realme / holdeth, as we fynde,
Habundaunce of fruytes / plesaunt and profitable,
Great plente of cornes / and graynes of every kynde;
With hylles / valeys / pastures / comly and delectable
The soyle and glebe / is set plentuous and commendable.
In all pleasaunt propurtes / no part of all this lande
May be compared / to this forsayd Merselande.

Edmund Spenser (1552-1599)

From The Faerie Queene (Book 1, Canto 1)

...Thus as they past,
The day with cloudes was suddeine overcast,
And angry Jove an hideous storme of raine
Did poure into his Lemans lap so fast,
That everie wight to shrowd it did constrain,
And this faire couple eke to shroud themselves were fain.

Enforst to seeke some covert nigh at hand,
A shadie grove not far away they spide,
That promist ayde the tempest to withstand:
Whose loftie trees yclad with sommers pride
Did spred so broad, that heavens light did hide,
Not perceable with power of any starre:
And all within were pathes and alleies wide,
With footing worne, and leading inward farre:
Faire harbour that them seemes; so in they entred arre.

And fourth they passe, with pleasure forward led,
Joying to heare the birdes sweete harmony,
Which therein shrouded from the tempest dred,
Seemd in their song to scorne the cruell sky.
Much can they prayse the trees so straight and hy,

The sayling Pine, the Cedar proud and tall,
The vine-prop Elme, the Poplar never dry,
The builder Oake, sole king of Forrests all,
The Aspine good for staves, the Cypresse funerall.

The Laurell, meed of mightie Conquerours
And Poets sage, the firre that weepeth still,
The Willow worne of forlorne Paramours,
The Eugh obedient to the benders will,
The Birch for shaftes, the Sallow for the mill,
The Mirrhe sweete bleeding in the bitter wound,
The warlike Beech, the Ash for nothing ill,
The fruitfull Olive, and the Platane round,
The carver Holme, the Maple seeldom inward sound.

Led with delight, they thus beguile the way,
Untill the blustring storme is overblowne;
When weening to returne, whence they did stray,
They cannot finde that path, which first was showne,
But wander too and fro in wayes unknowne,
Furthest from end then, when they nearest weene,
That makes them doubt their wits be not their owne:
So many pathes, so many turnings seene,
That which of them to take, in diverse doubt they been.

[Michael Drayton \(1563–1631\)](#)

From Poly-Olbion

Poly-Olbion was a long two-part poem describing much of England and Wales. (Olbion is Albion, or England.)

Away yee barb'rous Woods; How ever yee be plac't
On Mountaines, or in Dales, or happily be grac't
With floods, or marshie fels, with pasture, or with earth
By nature made to till, that by the yeerely birth
The large-bay'd Barne doth fill, yea though the fruitfullst ground.
For, in respect of Plaines, what pleasure can be found
In darke and sleepe shades? where mists and rotten fogs
Hang in the gloomie thicks, and make unstedfast bogs,
By dropping from the boughs, the o're-grown trees among,
With Caterpillers kells, and duskie cobwebs hong.
The deadlie Screech-owle sits, in gloomie covert hid:
Whereas the smooth-brow'd Plaine, as liberallie doth bid
The Larke to leave her Bowre, and on her trembling wing
In climing up tow'rds heaven, her high-pitcht Hymnes to sing.

From Poly-Olbion Part 2

But Muse, from her so low, divert thy high-set song
To London-wards, and bring from Lea with thee along
The Forrests, and the Floods, and most exactly show,
How these in order stand, how those directly flow:
For in that happy soyle, doth pleasure ever wonne,
Through Forrests, where cleere Rills in wild Meanders runne;
Where daintie Summer Bowers, and Arborets are made,
Cut out of Busshy thicks, for coolenesse of the shade.
Fooles gaze at painted Courts, to th' countrey let me goe,
To climbe the easie hill, then walke the valley lowe;
No gold-embossed Roofes, to me are like the woods;
No Bed like to the grasse, nor liquor like the floods:
A Citie's but a sinke, gay houses gawdy graves,
The Muses have free leave, to starve or live in caves:
But Waltham Forrest still in prosperous estate,
As standing to this day (so strangely fortunate)
Above her neighbour Nymphs, and holds her head aloft;
A turfe beyond them all, so sleeke and wondrous soft,
Upon her setting side, by goodly London grac'd,
Upon the North by Lea, her South by Thames embrac'd...

[William Shakespeare \(1564-1616\)](#)

From King Lear, Act IV Scene VI

This speech in blank verse by Edgar describes the supposed view from cliffs near Dover.

Come on, sir; here's the place. Stand still. How fearful
And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
Show scarce so gross as beetles. Halfway down
Hangs one that gathers samphire; dreadful trade!
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
The fishermen that walk upon the beach
Appear like mice; and yond tall anchoring bark,
Diminish'd to her cock; her cock, a buoy
Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge
That on th' unnumb'ed idle pebble chafes
Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
Topple down headlong.

Sonnet XXXIII

Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy;
Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace:
Even so my sun one early morn did shine
With all triumphant splendour on my brow;
But out! alack! he was but one hour mine,
The region cloud hath mask'd him from me now.
Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth;
Suns of the world may stain when heaven's sun staineth.

[Aemelia Lanver \(1569-1645\)](#)

From A Description of Cooke-ham

Cooke-ham (or Cookham, in Berkshire) was the estate of the poet's patroness, the Countess of Cumberland, to whom the poem is addressed.

The house received all ornaments to grace it,
And would endure no foulness to deface it.
And walks put on their summer liveries,
And all things else did hold like similes.
The trees with leaves, with fruits, with flowers clad,
Embraced each other, seeming to be glad,
Turning themselves to beauteous Canopies,
To shade the bright sun from your brighter eyes;
The crystal streams with silver spangles graced,
While by the glorious sun they were embraced;
The little birds in chirping notes did sing,
To entertain both you and that sweet spring.
And Philomela with her sundry lays,
Both you and that delightful place did praise.
Oh how me thought each plant, each flower, each tree
Set forth their beauties then to welcome thee!
The very hills right humbly did descend,
When you to tread on them did intend.
And as you set your feet, they still did rise,
Glad that they could receive so rich a prize...

...Now let me come unto that stately tree,
Wherein such goodly prospects you did see;
That oak that did in height his fellows pass,
As much as lofty trees, low growing grass,
Much like a comely cedar straight and tall,

Whose beauteous stature far exceeded all.
How often did you visit this fair tree,
Which seeming joyful in receiving thee,
Would like a palm tree spread his arms abroad,
Desirous that you there should make abode;
Whose fair green leaves much like a comely veil,
Defended Phoebus when he would assail;
Whose pleasing boughs did yield a cool fresh air,
Joying his happiness when you were there.
Where being seated, you might plainly see
Hills, vales, and woods, as if on bended knee
They had appeared, your honour to salute,
Or to prefer some strange unlooked-for suit;
All interlaced with brooks and crystal springs,
A prospect fit to please the eyes of kings.
And thirteen shires appeared all in your sight,
Europe could not afford much more delight.

John Donne (1572-1631)

From Satyre on Religion

...On a huge hill,
Cragged and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will
Reach her, about must and about must goe,
And what the hill's suddennes resists, winne so.
Yet strive so that before age, death's twilight,
Thy Soule rest, for none can work in that night.
To will implies delay, therefore now do;
Hard deeds, the body's pains; hard knowledge too
The mind's endeavours reach, and mysteries
Are like the sun, dazzling, yet plain to all eyes...

William Drummond (1585-1649)

Spring Bereaved (from Song)

That Zephyre every Year
So soon was hear'd to sigh in Forrests here,
It was for her: That wrapp'd in Gowns of Green
Meads were so early seen;
That in the saddest Months oft sung the mearles,
It was for her; For her Trees dropt forth Pearls.
That proud and stately Courts
Did envy those our Shades and calm Resorts,
It was for her; and she is gone, O woe!
Woods cut again do grow,
Bud doth the Rose and Dazy, Winter done;
But we, once dead, no more do see the Sun.

Robert Herrick (1591–1674)

Herrick lived in London and Devonshire.

From: The Country Life

...(Thou) walk'st about thine own dear bounds,
Not envying others' larger grounds:
For well thou know'st, 'tis not th' extent
Of land makes life, but sweet content.
When now the cock (the ploughman's horn)
Calls forth the lily-wristed morn;
Then to thy corn-fields thou dost go,
Which though well soil'd, yet thou dost know
That the best compost for the lands
Is the wise master's feet, and hands.
There at the plough thou find'st thy team,
With a hind whistling there to them:
And cheer'st them up, by singing how
The kingdom's portion is the plough.
This done, then to th' enamell'd meads
Thou go'st; and as thy foot there treads,
Thou seest a present God-like power
Imprinted in each herb and flower:
And smell'st the breath of great-eyed kine,
Sweet as the blossoms of the vine.
Here thou behold'st thy large sleek neat
Unto the dew-laps up in meat:
And, as thou look'st, the wanton steer,
The heifer, cow, and ox draw near,
To make a pleasing pastime there.
These seen, thou go'st to view thy flocks
Of sheep, safe from the wolf and fox,
And find'st their bellies there as full
Of short sweet grass, as backs with wool:
And leav'st them, as they feed and fill,
A shepherd piping on a hill.

John Denham (1615-1669)

From Cooper's Hill

Cooper's Hill is in the Thames Valley west of London, not far from Staines.

My eye, which swift as thought contracts the space
That lies between, and first salutes the place
Crown'd with that sacred pile, so vast, so high,
That whether 'tis a part of Earth, or sky,

Uncertain seems, and may be thought a proud
Aspiring mountain, or descending cloud,
Pauls, the late theme of such a Muse whose flight
Has bravely reach't and soar'd above thy height:
Now shalt thou stand though sword, or time, or fire,
Or zeal more fierce than they, thy fall conspire,
Secure, whilst thee the best of Poets sings,
Preserv'd from ruine by the best of Kings.
Under his proud survey the City lies,
And like a mist beneath a hill doth rise;
Whose state and wealth the business and the crowd,
Seems at this distance but a darker cloud...

...Windsor the next (where Mars with Venus dwells,
Beauty with strength) above the Valley swells
Into my eye, and doth it self present
With such an easie and unforc't ascent,
That no stupendious precipice denies
Access, no horror turns away our eyes:
But such a Rise, as doth at once invite
A pleasure, and a reverence from the sight...

[Abraham Cowley \(1618-1667\)](#)

From On the Queen's Repairing Somerset House

Somerset House, on the Strand in London, was a Tudor palace at the time of this poem. The present building was not begun until 1775.

Before my Gate a Street's broad Channel goes,
Which still with Waves of crowding people flows,
And every day there passes by my side,
Up to its Western Reach, the London Tide,
The Spring-Tides of the Term; my Front looks down
On all the Pride, and Business of the Town...

...And here, Behold, in a long bending row,
How two joynt Cities make one glorious Bow,
The Midst, the noblest place, possess'd by Me;
Best to be Seen by all, and all O're-see.
Which way soe'r I turn my joyful Eye,
Here the Great Court, there the rich Town, I spy;
On either side dwells Safety and Delight;
Wealth on the Left, and Power upon the Right.
T' assure yet my defence, on either hand,
Like mighty Forts, in equal distance stand
Two of the best and stateliest piles, which e're
Man's liberal Piety of old did rear,

Where the two Princes of th' Apostles Band,
My Neighbours and my Guards, watch and command.
My warlike Guard of Ships, which farther lye,
Might be my Object too, were not the Eye
Stopt by the Houses of that wondrous Street
Which rides o're the broad River, like a Fleet.
The Stream's eternal Siege they fixt abide,
And the swoln Stream's Auxiliary Tide,
Though both their ruine with joynt power conspire,
Both to out-brave, they nothing dread but Fire.
And here my Thames, though it more gentle be
Than any Flood, so strength'ned by the Sea,
Finding by Art his Natural forces broke,
And bearing, Captive-like, the Arched Yoke,
Do's roar, and foam, and rage at the disgrace,
But recomposes strait and calms his Face,
Is into reverence and submission strook,
As soon as from afar he does but look
Tow'rds the White Palace where that King does reign
Who lays his Laws and Bridges o're the Main.

[Andrew Marvell \(1621-1678\)](#)

From Upon the Hill and Grove at Bilbrough: to the Lord Fairfax

Bilbrough is not far from York.

See how the archèd earth does here
Rise in a perfect hemisphere!
The stiffest compass could not strike
A line more circular and like;
Nor softest pencil draw a brow
So equal as this hill does bow.
It seems as for a model laid,
And that the world by it was made.

Here learn, ye mountains more unjust,
Which to abrupter greatness thrust,
That do with your hook-shouldered height
The earth deform and heaven fright,
For whose excrescence, ill-designed,
Nature must a new centre find,
Learn here those humble steps to tread,
Which to securer glory lead.

See what a soft access and wide
Lies open to its grassy side;
Nor with the rugged path deters
The feet of breathless travellers.
See then how courteous it ascends,
And all the way it rises bends;
Nor for itself the height does gain,
But only strives to raise the plain.

Yet thus it all the field commands,
And in unenvied greatness stands,
Discerning further than the cliff
Of heaven-daring Tenerife.
How glad the weary seamen haste
When they salute it from the mast!
By night the Northern Star their way
Directs, and this no less by day.

Upon its crest this mountain grave
A plump of agèd trees does wave.
No hostile hand durst ere invade
With impious steel the sacred shade.
For something always did appear
Of the great Master's terror there:
And men could hear his armour still
Rattling through all the grove and hill.

[Alexander Pope \(1688-1744\)](#)

From Windsor Forest

Windsor Forest had been a royal hunting forest since the 13th century, although by the 18th century it was being tamed and ordered rather than used for hunting.

Here hills and vales, the woodland and the plain,
Here earth and water seem to strive again;
Not chaos-like together crush'd and bruis'd,
But, as the world, harmoniously confused:
Where order in variety we see,
And where, tho' all things differ, all agree.
Here waving groves a chequer'd scene display,
And part admit, and part exclude the day;
As some coy nymph her lover's warm address
Nor quite indulges, nor can quite repress.
There, interspers'd in lawns and opening glades,
Thin trees arise that shun each other's shades.
Here in full light the russet plains extend:
There wrapt in clouds the bluish hills ascend.

Ev'n the wild heath displays her purple dyes,
And 'midst the desert fruitful fields arise,
That crown'd with tufted trees and springing corn,
Like verdant isles, the sable waste adorn.
Let India boast her plants, nor envy we
The weeping amber or the balmy tree,
While by our oaks the precious loads are borne,
And realms commanded which those trees adorn.
Not proud Olympus yields a nobler sight,
Tho' Gods assembled grace his tow'ring height,
Than what more humble mountains offer here,
Where, in their blessings, all those Gods appear...

...Bear me, O bear me to sequester'd scenes,
The bowery mazes, and surrounding greens;
To Thames's banks, which fragrant breezes fill,
Or where ye Muses sport on Cooper's hill.
(On Cooper's hill eternal wreaths shall grow,
While lasts the mountain, or while Thames shall flow.)
I seem thro' consecrated walks to rove;
I hear soft music die along the grove:
Led by the sound, I roam from shade to shade,
By godlike Poets venerable made:
Here his first lays majestic Denham sung;
There the last numbers flow'd from Cowley's tongue.
Oh early lost! what tears the river shed,
When the sad pomp along his banks was led!
His drooping swans on every note expire,
And on his willows hung each Muse's lyre.

[William Whitehead \(1715–1785\)](#)

From The Enthusiast: An Ode

Once, I remember well the day,
'Twas ere the blooming sweets of May
Had lost their freshest hues,
When every flower on every hill,
In every vale, had drunk its fill
Of sunshine and of dews.

'Twas that sweet season's loveliest prime
When Spring gives up the reins of time
To Summer's glowing hand,
And doubting mortals hardly know
By whose command the breezes blow
Which fan the smiling land.

'Twas then beside a green-wood shade
Which cloth'd a lawn's aspiring head
I urg'd my devious way,
With loitering steps, regardless where,
So soft, so genial was the air,
So wond'rous bright the day.

And now my eyes with transport rove
O'er all the blue expansive grove,
Unbroken by a cloud!
And now beneath delighted pass,
Where, winding through the deep-green grass,
A full-brimm'd river flow'd.

I stop, I gaze; in accents rude
To thee, serenest Solitude,
Burst forth th' unbidden lay:
Begone, vile world; the learn'd, the wise,
The great, the busy, I despise,
And pity e'en the gay.

These, these are joys alone, I cry,
'Tis here, divine Philosophy,
Thou deign'st to fix thy throne!
Here, contemplation points the road
Thro' Nature's charms to Nature's God!
These, these, are joys alone!

Thomas Gray (1716–1771)

From On a Distant Prospect of Eton College

Ye distant spires, ye antique towers,
That crown the watery glade,
Where grateful Science still adores
Her Henry's holy shade;
And ye, that from the stately brow
Of Windsor's heights th' expanse below
Of grove, of lawn, of mead survey,
Whose turf, whose shade, whose flowers among
Wanders the hoary Thames along
His silver-winding way.

Ah, happy hills! ah, pleasing shade!
Ah, fields beloved in vain,
Where once my careless childhood strayed
A stranger yet to pain!
I feel the gales that from ye blow,
A momentary bliss bestow,

As waving fresh their gladsome wing,
My weary soul they seem to soothe,
And, redolent of joy and youth,
To breathe a second spring.

From Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard

When Gray wrote this poem, he was living at Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire.

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds:

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

Oliver Goldsmith (1730–1774)

From The Deserted Village

The poem is evidently not based on any particular village, but reflects the general problems of depopulation following enclosures of common land.

Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheer'd the labouring swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's lingering blooms delay'd:
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please:
How often have I loiter'd o'er thy green,

Where humble happiness endear'd each scene!
How often have I paused on every charm,
The shelter'd cot, the cultivated farm,
The never failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topp'd the neighbouring hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whispering lovers made!
How often have I bless'd the coming day,
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
And all the village train, from labour free,
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree:
While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old survey'd;
And many a gambol frolick'd o'er the ground,
And sleights of art and feats of strength went round...

....Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;
Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green:
One only master grasps the whole domain,
And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain;
No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,
But choked with sedges works its weedy way;
Along thy glades, a solitary guest,
The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest;
Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies,
And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.
Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all,
And the long grass o'ertops the mouldering wall;
And, trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand,
Far, far away thy children leave the land....

[William Cowper \(1731–1800\)](#)

The Poplar Field

This was apparently based on the area of Lavendon, Buckinghamshire.

The poplars are felled; farewell to the shade,
And the whispering sound of the cool colonnade;
The winds play no longer and sing in the leaves,
Nor Ouse on his bosom their image receives.

Twelve years have elapsed since I first took a view
Of my favourite field, and the bank where they grew:
And now in the grass behold they are laid,
And the tree is my seat that once lent me a shade!

The blackbird has fled to another retreat,
Where the hazels afford him a screen from the heat,
And the scene where his melody charmed me before
Resounds with his sweet-flowing ditty no more.

My fugitive years are all hasting away,
And I must ere long lie as lowly as they,
With a turf on my breast, and a stone at my head,
Ere another such grove shall arise in its stead.

'Tis a sight to engage me, if anything can,
To muse on the perishing pleasures of man;
Though his life be a dream, his enjoyments, I see,
Have a being less durable even than he.

From The Task

*The river referred to here is the Great Ouse which flows through
Buckinghamshire and other counties on its way to the sea at the Wash.*

How oft upon yon eminence our pace
Has slacken'd to a pause, and we have borne
The ruffling wind, scarce conscious that it blew,
While admiration, feeding at the eye,
And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene.
Thence with what pleasure have we just discern'd
The distant plough slow-moving, and beside
His lab'ring team, that swerv'd not from the track,
The sturdy swain diminish'd to a boy!
Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
Of spacious meads with cattle sprinkled o'er,
Conducts the eye along its sinuous course
Delighted. There, fast rooted in his bank,
Stand, never overlook'd, our fav'rite elms,
That screen the herdsman's solitary hut;
While far beyond, and overthwart the stream
That as with molten glass inlays the vale,
The sloping land recedes into the clouds;
Displaying on its varied side the grace
Of hedge-row beauties numberless, square tow'r,
Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells
Just undulates upon the list'ning ear,
Groves, heaths, and smoking villages remote.
Scenes must be beautiful which daily view'd
Please daily, and whose novelty survives
Long knowledge and the scrutiny of years.
Praise justly due to those that I describe.

Charlotte Smith (1749-1806)

From Beachy Head

Beachy Head is a headland in Sussex, overlooking the English Channel.

On thy stupendous summit, rock sublime!
That o'er the channel reared, half way at sea
The mariner at early morning hails,
I would recline; while Fancy should go forth,
And represent the strange and awful hour
Of vast concussion; when the Omnipotent
Stretch'd forth his arm, and rent the solid hills,
Bidding the impetuous main flood rush between
The rifted shores, and from the continent
Eternally divided this green isle.
Imperial lord of the high southern coast!
From thy projecting head-land I would mark
Far in the east the shades of night disperse,
Melting and thinned, as from the dark blue wave
Emerging, brilliant rays of arrowy light
Dart from the horizon; when the glorious sun
Just lifts above it his resplendent orb.
Advances now, with feathery silver touched,
The rippling tide of flood; glisten the sands.
While, inmates of the chalky clefts that scar
Thy sides precipitous, with shrill harsh cry,
Their white wings glancing in the level beam,
The terns, and gulls, and tarrocks, seek their food,
And thy rough hollows echo to the voice
Of the gray choughs, end ever restless daws,
With clamour, not unlike the chiding hounds,
While the lone shepherd, and his baying dog
Drive to thy turfy crest his bleating flock.

The high meridian of the day is past,
And Ocean now, reflecting the calm Heaven,
Is of cerulean hue ; and murmurs low
The tide of ebb, upon the level sands.
The sloop, her angular canvas shifting still,
Catches the light and variable airs
That but a little crisp the summer sea,
Dimpling its tranquil surface.

Afar off,
And just emerging from the arch immense
Where seem to part the elements, a fleet
Of fishing vessels stretch their lesser sails;
While more remote, and like a dubious spot
Just hanging in the horizon, laden deep,

The ship of commerce richly freighted, makes
Her slower progress, on her distant voyage...

George Crabbe (1754-1832)

From The Borough

The poem describes life on the Suffolk coast.

Before you bid these busy scenes adieu,
Behold the wealth that lies in public view,
Those far-extended heaps of coal and coke,
Where fresh-fill'd lime-kilns breathe their stifling smoke.
This shall pass off, and you behold, instead,
The night-fire gleaming on its chalky bed;
When from the light-house brighter beams will rise,
To show the shipman where the shallow lies.

Thy walks are ever pleasant; every scene
Is rich in beauty, lively, or serene:
Rich is that varied view with woods around,
Seen from the seat, within the shrubb'ry bound;
Where shines the distant lake, and where appear
From ruins bolting, unmolested deer;
Lively the village-green, the inn, the place
Where the good widow schools her infant race;
Shops, whence are heard the hammer and the saw,
And village-pleasures unreproved by law.
Then, how serene when in your favourite room,
Gales from your jasmines soothe the evening gloom;
When from your upland paddock you look down,
And just perceive the smoke which hides the town;
When weary peasants at the close of day
Walk to their cots, and part upon the way;
When cattle slowly cross the shallow brook,
And shepherds pen their folds, and rest upon their crook...

...Be it the summer-noon: a sandy space
The ebbing tide has left upon its place.
Then, just the hot and stony beach above,
Light twinkling streams in bright confusion move
(For heated thus, the warmer air ascends,
And with the cooler in its fall contends).
Then the broad bosom of the ocean keeps
An equal motion, swelling as it sleeps,
Then slowly sinking; curling to the strand,
Faint, lazy waves o'ercreep the ridgy sand,
Or tap the tarry boat with gentle blow,
And back return in silence, smooth and slow.
Ships in the calm seem anchored; for they glide
On the still sea, urged solely by the tide...

The poem tells the tale of the cruel and isolated fisherman, Peter Grimes:

...Thus by himself compelled to live each day,
To wait for certain hours the tide's delay;
At the same times the same dull views to see,
The bounding marsh-bank and the blighted tree;
The water only when the tides were high,
When low, the mud half-cover'd and half-dry;
The sun-burnt tar that blisters on the planks,
And bank-side stakes in their uneven ranks;
Heaps of entangled weeds that slowly float,
As the tide rolls by the impeded boat.

When tides were neap, and, in the sultry day,
Through the tall bounding mud-banks made their way,
Which on each side rose swelling, and below
The dark warm flood ran silently and slow;
There anchoring, Peter chose from man to hide,
There hang his head, and view the lazy tide
In its hot slimy channel slowly glide;
Where the small eels that left the deeper way
For the warm shore, within the shallows play;
Where gaping muscles, left upon the mud,
Slope their slow passage to the fallen flood:
Here dull and hopeless he'd lie down and trace
How sidelong crabs had scrawl'd their crooked race;
Or sadly listen to the tuneless cry
Of fishing gull or clanging golden-eye;
What time the sea-birds to the marsh would come,
And the loud bittern, from the bull-rush home,
Gave from the salt-ditch side the bellowing boom.
He nursed the feelings these dull scenes produce,
And loved to stop beside the opening sluice
Where the small stream, confined in narrow bound,
Ran with a dull, unvaried, sadd'ning sound
Where all presented to the eye or ear
Oppress'd the soul with misery, grief, and fear.

Joanna Baillie (1762–1851)

From An Address to the Night

But, lo! the moon looks forth in splendour bright,
Fair and unclouded, from her middle height.
The passing cloud unveils her kindly ray,
And slowly sails its weary length away;
While broken fragments from its fleecy side,
In dusky bands before it swiftly glide;

Their misty texture changing with the wind,
A strange and scatter'd group, of motley kind
As ever earth or fruitful ocean fed,
Or ever youthful poets fancy bred.
His surgy length the wreathing serpent trails,
And by his side the rugged camel sails:
The winged griffith follows close behind,
And spreads his dusky pinions to the wind.
Athwart the sky in scatter'd bands they range
From shape to shape, transform'd in endless change;
Then piece meal torn, in ragged portions stray,
Or thinly spreading, slowly melt away.
A softer brightness covers all below;
Hill, dale, and wood, in mellow'd colours glow.
High tow'rs the whiten'd rock in added strength;
The brown heath shews afar its dreary length.
The winding river glitters on the vale;
And gilded trees wave in the passing gale.
Upon the ground each blackning shadow lies,
And hasty darkness o'er the valley flies.
Wide sheeting shadows travel oer the plain,
And swiftly close upon the varied scene.
Return, O lovely moon! and look from high,
All stately riding in thy motled sky,
Yet, O thy beams in hasty visits come!
As swiftly follow'd by the fleeting gloom.

William Wordsworth (1770–1850)

Upon Westminster Bridge

The Westminster Bridge in this poem was not the same as the present one, although it was in the same place, on the Thames in London linking Westminster and Lambeth.

Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

From The Prelude

This poem is set in the Lake District, where Wordsworth grew up.

... I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cave, its usual home.
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;
Leaving behind her still, on either side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,
The horizon's utmost boundary; far above
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
She was an elfin pinnace; lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct,
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow tree;
There in her mooring-place I left my bark, –
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

***From Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey
(On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour, July 13, 1798)***

Although Tintern Abbey lies in Wales, Wordsworth is not concerned with that building but rather with the landscape around the River Wye, which here forms the border between Southern Wales and England.

Five years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur. – Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
‘Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit’s cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone.

These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man’s eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and ’mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration...

...Oh! how oft,
In darkness, and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart,
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro’ the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again:

While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye. —That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompence. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts: a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye and ear, — both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my mortal being.

From The Recluse: Home at Grasmere

Grasmere is in the Lake District.

Embrace me then, ye Hills, and close me in;
Now in the clear and open day I feel
Your guardianship; I take it to my heart;
'Tis like the solemn shelter of the night.
But I would call thee beautiful, for mild,
And soft, and gay, and beautiful thou art
Dear Valley, having in thy face a smile
Though peaceful, full of gladness. Thou art pleased,
Pleased with thy crags and woody steeps, thy Lake,
Its one green island and its winding shores;
The multitude of little rocky hills,
Thy Church and cottages of mountain stone
Clustered like stars some few, but single most,
And lurking dimly in their shy retreats,
Or glancing at each other cheerful looks
Like separated stars with clouds between.
What want we? have we not perpetual streams,
Warm woods, and sunny hills, and fresh green fields,
And mountains not less green, and flocks and herds,
And thickets full of songsters, and the voice
Of lordly birds, an unexpected sound
Heard now and then from morn to latest eve,
Admonishing the man who walks below
Of solitude and silence in the sky?
These have we, and a thousand nooks of earth
Have also these, but nowhere else is found,
Nowhere (or is it fancy?) can be found
The one sensation that is here; 'tis here,
Here as it found its way into my heart
In childhood, here as it abides by day,
By night, here only; or in chosen minds
That take it with them hence, where'er they go.
—'Tis, but I cannot name it, 'tis the sense
Of majesty, and beauty, and repose,
A blended holiness of earth and sky,
Something that makes this individual spot,
This small abiding-place of many men,
A termination, and a last retreat,
A centre, come from wheresoe'er you will,
A whole without dependence or defect,
Made for itself, and happy in itself,
Perfect contentment, Unity entire.

Green-Head Ghyll

Greenhead Ghyll is east of Grasmere.

If from the public way you turn your steps
Up the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,
You will suppose that with an upright path
Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent
The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.
But courage! for around that boisterous brook
The mountains have all opened out themselves,
And made a hidden valley of their own.
No habitation can be seen; but they
Who journey thither find themselves alone
With a few sheep, with rocks, and stones, and kites
That overhead are sailing in the sky;
It is, in truth, an utter solitude.

James Montgomery (1771–1854)

The Peak Mountains

This poem refers to the Derbyshire Peak District.

Emerging from the caverned glen,
From steep to steep I slowly climb,
And, far above the haunts of men,
I tread in air sublime:
Beneath my path the swallows sweep;
Yet higher crags impend,
And wild-flowers from the fissures peep,
And rills descend.

Now on the ridges bare and bleak,
Cool round my temples sighs the gale:
Ye winds! that wander o'er the Peak,
Ye mountain spirits, hail!
Angels of health! to man below
Ye bring celestial airs;
Bear back to Him from whom ye blow
Our praise and prayers.

Here, like the eagle from his nest,
I take my proud and dizzy stand;
Here, from the cliff's sublimest crest,
Look down upon the land:
O for the eagle's eye to gaze
Undazzled through this light!
O for the eagle's wings to raise
O'er all my flight!

The sun in glory walks the sky,
White fleecy clouds are floating round,
Whose shapes along the landscape fly,—
Here, checkering o'er the ground,
There, down the glens the shadows sweep,
With changing lights between;
Yonder they climb the upland steep,
Shifting the scene.

Above, beneath, immensely spread,
Valleys and hoary rocks I view,
Heights over heights exalt their head
Of many a sombre hue;
No waving woods their flanks adorn,
No hedge-rows, gay with trees,
Encircled fields, where floods of corn
Roll to the breeze.

My soul this vast horizon fills,
Within whose undulated line
Thick stand the multitude of hills,
And clear the waters shine;
Gray mossy walls the slopes ascend;
While roads, that tire the eye,
Upward their winding course extend,
And touch the sky.

With rude diversity of form,
The insulated mountains tower;
Oft o'er these cliffs the transient storm
And partial darkness lower,
While yonder summits far away
Shine sweetly through the gloom,
Like glimpses of eternal day.
Beyond the tomb.

[Samuel Taylor Coleridge \(1772–1834\)](#)

The following poems were all written while Coleridge lived in Somerset.

From Frost at Midnight

...My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee,
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore,
And in far other scenes! For I was reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.

But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself.
Great universal Teacher – he shall mould
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple-tree, while the night that
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall
Heard only in the trances of the blast,
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

From The Nightingale

The castle in this poem may be based on Dunster Castle, Somerset, a few miles from Coleridge's home.

No cloud, no relique of the sunken day
Distinguishes the West, no long thin slip
Of sullen light, no obscure trembling hues.
Come, we will rest on this old mossy bridge.
You see the glimmer of the stream beneath,
But hear no murmuring: it flows silently,
O'er its soft bed of verdure. All is still,
A balmy night! and though the stars be dim,
Yet let us think upon the vernal showers
That gladden the green earth, and we shall find
A pleasure in the dimness of the stars.
And hark! the Nightingale begins its song,
'Most musical, most melancholy' bird...

...I know a grove
Of large extent, hard by a castle huge,
Which the great lord inhabits not; and so
This grove is wild with tangling underwood,
And the trim walks are broken up, and grass,
Thin grass and king-cups grow within the paths.
But never elsewhere in one place I know
So many nightingales; and far and near,
In wood and thicket, over the wide grove,

They answer and provoke each other's songs,
With skirmish and capricious passagings,
And murmurs musical and swift jug jug,
And one low piping sound more sweet than all—
Stirring the air with such an harmony
That should you close your eyes, you might almost
Forget it was not day!

From This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison

Well, they are gone, and here must I remain,
This lime-tree bower my prison! I have lost
Beauties and feelings, such as would have been
Most sweet to my remembrance even when age
Had dimmed mine eyes to blindness! They, meanwhile,
Friends, whom I never more may meet again,
On springy heath, along the hill-top edge,
Wander in gladness, and wind down, perchance,
To that still roaring dell, of which I told;
The roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep,
And only speckled by the mid-day sun;
Where its slim trunk the ash from rock to rock
Flings arching like a bridge; – that branchless ash,
Unsunned and damp, whose few poor yellow leaves
Ne'er tremble in the gale, yet tremble still,
Fanned by the water-fall! and there my friends
Behold the dark green file of long lank weeds,
That all at once (a most fantastic sight!)
Still nod and drip beneath the dripping edge
Of the blue clay-stone.

Now, my friends emerge
Beneath the wide, wide Heaven – and view again
The many steeped track magnificent
Of hilly fields and meadows, and the sea,
With some fair bark, perhaps, whose sails light up
The slip of smooth clear blue betwixt two isles
Of purple shadow! Yes! they wander on
In gladness all; but thou, methinks, most glad,
My gentle-hearted Charles! for thou hast pined
And hungered after Nature, many a year,
In the great City pent, winning thy way
With sad yet patient soul, through evil and pain
And strange calamity! Ah! slowly sink
Behind the western ridge, thou glorious Sun!
Shine in the slant beams of the sinking orb,
Ye purple heath-flowers! richlier burn, ye clouds!
Live in the yellow light, ye distant groves!
And kindle, thou blue Ocean! So my friend
Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,

Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
Less gross than bodily; and of such hues
As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet he makes
Spirits perceive his presence...

Ebenezer Elliott (1781–1849)

Walkley

Walkley was then a village, and is now a suburb, just north of Sheffield.

Sarah and William Adams! here we stood,
Roofed by the cloud, which cast his frown between
Wardsend and Loxley's moorlands. From the wood
Of one-starred Grenno, like a sea unseen,
The wind swept o'er us, seeming, in his might,
To shake the steadfast rocks; while, rushing keen
Beyond the edge of darkness, stormy light,
As from a league-wide trumpet, on the scene
A cataract of glory poured; and, bright
In gloom, the hill-tops islanded the night
Of billowy shade around us. Vale and hill,
Forest and cloud, were restless as a fight;
They seemed as they would nevermore be still;
While, anchored over all, the high-poised kite
Saw the foamed rivers dash their blue with white.

John Clare (1793-1864)

Clare grew up in, and wrote about, Northamptonshire in the East Midlands.

Emmonsails Heath in Winter

I love to see the old heath's withered brake
Mingle its crimped leaves with furze and ling
While the old heron from the lonely lake
Starts slow and flaps its melancholy wing
And oddling crow in idle motion swing
On the half-rotten ash-tree's topmost twig
Beside whose trunk the gypsy makes his bed
Up flies the bouncing woodcock from the brig
Where a black quagmire quakes beneath the tread
The fieldfare chatter in the whistling thorn
And for the haw round fields and closen rove
And coy bumbarrels twenty in a drove
Flit down the hedgerows in the frozen plain
And hang on little twigs and start again

Mist in the Meadows

The evening oer the meadow seems to stoop
More distant lessens the diminished spire
Mist in the hollows reaks and curdles up
Like fallen clouds that spread – and things retire
Less seen and less – the shepherd passes near
And little distant most grotesquely shades
As walking without legs – lost to his knees
As through the rawky creeping smoke he wades
Now half way up the arches disappear
And small the bits of sky that glimmer through
Then trees loose all but tops – I meet the fields
And now indistinctness passes bye
The shepherd all his length is seen again
And further on the village meets the eye

From The Mores

(i.e. moors)

Far spread the moorey ground a level scene
Bespread with rush and one eternal green
That never felt the rage of blundering plough
Though centurys wreathed spring's blossoms on its brow
Still meeting plains that stretched them far away
In uncheckt shadows of green brown, and grey
Unbounded freedom ruled the wandering scene
Nor fence of ownership crept in between
To hide the prospect of the following eye
Its only bondage was the circling sky
One mighty flat undwarfed by bush and tree
Spread its faint shadow of immensity
And lost itself, which seemed to eke its bounds
In the blue mist the horizon's edge surrounds

Now this sweet vision of my boyish hours
Free as spring clouds and wild as summer flowers
Is faded all - a hope that blossomed free
And hath been once, no more shall ever be
Inclosure came and trampled on the grave
Of labour's rights and left the poor a slave
And memory's pride ere want to wealth did bow
Is both the shadow and the substance now
The sheep and cows were free to range as then
Where change might prompt nor felt the bonds of men
Cows went and came, with evening morn and night,
To the wild pasture as their common right
And sheep unfolded with the rising sun
Heard the swains shout and felt their freedom won

Tracked the red fallow field and heath and plain
Then met the brook and drank and roamed again
The brook that dribbled on as clear as glass
Beneath the roots they hid among the grass
While the glad shepherd traced their tracks along
Free as the lark and happy as her song
But now all's fled and flats of many a dye
That seemed to lengthen with the following eye
Moors, loosing from the sight, far, smooth, and blea
Where swopt the plover in its pleasure free
Are vanished now with commons wild and gay
As poet's visions of life's early day
Mulberry-bushes where the boy would run
To fill his hands with fruit are grubbed and done
And hedgrow-briars – flower-lovers overjoyed
Came and got flower-pots – these are all destroyed
And sky-bound mores in mangled garbs are left
Like mighty giants of their limbs bereft...

[John Keats \(1795–1821\)](#)

From Calidore: a Fragment

Calidore is a figure from Spenser's 'Faerie Queen'.

Young Calidore is paddling o'er the lake;
His healthful spirit eager and awake
To feel the beauty of a silent eve,
Which seem'd full loath this happy world to leave;
The light dwelt o'er the scene so lingeringly.
He bares his forehead to the cool blue sky,
And smiles at the far clearness all around,
Until his heart is well nigh over wound,
And turns for calmness to the pleasant green
Of easy slopes, and shadowy trees that lean
So elegantly o'er the waters' brim
And show their blossoms trim.
Scarce can his clear and nimble eye-sight follow
The freaks, and dartings of the black-wing'd swallow,
Delighting much, to see it half at rest,
Dip so refreshingly its wings, and breast
'Gainst the smooth surface, and to mark anon,
The widening circles into nothing gone.

And now the sharp keel of his little boat
Comes up with ripple, and with easy float,
And glides into a bed of water lillies:
Broad leav'd are they and their white canopies
Are upward turn'd to catch the heavens' dew.
Near to a little island's point they grew;

Whence Calidore might have the goodliest view
Of this sweet spot of earth. The bowery shore
Went off in gentle windings to the hoar
And light blue mountains: but no breathing man
With a warm heart, and eye prepared to scan
Nature's clear beauty, could pass lightly by
Objects that look'd out so invitingly
On either side. These, gentle Calidore
Greeted, as he had known them long before.

The sidelong view of swelling leafiness,
Which the glad setting sun, in gold doth dress;
Whence ever, and anon the jay outsprings,
And scales upon the beauty of its wings.

The lonely turret, shatter'd, and outworn,
Stands venerably proud; too proud to mourn
Its long lost grandeur: fir trees grow around,
Aye dropping their hard fruit upon the ground.

The little chapel with the cross above
Upholding wreaths of ivy; the white dove,
That on the windows spreads his feathers light,
And seems from purple clouds to wing its flight.

Green tufted islands casting their soft shades
Across the lake; sequester'd leafy glades,
That through the dimness of their twilight show
Large dock leaves, spiral foxgloves, or the glow
Of the wild cat's eyes, or the silvery stems
Of delicate birch trees, or long grass which hems
A little brook. The youth had long been viewing
These pleasant things, and heaven was bedewing
The mountain flowers, when his glad senses caught
A trumpet's silver voice...

To Autumn

Keats is said to have composed this poem after walking near Winchester.

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,

Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'erbrimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twinèd flowers;
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barrèd clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

Richard Henry Horne (1802–1884)

The Plough: A Landscape in Berkshire

Above yon sombre swell of land
Thou seest the dawn's grave orange hue,
With one pale streak like yellow sand,
And over that a vein of blue.

The air is cold above the woods;
All silent is the earth and sky,
Except with his own lonely moods
The blackbird holds a colloquy.

Over the broad hill creeps a beam,
Like hope that gilds a good man's brow,
And now ascends the nostril-stream
Of stalwart horses come to plough.

Ye rigid Ploughmen, bear in mind
Your labor is for future hours!
Advance—spare not—nor look behind:
Plough deep and straight with all your powers.

Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809–1892)

The Brook

This does not appear to refer to any particular brook or area.

I come from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally
And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
Or slip between the ridges,
By twenty thorps, a little town,
And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling,

And here and there a foamy flake
Upon me, as I travel
With many a silvery waterbreak
Above the golden gravel,

And draw them all along, and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,
I slide by hazel covers;
I move the sweet forget-me-nots
That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
Among my skimming swallows;
I make the netted sunbeam dance
Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars
In brambly wildernesses;
I linger by my shingly bars;
I loiter round my cresses;

And out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

From In Memoriam

Canto CI

Unwatch'd, the garden bough shall sway,
The tender blossom flutter down,
Unloved, that beech will gather brown,
This maple burn itself away;

Unloved, the sun-flower, shining fair,
Ray round with flames her disk of seed,
And many a rose-carnation feed
With summer spice the humming air;

Unloved, by many a sandy bar,
The brook shall babble down the plain,
At noon or when the lesser wain
Is twisting round the polar star;

Uncared for, gird the windy grove,
And flood the haunts of hern and crake;
Or into silver arrows break
The sailing moon in creek and cove;

Till from the garden and the wild
A fresh association blow,
And year by year the landscape grow
Familiar to the stranger's child;

As year by year the labourer tills
His wonted glebe, or lops the glades;
And year by year our memory fades
From all the circle of the hills.

Canto CXV

Now fades the last long streak of snow,
Now burgeons every maze of quick
About the flowering squares, and thick
By ashen roots the violets blow.

Now rings the woodland loud and long,
The distance takes a lovelier hue,
And drown'd in yonder living blue
The lark becomes a sightless song.

Now dance the lights on lawn and lea,
The flocks are whiter down the vale,
And milkier every milky sail
On winding stream or distant sea;

Where now the seamew pipes, or dives
In yonder greening gleam, and fly
The happy birds, that change their sky
To build and brood; that live their lives

From land to land; and in my breast
Spring wakens too; and my regret
Becomes an April violet,
And buds and blossoms like the rest.

Canto CXXIII

There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
There where the long street roars, hath been
The stillness of the central sea.

The hills are shadows, and they flow
From form to form, and nothing stands;
They melt like mist, the solid lands,
Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

But in my spirit will I dwell,
And dream my dream, and hold it true;
For tho' my lips may breathe adieu,
I cannot think the thing farewell.

Henry Alford (1810-1871)

Linn-Cleeve, Linton, Devon

This onward-deepening gloom – this hanging path
Over the Linn that soundeth mightily,
Foaming and tumbling on, as if in wrath
That aught should bar its passage to the sea.
These Sundered walls of rock, tier upon tier
Built darkly up into the very sky,
Hung with thick woods, the native haunt of deer
And sheep that browse the dizzy slopes on high, –
All half-unreal to my fancy seem, –
For opposite my crib, long years ago.
Were pictured just such rocks, just such a stream.
With just this height above, and depth below;
Even this jutting crag I seem to know –
As when some sight calls back a half-forgotten dream.

Newman Hall (1816–1902)

Bolton Abbey

Bolton Abbey is in the Yorkshire Dales.

Entranced with varied loveliness, I gaze
On Bolton's hallowed fane. Its hoary walls,
More eloquent, in ruin, than the halls
Of princely pomp, their solemn features raise
Mid thick embowering elms. Meek cattle graze
The peaceful pastures circling it around;
Old Wharf flows sparkling by with pensive sound,
And heathery hills look down through purple haze.
All lend their aid to prompt these humble lays;
Some kind and soothing influence all have given, –
The mouldering abbey and the moss-grown grave,
The breezy moorland and the rock-nurst wave,
Cliff, meadow, forest, – all direct to heaven,
All blend their voices in one psalm of praise.

Emily Bronte (1818-1848)

Emily Bronte wrote about the landscape of the Pennine moors near Haworth in Yorkshire.

Untitled

A little while, a little while,
The weary task is put away,
And I can sing and I can smile,
Alike, while I have holiday.

Where wilt thou go, my harassed heart—
What thought, what scene invites thee now
What spot, or near or far apart,
Has rest for thee, my weary brow?

There is a spot, 'mid barren hills,
Where winter howls, and driving rain;
But, if the dreary tempest chills,
There is a light that warms again.

The house is old, the trees are bare,
Moonless above bends twilight's dome;
But what on earth is half so dear—
So longed for – as the hearth of home?

The mute bird sitting on the stone,
The dank moss dripping from the wall,
The thorn-trees gaunt, the walks o'ergrown,
I love them – how I love them all!

Still, as I mused, the naked room,
The alien firelight died away;
And from the midst of cheerless gloom,
I passed to bright, unclouded day.

A little and a lone green lane
That opened on a common wide;
A distant, dreamy, dim blue chain
Of mountains circling every side.

A heaven so clear, an earth so calm,
So sweet, so soft, so hushed an air;
And, deepening still the dream-like charm,
Wild moor-sheep feeding everywhere.

That was the scene, I knew it well;
I knew the turfy pathway's sweep,
That, winding o'er each billowy swell,
Marked out the tracks of wandering sheep.

Could I have lingered but an hour,
It well had paid a week of toil;
But Truth has banished Fancy's power:
Restraint and heavy task recoil.

Even as I stood with raptured eye,
Absorbed in bliss so deep and dear,
My hour of rest had fled by,
And back came labour, bondage, care.

From Untitled

For the moors! For the moors, where the short grass
Like velvet beneath us should lie!
For the moors! For the moors, where each high pass
Rose sunny against the clear sky!

For the moors, where the linnet was trilling
Its song on the old granite stone;
Where the lark, the wild sky-lark, was filling
Every breast with delight like its own!

What language can utter the feeling
Which rose, when in exile afar,
On the brow of a lonely hill kneeling,
I saw the brown heath growing there?

It was scattered and stunted, and told me
That soon even that would be gone:
It whispered, "The grim walls enfold me,
I have bloomed in my last summer's sun."

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888)

The Hayeswater Boat

Hayeswater is a small lake in Patterdale, in the Lake District.

A region desolate and wild.
Black, chafing water: and afloat,
And lonely as a truant child
In a waste wood, a single boat:
No mast, no sails are set thereon;
It moves, but never moveth on:
And welters like a human thing
Amid the wild waves weltering.

Behind, a buried vale doth sleep,
Far down the torrent cleaves its way:
In front the dumb rock rises steep,
A fretted wall of blue and grey;
Of shooting cliff and crumbled stone
With many a wild weed overgrown:
All else, black water: and afloat,
One rood from shore, that single boat.

Last night the wind was up and strong;
The grey-streak'd waters labour still:
The strong blast brought a pygmy throng
From that mild hollow in the hill;
From those twin brooks, that beachèd strand
So featly strewn with drifted sand;
From those weird domes of mounded green
That spot the solitary scene.

This boat they found against the shore:
The glossy rushes nodded by.
One rood from land they pushed, no more;
Then rested, listening silently.
The loud rains lashed the mountain's crown,
The grating shingle straggled down:
All night they sate; then stole away,
And left it rocking in the bay.

Last night? – I looked, the sky was clear,
The boat was old, a batter'd boat.
In sooth, it seems a hundred year
Since that strange crew did ride afloat.
The boat hath drifted in the bay—
The oars have moulder'd as they lay—
The rudder swings – yet none doth steer.
What living hand hath brought it here?

From The Youth of Nature

This poem refers to many places in the Lake District and Cumbria.

Rais'd are the dripping oars—
Silent the boat: the lake,
Lovely and soft as a dream,
Swims in the sheen of the moon.
The mountains stand at its head
Clear in the pure June night,
But the valleys are flooded with haze.
Rydal and Fairfield are there;
In the shadow Wordsworth lies dead.
So it is, so it will be for aye.
Nature is fresh as of old,
Is lovely: a mortal is dead.

The spots which recall him survive,
For he lent a new life to these hills.
The Pillar still broods o'er the fields
Which border Ennerdale Lake,
And Egremont sleeps by the sea.
The gleam of The Evening Star
Twinkles on Grasmere no more,
But ruin'd and solemn and grey
The sheepfold of Michael survives;
And, far to the south, the heath
Still blows in the Quantock coombs,
By the favourite waters of Ruth.
These survive; yet not without pain,
Pain and dejection to-night,
Can I feel that their Poet is gone.

From The Scholar Gypsy

The poem is based on the story of an Oxford student.

Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill;
Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes;
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,
Nor the cropp'd herbage shoot another head.
But when the fields are still,
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanch'd green;
Come, shepherd, and again begin the quest.

Here, where the reaper was at work of late,

In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruise,
And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,
Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use;
Here will I sit and wait,
While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,
With distant cries of reapers in the corn—
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

Screen'd is this nook o'er the high, half-reap'd field,
And here till sun-down, shepherd, will I be.
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see
Pale pink convolvulus in tendrils creep;
And air-swept lindens yield
Their scent, and rustle down their perfum'd showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
And bower me from the August sun with shade;
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers...

...once, in winter, on the causeway chill
Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go,
Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden bridge,
Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
Thy face towards Hinksey and its wintry ridge?
And thou has climb'd the hill
And gain'd the white brow of the Cumner range,
Turn'd once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,
The line of festal light in Christ-Church hall—
Then sought thy straw in some sequester'd grange.

But what – I dream! Two hundred years are flown
Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,
And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe
That thou wert wander'd from the studious walls
To learn strange arts, and join a gipsy-tribe;
And thou from earth art gone
Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid—
Some country-nook, where o'er thy unknown grave
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,
Under a dark, red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

Eliza Keary (1827-1918)

From Snowbell: a Legend of Summer.

In July, when the year has eaten deep
Into the breast of summer, when the hours creep
Slowly, in a kind of drunken sleep,
Over each other, they're so satisfied
With the luxury, the tenderness, and the pride
Of the great time – when the air is all
Light and heat, even without sunshine–
When the green of the earth and the blue sky incline
Each to each, the trees
Drinking deep of heaven, and the sky taking shade from these–
When birds begin to hush
Their singing in tree and bush–
When the rose's blush pales by the flush
Of the ripe geraniums – when the mountain ashberries
Are growing red like cherries,
The petals of the large white lily yellowed over with down,
From its own self overblown–
When fruits are sweetening and corn ripening,
All at full height, toppling over, swaying
Between blooming and decaying;
A mystery, a sort of chasm between
Pleasures, crosses, treasures, losses,
Joy and sorrow, yesterday and to-morrow–
This is the dim land of no-being, the quaint, sweet land
Of spirit, fairy, dreaming, ruled by the wand
Of a wild power seated firm on either hand,
Whom yet we neither see, nor understand.
Look what I have found, here upon fairy-ground,
Written in cabalistic letters all over the daisies!...

Walter Thornbury (1828–1876)

Warlock Woods

It is unclear if this depicts a particular wood.

The oaks are doomed in pleasant Warlock Woods;
Soon they'll come crashing through the hazel copse;
Already rocking like poor wind-tossed ships,
I see their reeling spars and waving tops.

Shipwrecked indeed: the old estate is gone;
The knights have yielded to King Mammon's lords;
Rent is the good escutcheon, – sable, gules;
Shivered at last the brave Crusaders' swords.

Soon barked and bare, the oak-trees' giant limbs
Will strew the covert, all o'ergrown with fern:
I hear the jarring axe that cleaves and splits;
I see the woodmen's fires that crackling burn.

'T would be a dismal sight in winter-time,
When boughs are snapped, and branches tempest-cleft,
When dead leaves drift across the rainy skies,
And not a wayside flower of hope is left.

[George Meredith \(1828-1909\)](#)

Meredith lived in Surrey.

From Love in the Valley

Happy happy time, when the white star hovers
Low over dim fields fresh with bloomy dew,
Near the face of dawn, that draws athwart the darkness,
Threading it with colour, as yewberries the yew.
Thicker crowd the shades while the grave East deepens
Glowing, and with crimson a long cloud swells.
Maiden still the morn is; and strange she is, and secret;
Strange her eyes; her cheeks are cold as cold sea-shells.

Sunrays, leaning on our southern hills and lighting
Wild cloud-mountains that drag the hills along,
Oft ends the day of your shifting brilliant laughter
Chill as a dull face frowning on a song.
Ay, but shows the South-West a ripple-feathered bosom
Blown to silver while the clouds are shaken and ascend
Scaling the mid-heavens as they stream, there comes a sunset
Rich, deep like love in beauty without end.

Tardy Spring

Now the North wind ceases,
The warm South-west awakes;
Swift fly the fleeces,
Thick the blossom-flakes.

Now hill to hill has made the stride,
And distance waves the without-end:
Now in the breast a door flings wide;
Our farthest smiles, our next is friend.
And song of England's rush of flowers
Is this full breeze with mellow stops,
That spins the lark for shine, for showers;
He drinks his hurried flight, and drops.

The stir in memory seem these things,
Which out of moisten'd turf and clay,
Astrain for light push patient rings,
Or leap to find the waterway.
'Tis equal to a wonder done,
Whatever simple lives renew
Their tricks beneath the father sun,
As though they caught a broken clue:
So hard was earth an eyewink back;
But now the common life has come,
The blotting cloud a dappled pack,
The grasses one vast underhum.
A City clothed in snow and soot,
With lamps for day in ghostly rows,
Breaks to the scene of hosts afoot,
The river that reflective flows:
And there did fog down crypts of street
Play spectre upon eye and mouth:—
Their faces are a glass to greet
This magic of the whirl for South.
A burly joy each creature swells
With sound of its own hungry quest;
Earth has to fill her empty wells,
And speed the service of the nest;
The phantom of the snow-wreath melt,
That haunts the farmer's look abroad,
Who sees what tomb a white night built,
Where flocks now bleat and sprouts the clod.
For iron Winter held her firm;
Across her sky he laid his hand;
And bird he starved, he stiffen'd worm;
A sightless heaven, a shaven land.
Her shivering Spring feign'd fast asleep,
The bitten buds dared not unfold:
We raced on roads and ice to keep
Thought of the girl we love from cold.

But now the North wind ceases,
The warm South-west awakes,
The heavens are out in fleeces,
And earth's green banner shakes.

Bessie Rayner Belloc 1829 - 1925

From The Moors

This is set in Wharfedale, Yorkshire.

A slowly winding road
Led up and up; upon the boundary wall
A fringe of ferns cut into delicate shapes
By Nature's graving tool, and richly dyed
In every shade of green, grew lavishly,
Rejoicing, quiet things, to be alive.
So wound we up, till unawares we gain'd
The broad high table-land, and to our eyes,
Our dazzled, utterly astonish'd eyes,
Broke all that sea of heather, purple ton'd,
A luscious carpet far as eye could see,
Variously shaded, and the cotton-rush
Here and there flecking with its snow-white plume
The great expanse; and by us brown game-birds
Went whirring in sharp fear. Ne'er in my life
Had I seen such a sight, and I stood dumb
In awful wonder. Leonard said, "God's book
Lieth before thee."
In a point of time
I seem'd to read long chapters, every word
Cramm'd full with meaning, and the strangest thoughts
Came over me; the great indwelling soul
Of all this beauty spake my heart within,
While in my veins a richer life-blood ran;
The chaos of my fancy open'd out
Into an order never known before;
New thoughts, new paintings, and new poems rose
Like dreams of a futurity, more bright
Than ever was my past; I thought I heard
The stars all singing, though I saw them not,
And the earth swell the chorus...

...And so we pass'd
Over the hills, unto what seem'd a brink
O'erlooking half a world; hill after hill
Around us lay, encircling a great vale
Of many miles' extent; and to the right
An opening stretch'd away: we thither bent
Our steps, and gain'd a verdant pasture deep
In shadow of thick trees, beside the Wharf,
Where comfortable monks had built a church,
And dwellings for themselves, and pray'd and eat,
And drank and eat and pray'd and drank again,

And taught the neighbouring poor some little lore,
And gave them alms, and gossip'd; no place this
For rigid anchorite of dreams divine...

Kenilworth

Kenilworth is a castle in Warwickshire.

Broad level fields, and hedges thick with trees,
A calm still evening dropping fitful rain,
And hawthorns loaded with their perfum'd snow;
All Nature langorous, and yet alive
With humming insects and with bleating sheep;
A sky both grey and tender, – misty clouds
Floating therein, streak'd here and there with gold;
And golden flowers topping the tall June grass.
Ivy clothes all the ruins, sprouting weeds,
Lichen, and moss for richest tapestry;
While for festivity and regal pomp
Held in the olden time, is nothing now
But tune of children's voices, and the calm
Quiet evening, misty on the ruins. Far
Over the fields are farms and gardens gay;
And strong magnificent oaks, beneath whose boughs
Twilight sits brooding ere she walks abroad.
A soft moist summer eve, – 'tis Nature grieving
For the depart of Spring; not yet the sun
Hath dried her thoughtful tears; or else it is
The death of the Last Fairy, and the flowers
Hang down their heavy heads in grief for her.
I on this highest tower look far away
Over this lovely England; and I think
There is a poetry in our northern land
Peculiar to itself: though it hath not
The gorgeous colouring of southern shores,
Peopled with hero shades and temple-crown'd,
Yet we too have our tale of deeds sublime,
And spirits haunting our green forest glades,
And a grave meditation, born from out
Endeavouring lives and quiet scenery
And summer evenings so divine as this.

Christina Rossetti (1830 - 1894)

Life and Death

Life is not sweet. One day it will be sweet
To shut our eyes and die:
Nor feel the wild flowers blow, nor birds dart by
With flitting butterfly,
Nor grass grow long above our heads and feet,
Nor hear the happy lark that soars sky high,
Nor sigh that spring is fleet and summer fleet,
Nor mark the waxing wheat,
Nor know who sits in our accustomed seat.

Life is not good. One day it will be good
To die, then live again;
To sleep meanwhile: so not to feel the wane
Of shrunk leaves dropping in the wood,
Nor hear the foamy lashing of the main,
Nor mark the blackened bean-fields, nor where stood
Rich ranks of golden grain
Only dead refuse stubble clothe the plain:
Asleep from risk, asleep from pain.

William Morris (1834 – 1896)

Summer Dawn

Pray but one prayer for me 'twixt thy closed lips,
Think but one thought of me up in the stars.
The summer night waneth, the morning light slips,
Faint and grey 'twixt the leaves of the aspen, betwixt the cloud-bars
That are patiently waiting there for the dawn:
Patient and colourless, though Heaven's gold
Waits to float through them along with the sun.
Far out in the meadows, above the young corn,
The heavy elms wait, and restless and cold
The uneasy wind rises; the roses are dun;
Through the long twilight they pray for the dawn,
Round the lone house in the midst of the corn,
Speak but one word to me over the corn,
Over the tender, bow'd locks of the corn.

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

Hardy's work was generally based around Dorset and Wiltshire.

From The Revisitation

...Thus I walked with thoughts half-uttered
Up the lane I knew so well, the grey, gaunt, lonely Lane of Slyre;
And at whiles behind me, far at sea, a sullen thunder muttered
As I mounted high and higher.

Till, the upper roadway quitting,
I adventured on the open drouthy downland thinly grassed,
While the spry white scuts of conies flashed before me, earthward flitting,
And an arid wind went past.

Round about me bulged the barrows
As before, in antique silence – immemorial funeral piles–
Where the sleek herds trampled daily the remains of flint-tipt arrows
Mid the thyme and chamomiles;

And the Sarsen stone there, dateless,
On whose breast we had sat and told the zephyrs many a tender vow,
Held the heat of yester sun, as sank thereon one fated mateless
From those far fond hours till now.

Maybe flustered by my presence
Rose the peewits, just as all those years back, wailing soft and loud,
And revealing their pale pinions like a fitful phosphorescence
Up against the cope of cloud,

Where their dolesome exclamations
Seemed the voicings of the self-same throats I had heard when life was green,
Though since that day uncounted frail forgotten generations
Of their kind had flecked the scene.–

And so, living long and longer
In a past that lived no more, my eyes discerned there, suddenly,
That a figure broke the skyline – first in vague contour, then stronger,
And was crossing near to me.

Epeisodia

I
Past the hills that peep
Where the leaze is smiling,
On and on beguiling
Crisply-cropping sheep;

Under boughs of brushwood
Linking tree and tree
In a shade of lushwood,
 There caressed we!

II

Hemmed by city walls
That outshut the sunlight,
In a foggy dun light,
Where the footstep falls
With a pit-pat wearisome
In its cadency
On the flagstones drearisome
 There pressed we!

III

Where in wild-winged crowds
Blown birds show their whiteness
Up against the lightness
Of the clammy clouds;
By the random river
Pushing to the sea,
Under bents that quiver
 There rest we.

After a Romantic Day

The railway bore him through
 An earthen cutting out from a city:
 There was no scope for view,
Though the frail light shed by a slim young moon
 Fell like a friendly tune.

 Fell like a liquid ditty,
And the blank lack of any charm
 Of landscape did no harm.
The bald steep cutting, rigid, rough,
 And moon-lit, was enough
For poetry of place: its weathered face
Formed a convenient sheet whereon
The visions of his mind were drawn.

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–89)

Hurrahing in Harvest

Summer ends now; now, barbarous in beauty, the stooks arise
Around; up above, what wind-walks! what lovely behaviour
Of silk-sack clouds! has wilder, wilful-wavier
Meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies?

I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour;
And, éyes, héart, what looks, what lips yet gave you a
Rapturous love's greeting of realer, of rounder replies?

And the azurous hung hills are his world-wielding shoulder
Majestic – as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-sweet!
These things, these things were here and but the beholder
Wanting; which two when they once meet,
The heart rears wings bold and bolder
And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for him off under his feet.

Duns Scotus's Oxford

Towery city and branchy between towers;
Cuckoo-echoing, bell-swarmèd, lark-charmèd, rook-racked, river-rounded;
The dapple-eared lily below thee; that country and town did
Once encounter in, here coped and poisèd powers;

Thou hast a base and brickish skirt there, sours
That neighbour-nature thy grey beauty is grounded
Best in; graceless growth, thou hast confounded
Rural rural keeping – folk, flocks, and flowers.

Yet ah! this air I gather and I release
He lived on; these weeds and waters, these walls are what
He haunted who of all men most sways my spirits to peace;

Of realty the rarest-veinèd unraveller; a not
Rivalled insight, be rival Italy or Greece;
Who fired France for Mary without spot.

From Epithalamion

Hark, hearer, hear what I do; lend a thought now, make believe
We are leafwhelmed somewhere with the hood
Of some branchy bunchy bushybowered wood,
Southern dene or Lancashire clough or Devon cleave,
That leans along the loins of hills, where a candycoloured, where a gluegold-
brown

Marbled river, boisterously beautiful, between
Roots and rocks is danced and dandled, all in froth and waterblowballs, down.
We are there, when we hear a shout
That the hanging honeysuck, the dogeared hazels in the cover
Makes dither, makes hover
And the riot of a rout
Of, it must be, boys from the town
Bathing: it is summer's sovereign good.

[Ada Cambridge 1844-1926](#)

From By a Norfolk Broad

One hour ago the crimson sun, that seemed so long a-drowning, sank.
The summer day is all but done. Our boat is moored beneath the bank.
I bask in peace, content, replete – my faithful comrade at my feet...

...The clocks strike ten. The last, last gleam of lingering day has disappeared.
On field and marsh and quiet stream a few stars shine. The mist has cleared.
The willows of the further shore stand outlined on the sky once more.

How clear the blackness, leaf and bark, the plumes upon those bulbous
stumps!

A pallid fragment of the dark shows fine-etched flag and osier clumps.
Sharper and sharper in the glow the iris and the bulrush grow.

A faint dawn glimmers on the sedge, the grassy banks, the flowery meads;
A bright disc shows its radiant edge, the round moon rises from the reeds;
The sleeping lilies take the light; their steel-dark bed turns silver-white.

That path of glory, widening, streams across the mere to where we sit.
My sight swims in its dazzling beams; spirit and brain are steeped in it.
Dost thou not answer to the touch? Listen, my dog, that knows so much:–

There may be lovelier worlds than this, a heavenly country, vast and fair,
Where saints and seraphs dwell in bliss – I do not know – I do not care.
While in my human flesh I live I ask no more than earth can give.

[Edmund Beale Sargant \(1855-1935\)](#)

From The Cuckoo Wood

Cuckoo, are you calling me,
Or is it a voice of wizardry?
In these woodlands I am lost,
From glade to glade of flowers tost.
Seven times I held my way,

And seven times the voice did say,
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! No man could
Issue from this underwood,
Half of green and half of brown,
Unless he laid his senses down.
Only let him chance to see
The snows of the anemone
Heaped above its greenery;
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! No man could
Issue from the master wood.

Magic paths there are that cross;
Some beset with jewelled moss
And boughs all bare; where others run,
Bluebells bathe in mist and sun
Past a clearing filled with clumps
Of primrose round the nutwood stumps;
All as gay as gay can be,
And bordered with dog-mercury,
The wizard flower, the wizard green,
Like a Persian carpet seen.
Brown, dead bracken lies between,
And wrinkled leaves, whence fronds of fern
Still untwist and upward turn.
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! No man could
Issue from this wizard wood,
Half of green, and half of brown,
Unless he laid his senses down.

Seven times I held my way
Where new heaps of brushwood lay,
All with withies loosely bound,
And never heard a human sound.
Yet men have toiled and men have rested
By yon hurdles darkly-breasted,
Woven in and woven out,
Piled four-square, and turned about
To show their white and sharpened stakes
Like teeth of hounds or fangs of snakes.
The men are homeward sped, for none
Loves silence and a sinking sun.
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Woodmen know
Souls are lost that hear it so,
Seven times upon the wind,
To lull the watch-dogs of the mind.

A stranger wood you shall not find!
Beech and birch and oak agree
Here to dwell in company.
Hazel, elder, few men could
Name the kinds of underwood.

Summer and winter haunt together,
And golden light with misty weather.
'Tis summer where this beech is seen
Defenceless in its virgin green;
All its leaves are smooth and thin,
And the sunlight passes in,
Passes in and filters through
To a green heaven below the blue.
Low the branches fall and trace
A circle round that mystic place,
Guarded on its outward side
By hyacinths in all their pride;
And within dim moons appear,
Wax and wane — I go not near!
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! How we fear
Sights and sounds that come and go
Without a cause for men to know!

A.E. Housman (1859-1936)

On Wenlock Edge

Wenlock Edge is an escarpment in Shropshire.

On Wenlock Edge the wood's in trouble;
His forest fleece the Wrekin heaves;
The gale, it plies the saplings double,
And thick on Severn snow the leaves.

'Twould blow like this through holt and hanger
When Uricon the city stood:
'Tis the old wind in the old anger,
But then it threshed another wood.

Then, 'twas before my time, the Roman
At yonder heaving hill would stare:
The blood that warms an English yeoman,
The thoughts that hurt him, they were there.

There, like the wind through woods in riot,
Through him the gale of life blew high;
The tree of man was never quiet:
Then 'twas the Roman, now 'tis I.

The gale, it plies the saplings double,
It blows so hard, 'twill soon be gone:
To-day the Roman and his trouble
Are ashes under Uricon.

Tell me not here, it needs not saying

Tell me not here, it needs not saying,
What tune the enchantress plays
In aftermaths of soft September
Or under blanching mays,
For she and I were long acquainted
And I knew all her ways.

On russet floors, by waters idle,
The pine lets fall its cone;
The cuckoo shouts all day at nothing
In leafy dells alone;
And traveller's joy beguiles in autumn
Hearts that have lost their own.

On acres of the seeded grasses
The changing burnish heaves;
Or marshalled under moons of harvest
Stand still all night the sheaves;
Or beeches strip in storms for winter
And stain the wind with leaves.

Posses, as I possessed a season,
The countries I resign,
Where over elmy plains the highway
Would mount the hills and shine,
And full of shade the pillared forest
Would murmur and be mine.

For nature, heartless, witless nature,
Will neither care nor know
What stranger's feet may find the meadow
And trespass there and go,
Nor ask amid the dews of morning
If they are mine or no.

Amy Levy (1861-1889)

Out of Town

Out of town the sky was bright and blue,
Never fog-cloud, lowering, thick, was seen to frown;
Nature dons a garb of gayer hue,
Out of town.

Spotless lay the snow on field and down,
Pure and keen the air above it blew;
All wore peace and beauty for a crown.

London sky, marred by smoke, veiled from view,
London snow, trodden thin, dingy brown,
Whence that strange unrest at thoughts of you
Out of town?

Henry Head (1861-1940)

From Sun and Shower

He:

I have wandered round an Empire
To the kingdom whence it grew,
And the coast-line of my country
Flashes white between the blue.

Blue the sky and blue the water,
And a ruddy little town
Nestles in a sunny hollow
Underneath the windy down.

In that town a winding alley
Leads into a little square
With an almond-tree in blossom,
And I know my home is there.

Home and country, kingdom, Empire,
All the universe to me
Is a little laughing woman
In her brown room by the sea...

...She:

High upon the hill you slumber;
I sit watching by your side,
Coloured figures without number,
Through the checkered lowland glide.

Far off in a shallow runnel,
Silently the brown trains pass,
Slip to earth within the tunnel.
Like a blind-worm in the grass.

Down the white road by the river
Like a hawk a quick wheel skims.
And the darting sunbeams quiver,
Flashing from its silver rims.

Far from trouble you are sleeping.
New-created to arise:
Watch beside you I am keeping,
Calm as Eve in Paradise.

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)

The Way Through the Woods

They shut the road through the woods
Seventy years ago.
Weather and rain have undone it again,
And now you would never know
There was once a road through the woods
Before they planted the trees.
It is underneath the coppice and heath,
And the thin anemones.
Only the keeper sees
That, where the ring-dove broods,
And the badgers roll at ease,
There was once a road through the woods.

Yet, if you enter the woods
Of a summer evening late,
When the night-air cools on the trout-ringed pools
Where the otter whistles his mate,
(They fear not men in the woods,
Because they see so few.)
You will hear the beat of a horse's feet,
And the swish of a skirt in the dew,
Steadily cantering through
The misty solitudes,
As though they perfectly knew
The old lost road through the woods.
But there is no road through the woods.

[Laurence Binyon \(1869-1943\)](#)

Flame and Snow

The bare branches rose against the grey sky.
Under them, freshly fallen, snow shone to the eye.

Up the hill-slope, over the brow it shone,
Spreading an immaterial beauty to tread upon.

In the elbow of black boughs it clung, nested white,
And smooth below it slept in the solitude of its light.

It was deep to the knee in the hollow; there in a stump of wood
I struck my bill-hook, warm to the fingers' blood, and stood,

Pausing, and breathed and listened: all the air around
Was filled with busy strokes and ringing of clean sound,

And now and again a crack and a slow rending, to tell
When a tree heavily tottered and swift with a crash fell.

I smelt the woody smell of smoke from the fire, now
Beginning to spurt from frayed bracken and torn bough

In the lee of a drift, fed from our long morning toil
And sending smart to the eyes the smoke in a blue coil.

I lopped the twigs from a fresh-cut pole and tossed it aside
To the stakes heaped beyond me, and made a plunging stride,

And gathered twines of bramble and dead hazel sticks
And a faggot of twisted thorn with snow lumped in the pricks,

And piled the smoulder high. Soon a blaze tore
Up through hissing boughs and shrivelling leaves, from a core

Of quivering crimson; soon the heat burst and revelled,
And apparitions of little airy flames dishevelled

Gleamed and vanished, a lost flight as of elfin wings,
Trembling aloft to the wild music that Fire sings

Dancing alive from nothing, lovely and mad. And still
The snow, pale as a dream, slept on the old hill,

Softly fallen and strange. Which made me more to glow,
Beauty of young flames, or wonder of young snow?

From Thunder on the Downs

Wide earth, wide heaven, and in the summer air
Silence! The summit of the down is bare
Between the climbing crests of wood ; but those
Great sea-winds, wont, when the wet South-West blows,
To rock tall beeches and strong oaks aloud
And strew torn leaves upon the streaming cloud
To-day are idle, slumbering far aloof.
Under the solemn height and gorgeous roof
Of cloud-built sky, all earth is indolent.
Wandering hum of bees and thymy scent
Of the short turf enrich pure loneliness:
Scarcely an airy topmost-twining tress
Of bryony quivers where the thorn it wreathes;
Hot fragrance from the honeysuckle breathes;
And sweet the rose floats on the arching briar's
Green fountain, sprayed with delicate frail fires.
For clumps of thicket, dark beneath the blaze
Of the high westering sun, beset the ways
Of smooth grass, narrowing where the slope runs steep
Down to green woods, and glowing shadows keep
A freshness round the mossy roots, and cool
The light that sleeps as in a chequered pool
Of golden air. O woods, I love you well,
I love the flowers you hide, your ferny smell;
But here is sweeter solitude, for here
My heart breathes heavenly space; the sky is near
To thought, with heights that fathomlessly glow;
And the eye wanders the wide land below.

And this is England! June's undarkened green
Gleams on far woods; and in the vales between
Grey hamlets, older than the trees that shade
Their ripening meadows, are in quiet laid,
Themselves a part of the warm, fruitful ground.
The little hills of England rise around;
The little streams that wander from them shine
And with their names remembered names entwine
Of old renown and honour, fields of blood
High causes fought on, stubborn hardihood
For freedom spent, and songs, our noblest pride,
That in the heart of England never died...

Charlotte Mew (1869-1928)

The Trees are Down

They are cutting down the great plane-trees at the end of the gardens.
For days there has been the grate of the saw, the swish of the branches as they
fall,
The crash of the trunks, the rustle of trodden leaves,
With the 'Whoops' and the 'Whoas,' the loud common talk, the loud common
laughs of the men, above it all.

I remember one evening of a long past Spring
Turning in at a gate, getting out of a cart, and finding a large dead rat in the
mud of the drive.
I remember thinking: alive or dead, a rat was a god-forsaken thing,
But at least, in May, that even a rat should be alive.

The week's work here is as good as done. There is just one bough
On the roped bole, in the fine grey rain,
Green and high
And lonely against the sky.
(Down now!—)
And but for that,
If an old dead rat
Did once, for a moment, unmake the Spring, I might never have thought of
him again.

It is not for a moment the Spring is unmade to-day;
These were great trees, it was in them from root to stem:
When the men with the 'Whoops' and the 'Whoas' have carted the whole of the
whispering loveliness away
Half the Spring, for me, will have gone with them.

It is going now, and my heart has been struck with the hearts of the planes;
Half my life it has beat with these, in the sun, in the rains,
In the March wind, the May breeze,
In the great gales that came over to them across the roofs from the great seas.
There was only a quiet rain when they were dying;
They must have heard the sparrows flying,
And the small creeping creatures in the earth where they were lying—
But I, all day, I heard an angel crying:
'Hurt not the trees.'

Moorland Night

My face is against the grass – the moorland grass is wet—
My eyes are shut against the grass, against my lips there are the little blades,
Over my head the curlews call, And now there is the night wind in my hair;
My heart is against the grass and the sweet earth,— it has gone still, at last;
It does not want to beat any more,

And why should it beat?
This is the end of the journey.
The Thing is found.

This is the end of all the roads—
Over the grass there is the night-dew
And the wind that drives up from the sea along the moorland road,
I hear a curlew start out from the heath
And fly off calling through the dusk,
The wild, long, rippling call—
The Thing is found and I am quiet with the earth;
Perhaps the earth will hold it or the wind, or that bird's cry,
But it is not for long in any life I know. This cannot stay,
Not now, not yet, not in a dying world, with me, for very long;
I leave it here:
And one day the wet grass may give it back—
One day the quiet earth may give it back—
The calling birds may give it back as they go by—
To someone walking on the moor who starves for love and will not know
Who gave it to all these to give away;
Or, if I come and ask for it again
Oh! then, to me.

[Edward Thomas \(1878-1917\)](#)

Edward Thomas lived in Kent and Hampshire.

The Glory

The glory of the beauty of the morning,—
The cuckoo crying over the untouched dew;
The blackbird that has found it, and the dove
That tempts me on to something sweeter than love;
White clouds ranged even and fair as new-mown hay;
The heat, the stir, the sublime vacancy
Of sky and meadow and forest and my own heart:—
The glory invites me, yet it leaves me scorning
All I can ever do, all I can be,
Beside the lovely of motion, shape, and hue,
The happiness I fancy fit to dwell
In beauty's presence. Shall I now this day
Begin to seek as far as heaven, as hell,
Wisdom or strength to match this beauty, start
And tread the pale dust pitted with small dark drops,
In hope to find whatever it is I seek,
Harkening to short-lived happy-seeming things
That we know naught of, in the hazel copse?
Or must I be content with discontent
As larks and swallows are perhaps with wings?

And shall I ask at the day's end once more
What beauty is, and what I can have meant
By happiness? And shall I let all go,
Glad, weary, or both? Or shall I perhaps know
That I was happy oft and oft before,
Awhile forgetting how I am fast pent,
How dreary-swift, with naught to travel to,
Is Time? I cannot bite the day to the core.

The Sheiling

A sheiling is a hut in northern England and Scotland.

It stands alone
Up in a land of stone
All worn like ancient stairs,
A land of rocks and trees
Nourished on wind and stone.

And all within
Long delicate has been;
By arts and kindness
Coloured, sweetened, and warmed
For many years has been.

Safe resting there
Men hear in the travelling air
But music, pictures see
In the same daily land
Painted by the wild air.

One maker's mind
Made both, and the house is kind
To the land that gave it peace,
And the stone has taken the house
To its cold heart and is kind.

The Penny Whistle

The new moon hangs like an ivory bugle
In the naked frosty blue;
And the ghylls of the forest, already blackened
By Winter, are blackened anew.

The brooks that cut up and increase the forest,
As if they had never known
The sun, are roaring with black hollow voices
Betwixt rage and a moan.

But still the caravan-hut by the hollies
Like a kingfisher gleams between:
Round the mossed old hearths of the charcoal-burners
First primroses ask to be seen.

The charcoal-burners are black, but their linen
Blows white on the line;
And white the letter the girl is reading
Under that crescent fine;

And her brother who hides apart in a thicket,
Slowly and surely playing
On a whistle an olden nursery melody
Says far more than I am saying.

Over the Hills

Often and often it came back again
To mind, the day I passed the horizon ridge
To a new country, the path I had to find
By half-gaps that were stiles once in the hedge,
The pack of scarlet clouds running across
The harvest evening that seemed endless then
And after, and the inn where all were kind,
All were strangers. I did not know my loss
Till one day twelve months later suddenly
I leaned upon my spade and saw it all,
Though far beyond the sky-line. It became
Almost a habit through the year for me
To lean and see it and think to do the same
Again for two days and a night. Recall
Was vain: no more could the restless brook
Ever turn back and climb the waterfall
To the lake that rests and stirs not in its nook,
As in the hollow of the collar-bone
Under the mountain's head of rush and stone.

Harold Monro (1879–1932)

Great City

When I returned at sunset,
The serving-maid was singing softly
Under the dark stairs, and in the house
Twilight had entered like a moon-ray.
Tune was so dead I could not understand
The meaning of midday or of midnight,
But like falling waters, falling, hissing, falling,
Silence seemed an everlasting sound.

I sat in my room,
And watched sunset,
And saw starlight.
I heard the tramp of homing men,
And the last call of the last child;
Then a lone bird twittered,

And suddenly, beyond the housetops,
I imagined dew in the country,
In the hay, on the buttercups;
The rising moon,
The scent of early night,
The songs, the echoes,
Dogs barking,
Day closing,
Gradual slumber,
Sweet rest.

When all the lamps were lighted in the town
I passed into the street ways and I watched,
Wakeful, almost happy,
And half the night I wandered in the street.

Real Property

Tell me about that harvest field.
Oh! Fifty acres of living bread.
The colour has painted itself in my heart;
The form is patterned in my head.

So now I take it everywhere,
See it whenever I look round;
Hear it growing through every sound,
Know exactly the sound it makes—
Remembering, as one must all day,
Under the pavement the live earth aches.

Trees are at the farther end,
Limes all full of the mumbling bee:
So there must be a harvest field
Whenever one thinks of a linden tree.

A hedge is about it, very tall,
Hazy and cool, and breathing sweet.
Round paradise is such a wall,
And all the day, in such a way,
In paradise the wild birds call.

You only need to close your eyes
And go within your secret mind,
And you'll be into paradise:
I've learnt quite easily to find
Some linden trees and drowsy bees,
A tall sweet hedge with the corn behind.

I will not have that harvest mown:
I'll keep the corn and leave the bread.
I've bought that field; it's now my own:
I've fifty acres in my head.
I take it as a dream to bed.
I carry it about all day...

Sometimes when I have found a friend
I give a blade of corn away.

[John Freeman \(1880-1929\)](#)

Stone Trees

Last night a sword-light in the sky
Flashed a swift terror on the dark.
In that sharp light the fields did lie
Naked and stone-like; each tree stood
Like a tranced woman, bound and stark.
Far off the wood
With darkness ridged the riven dark.

And cows astonished stared with fear,
And sheep crept to the knees of cows,
And conies to their burrows slid,
And rooks were still in rigid boughs,
And all things else were still or hid.
From all the wood
Came but the owl's hoot, ghostly, clear.

In that cold trance the earth was held
It seemed an age, or time was nought.
Sure never from that stone-like field
Sprang golden corn, nor from those chill
Grey granite trees was music wrought.
In all the wood
Even the tall poplar hung stone still.

It seemed an age, or time was none...
Slowly the earth heaved out of sleep
And shivered, and the trees of stone
Bent and sighed in the gusty wind,

And rain swept as birds flocking sweep.
Far off the wood
Rolled the slow thunders on the wind.

From all the wood came no brave bird,
No song broke through the close-fall'n night,
Nor any sound from cowering herd:
Only a dog's long lonely howl
When from the window poured pale light.
And from the wood
The hoot came ghostly of the owl.

D.H. Lawrence (1885–1930)

Grey Evening

When you went, how was it you carried with you
My missal book of fine, flamboyant hours?
My book of turrets and of red-thorn bowers,
And skies of gold, and ladies in bright tissue?

Now underneath a blue-grey twilight, heaped
Beyond the withering snow of the shorn fields
Stands rubble of stunted houses; all is reaped
And garnered that the golden daylight yields.

Dim lamps like yellow poppies glimmer among
The shadowy stubble of the under-dusk,
As farther off the scythe of night is swung,
And little stars come rolling from their husk.

And all the earth is gone into a dust
Of greyness mingled with a fume of gold,
Covered with aged lichens, past with must,
And all the sky has withered and gone cold.

And so I sit and scan the book of grey,
Feeling the shadows like a blind man reading,
All fearful lest I find the last words bleeding
With wounds of sunset and the dying day.

Rupert Brooke (1887–1915)

From The Old Vicarage, Grantchester

Grantchester is in Cambridgeshire.

Just now the lilac is in bloom,
All before my little room;
And in my flower-beds, I think,
Smile the carnation and the pink;
And down the borders, well I know,
The poppy and the pansy blow...
Oh! there the chestnuts, summer through,
Beside the river make for you
A tunnel of green gloom, and sleep
Deeply above; and green and deep
The stream mysterious glides beneath,
Green as a dream and deep as death.
—Oh, damn! I know it! and I know
How the May fields all golden show,
And when the day is young and sweet,
Gild gloriously the bare feet
That run to bathe...

...Ah God! to see the branches stir
Across the moon at Grantchester!
To smell the thrilling-sweet and rotten
Unforgettable, unforgotten
River-smell, and hear the breeze
Sobbing in the little trees.
Say, do the elm-clumps greatly stand
Still guardians of that holy land?
The chestnuts shade, in reverend dream,
The yet unacademic stream?
Is dawn a secret shy and cold
Anadyomene, silver-gold?
And sunset still a golden sea
From Haslingfield to Madingley?
And after, ere the night is born,
Do hares come out about the corn?
Oh, is the water sweet and cool,
Gentle and brown, above the pool?
And laughs the immortal river still
Under the mill, under the mill?
Say, is there Beauty yet to find?
And Certainty? and Quiet kind?
Deep meadows yet, for to forget
The lies, and truths, and pain?... oh! yet
Stands the Church clock at ten to three?
And is there honey still for tea?

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