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Part 1

British Poetry

From Renaissance to the Late 20th Century



Chapter I

Renaissance and 16th-Century Poetry



Renaissance is an intellectual and cultural movement which began in Italy in the 14th century and spread to Europe through the 15th and 16th centuries. Renaissance is a French word meaning “rebirth” and it refers particularly to the revival of interest in classical Greek and Roman civilizations, thus bringing a “rebirth” to the ancient Greek and Roman culture and thinking in Europe.

The renaissance or “rebirth” of ancient Greek and Roman culture started with the study of classical languages, thoughts and social systems and with the translation of classical works of philosophy, history, literature, and science. Among the English translators, the Earl of Surrey translated Virgil’s *Aeneid*; George Chapman translated Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; Sir Thomas North translated Plutarch’s *Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans* (from which Shakespeare took the stories of *Julius Caesar* and *Anthony and Cleopatra*); Arthur Golding translated Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*. The study of Greek and Latin languages also gradually made available the works and thoughts of philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle and of other writers like Cicero, Castiglione, Ariosto, and Tasso.

Renaissance scholars did not just study ancient Greece and Rome as history, they gradually absorbed thoughts and values embodied in classical texts and civilizations. In their views, what distinguishes ancient Greece and Rome is the value and importance they placed on the present life, on human potentials and on human capabilities. In contrast to Christianity’s other-worldliness, the classical thoughts emphasise the value and importance of life in this world and the possibility of fully developing an individual’s potentials while he or she is still alive. The emphasis, in short, is placed on this life, not on life after death, and the center of value is placed on human being, not on God. This way of thinking is called humanism, as opposed to the religious

asceticism and self-denial. Ancient Greece and Rome were the champions of Man, not of God.

This classical way of thinking brought a release of creative energy and innovative spirit during this historical period. The English Renaissance saw the rise of a large number of writers and humanistic thinkers. Among them were Thomas More, the author of *Utopia*, Philip Sydney, the author of *The Defense of Poetry*, Edmund Spenser, the author of *The Faerie Queene*, Walter Raleigh, the writer and adventurer, Christopher Marlowe, the author of *Doctor Faustus*, and William Shakespeare, the greatest playwright and the greatest poet in English literary history. Following the classical and Italian models of Virgil and Petrarch, the Renaissance poets adhered to various poetic principles, such as delight in ornamental language, poetic figures and rhetoric; interest in various levels of style from epic and tragedy to pastoral and comedy; the use of allegory in the teaching of moral truth; the belief in a correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm; the belief in the symbolic order in God's universe, represented by the Great Chain of Being, with angels at the top, humans in the middle and the animals at the bottom.

The Renaissance writers had special views on poetry and they emphasised the art of literature. Naturalness is a virtue, but careful design is a sign of human ingenuity and of artistic achievement. Therefore, the poetry of this period is characterised by intricate metrical patterns and rhyme patterns. The popular verse form "sonnet," for example, is 14-line lyric poem of iambic pentameter, with a special rhyme of "abab abab cde cde". Spenser invented a 9-line verse of iambic pentameter, rhymed "abab bcbcc," and the verse form has been known as Spenserian stanza.

Renaissance poets emphasised originality, but did not refuse conventions: they inherited the well-known patterns and made ingenious elaborations on them. Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* follows the mythological mode of Ovid, telling a mythological story while teaching a moral lesson; Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* follows the heroic mode of epic poets, describing knightly battles with monsters and praising virtues of honour, battle courage, leadership and endurance; Sydney's *Arcadia* follows the pastoral mode of Virgil, valuing simple country life over sophisticated city life and military accomplishments; John Lydgate's *Mirror for Magistrates* follows the tragic mode of Boccaccio, presenting the complaints of people who have fallen from a high position and the warnings to people like them; and Henry Wyatt's verse letters follows the satiric mode of Horace, Juvenal and Persius, casting satires on follies of various people in the society.

Edmund Spenser (1552—1599)



Edmund Spenser was born in London and was educated at Merchant Taylor School and at Pembroke College, Cambridge (1569—1572). He began writing poetry while he was studying at Cambridge and contributed some poems to magazines. After graduation, he became secretary first to John Young, the Bishop of Rochester, and later to the Earl of Leicester, at whose household he became acquainted with another poet Sir Philip Sydney. Together they tried to promote a new poetry in English.

He married Machabys Chylde probably in 1579 and the next year he became secretary to Lord Grey of Wilton. With Lord Grey he went to Ireland, where he spent the rest of his life, except for two visits back to England, working as minor government officials. It was in Ireland that he wrote his great epic *The Fairie Queene*, an allegory about a knight who goes out to kill dragons and monsters in order to rescue a young lady.

At that time, Ireland was England's colony and revolts against English rule sometimes broke out and disrupted the life of residents like Spenser. During the last years of his life, revolts and wars destroyed his castle at Kilcolman (1598). He went back to England to report the situation and died in London in 1599. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, beside another great poet Geoffrey Chaucer, in the now famous Poets' Corner.

The following poems are from *Amoretti*, a group of 89 short love lyrics Spenser wrote to Elizabeth Boyle, the woman who in 1594 became his second wife. The poems are in sonnet form, a kind of lyric poem which contains 14 lines, rhymed "abab bcbe cdcd ee." As a form, sonnet was possibly invented by the Italian poet Petrarch and was used, with some variations, by many English poets of Spenser's time, including Sydney and Shakespeare. Sonnets are usually love poems. The speaker is usually a passionate lover who is trying to win the love of a lady who is cold and indifferent. A series of sonnets written to this same lady will form a sonnet sequence and it was a fashion to write sonnet sequences in Spenser's time.

Sonnet 34

Lyke as a ship that through the ocean wyde,¹
 By conduct of some star doth² make her way,
 Whenas a storme hath dimd her trusty guyde,³

Out of her course doth wander far astray.
 So I whose star, that wont with her bright ray,
 Me to direct,⁵ with cloudes is overcast,⁴
 Doe wander now in darkness and dismay,
 Through hidden perils round about me plast⁶.
 Yet hope I well, that when this storm is past
 My Helice, the lodestar of my lyfe⁷
 Will shine again, and looke on me at last,
 With lovely light to cleare my cloudy grief.
 Till then I wander carefull comfortlesse⁸,
 In secret sorrow and sad pensivenesse⁹.

[Notes]

1. *Lyke as*: like; *wyde*: wide
2. *doth*: does
3. *Whenas ... guyde*: When a storm has dimmed her trusty guide
4. *whose star...with cloudes is overcast*: whose star...is overcast with clouds
5. *that wont with her bright ray,/Me to direct*: that used to direct me with her bright ray
6. *round about me plast*: placed round about me
7. *Helice*: North Star, the guiding star of sailors; *the lodestar of my lyfe*: the north star of my life
8. *carefull and comfortlesse*: full of worries and discomfort
9. *pensivenesse*: pensiveness, deep thinking

[Questions]

1. What is the function of “Yet” in Line 9? What is the relation between the first eight lines and the last six lines?
2. What specifically do the “storm,” “clouds” and “hidden perils” symbolise? What may they refer to in the lover’s life?
3. The “Helice” or North-Star comparison is a conventional figure of speech. Do you think it gives a fresh perspective to the poem’s meaning?

[Commentary]

Spenser’s sonnets can be read in the structure of three quatrains and a couplet. The first two quatrains describe a situation, the third quatrain (usually beginning with “But” or “Yet”) changes the direction and the final couplet provides a conclusion. The final couplet can be understood as statement, re-statement,

counter-statement and conclusion.

“Sonnet 34” compares the lady to the North Star (Helice or lodestar) and compares the lover to a boat. At the beginning, a boat is sailing on an ocean. There is a storm and the water is troubled. There are dangerous rocks under water, posing a great threat to the voyage. The sky is cloudy and dark without moon or stars. In such circumstances, the boat is in urgent need of the North Star to point out the right direction and guide it through the storm.

The boat is the lover who badly needs the North Star (his lady) to guide him through a difficult period in his life. The third quatrain (beginning with “Yet”) brings an optimistic tone and expresses the hope that this “storm” will pass and the lady will return to him in the end. “I” shall be wreathing in pains until “you” come and save me.

As a compliment to the lady, the speaker places her in a higher position where she has power to solve his problems and save his life. As a traditional lover, he shows customary humility and looks up to his beloved with admiration and respect.

[Translation]

第 34 首

如同一只船驶在茫茫的海面，
 凭靠某一颗星辰来为它导航，
 当风暴把它可靠的向导遮暗，
 它就会远离自己的航道飘荡；
 我的星辰也常常用它的亮光
 为我指路，现已被乌云笼罩，
 我在深深的黑暗和苦闷中彷徨，
 穿行于周围重重的险滩暗礁。
 但是我希望，经过这一场风暴，
 我的赫利刻，我那生命的北极星，
 将重放光芒，最终把我来照耀，
 用明丽的光辉驱散我忧郁的阴云，
 在这以前，我忧心忡忡地徘徊，
 独自儿暗暗地悲伤，忧思满怀。

(胡家峦 译)

Sonnet 54

Of this worlds theatre in which we stay,
 My love like the spectator ydly¹ sits
 Beholding me that all the pageants play²,
 Disguysing³ diversely my troubled wits.
 Sometimes I joy when glad occasion fits,
 And mask in myrth lyke to a comedy:⁴
 Soone after when my joy to sorrow flits,⁵
 I waile⁶ and make my woes a tragedy.
 Yet she, beholding me with constant eye,
 Delights not in my myrth nor rues my smart:⁷
 But when I laugh she mocks, and when I cry
 She laughs and hardens evermore her heart.
 What then can move her? If nor mirth nor mone⁸,
 She is no woman, but a senceless⁹ stone.

[Notes]

1. *ydly*: idly
2. *me that all the pageants play*: me that play all the roles
3. *disguysing*: disguising
4. *myrth*: mirth, joy; *lyke to*: like
5. *Soone*: soon; *when my joy to sorrow flits*: when my joy changes to sorrow
6. *waile*: wail, utter a prolonged cry of grief or misery
7. *myrth*: mirth, joy; *rues my smart*: feel sad about my stinging pain
8. *mone*: moan
9. *senceless*: senseless

[Questions]

1. Does the structure of “Sonnet 54” resemble the structure of “Sonnet 34?”
 What is the function of “Yet” in Line 9?
2. The poem compares life to a play. Is this comparison appropriate for this poem? In what ways does it help convey the poem’s meaning?
3. The poem calls the woman a “senseless stone.” Is the poet guilty of woman-hatred or prejudice against women? Does he mean to accuse the woman?

[Commentary]

The setting of the poem is a theatre. The speaker compares himself to an actor and the lady to the audience. The actor is trying to please the audience

with various plays. Sometimes he plays comedy and sometimes he plays tragedy. But the audience does not seem to appreciate nor respond to the play. She simply does not care or is not interested in the plays. On the contrary, she mocks the actor's efforts and laughs at his performance.

The actor is the lover who is doing everything he can to please the lady. He is acting many roles to entertain her. But the lady refuses to be moved by his performance. This comparison again shows the relationship between the lover and his lady: the man is at the mercy of the woman who has got power to give him happiness.

The poem is a complaint about the lady's coldness: if she is not moved by happiness or sorrow, "she is no woman, but a senseless stone." Traditionally, sonnets are about passionate lovers and indifferent ladies: the lover is often in a hopeless attempt to persuade his beloved to show mercy to him.

[Translation]

第 54 首

在我们逗留的这座人生的剧院，
 我的爱人闲坐着，像一个观众，
 观看我表演各种各样的场面，
 我掩饰内心的不安，方式不同。
 有时在高兴场合，我快乐融融。
 就像演喜剧，把欢乐的面具戴上：
 转眼间，欢乐变成了忧心忡忡，
 痛哭流涕，又像演悲剧一场。
 但她以坚定的目光对我观望，
 决不因我乐而欢乐，因我悲而痛苦：
 我笑时，她嘲弄讥讽，我哭泣悲伤，
 她又大笑，那心肠是永远冷酷。
 什么能打动她？假如苦笑都不成，
 她就是一块石头，而不是女人。
 （胡家峦 译）

Sonnet 75

One day I wrote her name upon the strand¹,
 But came the waves and washed it away:
 Agayne² I wrote it with a second hand,

But came the tyde, and made my paynes his pray.³
 “Vayne man,” sayd she, “that doest in vaine assay,⁴
 A mortal thing so to immortalise,
 For I my selve shall lyke to this decay,
 And eek my name bee wyped out lykewise.”⁵
 “Not so,” quod I, “let baser things devise,⁶
 To dy in dust,⁷ but you shall live by fame:
 My verse your vertues rare⁸ shall eternise,
 And in the heavens wryte⁹ your glorious name.
 Where whenas death shall all the world subdew,¹⁰
 Our love shall live, and later life renew.”

[Notes]

1. *strand*: beach
2. *Agayne*: again
3. *tyde*: tide; *made my paynes his pray*: made my pains his prey, washed away my hard work
4. *Vayne man*: vain man; *sayd she*: said she; *assay*: attempt
5. *And eek my name bee wyped out lykewise*: And also my name be wiped out likewise.
6. *quod I*: quoth I, said I; *devise*: contrive
7. *To dy in dust*: to die in dust
8. *your vertues rare*: your rare virtues
9. *wryte*: write
10. *whenas*: while; *subdew*: subdue

[Questions]

1. The tide of ocean and the tide of time obviously have much similarity. Do you think the tide of time washes away everything? Does anything in the world last?
2. How does man achieve immortality? According to religion, what does immortality mean? Do we achieve immortality only through religion?
3. What is special about the structure of the poem? Is it similar to those of the previous poems? What is the function of the last two lines?

[Commentary]

The lover is trying to write the lady’s name on the sand, but the waves come and wash the name away. He writes the name again on the sand, but the

waves wash it away a second time. The lady says it is useless to do so, because human life will come to the same end, in due time washed away by the tides of time. We all shall die and disappear from the earth. But the lover has a different view on this matter. He believes his poem will give eternal life to his lady and make her immortal.

The poem touches on an important theme in Renaissance love poems: the relation between time and immortality. The poets often deplore the fact that life is short and beauty declines. To achieve immortality, through religion or worldly achievements, is considered the ultimate goal of life. Therefore, the lover's attempt to immortalise the lady (through verse) is the greatest service which he may offer to her.

[Translation]

第 75 首

有一天，我把她名字写在沙滩，
但海浪来了，把那个名字冲跑；
我用手再一次把它写了一遍，
但潮水来了，把我的辛苦又吞掉。
“自负的人啊，”她说，“你这是徒劳，
妄想使世间凡俗的事物不朽；
我本身就会像这样云散烟消，
我的名字也同样会化为乌有。”
“不，”我说，“让低贱的东西去筹谋
死亡之路，但你将靠美名而永活：
我的诗将使你罕见的美德长留，
并把你光辉的名字写在天国。
死亡可以征服整个世界，
我们的爱将长存，生命永不灭。”

(胡家峦 译)

Elizabethan Love Poets (Christopher Marlowe & Sir Walter Raleigh)



Christopher Marlowe (1564—1593) was born in Canterbury and was educated at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. He was one of the three

Cambridge student-playwrights known as the “University Wits.” At Cambridge they translated and performed comedies and tragedies of Roman playwrights Plautus (254—184 B.C.) and Seneca (4?—65 A.D.). They also wrote plays of their own, sometimes individually and sometimes in collaboration with each other. Thomas Kyd’s *Spanish Tragedy* was the earliest example of revenge plays which anticipated Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*; Robert Greene’s *James IV* created situations in which a woman disguises as a man, a device used by Shakespeare later on in *As You Like It* and *The Twelfth Night*; Marlowe wrote *Tamburlaine The Great* in blank verse, unrhymed iambic pentameter, which became the standard medium of Elizabethan drama.

After graduation, Marlowe came to London to pursue his career as a dramatist. His *Tamburlaine* won success in the theatres of London and he wrote another six plays including *The Jew of Malta* and *The Tragic History of Dr. Faustus*. Marlowe lived in London for only six years before his tragic early death (at the age of 29). The legend has it that he died in a pub, being stabbed to death in a quarrel over the bill. Some researchers believe that he was the victim of a political murder: first betrayed by his fellow playwright Thomas Kyd who informed the Privy Council of his alleged acts of treason and atheism, then murdered by a secret agent of the government.

Marlowe wrote a long poem about mythological lovers “Hero and Leander,” but his best-known and most anthologised poem is “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love.”

The Passionate Shepherd to His Love

Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That valleys, groves, hills, and fields,
Woods, or steepy mountain yields¹.

And we will sit upon the rocks,
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers to whose falls²
Melodious birds sing madrigals³.

And I will make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle⁴
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;

A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;
Fair lined⁵ slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold;

A belt of straw and ivy buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs:
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me, and be my love.

The shepherds' swains⁶ shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May morning:
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my love.

[Notes]

1. *yields*: produces
2. *falls*: flow, current
3. *madrigals*: songs of love
4. *kirtle*: gown, dress
5. *lined*: (clothes) attached with inside covering 加衬里的
6. *swains*: boys, lads

[Questions]

1. What particularly are the comforts the shepherd offers to attract the girl to “live with him?”
2. Apart from beds of roses, cap of flowers, kirtle of embroidery etc., what other delights are offered?
3. Do you think the shepherd is eloquent enough to persuade the girl? Do you think this is the typical proposal of marriage in Elizabethan time?

[Commentary]

The poem is an invitation to love. The speaker is a shepherd who is offering a profusion of country pleasures in order to persuade a young girl to come to him and be his love. As proposal of marriage, the poem is eloquent and persuasive, showing the passion of a lover who is eager to share his life with his other half.

The poem belongs to the pastoral tradition, which originates in ancient Greek and Roman literature, particularly in the *Idylls* of Theocritus and the

Eclogues of Virgil. As a tradition, pastoral poems show the life of shepherds and shepherdesses who raise sheep and fall in love in the countryside. The setting is usually a pasture, with mountains and rivers and trees and flowers. In this poem, the shepherd depicts a rural paradise which he hopes will be attractive to his beloved.

Marlowe's poem is probably the best and certainly the most famous of this kind. The shepherd is a typical lover of traditional love poems: outgoing, eloquent, persuasive, valuing pleasure and enjoyment above eternity and religion. Yet his eloquence arouses suspicion about the sincerity of his offer and, as we shall see, his invitation will receive many replies from other poets, including the following by Sir Walter Raleigh.

[Translation]

牧羊人的恋歌

来吧，和我生活在一起，做我的爱人，
在这里将使我们快乐无边，
这里有峻峭秀丽的山峦，
还有风光明媚的山谷田园。

在那边，我俩坐在山岩上，
看牧羊人喂养可爱的羔羊，
在浅浅的小溪旁，
鸟儿随着潺潺流水把爱情歌唱。

在那边，我将用玫瑰编一顶花冠，
用成千的花束做床，
用爱神木的叶子织成长裙，
一切都献给你，绚丽与芬芳

从羔羊身上剪下最好的羊毛，
为你做防寒的鞋衬和长袍；
用纯金为你制作鞋扣，
该是多么珍贵，多么荣耀

长春藤和芳草做的腰带，
珊瑚带扣点缀着琥珀水晶。
假如这些享受能打动你的心，

来吧，和我生活在一起，做我的爱人

银碟里盛着你吃的美味儿，
如同天上众神所用的一样，
丰盛的佳肴将为我俩，
摆在象牙制的桌面上。

牧羊少年们在每个五月的早晨，
将为你纵情舞蹈，高歌人云，
假如这些欢乐能打动你的心，
来吧，和我生活在一起，做我的爱人。

(袁广达 梁葆成 译)

Sir Walter Raleigh (1552—1618) was born in south Devon and studied for a little more than a year at Oxford University. He had been a soldier, explorer, coloniser, courtier, philosopher and poet. He fought battles in France and Spain. He led a gold-search expedition to Guiana (now Venezuela) in 1592 and led another expedition to Cadiz harbour of Spain in 1596. He is sometimes credited as the founder of colony of Virginia in America and as the first person to introduce tobacco to Europe.

He had enjoyed great favour from Queen Elizabeth I, but after the queen's death and the accession of King James I, he was charged with high treason and was thrown into prison (the Tower of London) in 1603. During the 13 years in prison, he wrote the *History of the World*. In 1617, he was released to search for the gold mine which he claimed to have discovered in Guiana on his earlier expedition 25 years before. This expedition was a disastrous one: his son was killed and his chief lieutenant committed suicide. On his return, the gold mine was found to be a fabrication and the charge of high treason was renewed. He was executed on 29 October, 1618.

He was known for a long poem to Queen Elizabeth, "The Ocean to Cynthia," and for a poem attacking social classes and institutions, "The Lie." But his best-known poem is a reply to Marlowe's "Passionate Shepherd."

The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd

If all the world and love were young,
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
These pretty pleasures might me move
To live with thee and be thy love.

Time drives the flocks from field to fold¹
 When rivers rage and rocks grow cold,
 And Philomel² becometh dumb;
 The rest complains of cares³ to come.

The flowers do fade, and wanton fields
 To wayward winter reckoning yields;⁴
 A honey tongue, a heart of gall,
 Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall.

Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of roses,
 Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies
 Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten—
 In folly ripe, in reason rotten.

Thy belt of straw and ivy buds,
 Thy coral clasps and amber studs,
 All these in me no means can move
 To come to thee and be thy love.

But could youth last and love still breed,
 Had joys no date nor age no need,⁵
 Then these delights my mind might move
 To live with thee and be thy love.

[Notes]

1. *fold*: sheep fold, a small enclosure to keep sheep safe at night
2. *Philomel*: nightingale
3. *cares*: troubles, worries
4. *wanton fields/To wayward winter reckoning yields*: lively fields surrender to the onslaught of the winter season.
5. *Had joys no date nor age no need*: [subjunctive mood] if joys were everlasting and old age had no insufficiency. *no date*: no end; *no need*: no lack, no poverty

[Questions]

1. Compare the form of this poem and that of the previous poem. What similarities do you find?

2. What details of the previous poem are mentioned in this poem? In what different way is the speaker using these details?
3. What are the reasons for the speaker to refuse the shepherd's invitation?

[Commentary]

In this poem, a young woman is answering the invitation made by the shepherd in Christopher Marlowe's poem. Her blunt refusal is based on suspicion that the shepherd is like many such lovers only using beautiful words to deceive innocent, inexperienced young girls. The pleasures he offered are likely to be short-lived and the happiness will soon become sorrow. Therefore, she refuses to believe the "shepherd's tongue."

It is unconventional for the woman to take the initiative in any love relationship because women are considered as the vulnerable party and they are more often on guard against the lover's deceptive words. They will choose to refuse the lover's proposal, at least at first, even if they have every reason to accept it. This prolongs the courtship and probably makes it more interesting. The "passionate lover and cold mistress" pattern is one of the most important characteristics of "courtly love" in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance period.

Notice the verse form of this poem. There is a conscious attempt on Raleigh's part to imitate the four-foot iambic couplet of Marlowe's poem, while at the same time to provide a sequel to its story.

[Translation]

美女答牧羊人

要是世界和爱情不变老，
要是牧羊人的话都可靠，
这些快活事能使我动心，
使我和你同住，做你的情人。

但河会泛滥，山石会变冷，
连夜莺也会变得不吭声；
这时，羊得从田野进羊圈，
其他的鸟兽担心地悲叹。

花枯萎凋谢，葱茏的大地
屈服于寒冷的任意算计；

蜂蜜般的舌头，胆汁似的心
是春的美梦，是秋的苦辛。

你那花束、玫瑰床和长袍，
你那绣花的裙子和鞋帽，
很快会干枯，破旧，被遗忘——
都在痴想中生，理智中亡。

麦秆、藤芽辫成的腰带上
虽有珊瑚扣、琥珀钉增光，
这些都无法打动我的心，
使我与你同住，做你情人。

只有叫青春常驻爱常留，
叫欢乐无尽，老来没穷愁，
这些高兴事才使我动心，
使我与你同住，做你情人。

(黄杲忻 译)

[Comparison]

The following poem is an example of a modern poet's imitation of "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" and it testifies to the vitality of Marlowe's poem 400 years after its composition.

Two Songs

2

Come, live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
Of peace and plenty, bed and board,
That chance¹ employment may afford.

I'll handle dainties² on the docks
And thou shalt read of summer frocks³:
At evening by the sour canals
We'll hope to hear some madrigals.

Care⁴ on thy maiden brow shall put
A wreath of wrinkles, and thy foot

Be shod with pain: not silken dress
 But toil shall tire thy loveliness.

Hunger shall make thy modest zone⁵
 And cheat fond death of all but bone⁶ —
 If these delights thy mind may move,
 Then live with me and be my love.

[Notes]

1. *chance*: unpredictable, accidental, occasional
2. *dainties*: nice food, delicacies
3. *shalt read of summer frocks*: shall read about summer dresses (probably in magazines)
4. *care*: worry
5. *make thy modest zone*: become your humble belt
6. *cheat fond death of all but bone*: (Hunger shall) deceive death over everything except bone.

[Questions]

1. What special “pleasures” is this modern lover offering to his beloved?
2. What effect has the author produced by his contrast with Marlowe’s poem?
3. Is this a love poem? What is the purpose of the author?

[Commentary]

The first two lines remind the reader of Marlowe’s “Passionate Shepherd to His Love” and of all the pleasures Marlowe’s lover offers to the young girl. But in this poem, no pleasure is offered. The lover has only a hard life to offer. By way of parody, the poem creates expectations which are then ruthlessly shattered. The reader hopes to hear the speaker express his passionate love. Instead, he only hears a complaint over poverty.

The author Cecil Day Lewis (1904—1972) was born in Northern Ireland and received education at Oxford. He was left-wing in politics and was very much concerned with social problems of his day. He joined the Communist Party for three years and later was appointed Poet Laureate. The above poem was written at a time when British economy is plummeting and people’s living standard was deteriorating. It is a protest against a society which cannot look after its citizens and it shows grave concern for the underprivileged people who are struggling on the verge of poverty.

William Shakespeare (1564—1616)



William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, a small town in Warwickshire. He attended the grammar school of his town, a key school which prepare students for university, but according to Ben Jonson he learned “little Latin and less Greek,” and therefore had no chance of going to Oxford or Cambridge. His father was an affluent businessman, a prosperous glove-maker and for a time was alderman of the town. In 1582, at the age of 18, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, a woman eight years older than him, and their daughter Susanna was born the next year. Another daughter and a son (twins) were born to them in 1585.

In 1584, Shakespeare left his hometown and for the next eight years no one knows his whereabouts or his activities; all records about him were blank. Some believe that he was serving in the armies of the Earl of Leicester in the Low Countries; others believe that he wandered through the country for some time and finally came to London, engaging in a variety of mean jobs like holding horses at the gate of the theatre. When he finally re-emerged in 1592, he was an actor and an increasingly successful playwright, who was satirised by Robert Greene as an “upstart crow...in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country.”

Shakespeare was an actor, a playwright and eventually a shareholder of Chamberlaine’s Men, a successful troupe attached to Lord Chamberlaine, which became King’s Men after King James I came to throne. The company built and performed in the then most famous theatre in London, the Globe. Throughout his career, Shakespeare wrote two long poems *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), 154 sonnets and 37 plays. By the time he retired, he had become a huge success and bought New Place, a magnificent residence with a beautiful garden, back in his hometown Stratford-upon-Avon.

The 154 sonnets are Shakespeare’s contribution to the Elizabethan vogue of sonnet sequences. Like those of Sydney and Spenser, Shakespeare’s sonnets contain similar motifs and similar patterns of argument, though written in a different rhyme scheme of “abab cdcd efef gg.” The first group of sonnets is written to a “Master W. H.,” celebrating his beauty and persuading him to get married; the second group is written to a certain “Dark Lady;” others are about a rival poet. The imagery comes from a variety of sources: gardening,

navigation, farming, law, business, astrology and domestic affairs. And the moods include delight, fear, pride, shame, disgust and melancholy.

The plays can be put into categories of histories, comedies, tragedies and romances, with the time of composition roughly following this order. The history plays cover prominent events in the history of Rome and of the native Britain up to Shakespeare's time, telling about the change of dynasties (*Henry IV*) or the fall of kings (*Julius Caesar*). Comedies tell love stories, often involving a difficult obstacle in the courtship (*The Twelfth Night*) and a happy ending in the marriage of the hero and the heroine (*As You Like It*). The tragedies explore into the depths of human nature, touching upon such human weaknesses as jealousy (*Othello*), excessive ambition (*Macbeth*), propensity for flattery (*King Lear*), irresoluteness and even the workings of the unconscious (*Hamlet*). The romances are usually miraculous stories set in a remote place (*The Tempest*) and often resort to magic to resolve the conflicts of the plays (*Winter's Tale*). Some critics suggest that the sequence of composition shows the development of Shakespeare's view of the world, from an optimistic belief in the final triumph of good over evil, to viewing destruction as the inevitable end of conflicts, and finally to a despairing use of magic to resolve those conflicts.

The plays are mostly written in blank verse and some of passages, such as "All the World's a Stage" and "To Be or Not to Be," are so well-known that they are read as independent poems. The sonnets also contain some of the finest songs ever written in English, of which the following are two prominent examples.

Sonnet 18

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
 Thou art¹ more lovely and more temperate:
 Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
 And summer's lease² hath all too short a date:
 Sometime too hot the eye of heaven³ shines
 And often is his gold complexion⁴ dimmed;
 And every fair from fair sometimes declines,
 By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed:⁵
 But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
 Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
 Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
 When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st,

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

[Notes]

1. *art*: are
2. *lease*: time, duration
3. *the eye of heaven*: the sun
4. *his gold complexion*: the sun's gold face
5. *By chance...untrimmed*: cut short, destroyed by chance (fate)

[Questions]

1. What is the author's purpose in mentioning "summer," "darling buds of May" and the sun's "gold complexion?" What common characteristics do they have?
2. Why does the author mention "death" and "change" in a poem of praise and commendation?
3. Judging from the last two lines, do you think this poem is about beauty or about poetry?

[Commentary]

This is probably the most famous of Shakespeare's sonnets. Structurally, it can be divided into two parts. The first eight lines are about the transience of natural beauty: in summer, in sunshine, and in flowers. The last six lines are about the immortality of "your" beauty, i.e. the beauty of the person the poem is dedicated to. We are all part of nature and we are all subject to "nature's changing course." We shall live our life and die, just as all natural objects are in time "untrimmed" by chance or fate. The poem starts out as a praise of "your" beauty, but then turns into a profound meditation on time and change, and on the nature of earthly life.

There is another issue suggested in the poem. "Your" beauty is said to be "eternal," above "nature's changing course." But "you" achieved immortality by becoming the subject of "my" poem: "So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,/So long lives this, and this gives life to thee." In other words, "my" poem gives eternity to "your" beauty. In this sense, this sonnet is also about the permanence of art and poetry.

[Translation]

第 18 首

我怎么能够把你来比作夏天？
 你不独比它可爱也比它温婉：
 狂风把五月宠爱的嫩蕊作践，
 夏天出赁的期限又未免太短：
 天上的眼睛有时照得太酷烈，
 它那炳耀的金颜又常遭掩蔽：
 被机缘或无常的天道所摧折，
 没有芳艳不终于凋残或销毁。
 但是你的长夏永远不会凋落，
 也不会损失你这皎洁的红芳，
 或死神夸口你在他影里漂泊，
 当你在不朽的诗里与时同长。
 只要一天有人类，或人有眼睛，
 这诗将长存，并且赐给你生命。

(朱生豪 译)

Sonnet 29

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes
 I all alone bewep my outcast state¹,
 And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless² cries,
 And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
 Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
 Featured like him,³ like him with friends possessed,
 Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,⁴
 With what I most enjoy contented least;
 Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
 Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
 Like to the lark at break of day arising
 From sullen earth sings hymns at heaven's gate;
 For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings
 That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

[Notes]

1. *bewep my outcast state*: weep over my fate as an outcast person

2. *bootless*: fruitless, futile
3. *featured like him*: having a face like him
4. *Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope*: wishing to have other people's skills and range of knowledge. *art*: skills; *scope*: range of knowledge

[Questions]

1. What different moods do we see in the first eight lines and in the last six lines? What causes this change of mood?
2. Look at the details of the person's "outcast state." Do they have a wider significance or do we see people in such "outcast state" in our life?
3. In Line 11, a "skylark" is used as an analogy to the person's state of mind. Is it an appropriate comparison? Why?

[Commentary]

This sonnet also has an "eight lines + six lines" structure. The first eight lines describe the misfortunes of the speaker: he has no personal attraction, no friends, no skills, no knowledge and no hope. He feels miserable about his "outcast state" and curses his own "fate." Just at this moment, he thinks of "you" and all is changed. The next six lines turn the poem to a very different direction. His memory of "you" lifts him instantly out of his misery and his spirit flies happily to heaven, like a skylark, in heavenly bliss. He is so happy to have "your love" that he refuses to change place with the king.

In the Petrarchan tradition, sonnets are usually written to a young lady and they use many rhetorical devices (metaphors and similes) to praise her beauty or persuade her to seize time and enjoy life. Though Shakespeare's sonnets are written to a young male aristocrat, probably his patron, he retains a great deal of the conventions of love sonnets. The praise in this poem will be pleasing to a young woman as well as to a young man. Anyone will be overjoyed to hear that he has such great importance in another person's life.

[Translation]

第 29 首

当我受尽命运和人们的白眼，
暗暗地哀悼自己的身世飘零，
徒用呼吁去干扰聒聒的昊天，
顾盼着身影，诅咒自己的生辰，
愿我和另一个一样富于希望，

面貌相似，又和他一样广交游，
 希求这人的渊博，那人的内行，
 最赏心的乐事觉得最不对头；
 可是，当我正要这样看轻自己，
 忽然想起了你，于是我的精神，
 便像云雀破晓从阴霾的大地
 振翻上升，高唱着圣歌在天门：
 一想起你的爱使我那么富有，
 和帝王换位我也不屑于屈就。

(梁宗岱 译)

Sonnet 73

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
 When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
 Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
 Bare ruined choirs,¹ where late the sweet birds sang.
 In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
 As after sunset fadeth in the west;
 Which by and by black night doth take away,
 Death's second self² that seals up all in rest.
 In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,
 That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
 As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
 Consum'd with that which it was nourished by.³
 This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
 To love that well, which thou must leave ere long.

[Notes]

1. *Bare ruined choir*: leafless boughs of trees which once make music in the wind like a choir
2. *death's second self*: the "black night" of the previous line
3. *Consumed with that which it was nourished by*: exhausted by the energy which once fed the fire

[Questions]

1. What image is seen in each of the three quatrains? What does the author mean to say by the three images?

2. Why does the author say what he means to say in images, instead of directly in statements? What effect has he achieved?
3. Why do people often appreciate more what they have lost or are going to lose? What psychology does the conclusion appeal to?

[Commentary]

Different from the two previous sonnets, with their “eight lines + six lines” structure, this poem has the three initial quatrains equally and continuously at work preparing for the concluding couplet. They develop successively the images of dying year (autumn), dying day (evening) and dying fire (ashes). The images drive home the fact of the speaker’s coming death and the increased value of friendship since it is going to end soon with his death.

The poet does not say directly about the coming of death, but uses three concrete images to show the approaching extinction. The audience sees more vividly and more directly the “ruined” health, the “fading” of life, the exhaustion (“consumed”) which accompany the coming of his death. The images enable the reader to feel, rather than abstractly understand, the condition of the speaker’s health and grasp the fact in a more memorable way.

[Translation]

第 73 首

在我身上你或许会看见秋天，
 当黄叶，或尽脱，或只三三两两
 挂在瑟缩的枯枝上索索抖颤——
 荒废的歌坛，那里百鸟曾合唱。
 在我身上你或许会看见暮霭，
 它在日落后向西方徐徐消退：
 黑夜，死的化身，渐渐把它赶开，
 严静的安息笼住纷纭的万类。
 在我身上你或许会看见余烬，
 它在青春的寒灰里奄奄一息，
 在惨淡灵床上早晚总要断魂，
 给那滋养过它的烈焰所销毁。
 看见了这些，你的爱就会加强，
 因为他转瞬要辞你溘然长往。

(梁宗岱 译)

Under the Greenwood Tree

Under the greenwood tree
 Who loves to lie with me,
 And turn his merry note¹
 Unto the sweet bird's throat,
 Come hither², come hither, come hither:
 Here shall he see
 No enemy
 But winter and rough weather.

Who doth ambition shun³
 And loves to live i' the sun⁴,
 Seeking the food he eats,
 And pleased with what he gets,
 Come hither, come hither, come hither:
 Here shall he see
 No enemy
 But winter and rough weather.

[Notes]

1. *note*: music
2. *come hither*: come here
3. *shun*: abandon, give up
4. *i' the sun*: in the sun

[Questions]

1. What kind of place does the poem describe? Why is it a preferable place?
2. What in contrast is the world which the speaker has abandoned? What is wrong with the world?
3. What is the theme of the poem?

[Commentary]

This song is taken from Shakespeare's play *As You Like It* (Act ii Scene 5), which tells the story of a Duke and his daughter who live in the Arden Forest after they have been driven out of their palace and their dukedom have been usurped by the Duke's brother. On the appearance, the song is a simple praise of country life and country pleasure, but actually it is a comment on the politics and social life of Elizabethan time.

On the one hand, the song describes the happiness of a simple life in nature and on the other it shows tiredness towards the intrigues and conspiracies of the court life. Thus the “greenwood tree,” the “merry note” of the “bird”, and the shine of the “sun” all seem sweeter, because there is “no enemy” here. We see a disillusioned speaker trying to persuade people to abandon desire for power and pursue a more simplistic existence without ambitious rivalry or power struggle.

[Translation]

绿树高张翠幕

绿树高张翠幕，
 谁来偕我偃卧，
 翻将欢乐心声，
 学唱枝头鸟鸣：
 盍来此？盍来此？盍来此？
 目之所接，
 精神契一，
 唯忧雨雪之将至。

孰能敝屣尊荣，
 来沐丽日光风，
 觅食自求果腹，
 一饱欣然意足：
 盍来此？盍来此？盍来此？
 目之所接，
 精神契一，
 唯忧雨雪之将至。

(朱生豪 译)

All the World's a Stage

All the world's a stage,
 And all the men and women merely players:
 They have their exits and their entrances;
 And one man in his time plays many parts,
 His acts being seven ages. At first, the infant,
 Mewling and puking¹ in the nurse's arms.

Then, the whining school-boy, with his satchel²
 And shining morning face, creeping like snail
 Unwillingly to school. And then, the lover,
 Sighing like furnace,³ with a woeful ballad
 Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
 Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard⁴,
 Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
 Seeking the bubble reputation⁵
 Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
 In fair round belly with good capon lined⁶,
 With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
 Full of wise saws⁷ and modern instances;
 And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
 Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloons⁸,
 With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side;
 His youthful hose well saved, a world too wide
 For his shrunk shank⁹; and his big manly voice,
 Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
 And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
 That ends this strange eventful history,
 Is second childishness, and mere oblivion,
 Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.¹⁰

[Notes]

1. *mewling and puking*: crying and vomiting
2. *satchel*: school bag
3. *sighing like furnace*: sighing heavily like bellows of a furnace
4. *bearded like the pard*: having beards like a leopard
5. *bubble reputation*: reputation is here seen as a bubble or an insubstantial dream.
6. *with good capon lined*: filled with good chicken meat
7. *wise saws*: wise proverbs
8. *slipper'd pantaloons*: comfortable trousers
9. *shrunk shank*: shrunk or thin leg
10. *sans teeth...sans everything*: without teeth...without everything

[Questions]

1. Shakespeare describes seven typical roles a person plays in his life. What are

- they? Are the seven roles different now from those of Shakespeare's time?
2. What does the attitude of seeing life as a drama suggest about the speaker's view of life?

[Commentary]

The passage is taken from *As You Like It* (Act ii, Scene 7). The exiled Duke notices that he and his friends are not the only unhappy people in this world because he sees many other people in suffering. Hearing this, Jacques, one of his followers, made the above remark about life. Its comparison of life to play is a keen and insightful observation: a play is a reflection of life, it is "to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature" (*Hamlet* Act iii Scene 2). As a playwright, Shakespeare surely felt strongly the close relationship between life and play.

Yet, to see life as play suggests a playful attitude to life and perhaps an abandonment of life's meaningful pursuits. This attitude is balmy to people in adverse circumstances like the Duke and probably can help them carry on with their life.

This view of life was common in Shakespeare's time and had a strong religious overtone, because Christianity would have people believe that this life is only a preparation for heaven. Therefore life is just like a performance, not real, not important. Success or failure does not matter; nor does wealth or poverty. What people can do is to patiently suffer and wait.

[Translation]

这世界本是一座舞台

这世界本是一座舞台，
 一切的男男女女只不过是些演戏的人；
 他们各自有出场，又各自有退场的时候；
 一个人，他的一生要演许多角色，
 他的戏共有七幕。先是婴儿时期，
 在保姆的怀里哇哇哭啼，吃饱了吐奶。
 然后是纠缠磨人的小学生，背着书包，
 像早晨一样的红红的面孔，蜗牛似的
 慢慢地蹭到学堂里去。然后是个恋爱之人，
 叹起气来像风箱，做一首伤心的情诗
 献给他情人的眉宇。然后是个军人，
 满嘴是奇怪的誓言，胡子翘得像头豹子，

很珍惜荣誉，动不动就吵嘴打架，
 甚至都会钻到大炮筒子里头去追求
 人世的虚名。然后就到了做法官的时候，
 肚子鼓得圆圆的，里边都是肥鸡肉，
 两只眼睛好不尊严，胡子剪得整整齐齐，
 开起口来不是至理名言便是当代谚语；
 他就这样上演这一幕。第六个时期就穿上了一
 条又瘦又长的裤子，穿一双拖鞋，
 鼻梁上架一副眼镜，身上垂着肉口袋，
 他年轻时候的袜子，保存下来，现在穿在他的
 瘦腿上简直是大而无当；他雄壮的男人嗓音，
 现在又变得同孩子的一样，又尖又颤，说起话来，
 一呼一吸，像在吹哨。然后到了最后一场，
 这一场将结束他那奇特多事的一生，
 这一场是第二个童年，然后完全消失，
 没有牙，没有眼睛，没有胃口，什么都没有。

(曹未风 译)

To Be, or Not to Be

To be, or not to be: that is the question:
 Whether 'tis nobler in the mind, to suffer
 The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,¹
 Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
 And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
 No more; and, by a sleep to say we end
 The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
 That flesh is heir to,² 'tis a consummation
 Devoutly to be wish'd. To die: to sleep;
 To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub³;
 For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
 When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,⁴
 Must give us pause. There's the respect,
 That makes calamity of so long life;⁵
 For who would bear the whips and scorns of time⁶,
 The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely⁷,
 The pangs of despis'd love, the law's delay,
 The insolence of office,⁸ and the spurns

That patient merit of the unworthy takes,⁹
 When he himself might his quietus make
 With a bare bodkin?¹⁰ Who would these fardels bear,
 To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
 But that the dread of something after death:
 The undiscover'd country,¹¹ from whose bourn
 No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
 And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
 Than fly to others that we know not of?
 Thus conscience¹² does make cowards of us all;
 And thus the native hue of resolution
 Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,¹³
 And enterprises of great pitch and moment
 With this regard their currents turn awry,¹⁴
 And lose the name of action.

[Notes]

1. *The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune*: the dangerous attacks (blows and strikes) which people might get in this worldly life
2. *the thousand natural shocks/That the flesh is heir to*: the many natural blows that our body inherits (have to bear or suffer)
3. *ay, there's the rub*: yes, that is the difficulty or obstacle
4. *when we have shuffled off this mortal coil*: when we have abandoned our physical body at the moment of death. *mortal coil*: body which will die one day
5. *There's the respect/That makes calamity of so long life*: That is the thought that gives such long life to the disaster.
6. *bear the whips and scorns of time*: endure the tortures and mockeries of this world
7. *the proud man's contumely*: the proud man's insulting and scornful language or behaviour
8. *the insolence of office*: the officials' impudent and disrespectful behaviour
9. *the spurns/That patient merit of the unworthy takes*: the kicks that a meritorious person patiently receives from the unworthy superior. *spurns*: kicks; *merit*: a person of merit
10. *his quietus make/With a bare bodkin*: with a bare knife achieve his own peace (kill himself). *quietus*: peace, death; *bodkin*: knife, dagger
11. *the undiscover'd country*: the country of the dead

12. *conscience*: awareness, consciousness, referring to the reflections just made
13. *the native hue of resolution/Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought*: determination softens with thinking; its colour becomes pale with thoughts.
hue: colour; *cast*: shade
14. *enterprises of great pitch and moment/With this regard their currents turn awry*: matters of great importance turn their course to the wrong direction.
great pitch and moment: great height and urgency

[Questions]

1. What has Hamlet mentioned about the ills of his age?
2. Is he going to suffer patiently? Or is he going to oppose and fight those ills of his age?
3. Why does death seem so nice to Hamlet at this time? Why doesn't he kill himself, as he says, "with a bare bodkin?"
4. Besides offering a critique of his society, what does this meditation on life and death show about Hamlet's character?

[Commentary]

Taken from *Hamlet*, Act iii Scene 1, this is probably the most famous soliloquy of Shakespeare's plays. It is often quoted and read as independent poem. In this soliloquy, Hamlet is debating in his mind over the question of life and death. He sees many problems in his society and is in such despair that he wants to end his own life in order to escape those problems. However, death turns out to be not such a nice alternative. The uncertain prospects after death make him hesitate. The soliloquy fully explores the dilemma Hamlet faces: on the one hand death is a comforting escape from life's problems; on the other hand it holds uncertain and unknown prospects for him. Therefore he loses his determination and his action is paralyzed.

However, the soliloquy has wider significance than just for the hero of the play. It can be seen as a general meditation of human life's predicament. People are all suffering in different ways in life. In other words, we are all in Hamlet's situation, having to answer the question of how to face the society we live in or how to face our fate.

[Translation]

活下去还是不活

活下去还是不活：这是问题。
 要做到高贵，究竟该忍气吞声
 来容受狂暴的命运矢石交攻呢，
 还是该挺身反抗无边的苦恼，
 扫它个干净？死，就是睡眠——
 就这样；而如果睡眠就等于了结了
 心痛以及千百种身体要担负的
 皮痛肉痛，那该是天大的好事，
 正求之不得啊！死，就是睡眠；
 睡眠也许要做梦，这就麻烦了！
 我们一旦摆脱了尘世的牵缠，
 在死的睡眠里还会做些什么梦，
 一想到就不能不踌躇。这一点顾虑
 正好使灾难变成了长期的折磨。
 谁甘心忍受人世的鞭挞和嘲弄。
 忍受压迫者虐待、傲慢者凌辱，
 忍受失恋的痛苦、法庭的拖延、
 衙门的横暴、做埋头苦干的大才
 受作威作福的小人一脚踢出去，
 如果他只消自己来使一下尖刀
 就可以得到解脱啊？谁甘心挑担子，
 拖着疲累的生命，呻吟，流汗，
 要不是怕一死就去了没有人回来的
 那个从未发现的国土，怕那边
 还不知会怎样，因此意志动摇了，
 因此就宁愿忍受目前的灾殃，
 而不愿投奔另一些未知的苦难？
 这样子，顾虑使我们都成了懦夫，
 也就这样子，决断决行的本色
 蒙上了惨白的一层思虑的病容；
 本可以轰轰烈烈的大作大为，
 由于这一点想不通，就出了别扭，
 失去了行动的名份。

（卞之琳 译）