

## **EZRA POUND**

### **“In a Station of the Metro”**

The apparition of these faces in the crowd:  
Petals on a wet, black bough.

### **“The Garden”**

Like a skein of loose silk blown against a wall  
She walks by the railing of a path in Kensington Gardens,  
And she is dying piece-meal  
of a sort of emotional anemia.

And round about there is a rabble  
Of the filthy, sturdy, unkillable infants of the very poor.  
They shall inherit the earth.

In her is the end of breeding.  
Her boredom is exquisite and excessive.

She would like some one to speak to her,  
And is almost afraid that I  
will commit that indiscretion.

### **“Portrait d’une Femme”**

Your mind and you are our Sargasso Sea,  
London has swept about you this score years  
And bright ships left you this or that in fee:  
Ideas, old gossip, oddments of all things,  
Strange spars of knowledge and dimmed wares of price.  
Great minds have sought you — lacking someone else.  
You have been second always. Tragical?  
No. You preferred it to the usual thing:  
One dull man, dulling and uxorious,  
One average mind — with one thought less, each year.  
Oh, you are patient, I have seen you sit  
Hours, where something might have floated up.  
And now you pay one. Yes, you richly pay.  
You are a person of some interest, one comes to you  
And takes strange gain away:  
Trophies fished up; some curious suggestion;  
Fact that leads nowhere; and a tale for two,

Pregnant with mandrakes, or with something else  
That might prove useful and yet never proves,  
That never fits a corner or shows use,  
Or finds its hour upon the loom of days:  
The tarnished, gaudy, wonderful old work;  
Idols and ambergris and rare inlays,  
These are your riches, your great store; and yet  
For all this sea-hoard of deciduous things,  
Strange woods half sodden, and new brighter stuff:  
In the slow float of differing light and deep,  
No! there is nothing! In the whole and all,  
Nothing that's quite your own.  
Yet this is you.

### **“Medallion”**

Luini in porcelain!  
The grand piano  
Utters a profane  
Protest with her clear soprano.

The sleek head emerges  
From the gold-yellow frock  
As Anadyomene in the opening  
Pages of Reinach.

Honey-red, closing the face-oval,  
A basket-work of braids which seem as if they were  
Spun in King Minos' hall  
From metal, or intractable amber;

The face-oval beneath the glaze,  
Bright in its suave bounding-line, as,  
Beneath half-watt rays,  
The eyes turn topaz.

## SYLVIA PLATH

### “Tulips”

The tulips are too excitable, it is winter here.  
Look how white everything is, how quiet, how snowed-in.  
I am learning peacefulness, lying by myself quietly  
As the light lies on these white walls, this bed, these hands.  
I am nobody; I have nothing to do with explosions.  
I have given my name and my day-clothes up to the nurses  
And my history to the anesthetist and my body to surgeons.

They have propped my head between the pillow and the sheet-cuff  
Like an eye between two white lids that will not shut.  
Stupid pupil, it has to take everything in.  
The nurses pass and pass, they are no trouble,  
They pass the way gulls pass inland in their white caps,  
Doing things with their hands, one just the same as another,  
So it is impossible to tell how many there are.

My body is a pebble to them, they tend it as water  
Tends to the pebbles it must run over, smoothing them gently.  
They bring me numbness in their bright needles, they bring me sleep.  
Now I have lost myself I am sick of baggage——  
My patent leather overnight case like a black pillbox,  
My husband and child smiling out of the family photo;  
Their smiles catch onto my skin, little smiling hooks.

I have let things slip, a thirty-year-old cargo boat  
stubbornly hanging on to my name and address.  
They have swabbed me clear of my loving associations.  
Scared and bare on the green plastic-pillowed trolley  
I watched my teaset, my bureaus of linen, my books  
Sink out of sight, and the water went over my head.  
I am a nun now, I have never been so pure.

I didn't want any flowers, I only wanted  
To lie with my hands turned up and be utterly empty.  
How free it is, you have no idea how free——  
The peacefulness is so big it dazes you,  
And it asks nothing, a name tag, a few trinkets.  
It is what the dead close on, finally; I imagine them  
Shutting their mouths on it, like a Communion tablet.

The tulips are too red in the first place, they hurt me.  
Even through the gift paper I could hear them breathe

Lightly, through their white swaddlings, like an awful baby.  
Their redness talks to my wound, it corresponds.  
They are subtle : they seem to float, though they weigh me down,  
Upsetting me with their sudden tongues and their color,  
A dozen red lead sinkers round my neck.

Nobody watched me before, now I am watched.  
The tulips turn to me, and the window behind me  
Where once a day the light slowly widens and slowly thins,  
And I see myself, flat, ridiculous, a cut-paper shadow  
Between the eye of the sun and the eyes of the tulips,  
And I have no face, I have wanted to efface myself.  
The vivid tulips eat my oxygen.

Before they came the air was calm enough,  
Coming and going, breath by breath, without any fuss.  
Then the tulips filled it up like a loud noise.  
Now the air snags and eddies round them the way a river  
Snags and eddies round a sunken rust-red engine.  
They concentrate my attention, that was happy  
Playing and resting without committing itself.

The walls, also, seem to be warming themselves.  
The tulips should be behind bars like dangerous animals;  
They are opening like the mouth of some great African cat,  
And I am aware of my heart: it opens and closes  
Its bowl of red blooms out of sheer love of me.  
The water I taste is warm and salt, like the sea,  
And comes from a country far away as health.

### **“Daddy”**

You do not do, you do not do  
Any more, black shoe  
In which I have lived like a foot  
For thirty years, poor and white,  
Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.

Daddy, I have had to kill you.  
You died before I had time——  
Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,  
Ghastly statue with one gray toe  
Big as a Frisco seal

And a head in the freakish Atlantic  
Where it pours bean green over blue  
In the waters off beautiful Nauset.  
I used to pray to recover you.  
Ach, du.

In the German tongue, in the Polish town  
Scraped flat by the roller  
Of wars, wars, wars.  
But the name of the town is common.  
My Polack friend

Says there are a dozen or two.  
So I never could tell where you  
Put your foot, your root,  
I never could talk to you.  
The tongue stuck in my jaw.

It stuck in a barb wire snare.  
Ich, ich, ich, ich,  
I could hardly speak.  
I thought every German was you.  
And the language obscene

An engine, an engine  
Chuffing me off like a Jew.  
A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.  
I began to talk like a Jew.  
I think I may well be a Jew.

The snows of the Tyrol, the clear beer of Vienna  
Are not very pure or true.  
With my gipsy ancestress and my weird luck  
And my Taroc pack and my Taroc pack  
I may be a bit of a Jew.

I have always been scared of you,  
With your Luftwaffe, your gobbledygoo.  
And your neat mustache  
And your Aryan eye, bright blue.  
Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You——

Not God but a swastika  
So black no sky could squeak through.  
Every woman adores a Fascist,

The boot in the face, the brute  
Brute heart of a brute like you.

You stand at the blackboard, daddy,  
In the picture I have of you,  
A cleft in your chin instead of your foot  
But no less a devil for that, no not  
Any less the black man who

Bit my pretty red heart in two.  
I was ten when they buried you.  
At twenty I tried to die  
And get back, back, back to you.  
I thought even the bones would do.

But they pulled me out of the sack,  
And they stuck me together with glue.  
And then I knew what to do.  
I made a model of you,  
A man in black with a Meinkampf look

And a love of the rack and the screw.  
And I said I do, I do.  
So daddy, I'm finally through.  
The black telephone's off at the root,  
The voices just can't worm through.

If I've killed one man, I've killed two——  
The vampire who said he was you  
And drank my blood for a year,  
Seven years, if you want to know.  
Daddy, you can lie back now.

There's a stake in your fat black heart  
And the villagers never liked you.  
They are dancing and stamping on you.  
They always knew it was you.  
Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through.

### **“The Colossus”**

I shall never get you put together entirely,  
Pieced, glued, and properly jointed.  
Mule-bray, pig-grunt and bawdy cackles  
Proceed from your great lips.

It's worse than a barnyard.

Perhaps you consider yourself an oracle,  
Mouthpiece of the dead, or of some god or other.  
Thirty years now I have labored  
To dredge the silt from your throat.  
I am none the wiser.

Scaling little ladders with glue pots and pails of lysol  
I crawl like an ant in mourning  
Over the weedy acres of your brow  
To mend the immense skull plates and clear  
The bald, white tumuli of your eyes.

A blue sky out of the Oresteia  
Arches above us. O father, all by yourself  
You are pithy and historical as the Roman Forum.  
I open my lunch on a hill of black cypress.  
Your fluted bones and acanthine hair are littered

In their old anarchy to the horizon-line.  
It would take more than a lightning-stroke  
To create such a ruin.  
Nights, I squat in the cornucopia  
Of your left ear, out of the wind,

Counting the red stars and those of plum-color.  
The sun rises under the pillar of your tongue.  
My hours are married to shadow.  
No longer do I listen for the scrape of a keel  
On the blank stones of the landing.

### **“Lady Lazarus”**

I have done it again.  
One year in every ten  
I manage it——

A sort of walking miracle, my skin  
Bright as a Nazi lampshade,  
My right foot

A paperweight,  
My face a featureless, fine  
Jew linen.

Peel off the napkin  
O my enemy.  
Do I terrify?——

The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth?  
The sour breath  
Will vanish in a day.

Soon, soon the flesh  
The grave cave ate will be  
At home on me

And I a smiling woman.  
I am only thirty.  
And like the cat I have nine times to die.

This is Number Three.  
What a trash  
To annihilate each decade.

What a million filaments.  
The peanut-crunching crowd  
Shoves in to see

Them unwrap me hand and foot——  
The big strip tease.  
Gentlemen, ladies

These are my hands  
My knees.  
I may be skin and bone,

Nevertheless, I am the same, identical  
woman.  
The first time it happened I was ten.  
It was an accident.

The second time I meant  
To last it out and not come back at all.  
I rocked shut

As a seashell.  
They had to call and call  
And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.

Dying  
Is an art, like everything else.  
I do it exceptionally well.

I do it so it feels like hell.  
I do it so it feels real.  
I guess you could say I've a call.

It's easy enough to do it in a cell.  
It's easy enough to do it and stay put.  
It's the theatrical

Comeback in broad day

To the same place, the same face, the same  
brute  
Amused shout:

'A miracle!'  
That knocks me out.  
There is a charge

For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge  
For the hearing of my heart——  
It really goes.

And there is a charge, a very large charge  
For a word or a touch  
Or a bit of blood

Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.  
So, so, Herr Doktor.  
So, Herr Enemy.

I am your opus,  
I am your valuable,  
The pure gold baby

That melts to a shriek.  
I turn and burn.  
Do not think I underestimate your great  
concern.

Ash, ash——  
You poke and stir.  
Flesh, bone, there is nothing there——

A cake of soap,  
A wedding ring,  
A gold filling.

Herr God, Herr Lucifer  
Beware  
Beware.

Out of the ash  
I rise with my red hair  
And I eat men like air.



## EMILY DICKINSON

### **“I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,” (340)**

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,  
And Mourners to and fro  
Kept treading - treading - till it seemed  
That Sense was breaking through -

And when they all were seated,  
A Service, like a Drum -  
Kept beating - beating - till I thought  
My mind was going numb -

And then I heard them lift a Box  
And creak across my Soul  
With those same Boots of Lead, again,  
Then Space - began to toll,

As all the Heavens were a Bell,  
And Being, but an Ear,  
And I, and Silence, some strange Race,  
Wrecked, solitary, here -

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,  
And I dropped down, and down -  
And hit a World, at every plunge,  
And Finished knowing - then -

### **“The Soul Selects Her Own Society” (303)**

The Soul selects her own Society —  
Then — shuts the Door —  
To her divine Majority —  
Present no more —

Unmoved — she notes the Chariots — pausing —  
At her low Gate —  
Unmoved — an Emperor be kneeling  
Upon her Mat —

I've known her — from an ample nation —  
Choose One —

Then — close the Valves of her attention —  
Like Stone —

c. 1862

**“I taste a liquor never brewed” (214)**

I taste a liquor never brewed —  
From Tankards scooped in Pearl —  
Not all the Frankfort Berries  
Yield such an Alcohol!

Inebriate of air — am I —  
And Debauchee of Dew —  
Reeling — thro' endless summer days —  
From inns of molten Blue —

When "Landlords" turn the drunken Bee  
Out of the Foxglove's door —  
When Butterflies — renounce their "drams" —  
I shall but drink the more!

Till Seraphs swing their snowy Hats —  
And Saints — to windows run —  
To see the little Tippler  
Leaning against the — Sun!

**“I Died for Beauty - But Was Scarce”**

I died for Beauty - but was scarce  
Adjusted in the Tomb  
When One who died for Truth, was lain  
In an adjoining Room -

He questioned softly "Why I failed"?  
"For Beauty", I replied -  
"And I - for Truth - Themselves are One -  
We Brethren are", He said -

And so, as Kinsmen, met a Night —  
We talked between the Rooms -  
Until the Moss had reached our lips -  
And covered up - Our names —

## ROBERT FROST

### “The Road Not Taken”

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

### “Mending Wall”

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,  
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;  
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.  
The work of hunters is another thing:  
I have come after them and made repair  
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,  
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,  
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,  
No one has seen them made or heard them made,  
But at spring mending-time we find them there.  
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;  
And on a day we meet to walk the line  
And set the wall between us once again.  
We keep the wall between us as we go.  
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.  
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls

We have to use a spell to make them balance:  
 'Stay where you are until our backs are turned!'  
 We wear our fingers rough with handling them.  
 Oh, just another kind of out-door game,  
 One on a side. It comes to little more:  
 There where it is we do not need the wall:  
 He is all pine and I am apple orchard.  
 My apple trees will never get across  
 And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.  
 He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'  
 Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder  
 If I could put a notion in his head:  
 'Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it  
 Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.  
 Before I built a wall I'd ask to know  
 What I was walling in or walling out,  
 And to whom I was like to give offense.  
 Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
 That wants it down.' I could say 'Elves' to him,  
 But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather  
 He said it for himself. I see him there  
 Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top  
 In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.  
 He moves in darkness as it seems to me,  
 Not of woods only and the shade of trees.  
 He will not go behind his father's saying,  
 And he likes having thought of it so well  
 He says again, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'

### “Design”

I found a dimpled spider, fat and white,  
 On a white heal-all, holding up a moth  
 Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth--  
 Assorted characters of death and blight  
 Mixed ready to begin the morning right,  
 Like the ingredients of a witches' broth--  
 A snow-drop spider, a flower like a froth,  
 And dead wings carried like a paper kite.

What had that flower to do with being white,  
 The wayside blue and innocent heal-all?  
 What brought the kindred spider to that height,  
 Then steered the white moth thither in the night?  
 What but design of darkness to appall?--  
 If design govern in a thing so small.

## “Birches”

When I see birches bend to left and right  
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,  
I like to think some boy's been swinging them.  
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay  
As ice-storms do. Often you must have seen them  
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning  
After a rain. They click upon themselves  
As the breeze rises, and turn many-colored  
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.  
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells  
Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust—  
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away  
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.  
They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load,  
And they seem not to break; though once they are bowed  
So low for long, they never right themselves:  
You may see their trunks arching in the woods  
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground  
Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair  
Before them over their heads to dry in the sun.  
But I was going to say when Truth broke in  
With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm  
I should prefer to have some boy bend them  
As he went out and in to fetch the cows—  
Some boy too far from town to learn baseball,  
Whose only play was what he found himself,  
Summer or winter, and could play alone.  
One by one he subdued his father's trees  
By riding them down over and over again  
Until he took the stiffness out of them,  
And not one but hung limp, not one was left  
For him to conquer. He learned all there was  
To learn about not launching out too soon  
And so not carrying the tree away  
Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise  
To the top branches, climbing carefully  
With the same pains you use to fill a cup  
Up to the brim, and even above the brim.  
Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,  
Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.  
So was I once myself a swinger of birches.  
And so I dream of going back to be.  
It's when I'm weary of considerations,

And life is too much like a pathless wood  
Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs  
Broken across it, and one eye is weeping  
From a twig's having lashed across it open.  
I'd like to get away from earth awhile  
And then come back to it and begin over.  
May no fate willfully misunderstand me  
And half grant what I wish and snatch me away  
Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:  
I don't know where it's likely to go better.  
I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,  
And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk  
Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,  
But dipped its top and set me down again.  
That would be good both going and coming back.  
One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

## WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

### “This is Just to Say”

I have eaten  
the plums  
that were in  
the icebox

and which  
you were probably  
saving  
for breakfast

Forgive me  
they were delicious  
so sweet  
and so cold

### **“The Red Wheelbarrow”**

so much depends  
upon

a red wheel  
barrow

glazed with rain  
water

beside the white  
chickens

### **“To Waken an Old Lady”**

Old age is  
a flight of small  
cheeping birds  
skimming  
bare trees  
above a snow glaze.  
Gaining and failing  
they are buffeted  
by a dark wind —  
But what?  
On harsh weedstalks  
the flock has rested —  
the snow  
is covered with broken  
seed husks  
and the wind tempered  
with a shrill  
piping of ple

### **“The Yachts” (1938)**

contend in a sea which the land partly encloses  
shielding them from the too-heavy blows  
of an ungoverned ocean which when it chooses

tortures the biggest hulls, the best man knows  
to pit against its beatings, and sinks them pitilessly.

Mothlike in mists, scintillant in the minute

brilliance of cloudless days, with broad bellying sails  
they glide to the wind tossing green water  
from their sharp prows while over them the crew crawls

ant-like, solicitously grooming them, releasing,  
making fast as they turn, lean far over and having  
caught the wind again, side by side, head for the mark.

In a well guarded arena of open water surrounded by  
lesser and greater craft which, sycophant, lumbering  
and fluttering follow them, they appear youthful, rare

as the light of a happy eye, live with the grace  
of all that in the mind is feckless, free and  
naturally to be desired. Now the sea which holds them

is moody, lapping their glossy sides, as if feeling  
for some slightest flaw but fails completely.  
Today no race. Then the wind comes again. The yachts

move, jockeying for a start, the signal is set and they  
are off. Now the waves strike at them but they are too  
well made, they slip through, though they take in canvas.

Arms with hands grasping seek to clutch at the prows.  
Bodies thrown recklessly in the way are cut aside.  
It is a sea of faces about them in agony, in despair

until the horror of the race dawns staggering the mind;  
the whole sea become an entanglement of watery bodies  
lost to the world bearing what they cannot hold. Broken,

beaten, desolate, reaching from the dead to be taken up  
they cry out, failing, failing! their cries rising  
in waves still as the skillful yachts pass over.