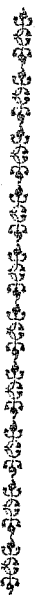


THE

OXFORD BOOK OF

Sonnets



EDITED BY

JOHN FULLER

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RUPERT BROOKE

258

The Hill



BREATHLESS, we flung us on the windy hill,
Laughed in the sun, and kissed the lovely grass.
You said, 'Through glory and ecstasy we pass;
Wind, sun, and earth remain, the birds sing still,
When we are old, are old. . . ' And when we die
All's over that is ours; and life burns on
Through other lovers, other lips,' said I,
'Heart of my heart, our heaven is now, is won!'
We are Earth's best, that learnt her lesson here.
Life is our cry. We have kept the faith! we said;
'We shall go down with unreluctant tread
Rose-crowned into the darkness! . . . Proud we were,
And laughed, that had such brave true things to say.
— And then you suddenly cried, and turned away.

RUPERT BROOKE

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RUPERT BROOKE

259

Sonnet Reversed



HAND trembling towards hand; the amazing lights
Of heart and eye. They stood on supreme heights.
Ah, the delicious weeks of honeymoon!
Soon they returned, and, after strange adventures,
Settled at Balham by the end of June.
Their money was in Can. Pacs. B. Debentures,
And in Antofagastas. Still he went
Cityward daily; still she did abide
At home. And both were really quite content
With work and social pleasures. Then they died.
They left three children (besides George, who drank):
The eldest Jane, who married Mr Bell,
William, the head-clerk in the County Bank,
And Henry, a stock-broker, doing well.

RUPERT BROOKE

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ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

266

The End of the World



QUIRE unexpectedly as Vasserot
The armless ambidextrian was lighting
A match between his great and second toe
And Ralph the lion was engaged in biting
The neck of Madame Sossman while the drum
Pointed, and Teeny was about to cough
In waltz-time swinging Jocko by the thumb—
Quite unexpectedly the top blew off:
And there, there overhead, there, there, hung over
Those thousands of white faces, those dazed eyes,
There in the starless dark the poise, the hover,
There with vast wings across the canceled skies,
There in the sudden blackness the black pall
Of nothing, nothing, nothing—nothing at all.

ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

270

EDNA ST VINCENT MILLAY

267

*'Time does not bring relief;
you all have lied'*



TIME does not bring relief; you all have lied
Who told me time would ease me of my pain!
I miss him in the weeping of the rain;
I want him at the shrinking of the tide;
The old snows melt from every mountain-side,
And last year's leaves are smoke in every lane;
But last year's bitter loving must remain
Heaped on my heart, and my old thoughts abide.
There are a hundred places where I fear
To go,—so with his memory they brim.
And entering with relief some quiet place
Where never fell his foot or shone his face
I say, 'There is no memory of him here!'
And so stand stricken, so remembering him.

EDNA ST VINCENT MILLAY

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GEORGE BARKER

292

To My Mother



MOST near, most dear, most loved and most far,
Under the window where I often found her
Sitting as huge as Asia, seismic with laughter,
Gin and chicken helpless in her Irish hand,
Irresistible as Rabelais, but most tender for
The lame dogs and hurt birds that surround her,—
She is a procession no one can follow after
But be like a little dog following a brass band.
She will not glance up at the bomber, or condescend
To drop her gin and scuttle to a cellar,
But lean on the mahogany table like a mountain
Whom only faith can move, and so I send
O all my faith, and all my love to tell her
That she will move from mourning into morning.

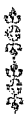
GEORGE BARKER

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WELDON KEEBS

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For my Daughter



LOOKING into my daughter's eyes I read
Beneath the innocence of morning flesh
Concealed, hintings of death she does not heed.
Coldest of winds have blown this hair, and mesh
Of seaweed snarled these miniatures of hands;
The night's slow poison, tolerant and bland,
Has moved her blood. Parched years that I have seen
That may be hers appear: foul, lingering
Death in certain war, the slim legs green.
Or, fed on hate, she relishes the sting
Of others' agony; perhaps the cruel
Bride of a syphilitic or a fool.
These speculations sour in the sun.
I have no daughter. I desire none.

WELDON KEEBS

297

FLEUR ADCOCK

314

Dreaming



'OBLIVION, that's all. I never dream' he said —
proud of it, another immunity,
another removal from the standard frame which she
inhabited, dreaming beside him of a dead
woman tucked neatly into a small bed,
a cot or a child's bunk, unexpectedly
victim of some friend or lover. 'Comfort me,'
said the dreamer, 'I need to be comforted.'
He did that, not bothering to comprehend,
and she returned to her story: a doctor came
to identify the placid corpse in her dream.
It was obscure; but glancing towards the end
she guessed that killer and lover and doctor were the same;
proving that things are ultimately what they seem.

FLEUR ADCOCK

318

SEAMUS HEANEY

315

The Skylight



You were the one for skylights. I opposed
Cutting into the seasoned tongue-and-groove
Of pitch pine. I liked it low and closed,
Its claustrophobic, nest-up-in-the-roof
Effect. I liked the snuff-dry feeling,
The perfect, trunk-lid fit of the old ceiling.
Under there, it was all hutch and hatch.
The blue slates kept the heat like midnight thatch.
But when the slates came off, extravagant
Sky entered and held surprise wide open.
For days I felt like an inhabitant
Of that house where the man sick of the palsy
Was lowered through the roof, had his sins forgiven,
Was healed, took up his bed and walked away.

SEAMUS HEANEY

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