***Shepherds of Letters***

*Wilde and Byron hold a singing contest. The ‘genre’ they choose is pastoral,*

*in this case super-sentimental (in Schiller’s* *sense). Byron ‘tunes his lay’ in italics.*

i.

Tonight the moore-ish moon is rising.

 Flash the gold tennysons in the pond.

 How lovelace, I, and suckling fond!

♫

How pale and wan, my shelleyising!

*I walk along the coleridge*

 *Beneath a lonely wordsworth cloud.*

 *Day wears a donne and dusky shroud.*

*I saint john of the cross a bridge.*

O’er a swift stream of consciousness

 I cross; the azure sky is clare,

 I breathe a bracing baudelaire

And I am gay at heart. I bless

The browning of the day, the leaves

 That in their nashy brightness fall.

 I keats the stubble fields and all

The shakespeares gathered up in sheaves

With white and wriothesley beard. Will blakes

 The dowson bread, and all shall share

 The goodness of his hardy fare,

The ale, the villons and the cakes.

ii.

*Why mope that hair must thomas gray*

 *When swallows chelidon the spring?*

 *For I shall go a-miltoning*

*With gladness in my smart today.*

*But e’en a youth, though edward young,*

 *May night thoughts have, and seek a place,*

 *A churchill solitude, where rays*

*Of moonlight move the stones among,*

*And skeltons lie with webster skulls,*

 *To marvell sadly over fine*

 *And private graves where worms do dine;*

*And thus is proven on his pulse*

*******Our brothers-grimm mortality.*

Yet euphuistic lylies still

 With colour all the graveyard fill.

*Still of the spring’s virgility*

*The songbyrds chaucer in the trees.*

 The yeats of paradise swing wide

 Upon the spensery bowers inside.

*Flowers catull us, the white fleece*

*Of charlsey lambs delights the eye,*

 *The hazlitt hedges are alive,*

***Historical Excursus***

*We shan’t macaulay history’s fuss.*

*Empires are gibbon to decay.*

*Though all thucydides away,*

*Their legends still herodotus*.

 *For doyling conans there do thrive,*

*And larks patrol the fausty sky.*

A de musset the nymphs and satyrs

 Nimbly dance, and kiplings play.

 The merry month of Mallarmay

Approacheth, and what joyce await us!

*We lay us down in darkling beddoes*

 *Where knightstale grows, and astrophel,*

 *And jonsonwort and lionel*

*While hills cast down dark angel shadows.*

We gather herricks, while we may,

 And puck de quinceys from the tree.

 In drowsy morpheus reverie

**We mumble low *Laudànum Te*.

*Now morris-dance mel villegers*

 *And many a boisterous dickin son*

 *And dickin daughter join the fun*

*To tunes of fiddling massingers.*

Schillery sheridan they quaff.

 When in a ceres falling down

 They droll, and breughel cockaignes clown,

How sterne is he who does not laugh!

iii.

*If rain should burst from gowering skies,*

 *‘Twill do the grain rossetti good,*

 *And I will don my thomas hood*

*To keep me dryden, hair and eyes.*

If Jove should shake his byron spere

** Villiers-de-l’isle-adàmantine,

 ‘Twill not be long ere sun will shine

Propertiously, and skies will clear.

*Let lightnings all the heavens rend!*

 *When mists childe herald storm’s abating*

 ♫

 *We’ll find a pot of goldsmith waiting*

*At iridescent rimbaud’s end.*

Ere long the festeous rain shall cease

 To pelt the hovels of the poe

 And then a-trolloping I go

On my good de la mare, at ease.

*I ride my horace down verlaines*

 *Sun-dappled hawthorne trees give shade*

 *And sidneying over hill and glade*

*I worship at arcadian feigns.*



iv.

On vines the purpling pindar grows

 While men on jacob ladders tall

 Pick fruit in orchards where stendhal

The beerbohm trees in ordered rows.

*At dawn the housman wakes, for he*

 *Must clough and thomson all his fieldings,*

 *Else crabbed will be the season’s yieldings*

*And wilkie will his collins be.*

Wycherley dons go quichotting

 Through thickets, at their simple noodling.

 Proud Chauntecleer is cock-a-doodling!

(He synges, because he likes to synge.)

*How fresh the grass, and robert greene!*

 *When nanny-groat and frisky kyd*

 *Caper the wilde flowers amid,*

*How corydon the pastor scene!*

Grandhoggs from holes pope up and peep.

 For truffles bristly beardsleys root.

 The evans on the eliot’s fruit

Georges itself, and lolls to sleep.

*Mice flee the hesiod falcon’s glance*

 *Till under rocks is shelter found.*

 *The beaumonts fletch along the ground*

*In search of dainty aeschylants.*

The pushkins and the hopkins kick

 In dostoevsky gambolling,

 While from the barnes the anvils ring

In dorset accents inches thick.

*From udders of the cowper flows*

 *Milk by the quarto, fit for butter.*

 *Volumes of dung cause grooms to mutter.*

*In stalls, mares lick their folios.*

The gissing gaskells zolafy,

 The call of naturalism heeding.

 The offspring of their careless breeding

Grub streetly round the moorey sty.

*The bins are cramnered, oats and rye.*

 *The troughs are filled with golding feed.*

 *In holing sheds, for winter’s need,*

*The salt-cured allinghams do dry.*

Sly fawkes creeps through a garden gate

 With small renard for property.

 Into the fenimore coop bursts he

And flutters all the prousting hens.

*The horne tooke calls o’er hill and dale!*

 *Now fox in quakering fear must run.*

 *Now robert burnes the mid-day sun*

*And the milk dickens in the pail.*

v.

At Kleistmas we go carolling.

 Though blow-ye-crack-cheek’d winds annoy,

 The cold kant scott the season’s joy,

Mount calverley oblivioning.

*Though sleet and hegel isis eyes*

 *The wouldsman sawyers down the tree*

 *That soon with Forms festooned will be*

*Our yuletide thoughts to platonise.*

A john can safely ford the fludd

 When turned to ice where skaters skeat.

 There’s punch for those with frosted feet

And austen broth to warm their blood.

vi.

I hamlet in an open grave.

 I dante through the savage wood.

 If in that place I find no good

I argosy the pontic wave.

*I wallow in wife-of-bathic lust.*

 *Through alien corn I ruth a path.*

 *Beneath an achillèan wrath*

*I hector down to bloody dust.*

*I dido died upon a pyre*

 *And aeneas can william tell*

 *Who left me so combustible,*

*A tender tinder for the fire!*

If I have had a lover’s tiff

 And love gives me so sharp a pain

 That grieving drives me half-insane

I sappho from the nearest cliff.



Bohemian sailors I adore,

 Borromean, not. I cantor through

 A set of winter tales or two

And lautréamont a maldoror.

vii.

*O’er grassy fields young Colin herds*

 *His battening letters: A and E*

 *Are plenteous, while X and Z*

*Are few. Some form gregarious words—*

*They scrabble as ‘gather’, ‘party’ and ‘join’.*

 *Some stray in little pairs of ‘we’.*

 *A lonely ‘I’ must watchful be*

*Lest her a hungry woolf purloin.*

When lengthening darkness from the hill

 Foreshadows evening coming on,

 The shepherd summoners with a yawn

In moschus meadows calm and still

**The schelling sheep he kirkeguards:

 All are accounted for, and thus

 He closes his theocritus

And drives them gently homerwards.

*While, from his jug of terra cotta*

 *Draining anacreonic wine,*

 *The cowherd, too, drives home his kine,*

*Pocketing up his* Lysistrata*.*

viii.

*Glims the lamenting Venus star low*

 *Over the sea. Her cause of grief?*

 *Leander, helpless as a leaf,*

*Sucked under water by a marlowe.*

 *Excuse me! I believe it was Oscar’s turn?*

*Yet chance what may, I seek a quorum*

 *Of sailors, for I wish to odyssey us.*

 *But let not any modest goddess see us*

*The contest is cut short by a loud intrusion*

*before the audience have time to declare a winner.*

*Tinkling in the Mare Librorum!*

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