

Classic Poetry Series

Joseph Warton

- poems -

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Ode to a Lady on the Spring

Lo! Spring, array'd in primrose-colour'd robe,
Fresh beauties sheds on each enliven'd scene,
With show'rs and sunshine cheers the smiling globe,
And mantles hill and vale in glowing green.

All nature feels her vital heat around,
The pregnant glebe now bursts with foodful grain,
With kindly warmth she opes the frozen ground,
And with new life informs the teeming plain.

She calls the fish from out their ouzy beds,
And animates the deep with genial love,
She bids the herds bound sportive o'er the meads,
And with glad songs awakes the joyous grove,

No more the glaring tiger roams for prey,
All-powerful love subdues his savage soul,
To find his spotted mate he darts away,
While gentler thoughts the thirst of blood controul.

But ah! while all is warmth and soft desire,
While all around Spring's cheerful spirit own,
You feel not, Amoret, her quickening fire,
To Spring's kind influence you a foe alone!

Joseph Warton

Ode to Fancy

O parent of each lovely Muse,
Thy spirit o'er my soul diffuse,
O'er all my artless songs preside,
My footsteps to thy temple guide.
To offer at thy turf-built shrine,
In golden cups no costly wine,
No murder'd fatling of the flock,
But flowers and honey from the rock.
O Nymph with loosely-flowing hair,
With buskin'd leg, and bosom bare,
Thy waist with myrtle-girdle bound,
Thy brows with Indian feathers crown'd,
Waving in thy snowy hand
An all-commanding magic wand,
Of pow'r to bid fresh gardens blow,
'Mid cheerless Lapland's barren snow,
Whose rapid wings thy flight convey
Through air, and over earth and sea,
While the vast various landscape lies
Conspicuous to thy piercing eyes.
O lover of the desert, hail!
Say, in what deep and pathless vale,
Or on what hoary mountain's side,
'Mid fall of waters, you reside,
'Mid broken rocks, a rugged scene,
With green and grassy dales between,
'Mid forests dark of aged oak,
Ne'er echoing with the woodman's stroke,
Where never human art appear'd,
Nor ev'n one straw-roof'd cot was rear'd,
Where Nature seems to sit alone,
Majestic on a craggy throne;
Tell me the path, sweet wand'rer, tell,
To thy unknown sequester'd cell,
Where woodbines cluster round the door,
Where shells and moss o'erlay the floor,
And on whose top an hawthorn blows,
Amid whose thickly-woven boughs
Some nightingale still builds her nest,
Each evening warbling thee to rest:
There lay me by the haunted stream,
Rapt in some wild, poetic dream,
In converse while methinks I rove
With Spenser through a fairy grove;
'Till suddenly awoke, I hear
Strange whisper'd music in my ear,
And my glad soul in bliss is drown'd
By the sweetly-soothing sound!
Me, Goddess, by the right-hand lead,
Sometimes through the yellow mead,
Where Joy and white-rob'd Peace resort,
And Venus keeps her festive court,

Where Mirth and Youth each evening meet,
And lightly trip with nimble feet,
Nodding their lily-crowned heads,
Where Laughter rose-lipp'd Hebe leads;
Where Echo walks steep hills among,
List'ning to the shepherd's song:
Yet not those flowery fields of joy
Can long my pensive mind employ,
Haste, Fancy, from these scenes of folly,
To meet the matron Melancholy,
Goddess of the tearful eye,
That loves to fold her arms, and sigh!
Let us with silent footsteps go
To charnels and the house of woe,
To Gothic churches, vaults, and tombs,
Where each sad night some virgin comes,
With throbbing breast, and faded cheek,
Her promis'd bridegroom's urn to seek;
Or to some abbey's mould'ring tow'rs,
Where, to avoid cold wintry show'rs,
The naked beggar shivering lies,
While whistling tempests round her rise,
And trembles lest the tottering wall
Should on her sleeping infants fall.

Now let us louder strike the lyre,
For my heart glows with martial fire,
I feel, I feel, with sudden heat,
My big tumultuous bosom beat,
The trumpet's clangours pierce my ear,
A thousand widows' shrieks I hear,
Give me another horse, I cry,
Lo! the base Gallic squadrons fly;
Whence is this rage?--what spirit, say,
To battle hurries me away?
'Tis Fancy, in her fiery car,
Transports me to the thickest war,
There whirls me o'er the hills of slain,
Where Tumult and Destruction reign;
Where, mad with pain, the wounded steed
Tramples the dying and the dead;
Where giant Terror stalks around,
With sullen joy surveys the ground,
And, pointing to th' ensanguin'd field,
Shakes his dreadful Gorgon-shield!

O guide me from this horrid scene
To high-arch'd walks and alleys green,
Which lovely Laura seeks, to shun
The fervours of the mid-day sun;
The pangs of absence, O remove!
For thou canst place me near my love,

Canst fold in visionary bliss,
And let me think I steal a kiss,
While her ruby lips dispense
Luscious nectar's quintessence!
When young-ey'd Spring profusely throws
From her green lap the pink and rose,
When the soft turtle of the dale
To Summer tells her tender tale,
When Autumn cooling caverns seeks,
And stains with wine his jolly cheeks;
When Winter, like poor pilgrim old,
Shakes his silver beard with cold;
At every season let my ear
Thy solemn whispers, Fancy, hear.
O warm, enthusiastic maid,
Without thy powerful, vital aid,
That breathes an energy divine,
That gives a soul to every line,
Ne'er may I strive with lips profane
To utter an unhallow'd strain,
Nor dare to touch the sacred string,
Save when with smiles thou bid'st me sing.
O hear our prayer, O hither come
From thy lamented Shakespear's tomb,
On which thou lov'st to sit at eve,
Musing o'er thy darling's grave;
O queen of numbers, once again
Animate some chosen swain,
Who, fill'd with unexhausted fire,
May boldly smite the sounding lyre,
Who with some new, unequall'd song,
May rise above the rhyming throng,
O'er all our list'ning passions reign,
O'erwhelm our souls with joy and pain;
With terror shake, with pity move,
Rouse with revenge, or melt with love.
O deign t' attend his evening walk,
With him in groves and grottoes talk;
Teach him to scorn with frigid art
Feebly to touch th' unraptur'd heart;
Like lightning, let his mighty verse
The bosom's inmost foldings pierce;
With native beauties win applause,
Beyond cold critics' studied laws;
O let each Muse's fame increase,
O bid Britannia rival Greece!

Joseph Warton

Ode to Music

Queen of every moving measure,
Sweetest source of purest pleasure,
Music; why thy powers employ
Only for the sons of joy?
Only for the smiling guests
At natal or at nuptial feasts?
Rather thy lenient numbers pour
On those whom secret griefs devour;
Bid be still the throbbing hearts
Of those, whom death, or absence parts,
And, with some softly whisper'd air,
Smooth the brow of dumb despair.

Joseph Warton

The Enthusiast, or the Lover of Nature

Ye green-rob'd Dryads, oft' at dusky Eve
By wondering Shepherds seen, to Forests brown,
To unfrequented Meads, and pathless Wilds,
Lead me from Gardens deckt with Art's vain Poms.
Can gilt Alcoves, can Marble-mimic Gods,
Parterres embroider'd, Obelisks, and Urns
Of high Relief; can the long, spreading Lake,
Or Vista lessening to the Sight; can Stow
With all her Attic Fanes, such Raptures raise,
As the Thrush-haunted Copse, where lightly leaps
The fearful Fawn the rustling Leaves along,
And the brisk Squirrel sports from Bough to Bough,
While from an hollow Oak the busy Bees
Hum drowsy Lullabies? The Bards of old,
Fair Nature's Friends, sought such Retreats, to charm
Sweet Echo with their Songs; oft' too they met,
In Summer Evenings, near sequester'd Bow'rs,
Or Mountain-Nymph, or Muse, and eager learnt
The moral Strains she taught to mend Mankind.
As to a secret Grot Ægeria stole
With Patriot Numa, and in silent Night
Whisper'd him sacred Laws, he list'ning sat
Rapt with her virtuous Voice, old Tyber leant
Attentive on his Urn, and husht his Waves.
Rich in her weeping Country's Spoils Versailles
May boast a thousand Fountains, that can cast
The tortur'd Waters to the distant Heav'ns;
Yet let me choose some Pine-topt Precipice
Abrupt and shaggy, whence a foamy Stream,
Like Anio, tumbling roars; or some bleak Heath,
Where straggling stand the mournful Juniper,
Or Yew-tree scath'd; while in clear Prospect round,
From the Grove's Bosom Spires emerge, and Smoak
In bluish Wreaths ascends, ripe Harvests wave,
Herds low, and Straw-rooft Cott's appear, and Streams
Beneath the Sun-beams twinkle -- The shrill Lark,
That wakes the Wood-man to his early Task,
Or love-sick Philomel, whose luscious Lays
Sooth lone Night-wanderers, the moaning Dove
Pitied by listening Milkmaid, far excell
The deep-mouth'd Viol, the Soul-lulling Lute,
And Battle-breathing Trumpet. Artful Sounds!
That please not like the Choristers of Air,
When first they hail th'Approach of laughing May.

Creative Titian, can thy vivid Strokes,
Or thine, O graceful Raphael, dare to vie
With the rich Tints that paint the breathing Mead?
The thousand-colour'd Tulip, Violet's Bell
Snow-clad and meek, the Vermil-tinctur'd Rose,
And golden Crocus? -- Yet with these the Maid,
Phillis or Phoebe, at a Feast or Wake,

Her jetty Locks enamels; fairer she,
In Innocence and home-spun Vestments drest,
Than if coerulean Sapphires at her Ears
Shone pendant, or a precious Diamond-Cross
Heav'd gently on her panting Bosom white.

Yon' Shepherd idly stretcht on the rude Rock,
Listening to dashing Waves, and Sea-Mews Clang
High-hovering o'er his Head, who views beneath
The Dolphin dancing o'er the level Brine,
Feels more true Bliss than the proud Ammiral,
Amid his Vessels bright with burnish'd Gold
And silken Streamers, tho' his lordly Nod
Ten thousand War-worn Mariners revere.
And great Æneas gaz'd with more Delight
On the rough Mountain shagg'd with horrid Shades,
(Where Cloud-compelling Jove, as Fancy dream'd,
Descending shook his direful Ægis black)
Than if he enter'd the high Capitol
On golden Columns rear'd, a conquer'd World
Contributing to deck its stately Head:
More pleas'd he slept in poor Evander's Cott
On shaggy Skins, lull'd by sweet Nightingales,
Than if a Nero, in an Age refin'd,
Beneath a gorgeous Canopy had plac'd
His royal Guest, and bade his Minstrels sound
Soft slumb'rous Lydian Airs to sooth his Rest.

Happy the first of Men, ere yet confin'd
To smoaky Cities; who in sheltering Groves,
Warm Caves, and deep-sunk Vallies liv'd and lov'd,
By Cares unwounded; what the Sun and Showers,
And genial Earth untillag'd could produce,
They gather'd grateful, or the Acorn brown,
Or blushing Berry; by the liquid Lapse
Of murm'ring Waters call'd to slake their Thirst,
Or with fair Nymphs their Sun-brown Limbs to bathe;
With Nymphs who fondly clasp'd their fav'rite Youths,
Unaw'd by Shame, beneath the Beechen Shade,
Nor Wiles, nor artificial Coyness knew.
Then Doors and Walls were not; the melting Maid
Nor Frowns of Parents fear'd, nor Husband's Threats;
Nor had curs'd Gold their tender Hearts allur'd;
Then Beauty was not venal. Injur'd Love,
O whither, God of Raptures, art thou fled?
While Avarice waves his golden Wand around,
Abhorr'd Magician, and his costly Cup
Prepares with baneful Drugs, t'enchaut the Souls
Of each low-thoughted Fair to wed for Gain.

What tho' unknown to those primæval Sires,
The well-arch'd Dome, peopled with breathing Forms

By fair Italia's skilful Hand, unknown
The shapely Column, and the crumbling Busts
Of awful Ancestors in long Descent?
Yet why should Man mistaken deem it nobler
To dwell in Palaces, and high-rooft Halls,
Than in God's Forests, Architect supreme!
Say, is the Persian Carpet, than the Field's
Or Meadow's Mantle gay, more richly wov'n';
Or softer to the Votaries of Ease,
Than bladed Grass, perfum'd with dew-dropt Flow'rs?
O Taste corrupt! that Luxury and Pomp
In specious Names of polish'd Manners veil'd,
Should proudly banish Nature's simple Charms.
Tho' the fierce North oft smote with Iron Whip
Their shiv'ring Limbs, tho' oft the bristly Boar
Or hungry Lion 'woke them with their Howls,
And scar'd them from their Moss-grown Caves to rove,
Houseless and cold in dark, tempestuous Nights;
Yet were not Myriads in embattled Fields
Swept off at once, nor had the raving Seas
O'erwhelm'd the foundering Bark, and helpless Crew;
In vain the glassy Ocean smil'd to tempt
The jolly Sailor, unsuspecting Harm,
For Commerce was unknown. Then Want and Pine
Sunk to the Grave their fainting Limbs; but Us
Excess and endless Riot doom to die.
They cropt unweetingly, the poisonous Herb
But wiser we spontaneously provide
Rare powerful Roots, to quench Life's chearful Lamp.

What are the Lays of artful Addison,
Coldly correct, to Shakespear's Warblings wild?
Whom on the winding Avon's willow'd Banks
Fair Fancy found, and bore the smiling Babe
To a close Cavern: (still the Shepherds shew
The sacred Place, whence with religious Awe
They hear, returning from the Field at Eve,
Strange Whisperings of sweet Music thro' the Air)
Here, as with Honey gather'd from the Rock,
She fed the little Prattler, and with Songs
Oft' sooth'd his wondering Ears, with deep Delight
On her soft Lap he sat, and caught the Sounds.

Oft' near some crowded City would I walk,
Listening the far-off Noises, rattling Carrs,
Loud Shouts of Joy, sad Shrieks of Sorrow, Knells
Full slowly tolling, Instruments of Trade,
Striking mine Ears with one deep-swelling Hum.
Or wandering near the Sea, attend the Sounds
Of hollow Winds, and ever-beating Waves.
Ev'n when wild Tempests swallow up the Plains,
And Boreas' Blasts, big Hail, and Rains combine

To shake the Groves and Mountains, would I sit,
Pensively musing on th'outrageous Crimes
That wake Heav'n's Vengeance: at such solemn Hours,
Dæmons and Goblins thro' the dark Air shriek,
While Hecat with her black-brow'd Sisters nine,
Rides o'er the Earth, and scatters Woes and Deaths.
Then too, they say, in drear Ægyptian Wilds
The Lion and the Tiger prowl for Prey
With Roarings loud! the list'ning Traveller
Starts Fear-struck, while the hollow-echoing Vaults
Of Pyramids encrease the deathful Sounds.

But let me never fail in cloudless Nights,
When silent Cynthia in her silver Car
Thro' the blue Concave slides, when shine the Hills,
Twinkle the Streams, and Woods look tipt with Gold,
To seek some level Mead, and there invoke
Old Midnight's Sister Contemplation sage,
(Queen of the rugged Brow, and stern-fixt Eye)
To lift my Soul above this little Earth,
This Folly-fetter'd World; to purge my Ears,
That I may hear the rolling Planets Song,
And tuneful-turning Spheres: If this debarr'd,
The little Fayes that dance in neighbouring Dales,
Sipping the Night-dew, while they laugh and love,
Shall charm me with a%orial Notes. -- As thus
I wander musing, lo, what awful Forms
Yonder appear! sharp-ey'd Philosophy
Clad in dun Robes, an Eagle on his Wrist,
First meets my Eye; next, Virgin Solitude
Serene, who blushes at each Gazer's Sight;
Then Wisdom's hoary Head, with Crutch in Hand,
Trembling, and bent with Age; last Virtue's self
Smiling, in White array'd, who with her leads
Fair Innocence, that prattles by her Side,
A naked Boy! -- Harrass'd with Fear I stop,
I gaze, when Virtue thus -- "Whoe'er thou art,
"Mortal, by whom I deign to be beheld,
"In these my Midnight-Walks; depart, and say
"That henceforth I and my immortal Train
"Forsake Britannia's Isle; who fondly stoops
"To Vice, her favourite Paramour." -- She spoke,
And as she turn'd, her round and rosy Neck,
Her flowing Train, and long, ambrosial Hair,
Breathing rich Odours, I enamour'd view.

O who will bear me then to Western Climes,
(Since Virtue leaves our wretched Land) to Shades
Yet unpolluted with Iberian Swords;
With simple Indian Swains, that I may hunt
The Boar and Tiger thro' Savannah's wild?
There fed on Dates and Herbs, would I despise

The far-fetch'd Cates of Luxury, and Hoards
Of narrow-hearted Avarice; nor heed
The distant Din of the tumultuous World.
So when rude Whirlwinds rouze the roaring Main,
Beneath fair Thetis sits, in coral Caves,
Serenely gay, nor sinking Sailors Cries
Disturb her sportive Nymphs, who round her form
The light fantastic Dance, or for her Hair
Weave rosy Crowns, or with according Lutes
Grace the soft Warbles of her honied Voice.

Joseph Warton

Verses on a Butterfly

Fair Child of Sun and Summer! we behold
With eager eyes thy wings bedropp'd with gold;
The purple spots that o'er thy mantle spread,
The sapphire's lively blue, the ruby's red,
Ten thousand various blended tints surprise,
Beyond the rainbow's hues or peacock's eyes:
Not Judah's king in eastern pomp array'd,
Whose charms allur'd from far the Sheban maid,
High on his glitt'ring throne, like you could shine
(Nature's completest miniature divine):
For thee the rose her balmy buds renews,
And silver lillies fill their cups with dews;
Flora for thee the laughing fields perfumes,
For thee Pomona sheds her choicest blooms,
Soft Zephyr wafts thee on his gentlest gales
O'er Hackwood's sunny hill and verdant vales;
For thee, gay queen of insects! do we rove
From walk to walk, from beauteous grove to grove;
And let the critics know, whose pedant pride
And awkward jests our sprightly sport deride:
That all who honours, fame, or wealth pursue,
Change but the name of things--they hunt for you.

Joseph Warton