

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Kenneth Allott**

**- poems -**

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## **Aunt Sally Speaks**

Who have been educated out of naive responses,  
The hoodoo of love, the cinderella of class  
Knowing that everywhere man has the same clock face,  
the same moody defences

Against age and the loss of love in the hope of millenniums  
Who think too much perhaps of elegance  
Or the form of wisdom, having outgrown dreams  
Like baby clothes a long while since;

Wiseacres playing with terrible dolls in the twilight  
holding our sides, thinking of mad Loyola  
Or that bald maker of roads, the much stabbed Caesar  
Till the stars are bright;

Who cannot live in the Very Lights of the headlines  
Or forget the unrehearsed summer of the shires  
Because Europe is frightened, quakes like a woman,  
Looks wildly behind?

How shall we live except as plants or fays  
Who cannot take ten deep breaths in any crowd?  
Neither the whimsical mob, nor those whose better times  
Are only a pierrots disguise

For the disastrous pathos of their present?  
What shall we do who cannot place a candle  
Before the ikon of the future, nor yet acquiesce  
Unconsciously in habit?

For whom the actor's gesture, the preacher's word  
Are not enough being at all times too conscious  
Of the shortcomings of motive, who refuse drugs  
And the tailspin of madness?

What shall we do with our hardened arteries  
Under the zeppelin shade of catastrophe  
but emulate the gloss and selfishness of china  
Till the clocks fly away?

Kenneth Allott

## Offering

I offer you my forests and my street-cries  
With hands of double-patience under the clock,  
The antiseptic arguments and lies  
Uttered before the flood, the submerged rock.  
The sack of meal pierced by the handsome fencer,  
The flowers dying for a great adventure.

I offer you the mysterious parable,  
The mount of reason, the hero's glassy hymn,  
The disquieting uproar of the obvious  
Hate in the taproom, murder in the barn  
The long experienced finger of the Gulf Stream,  
The flying sense of glory in a failure's dream.

I offer you the bubble of free will,  
The rarefied agony of forgotten places,  
The green cadaver stirring to the moon's pull,  
The cheerful butchery of raw amateur faces  
Which, like the half-blind nags shipped off for food  
Die, doubtless serving some higher good.

I offer you the Egyptian miracle,  
The acrobat doing handsprings in the rain,  
A touched up photograph in sepia  
Of the future teasing the fibres of the brain  
I offer you the seven league army boots he wears  
Striding down the black funnel of the years.

I offer you a coral growth of cells,  
A flash of lightning anchored in a carafe  
The withered arm of the last century  
Cannot provoke a demon to anger us,  
The strap-hanging skeleton of what has been  
Is out of date forever like the crinoline.

I offer you clouds of nuisance, fleur de lis,  
The opening lips of summer where pigeons rest  
The exploding office of the vast nebula  
The heraldic device under the left breast,  
The taut string and the scribbler's Roman tread  
Impinging on the slow shores of the dead.

I offer you the tithes of discontent,  
The deck-games played with shadows on a cruise  
Beyond the islands, marked on the ancient maps  
With the broken altars, markets in disuse  
To some "unspoilt" and blessed hemisphere  
Where comfort twists the lucid strands of air.

I would offer you so much more if you would turn  
Before the new whisper in a forgiving hour.  
Let all the wild ones who have offended burn,

Let love dissemble in a golden shower,  
Let not the winds whistle, nor the seas rave  
But the treasure be lapped forever in an unbroken wave.

There is nothing that I would not offer to you,  
My silken dacoit, my untranslatable,  
Whether in the smug mountains counting the stars  
Or crossing the gipsy's palm at the Easter fairs  
With so much that is difficult to say  
Before the frigid, unpeculating hours  
Shall drive this foreign devil to the sea.

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## The Statue

I take you looking at the statue  
the smile is yours and the stone is you  
the stone is simple and the smile is playful  
the smile is stolen and the stone is fallen  
I ask you to stand and smile like that until  
thinking you stone, time has forgotten you.  
They say but really I forget

however picturesque  
however figurative  
whether so often and so quizzical  
whoever it was crying in another voice ...  
Let us sit like tailors. At least I am sure of this:  
man or woman or beast I recall no face.

The night is kind so please to bend your arm  
hide your head in the hollow of your arm  
nobody will take you unawares, nobody  
and nobody will take you unprepared  
for time it is now to step out of time  
and sleep will come as easy as kiss my hand  
and you will find sleep kind.

Sleep has few terrors if we sleep like you  
it is a cooling shower that falls on you  
the water running through mirrors noiselessly  
dreaming in doing things you dreamt to do.

But now all brawn Colossus straightens up  
and stammers in the language of birds  
and the sea goes mincing back into the sunset  
strange to have lived so long upon this planet  
daylight and moonlight, all the fun in the world.

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