

Classic Poetry Series

Kenneth Allott
- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Kenneth Allott(29 August 1912 - 1973)

an Anglo-Irish poet and academic, and authority on Matthew Arnold.

He was born on August 29, 1912, in Glamorganshire, South Wales.

He went on to graduate with first class honors from the University of Durham; receiving his Bachelor of Literature from St. Edmund Hall, Oxford.

His career was spent as an educator; first as a tutor in adult education programs at the University of Liverpool, England. he then furthered his career and became a Professor of Modern English Literature.

Allot was also editor and author of introduction of an edition of Graham Greene's Brighton Rock, 1968. Author of play "The Publican's Story," produced in 1953. Work represented in anthologies, including Poems of Our Time, 1900-60, published by Dent, 1959; The Thirties Poets/(which was a work concentrating on 9 significant Poets of the 1930's in total; they being: W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Louis MacNeice, C. Day Lewis, Geoffrey Grigson, Kenneth Allot, Bernard Spencer, David Gascoyne and Dylan Thomas, this work was published by Penguin, 1964; and /I Burn for England. He contributed to periodicals over many years. during 1936 to 1939 he was the Assistant editor of the periodical New Verse.

Kenneth Allot died in May 1973

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.

Kenneth Allott

Ragnarok

Our Trojan world is polarised to mourn;
To dream and find a black spot on the sun,
And wake to love and find our lover gone.

The destination of any weapon is grief.
In homesteads now where joy must seem naive
Under a splitting sky our women conceive.

The towns of houses, massed security
Out-generalled by a later century,
Are hearse-plumes on an old economy.

The ache of crushed walls when the raid is over.
This is a house, we said, we have built forever:
A two-backed fool, thinking of one day's weather.

Only one monster has to love his error.
Only his wrangling heart cannot recover,
But glories in illusion when half cadaver;

Or likes being ill, or nurses grievances,
Or calls a mountain or a forest 'his',
Or quarrels in five hundred languages.

And man, erect, unvenerable,
A bloodshot eye so simply vulnerable
That half his history is marginal,

Incises stone in the Bastille of hate:
'Give us this day before it is too late
Something to love indeed, enough to eat.'

Kenneth Allott

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.

Kenneth Allott