

Poetry Anthology
AS Level and A Level Literature
in English (8695 and 9695)

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UNIVERSITY *of* CAMBRIDGE
International Examinations

A Different History

Sujata Bhatt

Great Pan is not dead;
he simply emigrated
to India.

Here, the gods roam freely,
disguised as snakes or monkeys; 5
every tree is sacred
and it is a sin
to be rude to a book.

It is a sin to shove a book aside
with your foot, 10
a sin to slam books down
hard on a table,
a sin to toss one carelessly
across a room.

You must learn how to turn the pages gently 15
without disturbing Sarasvati,
without offending the tree
from whose wood the paper was made.

Which language
has not been the oppressor's tongue? 20

Which language
truly meant to murder someone?
And how does it happen
that after the torture,
after the soul has been cropped 25
with a long scythe swooping out
of the conqueror's face –
the unborn grandchildren
grow to love that strange language.

Pied Beauty

Gerard Manley Hopkins

Glory be to God for dappled things –
 For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
 For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
 Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough; 5
 And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.
All things counter, original, spare, strange;
 Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
 With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change: 10
 Praise him.

Continuum

Allen Curnow

The moon rolls over the roof and falls behind
my house, and the moon does neither of these things,
I am talking about myself.

It's not possible to get off to sleep or
the subject or the planet, nor to think thoughts. 5
Better barefoot it out the front

door and lean from the porch across the privets
and the palms into the washed-out creation,
a dark place with two particular

bright clouds dusted (query) by the moon, one's mine 10
the other's an adversary, which may depend
on the wind, or something.

A long moment stretches, the next one is not
on time. Not unaccountably the chill of
the planking underfoot rises 15

in the throat, for its part the night sky empties
the whole of its contents down. Turn on a bare
heel, close the door behind

on the author, cringing demiurge, who picks up
his litter and his tools and paces me back 20
to bed, stealthily in step.

Hunting Snake

Judith Wright

Sun-warmed in this late season's grace
under the autumn's gentlest sky
we walked, and froze half-through a pace.
The great black snake went reeling by.

Head-down, tongue flickering on the trail 5
he quested through the parting grass;
sun glazed his curves of diamond scale,
and we lost breath to watch him pass.

What track he followed, what small food 10
fled living from his fierce intent,
we scarcely thought; still as we stood
our eyes went with him as he went.

Cold, dark and splendid he was gone
into the grass that hid his prey.
We took a deeper breath of day, 15
looked at each other, and went on.

A Birthday

Christina Rossetti

My heart is like a singing bird

Whose nest is in a watered shoot;

My heart is like an apple-tree

Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;

My heart is like a rainbow shell

That paddles in a halcyon sea;

My heart is gladder than all these

Because my love is come to me.

5

Raise me a dais of silk and down;

Hang it with vair and purple dyes;

Carve it in doves and pomegranates,

And peacocks with a hundred eyes;

Work it in gold and silver grapes,

In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;

Because the birthday of my life

Is come, my love is come to me.

10

15

The Woodspurge

Dante Gabriel Rossetti

The wind flapped loose, the wind was still,
Shaken out dead from tree and hill:
I had walked on at the wind's will, –
I sat now, for the wind was still.

Between my knees my forehead was, – 5
My lips, drawn in said not Alas!
My hair was over in the grass,
My naked ears heard the day pass.

My eyes, wide open, had the run 10
Of some ten weeds to fix upon;
Among those few, out of the sun,
The woodspurge flowered, three cups in one.

From perfect grief there need not be
Wisdom or even memory:
One thing then learnt remains to me, – 15
The woodspurge has a cup of three.

The Cockroach

Kevin Halligan

I watched a giant cockroach start to pace,
Skirting a ball of dust that rode the floor.
At first he seemed quite satisfied to trace
A path between the wainscot and the door,
But soon he turned to jog in crooked rings, 5
Circling the rusty table leg and back,
And flipping right over to scratch his wings –
As if the victim of a mild attack
Of restlessness that worsened over time.
After a while, he climbed an open shelf 10
And stopped. He looked uncertain where to go.
Was this due payment for some vicious crime
A former life had led to? I don't know,
Except I thought I recognised myself.

The City Planners

Margaret Atwood

Cruising these residential Sunday
streets in dry August sunlight:
what offends us is
the sanities:
the houses in pedantic rows, the planted
sanitary trees, assert 5
levelness of surface like a rebuke
to the dent in our car door.

No shouting here, or
shatter of glass; nothing more abrupt 10
than the rational whine of a power mower
cutting a straight swath in the discouraged grass.

But though the driveways neatly
sidestep hysteria
by being even, the roofs all display 15
the same slant of avoidance to the hot sky,
certain things:
the smell of spilt oil a faint
sickness lingering in the garages,
a splash of paint on brick surprising as a bruise, 20
a plastic hose poised in a vicious
coil; even the too-fixed stare of the wide windows

give momentary access to
the landscape behind or under
the future cracks in the plaster 25
when the houses, capsized, will slide
obliquely into the clay seas, gradual as glaciers
that right now nobody notices.



That is where the City Planners
with the insane faces of political conspirators 30
are scattered over unsurveyed
territories, concealed from each other,
each in his own private blizzard;

guessing directions, they sketch
transitory lines rigid as wooden borders 35
on a wall in the white vanishing air

tracing the panic of suburb
order in a bland madness of snows.

The Planners

Boey Kim Cheng

They plan. They build. All spaces are gridded,
filled with permutations of possibilities.

The buildings are in alignment with the roads
which meet at desired points
linked by bridges all hang
in the grace of mathematics.

5

They build and will not stop.
Even the sea draws back
and the skies surrender.

They erase the flaws,
the blemishes of the past, knock off
useless blocks with dental dexterity.

10

All gaps are plugged
with gleaming gold.

The country wears perfect rows
of shining teeth.

15

Anaesthesia, amnesia, hypnosis.

They have the means.

They have it all so it will not hurt,
so history is new again.

20

The piling will not stop.

The drilling goes right through
the fossils of last century.

But my heart would not bleed
poetry. Not a single drop
to stain the blueprint
of our past's tomorrow.

25

Summer farm

Norman MacCaig

Straws like tame lightnings lie about the grass
And hang zigzag on hedges. Green as glass
The water in the horse-trough shines.
Nine ducks go wobbling by in two straight lines.

A hen stares at nothing with one eye, 5
Then picks it up. Out of an empty sky
A swallow falls and, flickering through
The barn, dives up again into the dizzy blue.

I lie, not thinking, in the cool, soft grass,
Afraid of where a thought might take me – as 10
This grasshopper with plated face
Unfolds his legs and finds himself in space.

Self under self, a pile of selves I stand
Threaded on time, and with metaphysic hand
Lift the farm like a lid and see 15
Farm within farm, and in the centre, me.

Where I Come From

Elizabeth Brewster

People are made of places. They carry with them
hints of jungles or mountains, a tropic grace
or the cool eyes of sea-gazers. Atmosphere of cities
how different drops from them, like the smell of smog
or the almost-not-smell of tulips in the spring, 5
nature tidily plotted in little squares
with a fountain in the centre; museum smell,
art also tidily plotted with a guidebook;
or the smell of work, glue factories maybe,
chromium-plated offices; smell of subways 10
crowded at rush hours.

Where I come from, people
carry woods in their minds, acres of pine woods;
blueberry patches in the burned-out bush;
wooden farmhouses, old, in need of paint, 15
with yards where hens and chickens circle about,
clucking aimlessly; battered schoolhouses
behind which violets grow. Spring and winter
are the mind's chief seasons: ice and the breaking of ice.

A door in the mind blows open, and there blows 20
a frosty wind from fields of snow.

Composed upon Westminster Bridge

William Wordsworth

Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare, 5
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill; 10
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

The Bay

James K. Baxter

On the road to the bay was a lake of rushes
Where we bathed at times and changed in the bamboos.
Now it is rather to stand and say:
How many roads we take that lead to Nowhere,
The alley overgrown, no meaning now but loss: 5
Not that veritable garden where everything comes easy.

And by the bay itself were cliffs with carved names
And a hut on the shore beside the Maori ovens.
We raced boats from the banks of the pumice creek
Or swam in those autumnal shallows 10
Growing cold in amber water, riding the logs
Upstream, and waiting for the taniwha.

So now I remember the bay and the little spiders
On driftwood, so poisonous and quick.
The carved cliffs and the great outcrying surf 15
With currents round the rocks and the birds rising.
A thousand times an hour is torn across
And burned for the sake of going on living.
But I remember the bay that never was
And stand like stone and cannot turn away. 20

Where Lies the Land?

Arthur Hugh Clough

Where lies the land to which the ship would go?
Far, far ahead, is all her seamen know.
And where the land she travels from? Away,
Far, far behind, is all that they can say.

On sunny noons upon the deck's smooth face, 5
Linked arm in arm, how pleasant here to pace!
Or, o'er the stern reclining, watch below
The foaming wake far widening as we go.

On stormy nights when wild north-westerns rave, 10
How proud a thing to fight with wind and wave!
The dripping sailor on the reeling mast
Exults to bear and scorns to wish it past.

Where lies the land to which the ship would go?
Far, far ahead, is all her seamen know.
And where the land she travels from? Away, 15
Far, far behind, is all that they can say.

Morse

Les Murray

Tuckett. Bill Tuckett. Telegraph operator, Hall's Creek
which is way out back of the Outback, but he stuck it,
quite likely liked it, despite heat, glare, dust and the lack
of diversion or doctors. Come disaster you trusted to luck,
ingenuity and pluck. This was back when nice people said pluck, 5
the sleeve-link and green eyeshade epoch.

Faced, though, like Bill Tuckett
with a man needing surgery right on the spot, a lot
would have done their dashes. It looked hopeless (dot dot dot)
Lift him up on the table, said Tuckett, running the key hot 10
till Head Office turned up a doctor who coolly instructed
up a thousand miles of wire, as Tuckett advanced slit by slit
with a safety razor blade, pioneering on into the wet,
copper-wiring the rivers off, in the first operation conducted
along dotted lines, with rum drinkers gripping the patient: 15
d-d-dash it, take care, Tuck!

And the vital spark stayed unshorted.
Yallah! Breathed the camelmen. Tuckett, you did it, you did it!
cried the spattered la-de-dah jodhpur-wearing Inspector of Stock.
We imagine, some weeks later, a properly laconic 20
convalescent averring Without you, I'd have kicked the bucket...
From Chungking to Burrenjuck, morse keys have mostly gone
silent
and only old men meet now to chit-chat in their electric
bygone dialect. The last letter many will forget
is dit-dit-dit-dah, V for Victory. The coders' hero had speed, 25
resource and a touch. So ditditdit daah for Bill Tuckett.

The Man with Night Sweats

Thom Gunn

I wake up cold, I who
Prospered through dreams of heat
Wake to their residue,
Sweat, and a clinging sheet.

My flesh was its own shield: 5
Where it was gashed, it healed.

I grew as I explored
The body I could trust
Even while I adored
The risk that made robust. 10

A world of wonders in
Each challenge to the skin.

I cannot but be sorry
The given shield was cracked
My mind reduced to hurry, 15
My flesh reduced and wrecked.

I have to change the bed,
But catch myself instead

Stopped upright where I am
Hugging my body to me 20
As if to shield it from
The pains that will go through me,

As if hands were enough
To hold an avalanche off.

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Night Sweat

Robert Lowell

Work-table, litter, books and standing lamp,
plain things, my stalled equipment, the old broom –
but I am living in a tidied room,

for ten nights now I've felt the creeping damp
float over my pajamas' wilted white . . .

5

Sweet salt embalms me and my head is wet,
everything streams and tells me this is right;
my life's fever is soaking in night sweat –
one life, one writing! But the downward glide

and bias of existing wrings us dry –

10

always inside me is the child who died,
always inside me is his will to die –
one universe, one body . . . in this urn
the animal night sweats of the spirit burn.

Behind me! You! Again I feel the light

15

lighten my leaded eyelids, while the gray
skulled horses whinny for the soot of night.

I dabble in the dapple of the day,

a heap of wet clothes, seamy, shivering,

I see my flesh and bedding washed with light,

20

my child exploding into dynamite,

my wife . . . your lightness alters everything,

and tears the black web from the spider's sack,

as your heart hops and flutters like a hare.

Poor turtle, tortoise, if I cannot clear

25

the surface of these troubled waters here,

absolve me, help me, Dear Heart, as you bear

this world's dead weight and cycle on your back.

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Rain

Edward Thomas

Rain, midnight rain, nothing but the wild rain
On this bleak hut, and solitude, and me
Remembering again that I shall die
And neither hear the rain nor give it thanks
For washing me cleaner than I have been 5
Since I was born into this solitude.
Blessed are the dead that the rain rains upon:
But here I pray that none whom once I loved
Is dying to-night or lying still awake
Solitary, listening to the rain, 10
Either in pain or thus in sympathy
Helpless among the living and the dead,
Like a cold water among broken reeds,
Myriads of broken reeds all still and stiff,
Like me who have no love which this wild rain 15
Has not dissolved except the love of death,
If love it be for what is perfect and
Cannot, the tempest tells me, disappoint.

'Tis pitiful to think I must resign 30
You to the friendless grave, the patient prey
Of all the hungry legions of Decay.

But you must stay, dear body, and I go.
And I was once so very proud of you:
You made my mother's eyes to overflow 35
When first she saw you, wonderful and new.
And now, with all your faults, 'twere hard to find
A slave more willing or a friend more true.
Ay – even they who say the worst about you
Can scarcely tell what I shall do without you. 40

The Spirit is too Blunt an Instrument

Anne Stevenson

The spirit is too blunt an instrument
to have made this baby.

Nothing so unskilful as human passions
could have managed the intricate

exacting particulars: the tiny

5

blind bones with their manipulating tendons,
the knee and the knucklebones, the resilient
fine meshings of ganglia and vertebrae,
the chain of the difficult spine.

Observe the distinct eyelashes and sharp crescent

10

fingernails, the shell-like complexity
of the ear, with its firm involutions
concentric in miniature to minute
ossicles. Imagine the

infinitesimal capillaries, the flawless connections
of the lungs, the invisible neural filaments
through which the completed body
already answers to the brain.

15

Then name any passion or sentiment
possessed of the simplest accuracy.

20

No, no desire or affection could have done
with practice what habit
has done perfectly, indifferently,
through the body's ignorant precision.

It is left to the vagaries of the mind to invent
love and despair and anxiety
and their pain.

25

From Long Distance

Tony Harrison

Though my mother was already two years dead
Dad kept her slippers warming by the gas,
put hot water bottles her side of the bed
and still went to renew her transport pass.

You couldn't just drop in. You had to phone. 5
He'd put you off an hour to give him time
to clear away her things and look alone
as though his still raw love were such a crime.

He couldn't risk my blight of disbelief 10
though sure that very soon he'd hear her key
scrape in the rusted lock and end his grief.
He *knew* she'd just popped out to get the tea.

I believe life ends with death, and that is all.
You haven't both gone shopping; just the same,
in my new black leather phone book there's your name 15
and the disconnected number I still call.

From Modern Love

George Meredith

By this he knew she wept with waking eyes:
That, at his hand's light quiver by her head,
The strange low sobs that shook their common bed,
Were called into her with a sharp surprise,
And strangled mute, like little gasping snakes, 5
Dreadfully venomous to him. She lay
Stone-still, and the long darkness flowed away
With muffled pulses. Then, as midnight makes
Her giant heart of Memory and Tears
Drink the pale drug of silence, and so beat 10
Sleep's heavy measure, they from head to feet
Were moveless, looking through their dead black years,
By vain regret scrawled over the blank wall.
Like sculptured effigies they might be seen
Upon their marriage-tomb, the sword between; 15
Each wishing for the sword that severs all.

From Song of Myself

Walt Whitman

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,
The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of hell are with me,
The first I graft and increase upon myself, the latter I translate
into a new tongue.

I am the poet of the woman the same as the man,
And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man, 5
And I say there is nothing greater than the mother of men.

I chant the chant of dilation or pride,
We have had ducking and deprecating about enough,
I show that size is only development.

Have you outstript the rest? are you the President? 10
It is, a trifle, they will more than arrive there every one,
and still pass on.

I am he that walks with the tender and growing night,
I call to the earth and sea half-held by the night.

Press close bare-bosom'd night – press close magnetic
nourishing night!

Night of south winds – night of the large few stars 15
Still nodding night – mad naked summer night.

Smile O voluptuous cool-breath'd earth!
Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!
Earth of departed sunset – earth of the mountains misty-topt!
Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just tinged
with blue! 20
Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide of the river!
Earth of the limpid grey of clouds brighter and clearer
for my sake! ➤

Far-swooping elbow'd earth – rich apple-blossom'd earth!

Smile, for your lover comes.

Prodigal, you have given me love – therefore I to you give love!

25

O unspeakable passionate love.

He Never Expected Much

Thomas Hardy

Well, World, you have kept faith with me,

Kept faith with me;

Upon the whole you have proved to be

Much as you said you were.

Since as a child I used to lie

5

Upon the leaze and watch the sky,

Never, I own, expected I

That life would all be fair.

'Twas then you said, and since have said,

Times since have said,

10

In that mysterious voice you shed

From clouds and hills around:

'Many have loved me desperately,

Many with smooth serenity,

While some have shown contempt of me

15

Till they dropped underground.

'I do not promise overmuch,

Child; overmuch;

Just neutral-tinted haps and such,'

You said to minds like mine.

20

Wise warning for your credit's sake!

Which I for one failed not to take,

And hence could stem such strain and ache

As each year might assign.

The Telephone Call

Fleur Adcock

They asked me 'Are you sitting down?
Right? This is Universal Lotteries',
they said. 'You've won the top prize,
the Ultra-super Global Special.
What would you do with a million pounds? 5
Or, actually, with more than a million –
not that it makes a lot of difference
once you're a millionaire.' And they laughed.

'Are you OK?' they asked – 'Still there?
Come on, now, tell us, how does it feel?' 10
I said 'I just... I can't believe it!'
They said 'That's what they all say.
What else? Go on, tell us about it.'
I said 'I feel the top of my head
has floated off, out through the window, 15
revolving like a flying saucer.'

'That's unusual' they said. 'Go on.'
I said 'I'm finding it hard to talk.
My throat's gone dry, my nose is tingling.
I think I'm going to sneeze – or cry.' 20
'That's right' they said, 'don't be ashamed
of giving way to your emotions.
It isn't every day you hear
you're going to get a million pounds.

Relax, now, have a little cry; 25
we'll give you a moment...' 'Hang on!' I said.
'I haven't bought a lottery ticket
for years and years. And what did you say ➤

the company's called?' They laughed again.

'Not to worry about a ticket.

30

We're Universal. We operate

A retrospective Chances Module.

Nearly everyone's bought a ticket

in some lottery or another,

once at least. We buy up the files,

35

feed the names into our computer,

and see who the lucky person is.'

'Well, that's incredible' I said.

'It's marvellous. I still can't quite . . .

I'll believe it when I see the cheque.'

40

'Oh,' they said, 'there's no cheque.'

'But the money?' 'We don't deal in money.

Experiences are what we deal in.

You've had a great experience, right?

Exciting? Something you'll remember?

45

That's your prize. So congratulations

from all of us at Universal.

Have a nice day!' And the line went dead.

A Consumer's Report

Peter Porter

The name of the product I tested is *Life*,
I have completed the form you sent me
and understand that my answers are confidential.

I had it as a gift,
I didn't feel much while using it, 5
in fact I think I'd have liked to be more excited.
It seemed gentle on the hands
but left an embarrassing deposit behind.
It was not economical
and I have used much more than I thought 10
(I suppose I have about half left
but it's difficult to tell) –
although the instructions are fairly large
there are so many of them
I don't know which to follow, especially 15
as they seem to contradict each other.
I'm not sure such a thing
should be put in the way of children –
It's difficult to think of a purpose
Also the price is much too high. 20
Things are piling up so fast,
after all, the world got by
for a thousand million years
without this, do we need it now?
(Incidentally, please ask your man 25
to stop calling me 'the respondent',
I don't like the sound of it.)
There seems to be a lot of different labels,
sizes and colours should be uniform,
the shape is awkward, it's waterproof 30 ➤

but not heat resistant, it doesn't keep
yet it's very difficult to get rid of:
whenever they make it cheaper they seem
to put less in – if you say you don't
want it, then it's delivered anyway.

35

I'd agree it's a popular product,
it's got into the language; people
even say they're on the side of it.
Personally I think it's overdone,
a small thing people are ready
to behave badly about. I think
we should take it for granted. If its
experts are called philosophers or market
researchers or historians, we shouldn't
care. We are the consumers and the last
law makers. So finally, I'd buy it.

40

But the question of a 'best buy'
I'd like to leave until I get
the competitive product you said you'd send.

45

On Finding a Small Fly Crushed in a Book

Charles Tennyson Turner

Some hand, that never meant to do thee hurt,
Has crush'd thee here between these pages pent;

But thou has left thine own fair monument,

Thy wings gleam out and tell me what thou wert:

Oh! that the memories, which survive us here,

5

Were half as lovely as these wings of thine!

Pure relics of a blameless life, that shine

Now thou art gone: Our doom is ever near:

The peril is beside us day by day;

The book will close upon us, it may be,

10

Just as we lift ourselves to soar away

Upon the summer-airs. But, unlike thee,

The closing book may stop our vital breath,

Yet leave no lustre on our page of death.

Ozymandias

Percy Bysshe Shelley

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command, 5
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: 10
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Away, Melancholy

Stevie Smith

Away, melancholy,
Away with it, let it go.

Are not the trees green,
The earth as green?
Does not the wind blow,
Fire leap and the rivers flow?
Away melancholy.

5

The ant is busy
He carrieth his meat,
All things hurry
To be eaten or eat.
Away, melancholy.

10

Man, too, hurries,
Eats, couples, buries,
He is an animal also
With a hey ho melancholy,
Away with it, let it go.

15

Man of all creatures
Is superlative
(Away melancholy)
He of all creatures alone
Raiseth a stone
(Away melancholy)
Into the stone, the god
Pours what he knows of good
Calling, good, God.
Away melancholy, let it go.

20

25



Speak not to me of tears,
Tyranny, pox, wars,
Saying, Can God
Stone of man's thought, be good? 30

Say rather it is enough
That the stuffed
Stone of man's good, growing,
By man's called God. 35
Away, melancholy, let it go.

Man aspires
To good,
To love
Sighs; 40

Beaten, corrupted, dying
In his own blood lying
Yet heaves up an eye above
Cries, Love, love.
It is his virtue needs explaining, 45
Not his failing.

Away, melancholy,
Away with it, let it go.

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