

OIB British Option

Language & Literature Synoptic Topic

Gothic Writing

Six Poems

Ann Radcliffe: *Superstition. An Ode* (1790)

John Keats: *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* (1819)

Edgar Allan Poe: *Alone* (1829)

Alfred, Lord Tennyson: *Mariana* (1830)

Robert Browning: *Porphyria's Lover* (1836)

Emily Dickinson: *One Need Not Be A Chamber To Be Haunted*
(1891)

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Superstition. An Ode (from *A Sicilian Romance*)

ANN RADCLIFFE

High mid Alverna's awful steeps,
Eternal shades and silence dwell,
Save, when the gale resounding sweeps,
Sad strains are faintly heard to swell:

5 Enthroned amid the wild impending rocks,
Involved in clouds, and brooding future woe,
The demon Superstition Nature shocks,
And waves her Sceptre o'er the world below.

Around her throne, amid the mingling glooms,
10 Wild-hideous forms are slowly seen to glide;
She bids them fly to shade earth's brightest blooms,
And spread the blast of Desolation wide.

See! in the darken'd air their fiery course!
The sweeping ruin settles o'er the land,
15 Terror leads on their steps with madd'ning force,
And Death and Vengeance close the ghastly band!

Mark the purple streams that flow!
Mark the deep empassion'd woe!
Frantic Fury's dying groan!
20 Virtue's sigh, and Sorrow's moan!

Wide – wide the phantom swell the loaded air
With shrieks of anguish-madness and despair!

Cease your ruin! spectres dire!
Cease your wild terrific sway!
25 Turn your steps – and check your ire,
Yield to peace the mourning day!

La Belle Dame Sans Merci

JOHN KEATS

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

5 O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow,
10 With anguish moist and fever-dew,
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful – a faery's child,
15 Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She looked at me as she did love,
20 And made sweet moan.

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
A faery's song.

25 She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna-dew,
And sure in language strange she said –
‘I love thee true’.

She took me to her Elfin grot,
30 And there she wept and sighed full sore,
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
With kisses four.

And there she lullèd me asleep,
And there I dreamed – Ah! woe betide! –
35 The latest dream I ever dreamt
On the cold hill side.

I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried – ‘La Belle Dame sans Merci
40 Hath thee in thrall!’

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,
With horrid warning gapèd wide,
And I awoke and found me here,
On the cold hill’s side.

45 And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

Alone
EDGAR ALLAN POE

From childhood's hour I have not been
As others were – I have not seen
As others saw – I could not bring
My passions from a common spring –
5 From the same source I have not taken
My sorrow – I could not awaken
My heart to joy at the same tone –
And all I lov'd – *I* lov'd alone –
Then – in my childhood – in the dawn
10 Of a most stormy life – was drawn
From ev'ry depth of good and ill
The mystery which binds me still –
From the torrent, or the fountain –
From the red cliff of the mountain –
15 From the sun that 'round me roll'd
In its autumn tint of gold –
From the lightning in the sky
As it pass'd me flying by –
From the thunder, and the storm –
20 And the cloud that took the form
(When the rest of Heaven was blue)
Of a demon in my view -

Mariana
ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON
'Mariana in the Moated Grange'
(Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*)

With blackest moss the flower-plots
Were thickly crusted, one and all:
The rusted nails fell from the knots
That held the pear to the gable-wall.
5 The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:
Unlifted was the clinking latch;
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.
She only said, 'My life is dreary,
10 He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

Her tears fell with the dews at even;
Her tears fell ere the dews were dried;
15 She could not look on the sweet heaven,
Either at morn or eventide.
After the flitting of the bats,
When thickest dark did trance the sky,
She drew her casement-curtain by,
20 And glanced athwart the glooming flats.
She only said, 'The night is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

25 Upon the middle of the night,
Waking she heard the night-fowl crow:
The cock sung out an hour ere light:
From the dark fen the oxen's low
Came to her: without hope of change,
30 In sleep she seem'd to walk forlorn,
Till cold winds woke the gray-eyed morn
About the lonely moated grange.
She only said, 'The day is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
35 She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

About a stone-cast from the wall
A sluice with blacken'd waters slept,
And o'er it many, round and small,
40 The cluster'd marish-mosses crept.
Hard by a poplar shook alway,
All silver-green with gnarlèd bark:
For leagues no other tree did mark
The level waste, the rounding gray.
45 She only said, 'My life is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

And ever when the moon was low,
50 And the shrill winds were up and away,
In the white curtain, to and fro,
She saw the gusty shadow sway.
But when the moon was very low
And wild winds bound within their cell,
55 The shadow of the poplar fell
Upon her bed, across her brow.
She only said, 'The night is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am weary, weary,
60 I would that I were dead!'

All day within the dreamy house,
The doors upon their hinges creak'd;
The blue fly sung in the pane; the mouse
Behind the mouldering wainscot shriek'd,
65 Or from the crevice peer'd about.
Old faces glimmer'd thro' the doors
Old footsteps trod the upper floors,
Old voices call'd her from without.
She only said, 'My life is dreary,
70 He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am weary, weary,
I would that I were dead!'

The sparrow's chirrup on the roof,
The slow clock ticking, and the sound
75 Which to the wooing wind aloof
The poplar made, did all confound
Her sense; but most she loathed the hour
When the thick-moted sunbeam lay
Athwart the chambers, and the day
80 Was sloping toward his western bower.
Then, said she, 'I am very dreary,
He will not come,' she said;
She wept, 'I am weary, weary,
Oh God, that I were dead!'

Porphyria's Lover
ROBERT BROWNING

The rain set early in to-night,
 The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
 And did its worst to vex the lake:
5 I listened with heart fit to break.
When glided in Porphyria; straight
 She shut the cold out and the storm,
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
 Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
10 Which done, she rose, and from her form
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
 And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
 And, last, she sat down by my side
15 And called me. When no voice replied,
She put my arm about her waist,
 And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
 And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
20 And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,
Murmuring how she loved me – she
 Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,
To set its struggling passion free
 From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
25 And give herself to me for ever.
But passion sometimes would prevail,
 Nor could ton-night's gay feast restrain
A sudden thought of one so pale
 For love of her, and all in vain:
30 So, she was come through wind and rain.
Be sure I looked up at her eyes

Happy and proud; at last I knew
Porphyria worshipped me; surprise
 Made my heart swell, and still it grew
35 While I debated what to do.
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
 Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
 In one long yellow string I wound
40 Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
 I am quite sure she felt no pain.
As a shut bud that holds a bee,
 I warily oped her lids: again
45 Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
And I untightened next the tress
 About her neck; her cheek once more
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:
 I propped her head up as before,
50 Only, this time my shoulder bore
Her head, which droops upon it still:
 The smiling rosy little head,
So glad it has its utmost will,
 That all it scorned at once is fled,
55 And I, its love, am gained instead!
Porphyria's love: she guessed not how
 Her darling one wish would be heard.
And thus we sit together now,
 And all night long we have not stirred,
60 And yet God has not said a word!

One Need Not Be A Chamber To Be Haunted

EMILY DICKINSON

One need not be a Chamber – to be Haunted –
One need not be a House –
The Brain has Corridors – surpassing
Material place –

Far safer, of a Midnight Meeting
External Ghost
Than its interior Confronting –
That Cooler Host.

Far safer, through an Abbey gallop,
The Stones a'chase –
Than Unarmed, one's a'self encounter –
In lonesome Place –

Ourself behind ourself, concealed –
Should startle most –
Assassin hid in our Apartment
Be Horror's least.

The Body – borrows a Revolver –
He bolts the Door –
O'erlooking a superior spectre –
Or More –