

Thomas Gray. The Bard: A Pindaric Ode, 1757.¹

I: 1

1 'Ruin seize thee, ruthless king!
2 'Confusion on thy banners wait,
3 'Though fanned by Conquest's crimson wing
4 'They mock the air with idle state.
5 'Helm nor hauberk's twisted mail,
6 'Nor even thy virtues, tyrant, shall avail
7 'To save thy secret soul from nightly fears,
8 'From Cambria's curse, from Cambria's tears!'
9 Such were the sounds, that o'er the crested pride
10 Of the first Edward scattered wild dismay,
11 As down the steep of Snowdon's shaggy side
12 He wound with toilsome march his long array.
13 Stout Gloucester stood aghast in speechless trance:
14 'To arms!', cried Mortimer and couched his quivering lance.

I: 2

15 On a rock, whose haughty brow
16 Frowns o'er old Conway's foaming flood,
17 Robed in the sable garb of woe,
18 With haggard eyes the poet stood;
19 (Loose his beard and hoary hair
20 Streamed, like a meteor, to the troubled air)
21 And, with a master's hand and prophet's fire,
22 Struck the deep sorrows of his lyre.
23 'Hark, how each giant-oak and desert cave
24 'Sighs to the torrent's awful voice beneath!
25 'O'er thee, oh king! their hundred arms they wave,
26 'Revenge on thee in hoarser murmurs breathe;
27 'Vocal no more, since Cambria's fatal day,
28 'To high-born Hoel's harp or soft Llewellyn's lay.

I: 3

29 'Cold is Cadwallo's tongue,
30 'That hushed the stormy main:
31 'Brave Urien sleeps upon his craggy bed:
32 'Mountains, ye mourn in vain
33 'Modred, whose magic song
34 'Made huge Plinlimmon bow his cloud-topped head.
35 'On dreary Arvon's shore they lie,
36 'Smear'd with gore and ghastly pale:
37 'Far, far aloof the affrighted ravens sail;

¹ *Thomas Gray. Poems published in 1768*, edited by Arthur F. Bell, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915.

38 'The famished eagle screams and passes by.
39 'Dear lost companions of my tuneful art,
40 'Dear as the light that visits these sad eyes,
41 'Dear as the ruddy drops that warm my heart,
42 'Ye died amidst your dying country's cries---
43 'No more I weep. They do not sleep.
44 'On yonder cliffs, a grisly band,
45 'I see them sit, they linger yet,
46 'Avengers of their native land;
47 'With me in dreadful harmony they join,
48 'And weave with bloody hands the tissue of thy line.'

II: 1

49 "Weave the warp and weave the woof,
50 "The winding-sheet of Edward's race.
51 "Give ample room and verge enough
52 "The characters of hell to trace.
53 "Mark the year and mark the night,
54 "When Severn shall re-echo with affright
55 "The shrieks of death, through Berkeley's roofs that ring,
56 "Shrieks of an agonizing King!
57 "She-wolf of France, with unrelenting fangs,
58 "That tear'st the bowels of thy mangled mate,
59 "From thee be born who o'er thy country hangs
60 "The scourge of heaven. What terrors round him wait!
61 "Amazement in his van, with Flight combined,
62 "And Sorrow's faded form, and Solitude behind.

II: 2

63 "Mighty victor, mighty lord,
64 "Low on his funeral couch he lies!
65 "No pitying heart, no eye, afford
66 "A tear to grace his obsequies.
67 "Is the sable warrior fled?
68 "Thy son is gone. He rests among the dead.
69 "The swarm that in thy noon-tide beam were born?
70 "Gone to salute the rising morn.
71 "Fair laughs the morn and soft the zephyr blows,
72 "While proudly riding o'er the azure realm
73 "In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes;
74 "Youth on the prow and Pleasure at the helm;
75 "Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind's sway,
76 "That, hushed in grim repose, expects his evening-prey.

II: 3

77 "Fill high the sparkling bowl,
78 "The rich repast prepare,
79 "Reft of a crown, he yet may share the feast:
80 "Close by the regal chair
81 "Fell Thirst and Famine scowl
82 "A baleful smile upon their baffled guest.
83 "Heard ye the din of battle bray,
84 "Lance to lance and horse to horse?
85 "Long years of havoc urge their destined course,
86 "And through the kindred squadrons mow their way.
87 "Ye towers of Julius, London's lasting shame,
88 "With many a foul and midnight murder fed,
89 "Revere his consort's faith, his father's fame,
90 "And spare the meek usurper's holy head.
91 "Above, below, the rose of snow,
92 "Twined with her blushing foe, we spread:
93 "The bristled Boar in infant-gore
94 "Wallows beneath the thorny shade.
95 "Now, brothers, bending o'er the accursed loom,
96 "Stamp we our vengeance deep and ratify his doom.

III: 1

97 "Edward, lo! to sudden fate
98 "(Weave we the woof. The thread is spun)
99 "Half of thy heart we consecrate.
100 "(The web is wove. The work is done.)"
101 'Stay, oh stay! nor thus forlorn
102 'Leave me unblessed, unpitied, here to mourn:
103 'In yon bright track, that fires the western skies,
104 'They melt, they vanish from my eyes.
105 'But oh! what solemn scenes on Snowdon's height
106 'Descending slow their glittering skirts unroll?
107 'Visions of glory, spare my aching sight,
108 'Ye unborn ages, crowd not on my soul!
109 'No more our long-lost Arthur we bewail.
110 'All-hail, ye genuine kings, Britannia's issue, hail!

III: 2

111 'Girt with many a baron bold
112 'Sublime their starry fronts they rear;
113 'And gorgeous dames, and statesmen old
114 'In bearded majesty, appear.
115 'In the midst a form divine!
116 'Her eye proclaims her of the Briton-line;
117 'Her lion-port, her awe-commanding face,
118 'Attempered sweet to virgin-grace.
119 'What strings symphonious tremble in the air,

120 'What strains of vocal transport round her play!
121 'Hear from the grave, great Taliessin, hear;
122 'They breathe a soul to animate thy clay.
123 'Bright Rapture calls and, soaring as she sings,
124 'Waves in the eye of heaven her many-coloured wings.

III: 3

125 'The verse adorn again
126 'Fierce war and faithful love,
127 'And truth severe, by fairy fiction dressed.
128 'In buskined measures move
129 'Pale Grief and pleasing Pain,
130 'With Horror, tyrant of the throbbing breast.
131 'A voice as of the cherub-choir
132 'Gales from blooming Eden bear;
133 'And distant warblings lessen on my ear,
134 'That lost in long futurity expire.
135 'Fond impious man, think'st thou yon sanguine cloud,
136 'Raised by thy breath, has quenched the orb of day?
137 'Tomorrow he repairs the golden flood,
138 'And warms the nations with redoubled ray.
139 'Enough for me: with joy I see
140 'The different doom our fates assign.
141 'Be thine despair and sceptered care;
142 'To triumph, and to die, are mine.'
143 He spoke, and headlong from the mountain's height
144 Deep in the roaring tide he plunged to endless night.