

## Introduction to Poetry: Second Essay Assignment

*Due Tuesday, April 12, at the beginning of class. Five double-spaced pages. Please devise an original title for your essay.*

### Assignment Description & Task

This assignment is very much like the first, in that you should choose one of the four poems below and analyze it closely. The difference is that these are all metrical poems, so when you describe how the poem's particulars work, you will need to address such formal issues as meter, stanza, and rhyme scheme. Once again, the point is *to analyze what the poem means as a whole and to describe how its particulars work.*

The directions for the first essay still apply.

The choices are Marilyn Hacker, "Exiles"; Derek Walcott, "A City's Death by Fire"; Wilfred Owen, "Arms and the Boy," and Dylan Thomas, "The Force that Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower."

∪ = Unaccented syllable

/ = Accented syllable

/ = Break between poetic feet

|| = Caesura, or metrical pause

## Exiles

*Marilyn Hacker*

Her brown falcon perches above the sink  
as steaming water forks over my hands.  
Below the wrists they shrivel and turn pink.  
I am in exile in my own land.

Her half-grown cats scuffle across the floor  
trailing a slime of blood from where they fed.  
I lock the door. They claw under the door.  
I am an exile in my own bed.

Her spotted mongrel, bristling with red mange,  
sleeps on the threshold of the Third Street bar  
where I drink brandy as the couples change.  
I am in exile where my neighbors are.

On the pavement, cans of ashes burn.  
Her green lizard scuttles from the light  
around torn cardboard charred to glowing fern.  
I am in exile in my own sight.

Her blond child sits on the stoop when I come  
back at night. Cold hands, blue lids; we both  
need sleep. She tells me she is going to die.  
I am in exile in my own youth.

Lady of distances, this fire, this water,  
this earth makes sanctuary where I stand.  
Call of your animals and your blond daughter,  
I am in exile in my own hands.

## **A City's Death By Fire**

*Derek Walcott*

After that hot gospeller has levelled all but the church'd sky,  
 I wrote the tale by tallow of a city's death by fire;  
 Under a candle's eye, that smoked in tears, I  
 Wanted to tell, in more than wax, of faiths that were snapped like wire.  
 All day I walked abroad among the rubbled tales,  
 Shocked at each wall that stood on the street like a liar;  
 Loud was the bird-rocked sky, and all the clouds were bales  
 Torn open by looting, and white, in spite of the fire.  
 By the smoking sea, where Christ walked, I asked, why  
 Should a man wax tears, when his wooden world fails?  
 In town, leaves were paper, but the hills were a flock of faiths;  
 To a boy who walked all day, each leaf was a green breath  
 Rebuilding a love I thought was dead as nails,  
 Blessing the death and the baptism by fire.

## **Arms and the Boy**

*Wilfred Owen*

Let the boy try along this bayonet-blade  
 How cold steel is, and keen with hunger of blood;  
 Blue with all malice, like a madman's flash;  
 And thinly drawn with famishing for flesh.

Lend him to stroke these blind, blunt bullet-leads  
 Which long to nuzzle in the hearts of lads,  
 Or give him cartridges of fine zinc teeth,  
 Sharp with the sharpness of grief and death.

For his teeth seem for laughing round an apple.  
 There lurk no claws behind his fingers supple;  
 And God will grow no talons at his heels,  
 Nor antlers through the thickness of his curls.

## **The Force that Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower**

*Dylan Thomas*

The force that through the green fuse drives the flower  
Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees  
Is my destroyer.  
And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose  
My youth is bent by the same wintry fever.

The force that drives the water through the rocks  
Drives my red blood; that dries the mouthing streams  
Turns mine to wax.  
And I am dumb to mouth unto my veins  
How at the mountain spring the same mouth sucks.

The hand that whirls the water in the pool  
Stirs the quicksand; that ropes the blowing wind  
Hauls my shroud sail.  
And I am dumb to tell the hanging man  
How of my clay is made the hangman's lime.

The lips of time leech to the fountain head;  
Love drips and gathers, but the fallen blood  
Shall calm her sores.  
And I am dumb to tell a weather's wind  
How time has ticked a heaven round the stars.

And I am dumb to tell the lover's tomb  
How at my sheet goes the same crooked worm.