The Genesis of the Butterfly

Victor Marie Hugo

The dawn is smiling on the dew that covers
The tearful roses; lo, the little lovers
That kiss the buds, and all the flutterings
In jasmine bloom, and privet, of white wings,
That go and come, and fly, and peep and hide,
With muffled music, murmured far and wide.
Ah, the Spring time, when we think of all the lays
That dreamy lovers send to dreamy mays,
Of the fond hearts within a billet bound,
Of all the soft silk paper that pens wound,
The messages of love that mortals write
Filled with intoxication of delight,
Written in April and before the May time
Shredded and flown, playthings for the wind's playtime,
We dream that all white butterflies above,
Who seek through clouds or waters souls to love,
And leave their lady mistress in despair,
To flit to flowers, as kinder and more fair,
Are but torn love-letters, that through the skies
Flutter, and float, and change to butterflies

The Camellia

Honore de Balzac

In Nature's poem flowers have each their word
The rose of love and beauty sings alone;
The violet's soul exhales in tenderest tone;
The lily's one pure simple note heard.
The cold Camellia only, stiff and white,
Rose without perfume, lily without grace,
When chilling winter shows his icy face,
Blooms for a world that vainly seeks delight.
Yet, in a theatre, or ball-room light,
I gladly see Camellias shining bright
Above some stately woman's raven hair,
Whose noble form fulfills the heart's desire,
Like Grecian marbles warmed by Phidian fire*.*

Song of Fortunio

Alfred de Musset

If you suppose I'm going to say
Whose love I dare,
I would not for an empire's sway
Her name declare.

Nay, sing we turn about this air
If you think meet,
That I adore her --- she is fair
As is the wheat.

I to her whim where-er it leads,
Or bids, defer,
And I can if my life she needs
Give that to her.

The anguish which a love untold
Makes us endure,
My heart has torn, my heart will hold
Till death, I'm sure.

But I too fondly love to say
Whose love I dare;
I's for my darling die --- not aye
Her name declare.

Invocation

Alphonse de Lamartine

Oh you who appeared to me in this desert of a world,
Inhabitant of the sky, passenger in these parts!
O you who made this dark night shine
A ray of love in my eyes.

To my astonished eyes, show yourself all whole,
Tell me your name, your country, your destiny.
Were you cradled here on earth?
Or are you but a divine breath?

Will you see the eternal light again tomorrow?
Or in this place of exile, of mourning, of misery,
Must you still follow your troublesome path?
Ah! Whatever be your name, your destiny, your land,
Daughter of the earth, or of divine dwelling,
Ah! Let me, all my life,
Offer you my devotion or my love.

If you must, like us, complete your course,
Be my support, my guide, and suffer that in all places,
I kiss the dust of your worshipped feet,
But if you take your flight, and if, far from our eyes,
Sister of the angels, soon you will rise back up to them.
Having loved me some time upon the earth,
Remember me in heaven.