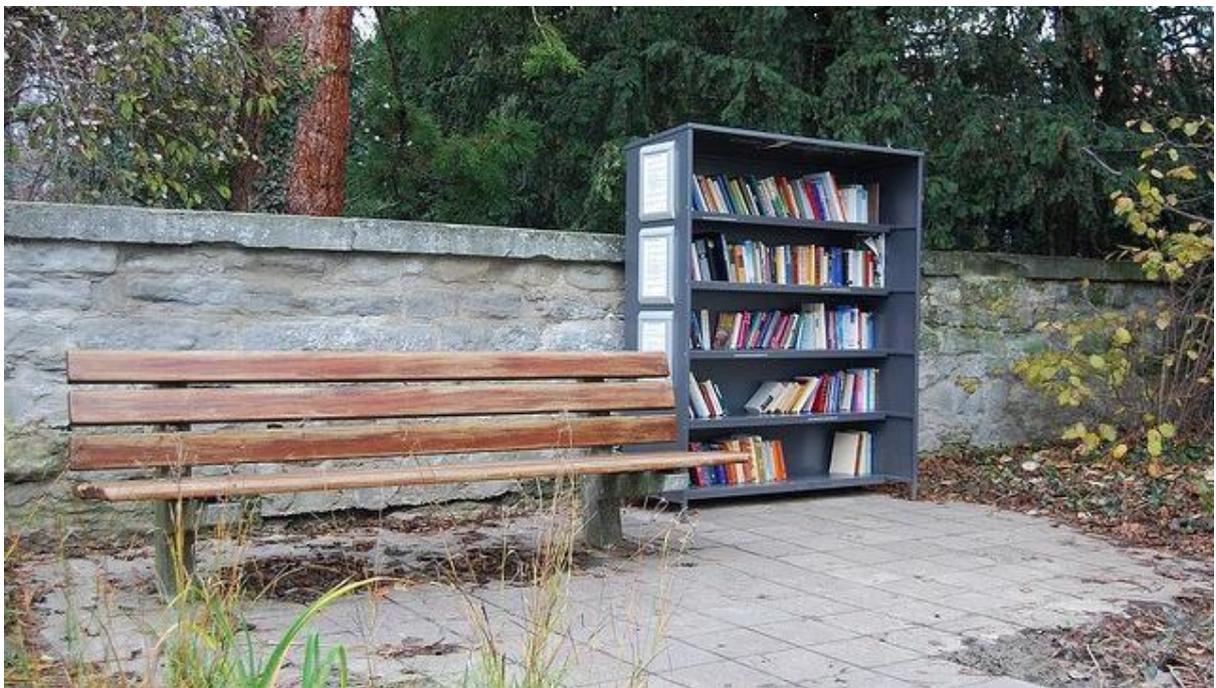


# INSPIRED BY BOOKS

A PK POETRY PROJECT



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## **INSPIRED BY BOOKS**

### **JAMES BELL**

Trial

most cabaret singers are androids

long shot

nowhere to hide

do the Rex

Pilgrim

### **JIM BENNETT**

Homer

bleak

the lighthouse

### **LESLEY BURT**

A Nice Knock-down Argument

A Singular Notion

### **BOB COOPER**

What's Not Read In The Last Chapter

Heathcliff Visits A Writing Course At Lumb Bank

### **JAN HARRIS**

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BB Ruminates on PR

The Cavalry Wears Petticoats

### **ERIC NICHOLSON**

A.L.I.C.E.

### **STUART NUNN**

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Three Mutual Friends

"Well, you can break his heart."

### **Barbara Phillips**

Diary: Catharine Speaks To Heathcliff

Alice

### **GRANT VAN WINGERDEN**

The Shoes of the Fisherman

Night of Error

# JAMES BELL

INSPIRED BY



## Trial

*Only the billowing overcoat remains. Everything else is made up.*  
Franz Kafka - *The Diaries*

they were waiting for him one night  
said the evidence was overwhelming  
advised he should come with them quietly  
for they still had to decide the charges

said the evidence was overwhelming  
thought the trial would soon be over  
although they still had to decide the charges  
and this might take a little time

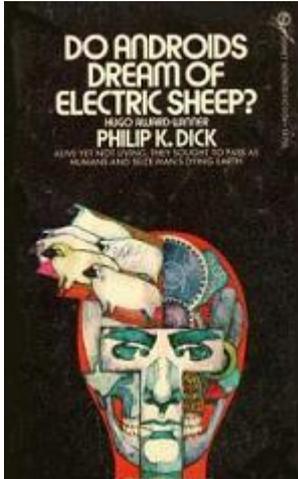
thought the trial would soon be over  
but the judge had to examine the case  
and this might take a little time -  
they said to plead guilty was best

the judge had to examine the case  
before there could be a decision  
they said to plead guilty was best -  
were left only with a billowing overcoat

before there could be a decision  
advised he should come with them quietly  
were left with a billowing overcoat  
were waiting for him again another night

# JAMES BELL

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## most cabaret singers are androids

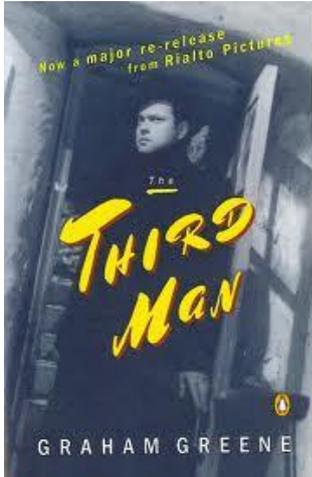
all androids are replicas of living persons  
all androids will live for four years  
then be replaced  
are replicas and cannot claim to be human  
even with beards like ZZ Top

all androids are unable to dream  
all androids can have sex with a living person  
but not fall in love  
even with a naked cow girl  
but can have an electric sheep as a pet

all androids will ultimately not pass the test  
all androids are allowed to run  
if they choose to run  
nobody knows why there is a need for androids  
one day there will be another boom  
boom boom boom

# JAMES BELL

INSPIRED BY



## long shot

she didn't keep walking as close up  
became long shot  
while the zither kept playing till the end

no this never happens in the book  
as the author preferred a happy end  
like in one of Rollo Martin's Westerns

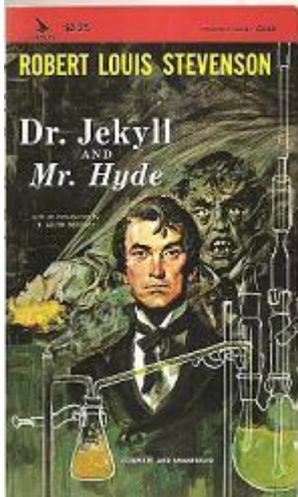
which was not his name in the movie -  
and that conversation in a car  
on the big wheel

nothing about cuckoo clocks being  
the only thing the Swiss made  
apart from watches that were any good

fiction imitates life more like the long shot  
is never the same as in the book  
she always keeps on walking

# JAMES BELL

INSPIRED BY



## **nowhere to hide**

remain in two minds about life -  
you know life - where one exists only in a vial  
though threatens to take over

there is nothing of nature here  
where thoughts can be conflicted - can't they  
when one wants to pound the streets

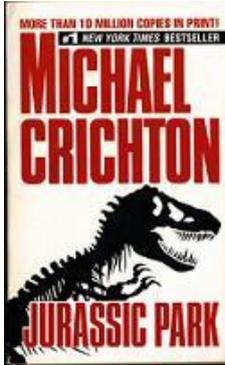
take liberties beyond morality -  
yet it doesn't take a liberty to find there's  
a darker side to evil

it's strength let loose at once  
must burn itself out - though at a price -  
even innocence is left unscathed

where one who should remain hidden  
has nowhere to hide - laughs  
like a jackal in the evening fog

# JAMES BELL

INSPIRED BY



## do the Rex

just a small island in the Caribbean  
you can go there if you like  
on the usual helicopter or a boat

these days let's say it's exclusive  
need a taste for this party atmosphere -  
it's a place that likes to dance

*and do the Rex  
do the Rex all night*

just be careful nobody bites your head off  
or have a raptor rapture in the dark

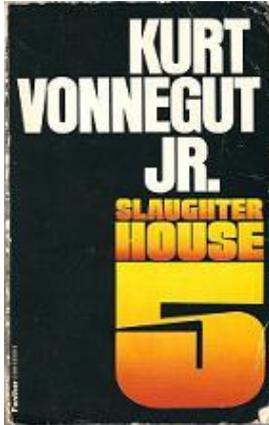
go for a Dip in the happy hour  
watch the water and the jelly shake  
have a Dactyl in the creative hour

*but do the Rex  
do the Rex all night*

*(If you are very clever you can sing this poem to the tune of 'Walk of Life' by Dire Straits.)*

# JAMES BELL

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## **Pilgrim**

*And so it goes. - Kurt Vonnegut*

setting foot outside the slaughterhouse  
was difficult next morning  
for all the china in Dresden was broken

even before that Billy had time travelled  
knew he must live in parallel lives -  
setting foot outside the slaughterhouse

was just another form of disorientation  
the world had become more Tralfamadorian  
for all the china in Dresden was broken

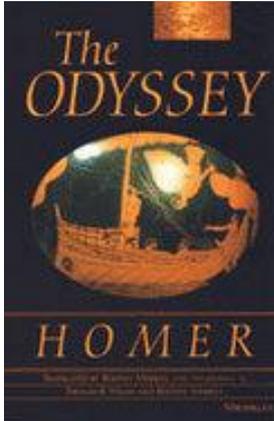
all the buildings were in ruins too  
firebombing will make this kind of difference -  
setting foot outside the slaughterhouse

the irony was not lost on Billy Pilgrim  
that he might be inside a Kilgour Trout novel  
for all the china in Dresden was broken

but he was unaware of that fact then  
was in love with a princess on another world  
and would not set foot outside the slaughterhouse  
where all the china in Dresden was broken

# JIM BENNETT

INSPIRED BY



## Homer

I always wondered about Homer  
the one who wrote history  
about battles with Troy at least  
five hundred years after the event

I suppose he had to wait  
for writing to come along  
couldn't write the Illiad in  
Cretan Linear Script

that was like hieroglyphics  
and would take too long  
he was writing an epic poem  
not engraving a stele or obelisk

fortunately for him a Phoenician  
thought up a new technology  
called an alphabet  
and that came in handy

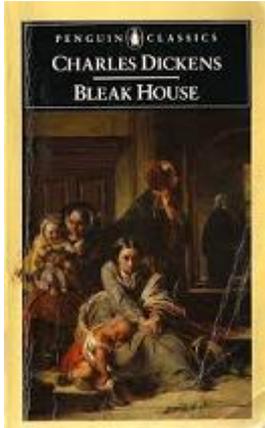
no one knows much about him  
or if there was a him or her  
or if he or she was a group  
but most people think they do

there are lots of statues and busts  
of an old guy with dodgy hair  
and curled beard it doesn't matter  
whoever it was could count

out lines of poetry in dactyls  
with an occasional spondee  
to break it up at six feet to the line  
that is a hell of lot of sandals

# JIM BENNETT

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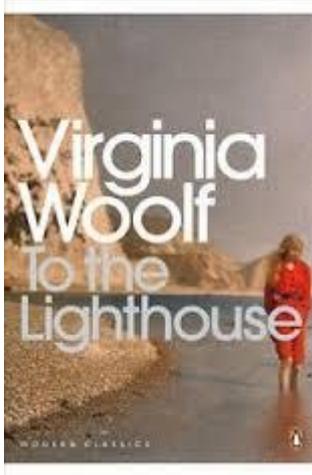


## bleak

between the Court of Chancery  
and Mr Krook's rooming house I met no one  
he called himself Nemo didn't have  
a submersible ship or a balloon like the Montgolfier's  
his was a more sedate form of travel  
he used opium burned it in a Chinese pipe  
it did for him in the end of course but not until  
an encounter and playful coincidence  
brought him to the notice of the reader  
enough to be remembered so that hundreds  
of pages later he could emerge in a way unexpected  
he stayed dead of course it was not *that* sort of book  
this was a wholly different sort of book  
with literary pretensions and a moral at the core  
it also has a lot to say about the law and the way people  
were treated in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Courts  
all very worthy and wonderful things to think about  
but the case of Miss Flite and her assertion  
that her judgement will be on judgement day  
and not one moment sooner perhaps that was the point  
maybe the case of Jarndyce v Jarndyce would  
drag on and on like the book into twenty instalments  
all waiting for people to die off and for the fees to build

# JIM BENNETT

INSPIRED BY



## **the lighthouse**

Fort Perch Rock has vanished  
into a Mersey mist the lighthouse  
a ghostly image in the swirling cloud

remember another lighthouse  
a promised visit from a summer home  
that didn't materialise

the long stalks of grass  
heavy with a seed head  
weave in the breeze

giant hogweed flowers  
float in the hedgerow like a sky  
full of summer clouds

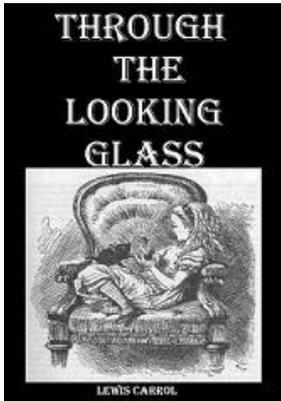
mist clears around the lighthouse  
a fisherman cuts flesh from a fish  
to use as bait throws rest back

it took the Ramsay's ten years  
and a war but here by the Fort  
the lighthouse is visible again

a camera will capture it  
with a satisfying click of its shutter  
before mist closes in again

# LESLEY BURT

INSPIRED BY



## A Nice Knock-down Argument

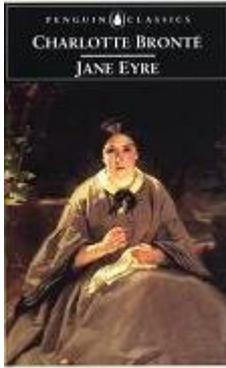
Take *hippopotamus*, he said;  
how could I? asked Alice.  
I'd never get a collar round its fat neck,  
and I don't care for mud.

Don't be pedantic, he said,  
I'm trying to show you a concept.  
But *hippopotamus* is what you said,  
replied Alice. We might call it *hippo*

for convenience, he said; or *rabbit*.  
So long as we always use it the same way.  
Take *wall*, said Alice. Take *fall*:  
I'm off for a smoke with *Butterfly*.

# LESLEY BURT

INSPIRED BY



## A Singular Notion

Blood-red drapes, carpet, cushions,  
tablecloth, bedspread; dust-muffled  
air behind drawn blinds;

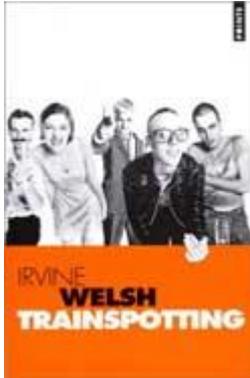
dull reflections in mahogany wardrobe:  
an upended coffin to conceal  
a dead man's suits; perhaps

holding his spirit from the pale child,  
whose glance at a looking-glass  
shows the small sprite peering back

and whose trembling ruffles the darkness.  
This thought stifles her sobs:  
her anguish may awaken him.

# BOB COOPER

INSPIRED BY



## What's Not Read In The Last Chapter

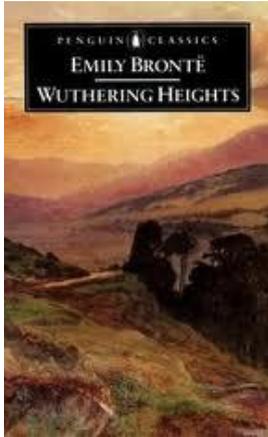
Ah, Begbie,  
now I've seen and heard your Da  
I'm no longer scared of you  
or a glazed, dark-eyed, future.

Now I can leave all this  
like I once did sat on Arthur's Seat  
in the windless, shortest, warm June night,  
12 o'clock awake,

reading the Beano aloud,  
before dozing between sips of Irn Bru,  
then stood wide-armed,  
face lit in the huge sea to sky sun.

# BOB COOPER

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## Heathcliff Visits A Writing Course At Lumb Bank

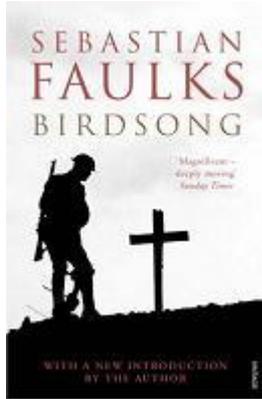
Squinting up at skylarks, down at scattering grouse  
on a fine morning stroll over Wadsworth Moor's heather  
to then stride across fields, along a track through cool woods,  
ends when I sit on a bench, hear chatter as folk relax,  
nibble slow lunches, laugh as clear as thrushes songs.

I linger into evening when their wine bottles empty  
then ghost between rooms, glance at what's written,  
search for my name - and Cathy's - as I stare at passions  
which creep slow as valley mist or overwhelm like lowering clouds.  
I read of bodies as close as quill to paper, but I am not there.

So I close their laptops, realising again I'm in only one book  
where its pages repeat all that's told of me by Ms. Bronte.  
But I want my own life. That's why I'm here. So I start to type  
a story where me and those I've just met belong, and passion.  
All night my fingers flicker; then, as goldfinches sing, walk home.

# JAN HARRIS

INSPIRED BY



## Centenary

we lay wreaths, sing hymns,  
breathe the same air as those we remember  
though they breathe no more

the breeze that ruffles coat hems at the cenotaph  
once carried the smell of cordite and cresol  
from trench to trench, flesh in stages of decay

today, it is sharp with traffic fumes and regret  
the tang of pavements after rain

we hold candlelit vigils,  
snuff flames out one by one  
see our prayers rise with the smoke

yet still, somewhere  
a soldier rests his eyes on unbroken sky  
where a lark showers the troubled world with song

# SALLY JAMES

INSPIRED BY



## The Help

1962 in Jackson Mississippi and Minnie was hot,  
so many rooms to clean, her back ached  
and fingers blistered. A child cried, Minnie smiled,  
she would rather nurse a toddler than brush a dusty yard.  
The child called her mamma, kissed her cheek,  
Minnie hoped she wouldn't do that  
when her real mamma was around.

It was tea time, Minnie gave her a wooden spoon  
and a pan to bang it on. The kitchen was modern,  
new things buzzed, needed to be plugged in.  
She cooked her own way, knew the mistress  
liked the fried chicken same as her family.  
Minnie had her own plate and cutlery in a cupboard,  
her cup hung on a hook out of sight.

When her day was done she walked home,  
her feet ached on the dusty road.  
A bus blustered by scowled "Whites only".  
Minnie mumbled, carried on, saw her home  
mingling in the down town slum.  
The door opened, children hugged her,  
cried hunger, she took off her shoes  
wiped her brow and put on her apron.

# DAPHNE MILNE

INSPIRED BY



## AFTERLIFE ON THE TOTNES LINE

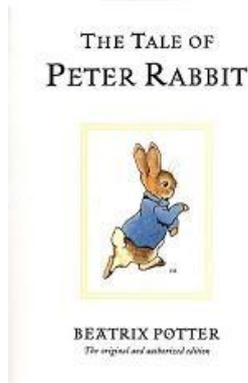
Haunting wasn't what I had in mind.  
It's the chains that get me down  
heavy, noisy and uncomfortable  
and the nightie – I wish they would  
read the book - it's all very well  
for the film-makers, looks suitably ghostly  
but I can tell you it's B. chilly  
wafting around the afterlife with no kecks,  
worse than being a Scotsman.

As for being translucent – well!

Then there's him – the hauntee  
as if I hadn't had enough of him in life  
miserable old so-an-so mousing around  
in semi darkness, saving pennies on candles  
miserable and miserly in one packet.  
I'll give him mustard and gravy.  
I'll have to send the gang round, otherwise  
I can guarantee there'll be no change there  
or my name's not Jacob Marley.

# DAPHNE MILNE

INSPIRED BY



## BB RUMINATES ON PR

Living with four women sounds good but  
he's not the man of the family  
quite the reverse three older sisters  
and Mother to chase him around.

He's sent out every day with the girls  
*To make sure he doesn't get into trouble.*  
They nag. I've heard them  
*don't do this, do that*

They're so bossy, smug as sixpences,  
buttoned up in their little pink capes.  
It's no wonder he's rebellious.

Of course he runs away, gets caught,  
escapes leaving his coat behind him  
reaches home soaking and shivering.

So he's sent to bed without supper  
but with a dose of nasty medicine.  
All because he wouldn't do as he was told.

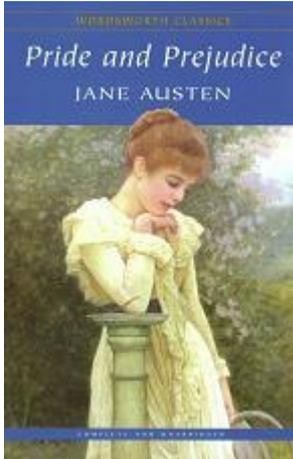
Living alone with Dad's much better  
no bread, milk and blackberries for tea  
a bit untidy but we manage.

I wouldn't be my cousin Peter  
not for all the lettuces  
in Mr. McGregor's garden.

I quite fancy my cousin Flopsy.

# DAPHNE MILNE

INSPIRED BY



## THE CAVALRY WEARS PETTICOATS

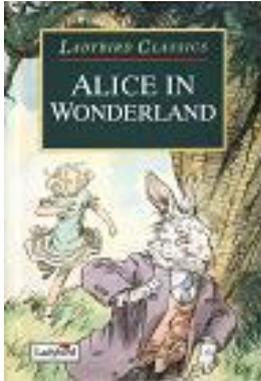
Great Aunt Jane didn't go in for wet T shirts.  
Her rebellions were of a gentler kind  
choreographed as precisely as a cotillion.

Such difficulties to be overcome:  
reclusive Father, over eager Mum,  
also the putative in-laws - snobbish,  
insular, self important, off putting.

Lizzie knows her duty  
however distasteful the task might be  
the rich, arrogant prig needs rescuing  
no alternative she must marry him.

# ERIC NICHOLSON

INSPIRED BY

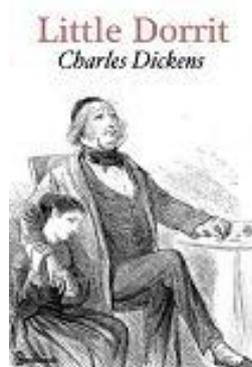


## A.L.I.C.E.

up down  
top bottom  
strange and charm  
went for a stroll  
(truth and beauty were nowhere to be seen)  
down disappeared  
down the hole first quickly  
followed by the others  
strange took it  
all in her stride  
up got in a spin  
bottom bottomed out  
top went all anti-matter  
charm said the rabbit  
burrow experience bore  
a striking resemblance  
to A Large Ion Collider Experiment  
and told everyone  
to duck as an unidentified  
sub atomic particle  
hurtled towards them

# STUART NUNN

INSPIRED BY



## Three Dorrits

### William

Who'd want to have a prison  
for family? Who'd exchange

an inconspicuous freedom for fame  
cadged in a cage? He would.

### Frederick

Music sustains him, tucked away  
in his corner of this double plot,

happy to be overlooked.  
His clarinet speaks for him.

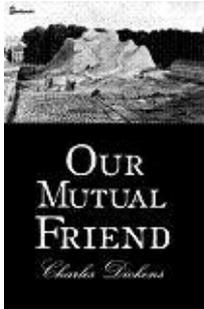
### Fanny

Insupportable, the life forced on her,  
two short steps from the gutter.

Her face is her fortune, and that  
not reliable. In the end.

# STUART NUNN

INSPIRED BY



## **Three Mutual Friends**

### **Noddy Boffin**

Where there's muck there's gold.  
in piles too high for climbing.

Where there's gold, muck accumulates,  
pollutes his generation.

### **Rogue Riderhood**

Night and river-water  
run through his veins,

his face reflected  
in drowned mens' eyes.

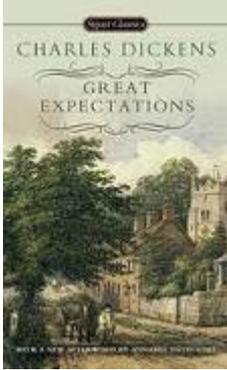
### **Silas Wegg**

He knows how to turn a penny –  
into the power to corrupt

a dustman's innocence. Till  
innocence drags him into the light.

# STUART NUNN

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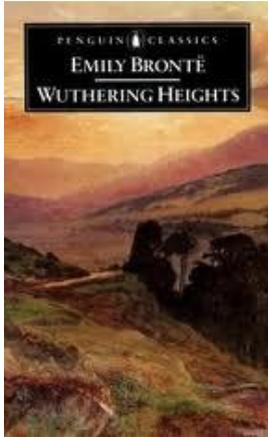


**“Well, you can break his heart.”**

How close, all his life, the shackle and cage;  
how just out of reach the cash.  
The web's prepared for him, woven of loss,  
corruption of uneaten cake, a kiss bestowed,  
beer stirred with a file, a servant's scarred wrists.  
When his moment comes, his innocence  
and sympathy for the fellow suffering  
springs the trap, and then what's left  
is the slow working out of the humiliation,  
the lead up to this night of rain  
and the stranger on the stair.

# BARBARA PHILLIPS

INSPIRED BY



## Diary: Catherine Speaks To Heathcliff

when the newness of the words  
still grows upon the page and the cutting  
leaves wounds so things can never be the same

you know it's like saying to you we're through  
even if we may think we are still in love  
but when you go I feel I've cut a living vein  
I say oh no—why did I let my love go  
but I know I can't call you back  
because it will never be the same again – ever

the wound will still be there, must always  
be shared and how can I do it -live with it  
I know inside where I don't want to go  
I can't – even if I say I can  
the cut was made  
it is deep, not just a scrape

I fooled myself into believing it was  
just as I did when I pruned those wounded  
branches that now flail in the wind  
their fresh gouges open  
to the light of morning accuse  
me of faithlessness, lash me with questions

(cont.)

(cont.)

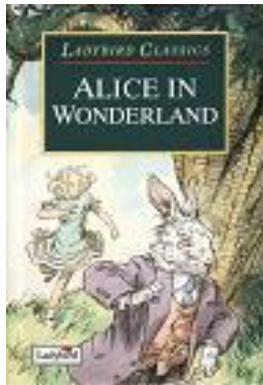
why can't you wait to see  
what love can do when you believe  
don't you know you can't presume  
to see necessity for endings when  
beginnings always cause pain that comes  
in growing towards togetherness

when trust is rain across limbs  
joined with ease of roots and earth  
when you exhale as if each breath  
is one you have not felt before  
when the one you love shines  
before you like a dream

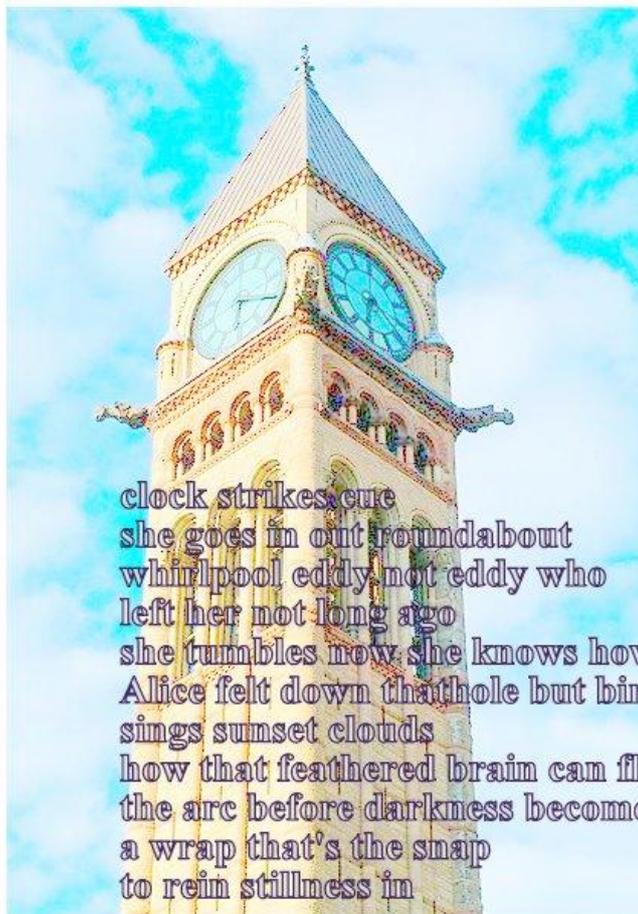
you didn't dream you'd ever  
see and we are new again in a way  
we didn't know we could ever be

# BARBARA PHILLIPS

INSPIRED BY



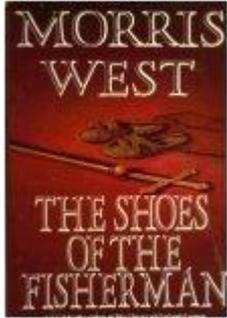
ALICE



clock strikes cue  
she goes in out roundabout  
whirlpool eddy not eddy who  
left her not long ago  
she tumbles now she knows how  
Alice felt down that hole but bird  
sings sunset clouds  
how that feathered brain can fly  
the arc before darkness becomes  
a wrap that's the snap  
to rein stillness in

# GRANT VAN WINGERDEN

INSPIRED BY

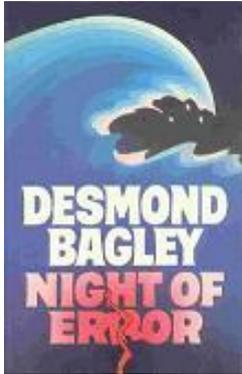


## **The Shoes of the Fisherman**

Soaked and slightly rotten but robust in a salt crusted way  
The careless knot and trailing lace across some speckled grime  
No time for the flap of the flip flop or slap of the slipper  
The hell with heels every time eyes on the line  
A lifetime of leaning over  
The canvas to fit  
Practical comfortable  
Weighted waterproof  
and for getting up on the roof

# GRANT VAN WINGERDEN

INSPIRED BY



## **Night of Error**

Through the mist of Mister's mistakes  
The fog and fug of those who lie awake  
and those who lie in wait

The evening out of imperfection  
Dares tumble in the wrong direction

The black streak bleak poised at peak  
Shadows shift at shaft of light  
Reaches for the switch to incandescence