

Poetry Series

David Mitchell
- poems -

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David Mitchell(20/12/1988)

BIOGRAPHY 4/4/2016

David Mitchell,27, lives in Colchester, England, and was educated at Great Totham Primary School, Colchester Royal Grammar School, and the University of Durham. He graduated from Durham with a BA in Music and an MA in Performance. It was while he was at university - on the 11th May,2008 - that he was received into the Catholic Church; and Christian themes are to be found in much of his writing. After he left Durham, he worked as a freelance musician, mainly as a piano teacher and an accompanist for various musical societies. In September 2015 he began teacher training at Colchester County High School and the Stanway School.

David began to write poetry in 2005 at the age of 16. His interest in poetry developed from some books his parents had in the house, and especially a very old copy of Francis Palgrave's Golden Treasury, which contains some of the finest lyric verse in the English language. To date, he has written over a hundred poems, many of which are available to read on the website .

In his spare time David likes to read, play the piano, and go for walks. He is interested in history, and enjoys visiting historic places.

A Colchester Nocturne

How strangely tranquil this town seems!
A quietness the stuff of dreams
Through all this soft and warm air streams
As still as death.

On this and ev'ry summer night
Day slowly turns to mild twilight
More pleasant to our mortal sight:
We pause for breath.

How diff'rent now, from when a crowd
Fill'd full this town with buzzing loud,
And Culver Square was just a cloud
Of human kind;

When people walk'd through ev'ry street,
The footsteps of so many feet
The weary antique pavestones beat:
They did not mind.

For now so few their vigil keep:
Most are at home falling asleep;
This old town almost seems to weep,
The wind to sigh.

For now a solemn awfulness
The air of evening does possess:
It sighs with great and deep sadness,
And so do I.

(Friday, 15th September, 2006.)

David Mitchell

A Confession

I've just spent twenty minutes of my life
Watching a cartoon (I am seventeen!)
With animals that talk in Irish accents
And wear sunglasses: most of them are pigs:
Can any excuse mitigate this crime?
I scann'd the guide to what I could have watch'd
Upon the screen, and in the top right corner
The Irish pig cartoon was on, and it
Entranced me, so I watch'd it (on full screen)
For twenty minutes, then it ended. If
I have by this committed mortal sin,
I pray that God forgive me. Mea culpa,
Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.
My conscience is now clearer than before.

David Mitchell

A Consolation

'This child of clay
To me was given
To rear and train
By sorrow and pain
In the narrow way,
Alleluia,
From earth to heaven.'

- THE VENERABLE JOHN HENRY CARDINAL NEWMAN.

When anguish'd sighs are sadly shed
And salty tears fall free and fast,
And when your life is heavy as lead
And memory dwells upon the past,
When foes and friends alike will hate,
When your soul will not cease to groan,
And you, unglad, submit to fate,
Remember you are not alone.

When falsely you are accused of crimes
That you would easily commit,
When you wish you'd been born in times
For which you did not feel unfit,
When broken is your breaking heart
And you think you are on your own
And demons tear your soul apart,
Remember you are not alone.

When you are beaten, scorn'd, and thrash'd,
And no one wants to understand;
By biting sarcasm you are lash'd;
You feel a million miles from land;
When all the world laughs you to scorn,
And talks of you in jeering tone,
And you wish you had not been born,
Remember you are not alone.

When in the depths of the abyss
You find your sinful soul is cast,
And when you long for more than this,

And yearn to breathe - to breathe your last,
And for fair Death's tender embrace,
And once for ever to have flown
From this most miserable place,
Remember you are not alone.

This is the path that men have trod
Before, and men will tread again -
For to prepare to meet your God
Endure brief suffering and pain:
Each baby in its mother's arms,
That wails with sad prophetic moan;
Each warrior in war's alarms,
Remember you are not alone.

Each mother bringing forth new life,
Each sick man on the brink of death,
This moment bears measureless strife,
For suff'ring comes, alas! with breath.
So do not fear when sorrow smites
Your soul; if you thought you'd outgrown
Tears that the honest babe not fights,
Remember you are not alone.

Remember when the God of heaven
Knelt in the garden, blood for sweat,
Remember when that God was given
Thirty-nine lashes, nor forget.
They crown'd the King of Kings with thorns
- He bore his fate with many a groan -
Imitate Him when all the world scorns -
Remember you are not alone.

Remember Simon of Cyrene
Bearing for Christ the doleful Cross;
Behold Jesus the Nazarene
Suffer and die - behold our loss -
He dies to bring life once for all -
The seeds of paradise are sown -
What will we there this half-life call?
Remember you are not alone.

O Queen of heaven, sweet Mary maid,
To thee we cry, life, sweetness, hope,
And send our sighs up from the shade
Of this tear-vale where weep and mope
Eve's poor and banish'd progeny:
Then turn thine eyes toward us who moan,
Show us exiles thy son, Mary,
For we are not alone.

David Mitchell

A Dark Poem

As languidly my feet plod home,
My thoughts the universe o'er-roam;
The silent stillness still inspires
A muteness of Cimmerian choirs
That dumbly sing but sound no note —
Hush that by sound shall not be smote —
Until one voice, damn'd to despair,
Destructively shall rend the air.

(Saturday, 15th October, 2005.)

David Mitchell

A Late Evening Poem

The sun has sunk beneath the skies,
But leaves a soft warm glow behind;
And, climbing slowly down, he dies,
Like me to heavy rest inclined:
My eyes are drowsy and call for sleep;
For they were not long dark this morn:
I'll now let Rest upon me creep,
And slumber as the night is born.

David Mitchell

A Parody Of Keats

Season of cold and languid joylessness,
With never-rising, ever-setting sun;
I cannot praise thee, and I cannot bless
The time from now till February is done;
When colds abound, and everyone shall sneeze,
And cough and lie in sickness with a sore
And aching head, with pains from all the hells.
And we go back to work or school once more,
And still more, and who any goodness sees
(Except John Keats) in sorrow, cold, disease,
And autumn, when all homes are prison cells?

David Mitchell

A Prayer For The Love Of God

Ah, Lord, let me love Thee,

Let me love Thee,

love Thee,

love Thee,

more, more, more;

let my soul and my heart

ever yearn for Thee

until the day

of consummation:

Let the only, the only desire of my heart

be to love Thee

and to bring others to love Thee.

Thou alone

art my happiness, my life, my joy, my love, my pleasure, my delight;

In Thee may my soul find rest;

In Thy Will, and in that alone

can happiness be found.

One day in Thy courts

is better than a thousand...

Thou, my only Love, art Love itself,

Love itself unloved!

Love is not loved! Love is not loved!

Ah! weep! weep bitter tears, roar, sob, sigh, groan:

Love is not loved!

Wherefore art Thou unloved, my dearest Love?

It is not that Thy creatures know not love,

Although they know not Thee.

Let Love be loved!

Lord, let my heart

Blaze, burn, with rushing sparks my heart ignite -

Oh! Lord! That Thou be loved is my desire -

My sole desire; I set my life at naught...

Oh! Love of God,

Resisted, driven back, and set aside:

Ah! Love unknown, untasted... That they knew
How happy they would be... Oh, how I wish
Thy love for us was known. But how much more
I wish all men requited it! O, folly!
Not to return this gift of love - what madness!
A treacherous ingratitude. Ungrateful
Thus to reject Thy boundless charity.
Let all men love Thee, Lord; let all men love Thee!
These hearts of stone make hearts of fire of love -
Enkindle in our hearts such ardent flames
That we may love Thee as the Saints have done.
Open the ears of those who proudly stop them:
Open the eyes of those who proudly shut them:
Open the minds of those who proudly follow
Their own capricious intellects. Lord, help us:
Help us to bear the crosses that Thou givest,
These tokens of Thy love - ah, healing Cross!
O Cross of Christ, come, come, with all thy torment,
With all thy terrors and with all thy pain,
Hail, Cross, my only hope! - Lord, let me love Thee!

Lord, let us love Thee; break the hearts of sinners
In mercy infinite: ah, Lord, inflame
Our rotten hearts with burning zeal so fervent
Our joy shall know no bounds. Oh, Lord, have mercy,
And melt the ice of pride that sinners bear
Freezing their hearts; O melt away their coldness
With fiery flames enkindled by Thy Spirit.

Oh, Lord, why is it sinners rage
So furiously against Thee?
It breaks my heart to see Thee treated thus!
Behold our King, behold Him on the Cross,
The Cross of shame, the ignominious death
That conquered is by love, eternal Love.

Ah!

It is for my sins, Jesus, that Thou diest.
Thou diest for us all, us wretched sinners,
Who still blaspheme Thee; still we sin against Thee
And tear Thee limb from limb - insensate wretches!

God, grant us grace, and we shall conquer evil -
Or rather Thou shalt conquer evil in us.
Strength comes from Thee alone (to those who ask it) .
Give us the sense to ask the strength we have not,
Or Satan certainly will overcome us:
Grant us the grace to conquer his temptation.

My dearest Jesus, why do men blaspheme Thee?
Why do they hate Thee so? They may deny it,
Just as they Thee deny. But they will answer
To Thee, Lord, at the last. Let all men love Thee!
Lord, let them know that hatred of a sin
IS love of sinners. Let us love the good,
But sin and error passionately hate:
And let them know that nobody can love
Who does not hate the enemies of his love:

(13th January,2011.)

David Mitchell

A Short Waste Of Time

Why do I write these words?

Why do you read them?

Surely you've better things to do with your time?

Like watching the flight of birds,

With stale bread to feed them;

Why on earth are you reading this incompetent rhyme?

(Wednesday, 28th December, 2005.)

David Mitchell

A Sonnet

My soul was sorrowful, and burdened sore
With suffering and pain without a cause.
My sighs went up to heaven to implore
The Eternal that I might obtain a pause,
At least, from so great agony; and tears
Unbidden fell from dark and weary eyes
That feared of this a riverful of years
And sadness, for how slow the future flies.

And then I saw an old man, sick in bed,
A starving child, its mother giving birth,
A battlefield bestrewed with heaps of dead.
I saw them being laid beneath the earth;
And having seen a city all enflamed,
I saw myself; and then I was ashamed.

David Mitchell

Ad Mariam Semper Virginem

Lady, look upon this land,
This land so dear to thee;
Pray that from city unto sand,
Thine again she may be!

Pray that, amid the wolf-like throng,
Some saintly sheep may rise,
Whose pray'rs, like Thine, may be so strong
As to uncloud men's eyes.

Let England, Thy Dowry, return to the Faith
From wave-crashed shore to shore;
And let her great people stay true to the death:
Smile on us, Maid, once more!

(6th November, 2007. /PRO CONVERSIONE ANGLIÆ, DOTIS MARIÆ
FOR THE CONVERSION OF ENGLAND, THE DOWRY OF MARY)

David Mitchell

After Aquinas

Evil is an absence:

The absence of good.

One cannot say that good is the absence of evil,

Any more than that light is the absence of darkness.

For darkness is the absence of light

And is utterly subsumed by it

As evil is by good.

David Mitchell

After Confession

Freed at last from the frightening grasp of the foe,
Once again peace returns, now is ended the woe
That descended upon me as black as the pit
Of the hellfire of sin I had willingly lit!
O my Jesus! I love Thee! No words can suffice
Thee to thank for Thy Mercy; Thy Blood was the price
Of my wickedness; hadst Thou not pardon'd my crime,
Then accurst I had been in each moment of time
Until death or repentance had broken the thread
And I were to this wicked life, or to sin, dead;
Should this sinner have died in his sins (trembling thought) ,
Then a curse everlasting on him had been brought—
Yea, the curse of the Christ on my head would have lit,
And should certainly never be lifted from it.
But the curse of my sins in Thy mercy was turn'd
To a blessing, a beautiful blessing unearn'd
By me, save by repentance, Thy generous grace
That thou gavest to one that had spat in Thy Face.

May the blessing of grace that Thou gavest to me
Be a treasure I cling to, although there should be
Twenty thousand temptations to drag me to hell,
Still I ask Thee, then, Jesus, all evil to quell.

My Jesus, have mercy; preserve me from death
Everlasting; in Thee, Lord, I place all my faith;
And, O Mary, my Mother, take pity on me—
May the end of my journeying glorious be!

(Tuesday, 20th January, 2009.)

David Mitchell

After Tennyson

Though the tender grace of a day that is dead
May never come back to me,
Yet the joy and the warmth there was once may return
That again I may happiness see;

While the years that seemed so long have flown by
As if they were so many days,
And the loss of old friends starts a tear in the eye
And one pierces through Memory's haze:

Yet the joy I once knew has come back to me now,
All my sorrow away from me flies,
As I hear the birds chanting their glorious song,
And the Spring flourish under the skies.

(Monday, 6th April, 2009.)

David Mitchell

An Ode To The Novelist Who Shares My Name

I don't know how long I had known of this man,
But I'd never read one of his works;
But I one day to read his 'Cloud Atlas' began,
And now on my bookshelf it lurks.

I still haven't read any more of his books,
But one day soon I probably will;
Tho' as if they're as good as the last one it looks,
And that was an absolute thrill.

He's writing another; next year it comes out;
I'd better read that when I've time;
I've not the least notion of what it's about,
But no doubt 'twill be highly sublime.

I should mention, this man's no relation of mine,
And though he stole my name, he's not me,
And you should read 'Cloud Atlas', for that's very fine,
And it may be the finest that he

Has yet written; what can I do but recommend
The man who has stolen my name –
Read his novels until you arrive at the end –
Please remember we are not the same.

(Wednesday, 28th December, 2005.)

David Mitchell

And We Beheld His Glory

CREATOR of the worlds and skies,
Come down to us this night,
Almighty God, with our own eyes
We see Thy glorious light.

Unto Thine Own Thou comest, Lord,
Who shall receive Thee not.
Be still: behold the INCARNATE WORD
With manger for a cot.

The Sun of Righteousness doth shine;
The long night fades away;
The wise men knew the star a sign
That leads to Thee today.

Their orient treasures to Thee they render
Myrrh, frankincense, and gold:
What may I give to the tender
Babe that swaddling clothes enfold?

He asks no gift of you, my brother,
But that you follow Him, the Lord;
His sole command: Love one another;
Lay down your shield and sword.

In Godhead-Manhood lived this Child,
Condemn'd to suffer death
As criminal, but now we are reconciled
To Jesus of Nazareth.

(Sunday, 25th December, 2005.)

David Mitchell

Andantino

I find I walk a lot: it helps me think
And calms me down, and minimizes stress.
Sometimes I think I would prefer it if I did
Not think; but contemplation is not bad.
Indeed, if I thought not, I would not write,
Or if I did, I think I'd do it badly.
We all should walk more often: benefits
Are surely evident from doing so:
The environment would certainly improve;
It is a safe and healthy way to travel;
And - most important good of all, for me -
Walking induces thought. Is it not true
(Although, if true, it must therefore be sad)
That in this time we seldom pause for thought?
Our attitude is 'We do not have time'.
We do not seem to understand that this
Is no excuse: if we do not have time,
Surely we do too much, and should do less.
And if we take as much time as we need
(Not more) , may we not thereby gain more joy
—More Something, out of life? Slow down: at least,
Don't rush. Do not want something yesterday
Which you will get tomorrow, if you wait;
For it may never come. And do not think
'If I don't fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
I'll be no man': whatever you may do,
And whatsoever evil may befall you,
Never will you be able to say truly
That you are not a man: for although minutes
Do not forgive, they do not unforgive.
Now ask yourself, what does this word mean, 'minute'?
A sixtieth of an hour: what is an hour?
Do you not understand that man makes hours
And measures them, and minutes measure man?
If we did not waste time by worrying
About that time, then we would get more done:
Not only more, but much more fruitfully.
There is no need to Do Everything Faster;

For life is not a race. Sufficient rest,
As well as work, is requisite for health.
I do not mean that there are never times
(For often are such times) when one should hurry
Or act immediately without delay:
I mean that one should take the proper tempo,
Not playing 'presto' when we read 'allegro',
Nor 'largo' for 'andante'. There is none
Alive who, when he breathes his final breath,
Can truly say, 'I have wasted no time':
For everyone could say 'I wasted time,
And I could have done more': remorse is needless
(Repentance not) when one departs this frame:
You need not worry (unless you have good reason)
If you do not work twenty hours each day
Without or food or sleep. Too great exhaustion
Would kill you if you did, and kill you soon.
Be not afraid to live - nor to be idle:
As long as you're not dead all your life long,
And lazy to the core, then if you do
Your share of work, then whether you deserve
To rest or not, you need your rest, so take it.
Walking alone gives time enough for thought:
And solitude enhances this, sometimes.
And thought is never wasted. Above all,
Walking is pleasant - walking in the sun,
At least; I do not think I can pretend
To like a long stroll through the wind and rain;
But others do (pretend? or do they really?) .
The great virtue of walking is, I find,
That unlike many other things in this
Too hectic time, whose ghost is one of speed,
Walking allows a man to take his time,
To think, to meditate, and to reflect.

David Mitchell

Answer To Prayer

Be not afraid, for I am with you ever:
Yea, I am with you unto the world's end:
Though you forsake Me, I shall leave you never;
I am your Lord, your Brother, and your Friend.

You know by now the world you live in hates you;
Your life seems like a living tragedy;
You're scorn'd and scoff'd at, everyone berates you;
You only wish your enemies could see.

Me love and follow, people slandering you;
Endure it when you wish that you were dead;
I died for you, from death to life to bring you,
And I did rise, exactly as I said.

If you do well and serve Me as you ought to,
Submit your will to Me without restraint,
Then you, now thirsty, will at last be brought to
Heavenly waters and become a Saint.

(Saturday,4th August,2007.)

David Mitchell

April

March is dwindling and dying -
Now April is here,
The sweetest of months
In the whole of the year!
The chill winds of March
Have left us again:
It is time we should welcome
The soft vernal rain!

The gentle spring showers
Enduring for hours
Give life to the flowers
That lie on the ground.

The sky shines with brightness,
The air's filled with lightness,
The clouds with clear whiteness,
The spring with sweet sound.

This month is a treasure;
Enjoy it at leisure:
I hope it's a pleasure
To you and to yours,

And I hope that you find
It a pleasant and kind
Month, and if not, don't mind
The month the world adores!

(Friday, 31st March, 2006, Colchester.)

David Mitchell

Autumn

The shining summer ages, dwindles, dies;
The heat turns to the cold.
The former azure hue of yonder skies
Is hardly to behold:

For often, as hastens the wintry time,
Full many a cotton cloud
O'ercasts the heaven; approaches the cold clime
When snow shall come, like shroud.

'Tis not here yet; some warmth doth yet remain,
As leaves from bleak boughs fall:
The mellow colours winter will disdain,
For they will vanish, all:

The autumn, like its leaves, must fall and fade,
With the ephem'ral year:
Creation all will have died and decay'd,
That green was ere 'twas sere.

(Monday, 10th October, 2005.)

David Mitchell

Birthday Wish

Each year, on my birthday, I have had a birthday cake.

Each year I have had to blow the candles out, and make a wish.

I don't think I made any particular wishes when I was younger; at least, if I did, I don't remember it.

But today I made a wish.

I cannot tell you what it was, or it would not come true.

Will my wish be fulfilled this year?

(Tuesday, 20th December, 2005.)

David Mitchell

Ce Qu'On Entend Sur La Montagne

He trudges forcefully towards the height
That crowns the glory of the arduous hill;
At long last his feet on that summit light,
And for the first time in an age are still;
He looks down at the view beneath, until
Its beauty does not move him, but he hears
And feels, submitting to the Supreme Will,
The cold breath of the wind upon his ears,
Making him listen to his silent hopes and fears.

Now memories haunt him like so many ghosts,
Intangible, for ever now past reach;
His brain's each thought before him slowly coasts,
Nor does he exercise his power of speech:
Is it his part to learn now or to teach
His soul something she did not know before?
What must he teach or learn, if so? We each
Can learn, did we but open wide the door,
And know that of Infinity is ever more.

His reverie subsided, and he went
Down and away, to shelter, but not home;
'Twas not an easy, though a steep, descent;
And often would he through the country roam,
And often thoughts profound to him would come;
He suffer'd what he must, did not complain,
But sadly read the universe's tome;
But always hope would come to him again,
Relieving him somewhat from misery and pain.

(Saturday, 21st October, 2006.)

David Mitchell

Celestial Bodies

The earth each day travels her weary round,
Partly in sunlight, partly in darkness hid;
Around the sun she goes without a sound,
And nothing her trajectory can forbid:

The sun shines forth, spreading his finite flame
As far as any one might ever see,
But he is only worth being called that name,
Because of life, that here he makes to be.

The mournful moon, wan, through the night sky shines,
Her sad face sad at the earth's evil she sees,
And through the sky to wander she resigns,
A beauteous crescent floating through night's breeze.

The stars are glittering in unlighted skies,
They are not bright, but light even so they bear,
They are there not only when the moon doth rise,
But in our daytime their fair light they share.

The other planets run around the sun;
And seem at night like other stars to appear,
As they their courses of various lengths run,
Completing each his circumsolar year.

And other planets other stars surround,
But for some reason they do not, like ours,
Bear life—why is this? Man hath never found
Out why, no more why pass these temporal hours.

The earth each day travels her weary round,
Partly in sunlight, partly in darkness hid;
Around the sun she goes without a sound,
And nothing her trajectory can forbid.

(Monday, 12th September, 2005.)

David Mitchell

Cold

I always feel cold
I wake up in the morning and I feel cold
I pull the duvet over me to try to get warm
I get out of bed and I am cold
I get dressed and I do not feel any warmer
I have breakfast and I am still cold
I walk through the freezing cold and rain and I am even colder
At the end of the day I go to bed
and I cannot sleep
because I am cold
and the angel of music sings songs in my head
the fires of hell itself would scarce suffice to warm my heart

(Friday, 4th November, 2005.)

David Mitchell

Cosmos

Onward beneath the night-bedark'nèd vault
Of scarcity of stars I see aloft,
I, weary, cold, alone, my-homeward wend,
And, still to attain mine end,
Perceive the incision of the acute wind's breath;
It is the chill of death,
And yet caresses me, cool, tender, soft,
But I force forth my way, who may not halt.

Yea, force, till I have planted firm my feet
The thither side my threshold; I look there
Far past the stars; to the last thing in space
My mind doth freely race
That cowers at this fell infinitude
Of nothing, what this nude
Abyss, cosmotic, emptiness, nor air,
'Twixt me and infinite naught a vacuum fleet.

Nothing 'twixt me and nothingness I find,
But here I shudder as I trudge along;
I, lone, apart, and weary, must escape
This demon void of shape,
I must, I shall, away from this, and now,
And none can tell me how
I can escape the horror and the wrong,
Nor yet the vast recesses of my mind.

David Mitchell

Cry Of The Soul

I thought I had passed through this. Was I wrong?
I have not wept as I have wept today
For long - months, certainly; perhaps a year;
And then I was a fool - am I so still?
Have life's sharp blows not roused thee from thy stupor?
Art thou no wiser than thou wast before?
If so, why kept'st thy tears until today?
Something within me stirred, and I was breaking;
Something that I had put far deep within;
Something I started saying made me tremble;
With difficulty I held back my tears.
And then I was alone; wellsprings gush'd forth,
I cried for half an hour, and I remember'd,
Remember'd how I wept in days gone by,
Both how I felt, and what I was, remember'd;
And yet I would not go back if I could.
Or would I? If I could subtract the evils
That there were then, and are for me no more,
Perhaps I would: and yet I do not know it,
For some things are predestin'd not to be,
And some depend on things fortuitous,
One does not know how one would live a day
Again; how often does one wish one could!
Friends, family, will pass, and traverse over
The double-dreadful agony of death.

(Published Thursday, 8th January, 2009, written 2007 or 2008 - around the same time as 'Orthodoxy' and 'Memory', which I put up today.)

David Mitchell

De Rerum Natura

I cast my mind's eye to the mountaintop
And what do I see?
I see, beneath me, the world
Of quotidian existence,
Of labour and of rest,
Of man's humanity and inhumanity,
A world inhabited by people whose prime object is their several self,
Who seldom if ever look inward,
Let alone outward,
A world of cruel wrath;
But in this world I see also the good,
The kind, the friendly,
Those who truly love mankind,
Although they bewep our outcast state,
The benevolent and the selfless.

Above me stretches the heaven,
abode of the Divine, the Ineffable,
half-forgotten by much of His Creation.

I fall to my knees and silently pray.

(Sunday, 4th December, 2005.)

David Mitchell

Death And Life

If what follows this life
Is a heaven without suffering,
Where the recollection of past suffering
Does not induce present suffering;
Where there is nothing of evil;
Where we are reconciled, at last,
One to another and to our Creator,
And where all is good and perfect;
Surely such a life
(If it may be so called)
Is better than this.

If what follows this life
Is an oblivion without mind,
Where there is neither suffering
Nor recollection of past suffering
To induce present suffering;
Where all that we ever knew
Is forgotten,
Surely such a death
(If it may be so called)
Is better than this.

If what follows this life
Is another, like life,
Wherein we shall suffer
As in the present present;
Where there is as much or more of evil
Than in this life;
Then hope says
That surely such a life
(Be it true or untrue)
Is better than this.

But whatever follows this life,
We must not neglect it.

(Sunday, 15th January, 2006.)

Deep Thought

We exist: of that no sane person does doubt,
Although there may pseudophilosophers be,
Who claim this essence is not. They are liars.
Commune not with such men. 'Tis real enough.
Our senses we may trust, else had we none
To be born, procreate, and, last, to die,
Successive generations destin'd thus
Perpetually — Is that all that life is?
Birth, intercourse, and death? Birth, love, and death?
Love, hate, despair, faith, anguish, trust, fear, hope,
Guilt, innocence, experience; baby, toddler,
Child, adolescent, adult young, then old,
And, when he calls, his preordainèd hour,
Whether we will or no, too soon, too late,
Wishing to live another year, in vain,
The time appointed from ere worlds were made,
The doom awaits us all, few fear him not:
Perhaps none fear him not; there is no shame
In fear of whom 'tis human but to fear,
Tho' he comes but once — his name, we know, is Death:
And it shall be as if thou hadst never been.
To live only to die? It cannot be —
Perhaps it can: 'life _has_ no point, ' they say —
'Tis true, maybe, we ne'er will understand it,
But that conclusion seems to me to be
Like giving up in despair. We must go on
Seeking what we desire, whether that means
That we must therefore suffer, humankind!
Or never come to yonder wicker gate,
We never must give up. Courage and hope
And wisdom and forethought and strength of will
And mind and character, and fortitude
Shall benefit us, let come what come may:
Nothing will come of naught; unreap'd, unsown;
Brave what perils may come; they may be great;
They may be dire; it may be that thou cross
Bridges thou wishest that thou hadst not cross'd;
Yet they must be travers'd. Suffer thou shalt
Things that thou wouldst prefer not to have borne;

But thou wast born of woman, human thou,
And ne'er to have suffered is to be inhuman,
Or dead, or undead, or else yet unborn;
'Tis true that sweet is pleasure after pain;
But miserabler is woe soon after joy.
There is but little pleasure in memory
Of joy that is past; is that pleasure, or pain?
Insanely man hopes the to-come to bring
The former, when ——— insanely did I say?
Nay, rationally, for grief and joy are both
Ephemeral, in the usual course of things.
But languor long may last, more so than joy?
Terrestrially I think; celestial, no;
Small consolation to us on earth below.
What joy is there in heaven? Joy infinite,
Love infinite, infinite bliss and peace;
How can this be? I do not understand:
But it is not my province; I am not God,
I am but a man, frail man, lords of the earth,
That purposeless each other do destroy!
Art thou, then, born to suffer? Yea and nay,
But still I do not understand how that
Can be the only purpose of our being.
It makes no sense to me, who cannot see
How that could be, seeing that God is good.
God is not evil; he gave men free will,
And if man will his own kind will to kill,
That is man's will, not God's; God interferes not,
Knowing that soon or late we all must die,
And knowing a great many things besides
That thou know'st not. This is no explanation
For evils that the earth herself commits
That has no mind or will to call her own,
Such as her quaking, horrified, at man,
Whose own evil is greater, who deserves
To die ten thousand times in torture fell,
For wickedness that he is guilty of.
But if to suffer is why we are here,
We may as well go kill ourselves: 'tis not.
Neither do we (like Epicurus old)
Claim we are here to enjoy ourselves; no truer
Is that hypothesis than its opposite.

'Give thanks to God! ' men say, 'That's why we're here.'
Yes, but I am not satisfied with this;
It is not a sufficient explanation.
If God made man himself to glorify,
For that purpose alone, it seems to me
(Who may be wrong, but do not think I am,
Like Plato's troglodytes) that God is vain.
Which he is not: for God is perfect love,
Essence supreme, creator of all things,
Of all things Lord, both merciful and just.

Thou dost not know wherefore thou art create;
But thou sure know'st that God is the most great,
Most good, most perfect Being; while we suppose
Empty surmises, he all answers knows.

(Saturday,15th October,2005.)

David Mitchell

Early In The Morning

'Twixt the hours of three and four
The poet wakes;
As those angry dark clouds roar,
The morning breaks.
And the chorus of the morn
Quells my short sleep,
As my soul from rest is torn,
To twilight deep.

Yonder birds with their shrill sound
My rest destroy,
And they fill my hearing round,
Seeming to cloy:
Now I wonder how I slept,
So soon to wake,
Light the vigil that birds kept
Could easy break.

Now the skylark's morning song
Is softer far;
Though it was both loud and long,
They quieter are:
And their sound has cast away
The dark of night,
For they've brought their many a ray
Of sun's daylight.

David Mitchell

Early Morning Stillness

Hush! All is still and silent, cold and dark,
No sound to hear; a whelming silentness
Engulfs my being; I wake long long before
The sun lifts up his head: wide wide awake
Am I, while all beside so quiet is
The earth herself seems sleeping. The birds wake:
I hear their silvery song: why sing they so?
So beautiful, the world beside oblivious
Of their entrancing melody.—Sleep on,
Ye people; or if wake, do not destroy
With unmeet noise their heavenly music. Why
Can mankind not this peacefulness sustain,
But with wild clamouring noise peace doth destroy?
List, list, O man! to the unforc'd song o' th' lark:
Hear, that hast ears to hear! A wondrous sound,
A melody divine! I hear your song,
And know that I shall be at peace this day,
Though I know not what woe this day may bring
To me or any other mortal being:
Your song, the outward expression of your souls,
With you created by the Thought of God.

(Monday, 23rd January, 2006.)

David Mitchell

Easter Trilogy: 1: Good Friday

Alas! the Lord is dying now, and soon He will be dead!
And all our sins innum'erable are laid upon His head!
It's we who are responsible, it's we who've caused this loss -
We have condemn'd this guiltless God to die upon a cross.

We knew Thee not, alas! O Lord, we cared not who Thou wert;
O miserable people, who could dare to do such hurt:
The robber we let go, and shouted 'Jesus crucify! '
What mattered it to us whether the Lord should live or die?

At this momentous hour the temple's vail was rent in twain:
We thought that we should never see Thyself alive again:
And it did not then seem to us to be remotely odd
That an enemy centurion said: This was the Son of God.

At this momentous hour a horrid dark spread o'er the land;
The earth did quake in fear in every town and every sand;
The universe itself in every atom seemed to say:
Be sorrowful, O man, for you have killed your God today.

(Friday, 14th April, 2006.)

David Mitchell

Easter Trilogy: 2: Easter Even

This day is dark and dismal, as our sorrows we bewail:
As we reflect upon our extinct Master's woeful tale:
We fail'd him in his life, even as we fail him in his death:
And shall we see his like again - Jesus of Nazareth?

He left us suff'ring yesterday, he left us here to mourn;
We know not what to think or do, of Jesus' aid forlorn;
We sit and we ask one another, 'What was it all for?
And shall the world remember him at all for evermore? '

Remember him, remember him, remember him, although
You suffer, you shall not forget that he suffer'd also -
That he was crucified for you, and he has made you free:
But what of that, you say, now God Himself has ceased to be?

The Lord has died - we all must die - just as we must be born:
How shall we e'er forget the baleful woes of yestermorn?
When all my sins vermilion were laid on Jesus' head,
To be made white, like this black day when God himself is dead!

(15th April,2006.)

David Mitchell

Easter Trilogy: 3: Easter Day

Tell me, sir, where is my Lord, for they have taken him away,
Said Mary Magdalene before the dawning of the day,
And I know not where they've laid him, - sir, with him what have you done?
Mary, soft said the risen Christ and Everlasting Sun.

A week ago they raised for me the great 'Hosanna' cry -
These were the men who not long since condemn'd this Man to die -
But I have conquered Death, and I have gained for Man the key
To everlasting joy for him beyond eternity.

Behold, mankind, what God will dare to undertake for you;
What Man will undertake - the selfsame Man Whom mankind slew:
Behold the wonder: Christ rose after suff'ring Cross and scourge:
The work of none but God, a most Almighty Thaumaturge.

Despair no more, O man, for your scarce revocable loss
Has been atoned: 'twas not for Christ Christ died upon a Cross:
Hear Jesus' words, listen to them: 'Poor sinner, follow me
To everlasting life, for I, the Truth, have made you free.'

(April 16,2006 - Easter Day, rev.28th May 2010.)

David Mitchell

Esto Vir!

(Dedicated to H. W. Longfellow.)

I shall stand unbowed, unflinching,
At the stinging darts of life;
Though my soul with pain is pinching,
I shall bear the battle's strife.

Though I be completely shaken,
And shed tears that burn like fire,
Though the things I love be taken,
And the seas are rising higher,

And though life should knock me over,
And my head be smeared with blood,
I shall rise again, nor cower,
Till my heart's last thundering thud.

And to gain the longed-for guerdon,
I shall struggle on uphill,
And I'll bear my crushing burden
With an adamant will.

(David Mitchell, All Saints' Day, 2013)

David Mitchell

Et Homo Factus Est

The Christ was born in Bethlehem
Beneath a starlit sky;
The Christ was born in Bethlehem;
The world pass'd thoughtless by.

The Christ was born in Bethlehem
One terrible tranquil night;
The Christ was born in Bethlehem:
Keep Bethlehem in sight!

The Christ was born in Bethlehem,
Of Virgin Mother pure;
The Christ was born in Bethlehem
Our sorrows to endure.

The Christ was born in Bethlehem
The Living, Breathing Word:
The Christ was born in Bethlehem,
And scarce a sound was heard.

The Christ was born in Bethlehem,
The Wise came from afar
- The Christ was born in Bethlehem -
Led to him by a star.

The Christ is born in Bethlehem –
We kneel before His feet –
The Christ is born in Bethlehem –
How terrible and sweet!

The Christ is born in Bethlehem,
And see his hands so small
- The Christ is born in Bethlehem -
That have created All!

The Christ is born in Bethlehem
To this world sent to die:
The Christ is born in Bethlehem;
Hear that foreboding cry!

The Christ is born in Bethlehem,
The Long-awaited one:
The Christ is born in Bethlehem,
Messiah, David's Son.

The Christ is born in Bethlehem;
The newest Age begins;
The Christ is born in Bethlehem
Into a world of sins.

The Christ is born in Bethlehem
To take those sins away;
The Christ is born in Bethlehem
And lives in us today.

The Christ is born in Bethlehem
To suffer and to die
- The Christ is born in Bethlehem
- For us in agony.

The Christ is born in Bethlehem
Because of sin and us;
The Christ is born in Bethlehem
In stillness glorious.

The Christ is born in Bethlehem,
And grows from babe to child;
The Christ is born in Bethlehem,
By sin not once beguiled.

The Christ is born in Bethlehem,
ET HOMO FACTUS EST;
The Christ is born in Bethlehem:
The Perfectest and Best.

The Christ is born in Bethlehem
One dark and silent night:
The Christ is born in Bethlehem:
Of True Light see True Light!

The Christ is born in Bethlehem;

The wormwood and the gall
- The Christ is born in Bethlehem -
Shall smite the Lord of All!

The Christ is born in Bethlehem:
O wondrous, wondrous love!
The Christ is born in Bethlehem –
The God of Heaven above!

The Christ is born in Bethlehem –
And Mary's arms enfold
Great God made Man in Bethlehem
Who All does make and hold.

Praise be to God in Bethlehem –
To Father, and to Son,
Who now is born in Bethlehem,
And Holy Ghost: all One.

David Mitchell

Even So, Come, Lord Jesus

The dead awake. The sleeping rise.
The fatal trumpet blasts the skies.
In dazzling white the Lord descends,
And all of his creation ends.

The quick and dead view him with fear,
As each thought, word, and deed, is clear;
No secrets undiscovered stay,
Nor space, nor worlds; nor time, nor day.

To heaven or hell each soul must fly -
Each body quakes; no eye is dry,
That sees the glory of the Lamb
Of God, great I AM THAT I AM.

The universe trembles in awe
And yields to its Creator's law;
The day has come, it is today
That all the worlds must melt away.

The King of Kings prepares to speak,
All turn towards him, all are weak;
Gabriel's call to wake the dead
Abruptly stops. All is mute dread.

'I came to save you from your crime;
To turn to Me I gave you time
Enough, and more; it is too late
For you to influence now your fate.'

All gaze at Jesus, terrified,
And none their fear of hell need hide,
Nor could they if they would do so,
For He would always all things know.

'Whose name is in the book I hold
(Unopen'd yet) is of the fold:
Whose name is not indited there
Must be condemn'd to grim Despair.'

Each soul at length found its last home,
From where it nevermore would roam;
Some to hell's lonely, fiery heat
And some to a joyful heaven and sweet.

Time rolls away. Use what is left
Before the universe is cleft
Asunder, then to nothingness;
Before your life swift time shall press:

There shall no matter soon exist:
All shall fade into murk and mist;
There shall be neither now nor here
When all becomes for ever clear.

David Mitchell

Evening

The long day now at last is o'er,
Its joys and sorrows done,
And it will not be long before
Its sum of hours has run.

The sun has set and gone below
The occidental skies,
And while the heaven is all aglow
The ephemeral twilight dies.

How beautiful! above my head
I see the vast dark cloud,
And little light; but this dark spread
Clothes dying day, like a shroud.

Night's solemn chill pervades the air,
From garish day a release:
Enjoy it while you may, and share
In this mild evening peace.

David Mitchell

Excess

I eat too much
I write too much
I think too much

(Sunday, 6th November, 2005.)

David Mitchell

Existence

Nothing we know exists without our knowing
That it exists, although things may exist
Without anyone knowing they exist.
For all that we perceive via our senses
We know by intuition that 'tis true;
But what we by perception do not sense,
We cannot know for sure; we might believe,
But cannot strictly know. Some might maintain
That we cannot know anything, because
Our senses may deceive us; that seems true,
But instinct says 'tis false; does instinct lie?
I do not think it does; I trust my mind,
That never lied to me. Because I think,
I am;
Did I not think, should I then not exist?
When I am asleep, unconscious of my being,
Do I then not exist? I feel quite sure
That I shall still exist when I awake.
But maybe there is matter we know not
Within the universe, and we may never
Know that it is, if we ne'er come across it.

(Saturday, 29th October, 2005.)

David Mitchell

Fear

One dark night in the distance,
As I walkéd through the wood,
I saw a sable figure,
Terrible, wearing a hood.
It was more dark than grimmest night,
And it approachéd me,
That horrifying person which
Near death did frighten me.

I turn'd, and ran, as fast I could,
And ran into the night,
A long way from that uncouth hood,
Quiv'ring with nervous fright.

I could not see the way I went,
And I rush'd tremendously fast,
And then I look'd behind me, and
A glance towards it cast.

It was much much too close to me;
I would it were a dream;
And then methought it touchéd me,
Which causéd me to scream.

It stood like statue by my side,
This Figure, with his hood:
"May'st thou thy face show unto me? "
Stock still the Figure stood.

"Why dost thou not as I thee ask'd? "
It not a thing did say.
The sun came up: at last I saw
The glorious light of day.

And when the sunbeams of the dawn
Upon the forest shone,
I look'd around me—saw it not
—The hateful thing was gone.

(Written in 2001. Revised up to 2003. This is my earliest poem.)

David Mitchell

Food For Thought

'Of his diete mesurable was he,
For it was of no superfluitee,
But of greet norissyng and digestible.'
(Chaucer, Cant. T., Gen. Prol., I.435-437.)

At what I am about to write
I don't intend to start a fight;
Although the atmosphere is tense,
To me it seems like common sense.

The more you eat, the more you weigh —
He risks his life who so should say.
Or if you eat a lot, then you
Must do some exercises too.

No longer can I keep quiet
About this nonsense 'diet' —
You have a liver to detoxify you.
You all should take some care
That water, sleep, fresh air,
Do not conspire together to defy you.

(Tuesday, 3rd January, 2006.)

[2006: 1]

David Mitchell

From Catullus

Soles occidere et redire possunt:
Nobis, cum semel occidit brevis lux,
Nox est perpetua una dormienda.
- Catullus, V.

The sun may set and rise tomorrow bright:
But we, when once shall set our brief day's light,
Shall sleep at last in everlasting night.

Friday, 5th October, 2007.

David Mitchell

God Moves In A Mysterious Way

Tell me, O Lord, wherefore it pleases Thee
That whensoever I turn on my TV
That Eamonn Holmes pops up from nothingness
And does not ever disappear, unless
I turn the television off again
(Which I must do, to minimize the pain) .
And always he is doing some quiz show
I do not want to watch. Why is this so?

David Mitchell

Hell And Heaven

Although my eyes were open, yet I dream'd;
Was borne by ghastly spirits into a trance,
Wherein I saw darkness, and was afraid.
I dream'd that I had left my brittle frame,
And was in hell. I did not feel its fires,
But saw the agony that kills the damn'd
In hell, the lake of fire, their second death.
I pitied them, and saw how swiftly joy
Inverted is to horror, or despair.
Is this for me? I shuddered to think.
It is what I deserve, nor less nor more:
It is far worse than this life, though it seems
At times as if 'tis hard to tell. For torment
Appears at times to reign not only in hell,
But also in this world. It cannot be
That we should never suffer in this life,
For if we never suffer'd, were it possible
In this life not to suffer, and were there
No death (for death brings suffering) here either,
Then what need would there be for any more?
How would a heaven be possible? But this,
Although 'tis not the best world that could be,
Is likewise not the worst. For if it were,
There would be no need of a hell hereafter,
Even as there would be no need of a heaven.

The spirits seem'd to fade and disappear,
As if I had not seen them; but the tears
That swift flow'd from my eyes, ceased not to gush;
The sobbing of my soul slow'd, not yet stopping;
I knew not how to fend away the fiends,
The horde of devils that plagued me then, and still
Assail me when it pleases them. How swift
Is joy inverted to despair! How hard
It sometimes is to think that hell is worse
Than this! How easy then to realize
That heaven is better! What more can I say?
Devils assail me and those who surround me,
Whose cruel sarcasm cuts like a knife

Of shining steel. They tense the very air
In which I breathe, in which I walk, unless
The melancholy air shall be made clean,
And pure, and fresh, and bright, as is the summer
When not a wisp the utter purity
Of heaven can destroy, as now, when heat
Streams from the sun in an unbroken course:
Would God my mind were likewise free from gloom!
Perhaps one day the calmness I recall
From some scarce visited cavern in my mind
Shall come to me once more. Perhaps that day
I shall be happy, maybe for one day.
One day! alas! what then? the joy is over,
And melancholy haunts me. Death remains
Thereafter to look forward to, and by
The grace of God my sins which are as scarlet
Shall be made white as snow: the grace of God!
The thought of latent joy renders me tranquil,
Courageous to fight fiends that once did haunt me,
And but a short while since. I see the placid
And summery sky outside; and it is happy.
Why should not I be? If I could be so,
I would: what does this word mean, 'happiness'?
I think I do remember: happy once
Upon a time, I may be so again
Surely? Why should not I be? Am I? No.
And why? Perhaps because I have a mind
And will, to displease others or myself.
Am I a selfish person? None have said so,
And none, I hope, have thought so, save for me,
Who know better than others what I am,
Sorrowful and unhappy. And to see others
Spiteful and nagging rends my soul apart,
Or so at least it feels. Endless tomorrows
Are stretch'd before me, till the final summons
To the dread judgement seat. May I not perish
Then, as I feel as if I perish now:
May my name not be wiped out from the book
Of everlasting life; and may we all
Be guided whither none of us deserve.

(Saturday, 10th June, 2006.)

David Mitchell

Homesickness?

From England's green and pleasant land
And dark satanic mills
To Tuscan cypress-trees, sun-tann'd,
And heaven-kissing hills

I went, and here myself I find
Alone, from you apart:
Here bright sunbeams depress my mind
And mock my aching heart.

Oh, to be back on England's shore,
Where all my friends abide!
Would that I trod that ground once more,
The land where you reside!

How long it seems: twice seven days,
And seven have gone by:
On us what clever tricks time plays:
We need not wonder why.

The seven nights I long to pass
Will slowly fade away
And then tomorrow's greener grass
Becomes that of today:

Then once again I shall be home
On England's milder shore,
Whose waves will roll their constant foam,
And I be home once more!

David Mitchell

Horace, Odes I. Xx. Translation.

Cheap the Sabine wine we shall drink together
Out of plain Greek jars which I stored and sealed there
After, Maecenas, you received such heartfelt
Thundrous applause that

Your own sires' stream's banks did return your praises,
My dear Eques friend, and the sportive echo
Of the mountain high, yes, the Vatican hill,
Joins the sweet music.

Caecuban you'll drink and the juice of grapes crushed
By a renowned winepress from the town of Cales;
Nor Falernian vines nor the Formian hills
Mod'rate my winecups.

David Mitchell

Hymn To Light

Hail, thou most sacred, venerable thing!
Of God created ere aught else was made!
May I attempt in verse thy praise to sing,
That art, and must exist unless thou fade?

Before the moon, before the stars and sun,
Thou with four words wast made: LET THERE BE LIGHT,
Said God; and at the word of the Almighty One,
Light was, destroying pre-eternal Night.

Before He separated Day from Night,
Before He made any material thing,
'Twas thee he made; thee, marv'llous dazzling light,
First substance e'er releas'd from Yahweh's wing,

And greatest of his creätures among,
Where should we be, and what, Light, without thee,
How should we live our decades long,
When not a glimmer could we see?

Poor people blind, of sight bereft,
Of all the senses th' worst to lose,
To have no sense of vision left,
It is a fate that few would choose.

But all our senses Death shall slay,
Together with our bodies weak:
Never to see the light of day,
That is a doom that none would seek.

It is a doom that all must take,
For all mankind are doom'd to die,
For one man one rule had to break,
And cause his children many a sigh.

Be not afraid, thou sinful man,
Be not afraid of certain death,
Be not afraid: one sinless man—
Be not afraid of thy last breath—

One sinless man, God's only Son,
Of Adam's sons alone sinless,
Who, tempted by the Evil One,
Was never seduced to transgress,

Upon himself took willingly
The punishment we merit all,
All our sins' burden He took, free,
O that such love should e'er befall!

To save us all, to save both me
And him and her and us and thee
From the Adversary's fearful flame;
O, blessed be the Lord God's Name!

DOXOLOGY

'All glory to the Father be,
All glory to the Son,
All glory, Holy Ghost, to thee,
While endless ages run.' Amen.

David Mitchell

Hypergraphia

I have an insatiable urge to write
That possesses me throughout both the day and the night
I'm told by someone who was reading a copy of 'New Scientist' magazine the
other week and I don't think is in the Mafia
That it's a mild psychiatric disorder called Hypergraphia
Which is a load of rubbish because I know damn well I'm not the only writer out
there who doesn't think he has a mild psychiatric disorder
These psychiatrists really oughta
Psychiatrize themselves before they start psychiatrizing others
Because how can you say when there is a log in your eye that there's a mote in
your brother's?

(Saturday 5th–Sunday 6th November,2005.)

David Mitchell

I Cannot, For It Is Sealed

I take my rubbish to the dump
and I find that it is not the dump
but the civic amenity point
I turn on my laptop
but it's not a laptop
it's a notebook
I read my book
which is not a book
but a visual learning device
I eat my food
which is oral sustenance
I cannot think for myself
I must think outside the box
what box?
I write with my fountainpen
or should that be a transcribing implement
my watch says it is twelve minutes to six
my miniature chronometer I mean
I used to wear a brace for my teeth
it was called a nonremovable appliance
or something
sounds like a washingmachine
my glasses are visionenhancers

why can't anybody speak English?

(Sunday,6th November,2005.)

David Mitchell

I Did Not Choose To Be Alive

I did not choose to be alive,
I did not ask the gift of breath:
Take comfort, though; be thankful that
After the farce comes death.

(Friday, 4th November, 2005.)

David Mitchell

I Write These Lines Upon A Sheet Of Paper

I write these lines upon a sheet of paper
That someone made from what was once a forest
Without much thought (as I suspect) for nature:
Does this not fill my heart with guilty sorrow?
Or is its lifeblood more akin to water
That runs in rivers under cloud and sunshine?

Why am I so affected by the sunshine?
All that I do - whether I read the paper,
Or, being thirsty, drink a glass of water,
Or walk amid the tall trees of the forest,
If there's no sun, my mind is fill'd with sorrow,
And if it shines, gladness is in my nature.

But gladness is not always in the nature
Of all terrestrial things, whether the sunshine
Dispels from my own mind some part of sorrow
For many men and creatures, as the paper
I read informs me, live within a forest
Of woe, and some have not a dropp of water.

One dropp of that mysterious liquid, water,
Would save a living animal, by nature,
Whether it dwelt in pasture or in forest,
However little it received of sunshine,
It cannot be exprest by lines on paper
How marv'llously that liquid quenches sorrow.

How much may we, the lucky living, sorrow,
For those who have been drown'd by cruel water,
The greater part of whom are not on paper
Recorded: but the cruelty of Nature
Alone knows. May their souls in heavenly sunshine
Be rested, and walk peaceful through that forest.

I think that life itself is like the forest,
A dark one, where one knows not whether sorrow
Will come, or else a glade o'erspread by sunshine,
That suddenly becomes a fall of water

That patters down in raindrops, in its nature.
Will those trees bloom or turn to crumpled paper?

I'll use no further paper from the forest:
My nature does not wish for you to sorrow,
But sit by flowing water in the sunshine.

David Mitchell

Illness

I lie with aching head
In my hot imprisoning bed
With a splutter, cough, and pain; I am alone;
I am left myself to mend,
In the scenery to blend,
And nobody hears my silent stifled groans.

And the ceaseless stream of time
Flows its uncouth course sublime,
And the lives of others peacefully exist
But time for me means naught
In a cell of rambling thought
And a hope that soon this sickness shall desist.

(Tuesday, 28th March, 2006.)

David Mitchell

In Defensione Sui

When a poet writes the words
floating in a sea of hopelessness and despair
he does not mean
that he goes around
with a big black raincloud over his head
he intends to convey
to his readers if he has any
and to himself if he has not
that we all despair at times
but does not intend them to think
that he is in a permanent state
of desiring to kill himself
and waiting for death to come
he does mean
that when the poem came to him
he was in a room with a large number of people in it
which he found conducive to poetic thoughts
and he could not hear what people were saying
because of the noise
but he did not immediately write it down
because someone started talking to him
but he wrote the words down that evening
by which time he felt fine
and he was not feeling particularly sad in any case
it was a metaphor

(Tuesday, 8th November, 2005.)

David Mitchell

Inspiration

I charge thee, my long absent friend,
Returned to me at last, descend!
The poet strolls o'er bush, o'er brier,
In search of thy celestial fire,
And climbs to soaring mountain height,
Asking himself 'What shall I write?
Of summer's odoriferous air?
The lustre of the beloved's hair?
Of space, of time, of death, of life?
Of mankind's miserable strife? '
We must admit Pope's general rule,
That every poet is a fool:
And, asking these things proves him so;
Only by writing can he know:
For poetry, the greatest art,
Is best delivered from the heart.

(Friday,31st March,2006.)

David Mitchell

Inspired By Sunrise

Welcome, thou beauteous lightbestowing hour,
When all things seem to be, for once, at peace!
And when the sun, irradiant in his power,
The nighttime's dreary darkness makes to cease!

Why do I not more often at this time
Get out of bed to see th'ephem'ral dawn,
And gaze in wonder at this most sublime
Diurnal recommencement of the morn?

Perhaps because 'twould mar its rarity,
Were I to see it ev'ry single day;
No, 'twould not. Though I should watch it daily,
Sunrise's splendour would not fade away.

(Tuesday, 30th August, 2005.)

David Mitchell

Intended To Be Today's Last

This is the fifth poem I've written today,
And probably the last -
There's really not much more for me to say,
Or into verse to cast.

But once I've turn'd the musings of my mind
Into this stream of letter,
I generally - though not always - find
I feel a little better.

(Branton, NorthId., Tues.,4th April,2006.)

David Mitchell

Introspection

Why don't you do something productive with time,
Instead of composing this torturous rhyme?
You've not only wasted so many short hours
In trying to build some poetical towers –
You've even inflicted them on other folk:
To force them to read your stuff's more than a joke.
You're doing it now (don't you find it ironic?)
You wish that your rhymes were worthwhile - nay, Byronic –
How can we this man's creativity stifle?
The only secure way must be with a rifle;
But seriously, few truly understand art:
Not many melt with creativity's heart.

David Mitchell

It Is The Poet's Duty

It is the poet's duty
To describe ineffable beauty
With his insufficient palette of grey words,
But no language can be fair
To the clouds within the air,
Or the music of the ever joyous birds.

He may but hope to convey
What he means, though he may say
A meaningful succession of strange sounds,
But he cannot make to seem
A tripping, gushing stream,
Or the echoes with which earth and heaven resounds.

(Branton, Thursday, 6th April, 2006.)

David Mitchell

Kyrie Eleison

My Jesus, for the hatred I have shown You
In every sin committed since my birth,
As if I might ignore You or disown You,
My name should be deleted from the earth.

But take away my soul-destroying pride, Lord,
And, which re-crucifies You, all my sin,
For ever let Your sanctity abide, Lord;
And help us all this fearful fight to win.

You made us, Lord, to love You and to serve You,
And not to turn to our own evil wills;
For, save Your Blessed Mother, none deserve You;
We madly turn towards the death that kills.

Have mercy on us, God of Power and Might,
And save us from our ever-ending night.

David Mitchell

Le Temps

Le temps continué régulièrement
S'écoule sans jamais vouloir un changement
(Dans l'éternel présent) de sa propre vitesse,
Le grand tapis du temps se déroule sans cesse,
Le grand tapis du temps maintenant se déroule;
Le fleuve du présent hier et demain coule;
En vain nous essayons de saisir l'accompli:
Dans le temps éternel habite l'Infini!

(Friday, 17th March, 2006.)

David Mitchell

Les Paroles D'Un Mort

I was. I am not. What was I,
Breathing the air of earth?
Myself am nothing, nothing was,
Forever nothing worth.

To me, or to your tiresome world
Of wails and weeping woe;
To you I am what I was to you
A timelessness ago.

Bewail your loss, but not my death,
Which I felt a release;
I see you now; fear not; your life
Will end; and after, peace.

However miserable your life
On earth, your strife how sad,
Your suffering is short; in heaven
One cannot but be glad.

(Saturday, 7th January, 2006.)

David Mitchell

Les Quatre Saisons - The Four Seasons

Le printemps — la saison quand l'agréable tiédeur
Recommence, apportant avec lui son bonheur,
La saison quand les feuilles vertes apparaissent
Sur les mêmes arbres qui nous toujours connaissent.

L'été, belle saison d' la chaleur du soleil,
De la lumière revivifiant le réveil,
Les nuages et ça se succèdent à tour
De rôle; saison de jeunesse et d'amour!

Puis l'automne, saison du feuillage tombant,
Temps qui me fait penser au bref temps s'écoulant,
La plus douce saison des tous, à mon avis; —
Hélas! Est-ce moi, ou est trop courte la vie?

Et finalement, oui, vient le gel de l'hiver,
En vain pour la neige de mes rêves j'espère;
C'est la fin de l'année, et il sera mon sort
A la fin de ma vie, j'atteindrai — la mort.

Translation into English verse (not literal) .

The spring is the season of freshness and calm,
Revivification of its own sweet balm,
When the longwaited leaves on their trees reappear,
Reaffirming the life that they show every year.

Next, the summer, the season the sun spreads his rays,
With lifegiving fire the sky sets ablaze,
The clouds and he fight in the heaven above,
In the summer, the season of youth and of love!

Next, the autumn, the time when the leaves start to fall,
And I think my short life hardly takes place at all;
This my favourite season, both mellow and ripe,
Alas! 'tis too short; 'tis too short, just like life.

And at last, the last season to come and to go,
Yes, the winter, when fondly we dream it will snow;

'Tis the end of the year, and I sigh a sad breath —
At the end of my life, I shall reach — death.

(Tuesday, 1st November, 2005.)

David Mitchell

Lies And False

Fellow sinner, how I wonder
As I read your statement odd,
What has led you to this blunder
As regards the Word of God.

I suspect you have not read it –
Nor, to tell the truth, have I;
Though it is not to my credit,
Nor, at least, is it a lie.

Genesis to Revelation
I've not read the Bible through;
And yet by your proclamation
I cannot but think - have you?

But I have not failed completely
To read some of what it says,
And the print laid out so neatly
Tells the Lord and all his ways.

For most of the New Testament
And something of the Old
I've read; with no cause to lament
What in my hands I hold.

I do not really understand
What are these lies you find –
I find your statement rather bland
And would not want your mind.

The Song of Solomon let's take
(It's part of Holy Writ) :
Where is the falsehood you can rake
From any part of it?

It is a poem! so is this,
If that you cannot see;
And I know no analysis

By which these false can be.

'Thou shalt not steal' - oh, man alive,
It's neither false nor true:
A negative imperative:
How does one talk to you?

And there are stories it contains
To give a moral gist:
But you, since they're not true, it pains
And, angered, clench your fist.

And then most of the history
Is literally true;
D'you think it will unbiased be?
What do you think? or do?

I suspect you have no reason
For your most depressing crime:
Not that, at a later season,
I might write this wretched rhyme?

I don't think you can have thought it;
I don't think you can have thought:
If you have a mind, God brought it
To you, and can make it naught.

And may God give you the thinking
If it's not already done,
To approach his truth unshrinking:
Don't think blasphemy is fun.

May you then give sincere praises
With more earnestness than most
To Who all from nothing raises:
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

David Mitchell

London: A Sonnet

City of dreams destroy'd and hopes fulfill'd,
Of Johnson, Newton, Sullivan, and Wren!
My soul now longs to visit you again;
Therefore with thoughts of this place gently thrill'd,
Descend, my Muse, that long was softly still'd,
And sing of London's glorious women, men,
And sites where history was written then
And will be written, till Time's life is chill'd
At once, and Time is not. But till the end,
May you ne'er be forgotten, and bring forth
Ripe fruit, who will ameliorate their home:
Not but this town, but all the world. A friend
Of genius may you be: be always worth
Your name: the Eternal City is not Rome.

David Mitchell

Luna

The moon shining nocturnally
Reflects the radiant majesty
The sun provides when day breathes free,
And makes the night more beautiful.

She hides behind a veil of cloud,
But still we see her through that shroud;
For she is distant from the crowd
With which the teeming earth is full.

She wistfully looks down on us;
She neither frowns nor makes a fuss,
But, tranquil and mysterious,
She wanders onward, sorrowful.

She is not pale for weariness,
Nor out of desperate helplessness,
But her complexion's chalkiness
With grave serenity is full.

She will not rest her journeying,
Nor cease her earth-joined sorrowing,
Until the earth's song does not sing
And the hourglass of time is full.

David Mitchell

May

The soaring skylark's warble fills the air
That breathes beneath an all but cloudless sky;
The summer's sultry warmth we all may share,
Which transient heat will cold be by and by -

Earth, happy, teems with beauty and with life,
The radiant sun fears not to flame his fires,
Her gushing rills and bubbling brooks are rife
With all the joyful sounds of nature's choirs!

Let us join in this seasonable joy -
Let us join in the heartfelt soaring song -
Of nature's music may we never cloy -
That nature to which all of us belong!

(May 2006.)

David Mitchell

Melancholia

You don't notice the unclouded sky overhead
When you wish you were happy, or sleeping, or dead!
When, surrounded by friends, you are still quite alone,
And you'd rather shed tears in a room on your own;
When there's nothing to save you from being so sad;
You're not ready to be, if you e'er will be, glad.
You can not try by thinking to cheer yourself up,
Though you'd let none else drink from so bitter a cup:
When your soul is divided between hope and fear,
In your mind (not your heart) all is gloomy and drear!

David Mitchell

Memory

There is a cloud over the earth
Of darkness and despair,
That covers all the joy and mirth
That formerly was there.

And all the old and pleasant days
Of warmth and innocence
Have faded from a fiery blaze
To memory's impotence.

(Published Thursday, 8th January, 2009. Written some time in 2008, or possibly very late 2007, I think.)

David Mitchell

Meteorology

The languid grey-white sky bedims the morn,
The biting wind of winter chills the air,
The universe of warmth is all forlorn,
And life is full of cold and crushing care...

(Thursday, 9th March, 2006.)

David Mitchell

Music, A Roundelay

O Music, sent down from celestial spheres,
Thou sound of heaven that soothest mortal ears,
To which a man might listen ev'ry day,
And, in so doing, waste his life away,
Fain would I hear thee!

O Music, thou that quellest human fears,
O thou, that bearest heaven to him that hears,
Thou sound divine, without which man is naught,
Expressive thou of ev'ry human thought,
Fain would I hear thee!

(Spring,2005. [Tuesday,19th, or Wednesday,20th, April,2005.])

David Mitchell

Nonsense Based On The Colour Yellow

I'm not ashamed to tell you I dislike the colour yellow,
It matters not whether its hue is bright or somewhat mellow,
Unless it is the shade of Tropicana Sanguinello,
For having drunk thereof, indeed I am a merry fellow,
So let the trumpets rend the sky and let the organ bellow,
Full orchestra shall play fff and resound like hell, O!
The echo shall reverberate through mountain high and dell, O!
The gong shall bong, and let resound the tinkling matin bell, O!
That all shall hear from royalty to thief in prison-cell, O!
So all at last shall utterly despise the colour yellow.

(Friday, 2nd December, 2005.)

David Mitchell

Nox

It is the night. Darkness prevails.
Sharp smites the knife-like wind:
Sleepless these hours of howling gales
When day is far behind.

The world returns to slumber deep,
But I do not know rest;
Morpheus may toward others creep;
He creeps toward the blest!

But while they dream of summer days
And fellowship of friends,
I lie awake, and heavenward gaze:
No drowsiness descends.

I stretch my arms and up I rise;
I wander to and fro,
Until the dim and silent skies
With light begin to glow.

And as I walk across my room,
I ponder many things
About departed joy and gloom
And what the future brings.

(The last verse written today, Thursday, 8th January, 2009; all the rest written either 2008 or 2007, I don't know [orig. MS. n.d.])

David Mitchell

On Being

Thus to be lock'd in an eternal present,
As that that shall be future turns to past,
To me this seems horrendously unpleasant,
When life, we know, must end in death at last.

And for this reason memory was given
That we might recollect what is no more,
Remembering past joys when we are driven
To suff'ring now, when we did not before.

And for so long as our frail life shall linger,
And at one blow convert itself to death,
Hope, given to us by life's almighty Bringer,
Stays, not destroy'd until our latest breath.

(Sunday, 28th August, 2005; slightly revised, Monday, 31st October, 2005.)

David Mitchell

On Reading From A Book

I wander'd through the library
In search of a good book;
And one it chanced my eyes did see
And in it then did look.

I open'd the fair volume, then
I turn'd its pages o'er;
But I was disappointed, when
My eyes were thus made sore.

They read the good translator's note,
From 1966,
But did not read (rather did float)
Over the dull dry mix

Of illustrations some good man
Had thought to make a list
For inattentive eyes to scan;
Nor was it that he miss'd

The chance to make a catalogue
Of dull abbreviations;
But we must plough through this dense fog
Towards our destinations.

But first we pause to read a bit,
The 'editor's foreword' –
'Tis but a page, not too long writ,
And tho' it seems absurd,

There follows a biography
(Compiled by the translator)
Of the biographer, whose sea
Of words must wait till later.

Ah, here we are! Is this the start?
Alas! my child, but no.
It very nearly breaks my heart
So sad, to tell you so;

But this is but the 'Foreword to
The Third Edition, dear;
Could there be more? Yes! There is, too
-Editor's Notes' I fear.

This must be it. Don't hope too high.
The introduction now is.
Will we begin before we die?
This great confusion how is?

After another note, we find
The text at last commences:
But after all of that my mind
Is tired, as are my senses.

The moral here is very clear,
Do not try to read prefaces,
For they belong, as tells my song,
In the earth's deepest crevices.

David Mitchell

On This Green Hillside...

On this green hillside do I gaze
At clouds still, sweet, and soft,
And many a tree that gently sways
And birds that soar aloft!

I hear the lambkin's soothing bleat,
The hedgerow's rural rustle -
April's repeated avian tweet,
Far from the hustle bustle

Of overcrowded noisy towns
And hectic urban feet
Belonging to clock-beleaguered clowns
That rush from street to street.

How nice it is to sit and dream
Beneath an azure sky
Beside a clear fast-flowing stream
Watching the world go by!

(Branton, Northumberland; Tuesday, 4th April, 2006.)

David Mitchell

Orthodoxy

I will take, will take you back to the land
And the time when men were men,
And women were women, and children played -
For we shall know joy, ah, then!

We shall stand on our feet and look up to the sky,
And we shall, like a child,
In astonishment gaze with a sharp-pierc'd eye,
Bedazzled, ay, beguiled.

For the sky will be clear and the stars will be bright,
Their secret known to us,
While the rest of the world gropes in double-black night,
In darkness ponderous.

(Published Thursday, 8th January, 2009; this is written on the back of something I printed off the Internet on the 25th of April 2007, so it must have been written after that date; I have a suspicion it was written in 2008, possibly after my reception into the Catholic Church.)

David Mitchell

Perspective

How small those distant houses look
From this not great hill height:
How distant yonder gushing brook!
It seems the dazzling light

The sun provides, when view'd from here,
Is but a very small
(But potent) lightbestowing, mere
Eye-aching yellow ball!

And not more than a pinprick seems
Each lively twinkling star,
Beneath which we both live and dream:
When witness'd from so far.

To man, all is proportionless
On which he treads his toes;
He thinks he sees, but cannot guess
What's underneath his nose.

(Branton, Wednesday, 5th April, 2006.)

David Mitchell

Post Mortem

When I die, I am going to go to heaven.

I hope so, anyway.

But I do not comprehend what heaven is, or how.

It is in opposition to hell.

Hell is infinite punishment, which nothing merits but infinite wrong.

Conversely nothing merits infinite bliss but infinite good, which God only is capable of, and is.

But God is merciful.

Where to draw the line between mercy and justice?

Valjean, Javert. The former knew.

When I go to heaven, shall I be so innately wise that what knowledge I have gained on earth will have been unnecessary?

We know that we don't know the answers to our questions, but we ask them nonetheless.

(Saturday, 5th November, 2005.)

David Mitchell

Proficiscere, Anima Christiana, De Hoc Mundo!

Why does my soul so strongly cling
To the world that gave it birth?
Will not that Death to whom I sing
Release me from this earth?

Scarce can I bear sixty years more
Or so, of human life,
Take me away from sorrow's shore,
From anguish and from strife!

Take me from endless misery,
To somewhere happy, or sans woe;
And let me there my comfort see:
From life release and let me go!

Or if you won't take me away
From suffering, then take
That suffering from me today
Ere I completely break.

* * *

Be strong, my soul, fear not to endure
Blind Fortune's many a dart:
Black thunderclouds will soon, for sure,
Break, into light, apart.

(Sunday, 8th October, 2006.)

David Mitchell

Purification

I

There is a purifying fire that no man can evade;
It is the fire of truth and love and justice once betrayed,
For Right shall be avenged and every farthing must be paid.

II

Our Lord went forth to Calvary to pay in full the price.
It was for us He suffered death, to vanquish all our vice.
He did not shirk (although He feared) the Greatest Sacrifice.

III

His Blood was shed for love of us unto the latest dram.
Behold Him now! Behold Him! He is God's unspotted Lamb.
Desire of the Eternal Hills, He is the Great I AM.

IV

And we shall follow Him even as far as Calvary,
And know the pain inflicted by a world that does not see,
And we shall die a death of love, and truth shall make us free.

V

There is a fire that burns the soul as trial is heaped on trial:
O to be free from such a world as this one filled with bile!
But patience: all things have their end, even our sin and guile.

VI

The fire that burns the stains away is painful to endure,
But trust in Him alone, for no foundation is more sure;
And the refiner's fire will make you holy, just, and pure.

VII

I can't go on. I must go on. Arise, then, let us go
For there is no escape within this world from pain and woe.
That love was never without pain, God became man to show.

VIII

Let us go THROUGH, we shall be free, and we shall be at peace,
A peace not as the world giveth, but giveth us release,
A peace of soul that even in flames maketh all anguish cease.

IX

This fire is not to torture us; it is purify
Like gold; both gold and worthy men the crucible shall try:
And so go on, let come what may. Blessed are you who cry.

31st March,2012 (Vigil of Palm Sunday,2012)

David Mitchell

'Real Men Don'T Cry'

Whoever said 'real men don't cry'
Uttered the most damnable lie
Ever by human being spoken:
Who knows not what 'tis to be broken?

The man who said it was no man;
And there is no woman who can
Or ever could have spoken so
Be trivial as it may man's woe.

Take hence to whence he came the liar
Of demons born; let raging fire
And fury scald his gasping breath,
And let him hate his second death!

Let him endure the noxious smell
And endless, boundless pangs of hell;
And then observe his manly eyes –
See if he cries! see if he cries!

Behold the man! behold his tears!
What do we make of this man's jeers
Of every man who has a heart?
The devils tear his soul apart.

And every man who has a mind
And feelings, sometimes is inclin'd
To overflow with tears of sadness,
That drive him to the brink of madness.

But when into the Majesty
Of Three-In-One Infinity,
Each fearful soul shall come,
The too content shall sorrows see,
The sorrowful shall happy be,
And glad shall be the glum.

And will that man in hellfire weep,
So proud that tears did never creep

On his courageous cheek?
And if hell hurt the courage-wearer,
Will he then understand that there are
Men whom he would call weak?

Behold! the man whose wicked lies
Did nothing to prevent our eyes
From crying us to welcome sleep:
Behold him weep! behold him weep!

(Saturday, 7th October, 2006.)

David Mitchell

Recurrent Seasons

Spring is begun;
Some leaves at last appear;
Trees' twigs were one
Time earlier in the year
Of leafage bare
And bleak as desert sands
That nothing care
For rain that peopled lands
Receive much more
Because more needed are.
Tho' the trees' store
Of leaves is yet quite spare,
Not being hid
Wholly by leaves the boughs,
They'll soon be rid
Of former winter drowse
And be as green
As were the year before;
But while they've been
Obeying Nature's law
In yearly night,
Their fellow-trees awake
Were, full as bright
As Titan's beams—that break
Nocturnal dark
And hide the stars from sight, —
And fain did mark
All of that sound and light
Their dormant friends
Knew not, nor can for waste
Time make amends;
Nor will they ever haste
Thereto, nor try
To stay awake next year—
Were't so, whereby
Should we know winter here?
For 'twere not such
And autumn could not be;
For it needs much

Fall from tall linden-tree
To cross from thence
To winter, whence to spring,
While garden-fence
Is home to birds that sing
Not only then
But ev'ry season through,
And even as when
They warble, cheep, and coo,
Summer is raught,
As Earth the hot Sun rounds,
Tho' never taught;
While summer here resounds,
Which soon will change
To mellow autumn, when
A varied range
Of leaves bestrew again
The unswept ways,
As last year, and the last,
Through countless days,
Not only that have past,
But those to come,
Each year identical,
Until the sum
Of all moments that shall
Have ever been
Shall reach their fated end,
And all is seen,
Done, and wholly bekenn'd,
The seasons four
Perpetual repeat
Shall make no more,
Time's constant throbbing beat
At last shall cease,
And what succeeds to this
Consist in peace?
With hope, perpetual bliss.

(March or April 2005, slightly altered 28th August and 30th October,2005.)

David Mitchell

Response To A Criticism By Michael Shepherd Who Suggested I Should Have Written 'It's' Instead Of "'Tis'

I always thought that poetry ought
To transcend bounds of time:
I realize I archaize —
I sometimes even rhyme.

And if my style you think is vile
Read someone else's verse;
Than Sally Clarke, or Jarman, Mark,
A critic might do worse.

Suggestion is, where I wrote "'tis'
I should have written 'it's' —
For then my style would be less vile
And satisfy the 'crits'.

That word you heard was quite absurd;
I wanted rhyme for 'it's' —
So to fulfil poetic will
For 'critics' I wrote 'crits'.

My licence poetic may not be aesthetic-
'lly pleasing to the Pastor
Who a critical note on my poetry wrote
Like unto a Great Master.

If he would take the time to scan some of my rhyme,
And my non-rhyming poems as well,
He might very well find my poetical mind
Does not always antiquity tell.

For at times I might write a colloquial light
Unembellished manner of speaking,
But whatever I may I endeavour to say
While I'm always for poetry seeking.

In such verses, if he would endeavour to see,
He might find many an 'it's' if he tried;

While in classical writing, postmodernism smiting,
I'll in nowise archaism hide.

(Saturday, 5th November, 2005.)

David Mitchell

Righteous Indignation

What though the angry world should try to fight thee,
And of all crimes accuse thee, innocent?
What though with wrathful words thy fellows smite thee
And it is hard for thee not to resent
Their blows unwarranted, and either weep
Or answer them with terrifying rage?
Let not these arrows sharp pierce thee too deep
Nor yet distract thee from the war we wage.

O thou, who oft before an angry man
Dost quake with terror, how then dost thou think
That thou shalt stand before the wrath of God?
None but a fool flatters himself he can
(Unless a saint) - so, at the thought I shrink,
Mindful of the stray steps that I have trod.

David Mitchell

Sehnsucht

The birds their evening song do sing;
The fresh wind seems to heave;
And with their song the air does ring,
All on a summer's eve.

I hear their song each balmy night
Pierce my soul like a dart,
And gaze into the dwindling light,
And something fills my heart.

What shall I call this fleeting sense?
Awe, wonder, sorrow, pain,
Joy, longing, yearning? This immense
Desire may come again:

But it is not meant for this life;
'Tis not for something here;
Although indeed it eases strife
And helps us conquer fear.

Know ye that God created
A heaven as well as earth,
And that for you he fated
A death as well as birth?

The light is now grown dimmer,
The last birds cease their sound;
Some lamps in windows glimmer,
And rain falls to the ground.

I praise God for the wonder
And beauty of this hour:
As terrible as thunder
A gentle evening shower.

Once I shall die; no longer
Shall listen to the patter of the rain,
And the birdsong, while men to come, not stronger,
Shall come to know life's happiness and pain.

Though never again shall my heart beat,
And never shall I speak another word,
The cool wind will lessen the sun's heat still,
And the birdsong will continue to be heard.

David Mitchell

Sestina

The year is fading away
From us in December's snow and cold;
But Christmas is coming soon—
What joy that season will bring!
And how swift the foot of time!
How brief a thing is life!

I wonder whether I would prefer death to life,
That it shall be taken away
From me, and I shall live a short time
Only; I think of the icy cold
That Death will bring
Me soon:

Soon enough, or is it, perhaps, too soon,
To be taken, willing or unwilling, from a life,
That one's parents did bring
One unconscious and unwilling; that taken away,
A life that perhaps, is dismal, dank, and cold;
But it must be, in a short time.

Or is it a long time?
Whether that is true or not, it feels too soon
And not soon enough to plunge into the cold
Waters of death from the comfort of life,
If it is comfort we are taken away
From. I want God to bring

Me to heaven; but I do not deserve Him to bring
Me there—not at this time;
But there is a way
When God wills it so, so soon;
When God wills it so with one's life,
Which in itself was bleak and cold.

When I am dead I shall not feel cold;
If, as I hope, God shall bring
Me to heaven, I shall not be cold in that life,
Nor in hell, the thought of which fills me with dread, hot as hell all the time,

Not cold; I shall feel the warmth soon;
This life will soon melt away.

How cold it is in this life all the time!
God brings His Son; Christmas comes soon:
And life, at last, it vanishes away.

(22nd or 23rd December,2005.)

David Mitchell

Sheep

The ewes sit calmly on the grass,
Their newborn lambs beside them;
And man and motor thereby pass,
Not caring what betide them;

Indifferently they chew the cud,
Or stray across the lea,
Their hooves accustomed to the mud,
And, briefly, to be free.

(Branton, Wednesday, 5th April, 2006.)

David Mitchell

Silence

Silence is what was before all else was made:
Before it was cut with the words 'Fiat lux'.
Silence is what we both lack and need,
We need to stop doing and learn how to be.
Silence is what we do not really know;
Be silent. You are silent, and what do you hear?
Silence? No; 'tis the music of nature you hear.
Become part of the cosmos: leave chaos behind.

(Saturday, 5th November, 2005.)

David Mitchell

Sleep

A welcome drowsiness
Descends from heaven
Between the hours
Of ten and eleven;
And I find in this weariness
The toils of the day
With an overwhelming bleariness
Are melted away.

David Mitchell

Snow

I see the snow outside my window falling;
I see it upon houses' rooftops crawling;
The sky itself is white, like to the snow
Descending from it to the ground below;
A dazzling carpet of unsullied beauty
And glistening white; what were it else than duty
To wonder at it? See the children playing
In snowball-fights; now see the children laying
The snowman's head upon his body. Wonder
At winter's frozen miracle, whereunder
The grass stays green, tho' covered o'er by white;
And we shall see the inevitable plight
When winter shall be melted overnight,
The dazzling snowy carpet shall be roll'd
Away; and warmth shall drive away the cold,
And we shall welcome the mild warmth of spring,
And see what a new season has to bring.

(Friday,30th December,2005.)

David Mitchell

Spelling Is Compelling?

I turn the television on
And what abysmal hell
Pollutes the screen? What could it be
But Eamonn Holmes' Hard Spell?

It can't be fair, it seems to me,
When A must spell 'laparoscopy'
(Does such a word even exist?)
And B must spell 'balloon'.

How can you take two words like that,
And say they're equally hard,
And thus make one a winner,
And the other fate ill-starr'd?

From whence do they obtain these words,
This witenagemote?
And who are they to tell us how
To spell the words that float

In the ethereal vap'rous air,
Imponderable na,
When they canna deveese a fair
Set o' gemme ruiles at a'?

I do suspect they make them up,
Pretending they exist –
I'm not aware that 'na''s a rod,
But it's probably on their list

Of words they think are hard to spell,
Like 'apple' and 'breakwater',
'Electroencephalogram',
'Effacement' and 'stepdaughter'.

And then of course that woman
Who can't speak a single word
Derstuncly – no, DERSTUNCTLY;
For the CONSONANTS are heard.

Who would have thought orthography
Could really be compelling –
Who would have thought that aught could be
Excitinger than spelling?

(Thursday, 29th December, 2005.)

David Mitchell

Stars

The stars adorn the heaven at night,
They beautify with gleaming light
The sky of dismal hue;
They shiver in the icy cold,
They are, and were in ages old,
Embellishing the blue.

They hide themselves from their bright lord,
As from the Garden's fiery sword
And incandescent flame;
And tho' we do not see their fire
When sunshine dims the heavenly quire
They are always, all the same.

Behold these messengers of peace!
Belligerent man, your fighting cease,
And do your kind no harm;
Look heavenward; stars do not fight,
But grant a respite to the night;
In heaven, at least, is calm.

(Sunday, 11th November, 2005.)

David Mitchell

The Battle Of Flodden Field (1513)

And this is famous Flodden Field
Where Englishman and Scot did wield
The gleaming sword and shining shield,
Where fourteen thousand men were slain,
And ended Scottish James's reign.
And as I stand atop the hill,
It seems I hear that battle still.
But silence reigns o'er Flodden now;
A monument commemorates how
'Both nations' brave' their lives laid low.
The wind is cold, but colder yet
The corpses we do not forget.
And peace this region now unites;
No warrior now the wet marsh bites;
Both nations' slain together lie
Beneath the churchyard-ground nearby;
Both nation's dead one day will rise
To living glory o'er the skies.

David Mitchell

The Big Barbarian

I am the Big Barbarian,
Ain't got a lot of brain,
But things that I don't understand
Are really quite a pain—
And I'm too lazy or too dull
To try to work them out—
And so I throw a tantrum
And I bawl and scream and shout.

I don't believe in anything
(Except myself, of course) —
And I don't know the meaning
Of repentance or remorse.
And things that I don't understand—
Almost all things, in fact—
I furiously hammer at—
These things must be *attacked! *

Soldiers and priests I cannot bear,
Or a widow that tells her beads;
These people I despise and hate—
And I detest all creeds,
Except Do what you will—this is
The only law I own;
Conscience be damned! I wish that voice
Would leave me quite alone.

What's this? A church? A waste of money,
Effort, time, and space!
Why must that hideous building
Stand there: doesn't it deface
The landscape? And the money
Spent on that ought to be spent
On something purposeful—
Not useless-but-well-meant.

I am the Big Barbarian,
And I am full of pride,
And that is why my every word's

So sneering and so snide.
I cannot make or understand;
With my one eye I see.
I only bully and destroy.
That's good enough for me.

(Monday, 7th February, 2011.)

David Mitchell

The Convert

Climb aboard, weak swimmer, climb aboard:
Within this ship are stored
Treasures beyond your dreaming:
Climb aboard;
For I am your redeeming
And your Lord!

On that shore but sorrow you will find:
Open your vision blind,
And look toward the ending;
For behind
Your heart shall not cease rending
And your mind.

Welcome home, brave warrior, welcome home:
Never tomorrow roam
Back to the land of dying,
For here there is no doom,
Nor sorrowing, nor sighing:
Welcome home.

(Sunday, 7th October, 2007.)

David Mitchell

The Deserted Village

This desert place was once a village,
A place that breathed with life –
Eleven fam'lies lived and work'd,
And lived through joy and strife.

I would have walk'd straight past this ruin,
And nothing would have seen,
If it had not been shown to me,
That sorrowful empty scene.

The remnant of this settlement:
A half house and a wall.
Witness what grim destruction
Towns - and nations - can befall.

(Thursday,6th April,2006. Northumberland.)

David Mitchell

The Forgotten Dream

I dreamed a dream a while ago —
What it was about I do not know;
For I woke up at the break of the day,
And all of my dreams were melted away.

(Saturday, 5th November, 2005.)

David Mitchell

The Greenery Wafts To Celestial Skies

The greenery wafts to celestial skies,
Ascending, descending, in eerie disguise,
And everything that the songthrush was taught
Is wafted away by a stormcloud of thought.

Viridian limetrees disposed of their leaves,
Oft falling from high like autumnal soft sleeves,
Ascending, descending, with languid red sighs,
The greenery wafts to celestial skies.

(Friday, 28th October, 2005.)

David Mitchell

The Inexorable Flow Of Time

The inexorable flow of time
Goes by, leaving past space behind,
Extinguishing itself with ease,
Approaching its predestined end,
When all creation wafts away.

(Saturday, 29th October, 2005.)

David Mitchell

The Insomniac

When night has spread his shades of dark,
And silent is the singing lark,
And no more's heard the canine bark,
The insomniac awakes.

When man nor woman nothing sees,
And scarce is heard the more than breeze
That gasps amongst the leaves of trees,
The insomniac awakes.

When silent is the noiseful town,
When Luna's smile Apollo's frown
Replaces, in his dressing-gown
The insomniac awakes.

Trying in vain his eyes to close,
Morpheus approaches - Morpheus goes;
Forbidden to forget his woes,
The insomniac awakes.

Not knowing what's this thing call'd sleep,
Incessant vigil doom'd to keep,
In sleepless throes condemn'd to weep,
The insomniac awakes.

He tries, alas! to shut his eyes,
His inner voice madly replies
'I am condemned to tears and sighs':
The insomniac awakes.

The moon her nightly path has run:
Appears the firstmost hint of sun;
The sleeper's hours of rest are done:
The insomniac awakes.

He works, but cannot concentrate:
He eats, but flavourless his plate:
He dreams in daytime - 'tis his fate:

The insomniac awakes.

Alert as man could ever be,
The world a haze alone sees he,
And, plodding homeward o'er the lea,
The insomniac awakes.

A few brief hours, or minutes even,
The insomniac receives this even,
When Morpheus descends from heaven.
The insomniac awakes.

But heaven's moment soon is o'er,
And he is as he was before:
'Tis midnight, and, sleeping no more,
The insomniac awakes.

(Monday, 8th May, 2006.)

David Mitchell

The Journey Home

Now strolling towards the dimming west,
Towards the autumn sun, who rest
Is also seeking, so I walk
Along the roadside, and I talk
But to myself in silent thought
That comes unbidden and unsought;
And now I hear the traffic's hum,
That forms not all, but only some
Of what impinges on my sense,
For from atop a garden fence
I hear the song of the evening bird
As soothing as when'er 'tis heard.
And as I went towards the sun
Now that his task was almost done,
I saw the melancholy leaves
Both dead and sere, though no one grieves
At autumn's slump of brown and yellow
Leaves; for the beauty of death is mellow.
I know not why, but, like a child,
I walk upon this foliage mild,
Enjoying the crispness of the rustle
Of crackling leaves that do not tussle:
For they cannot resist my tread
Which, to a leaf, is heavy as lead.
November wind bites through the air,
But I need not much farther fare;
And though 'tis cold and home I seek,
And evening turns to night more bleak,
I take my time till I arrive,
And I am glad to be alive.

And as I wander on this earth,
Think how soon death is reach'd from birth,
And know that though I now here roam,
I soon must take my journey home.

David Mitchell

The Killing Of The King

A KING accused of treason
And guilty of no crime:
The bigots now condemn him
In this, the iron time:

The accusation uttered,
The King begins to speak:
'A moment, by your favour';
The prospect now is bleak.

'Wait until I have finished, '
The prosecutor says,
And then he did continue
His accusations base

'The said Charles Stuart, author
Of cruel and bloody wars,
Of murders, spoils and rapines
Thus guilty by the laws.

The King's own subjects charge him -'
A woman intervenes:
'Traitors and rebels, rather! '
O miserable scenes!

They brand her on the shoulder
And head in view of all;
Her hair and flesh on fire;
In pain they hear her bawl.

'I may not tell, ' the King said,
'Why I may not defend
The liberty of my subjects'
- And cheer did many a friend.

If his rights were no longer,
What hope had any man?
—Now Hewson spits in his face,
Saying 'justice' is his plan.

The King he answers calmly,
Drawing his handkerchief,
'God's justice for us both, ' and
The rest of his life would be brief.

And now the last tribunal
Will sentence him to death,
But one man on the jury...
'Hold thou', they say, 'thy breath! '

'I muyst though I should die for it, '
John Downes begins to say,
'Sit still, thou fool, ' says Cromwell,
And Downes records his 'nay:

I will not to this sentence
Agree, ' sits down again;
Dissent was not recorded
So much for Downes's pain.

The King warns his young child
'Don't let him make you King! '
'I will be torn in pieces
Ere they do such a thing! '

The crowds gather together
That January day:
The clouds they break, the King he speakes
The last words he shall say.

The axe has dropped; the King is dead;
The headsman lifteth up his head;
The crowd emits a heavy groan,
And one man prays never again
To hear such cry of human pain
Or such a direful moan.

* * *

The Queen waits news in Paris,
Is sitting all alone;
The messenger returns not;

'Tis long since he was gone.
A Priest, who knows the tale
Says 'he would have returned
Surely, if all were well; '
The Queen the tale has learned.

She stares for hours at nothing,
She does not live in time;
Then one she loves approaches;
Her lord he did not crime.
The Duchess of Vendôme
Kneels down and clasps her knees.
It snaps: they weep: a storm breaks:
The gale howls through the trees.

David Mitchell

The Legend Of St Dorothea, Virgin And Martyr

Dorothea would not bow
To idols, and she would not wed,
And now they tortured her, and now
Decided that she should be dead.

Sapricius sentenced her to die,
And asked her where was now her Christ;
And sweetly did she make reply,
'My Jesus is in Paradise.

In Paradise, where pleasant fruits
In endless temp'rate Spring do grow;
In Paradise, fair flowers and shoots
Have burgeonéd from long ago;

In Paradise, where grass grows green
And lovely life, out of the flesh,
Is endless; in this gorgeous scene
All such delights are ever fresh.'

Theophilus, a lawyer, then
Began to speak in jeering tone:
'Say, Dorothy, bring hither, when
To Paradise your soul is flown,

Apples and roses, if you please';
And Dorothea said she would;
She pray'd to Him Who all things sees,
And He did not deny her good.

For, ere her slaughter had occur'd,
An angel brought a basket here,
From which Theophilus inferr'd
Eternal truth - and he did fear.

Three roses and three apples came
From heaven in that angel's case,
Theophilus did Christ proclaim,
Ready for Him his death to face.

They both were kill'd for Jesus' sake,
They gladly left this vale of tears;
Could we their blest example take,
And lose this life for endless years?

David Mitchell

The Lord Of The Terrible Land

Galloping, galloping, galloping onward
To Death in the distant dark.

The rider he rode on a sable mare
That was ever so fair to see
And each evening at sunset he went from his home
and he rode oh so swift o'er the lea.

For he'd plighted an oath in days of yore
To the Lord of the Terrible Land
And each evening at sunset he went from his home
Towards its yellow sand.

It was many a year since he'd plighted his oath,
The promise he never could break,
That he'd travel each night to the Terrible Land
Or drown in the fiery lake.

So the rider he road when the sun 'gan descend
And he never did dare to delay:
'You will come to my grim and grotesque domains
Ere the ending of every day.'

He arrived every night at the gates of black,
And roar'd like a lion wroth;
And the gates they would open and squeal and crack,
Then slam together both.

'Have you brought the Demand? ' said a bloodcurdling voice,
And the Rider said he had.
'You have brought the weregild-price, I see:
If not, I would be mad! '

The weregild-price he spoke of was
The price of a human eye:
So every night he brought to that land
A human doomed to die.

And every night the lord of that land

Would pluck out that human's eyes
And add to his collection
That grew to a notable size.

And as the human was of no more use
To the lord of the terrible land,
He would kill it, then deposit the corpse
Upon the yellow sand.

The Rider did not like this at all,
And one day his conscience said:
I will not go as the agent of death:
I will go to sleep in my bed.

He went to bed but did not sleep
A minute of the night:
For he knew he should drown in the lake of fire
Before the morning light.

At midnight the Lord of the Terrible Land
Stormed into the Rider's home
And roared, 'Stand forth, thou traitor knave,
And say why thou didst not come.'

'I will not, ' said the Rider, with strength,
'Be part of your crime any more.'
'Thou wilt, ' said the Lord of the Terrible Land,
'For thou wast in days of yore.'

'I will not! ' cried the Rider, 'nor yield to thee,
Though DEATH stand in the way!
'Then DEATH it is, and DEATH for thee
Before the dawn of day! '

Without a word the Rider was whisked
Once more to the Terrible Land
And cast into the lake of fire,
Surrounded by Death's foul band.

And as the flames about him leapt,
He managed one thing to say,
'May your eyes be pluck'd out and your tongue cut off,
Until your dying day! '

(Thursday, 10th August, 2006.)

David Mitchell

The Lusty Month Of May

Now that the fiery sun both lights and warms the supple earth,
Now that the month of Gemini has come with joy and worth,
Now that the days are lengthening, now that the summer sky
Without a hint of cloud appears, a lucid heaven on high:
Now that the songbirds sing their song, and sweetly fill the air,
Now that earth breathes with healthfulness, has driven away all care,
And now the joy of summer has dispelled the wintry past,
Rejoice, my friends, for 'tis examination time at last!

The student diligent is working at the crack of dawn,
When Sol, unrisen, casts a twilight glimmer on the lawn;
The student indolent does no work till 'tis time to sleep,
And Time upon him stealthily with trademark scythe will creep.
The hour approaches when must come the undesired test,
When sinews crack and hearts beat fast within each nervous breast;
The candidates arrive on time (one hopes) or just before;
Now there's a hush: the invigilator opens wide the door.

"Please find your seat, the one that has a card with your name on it" –
You find a desk on which are written five lines of a sonnet –
"If you have on your person any mobile telephone,
Put it into this box, or into hell you will be thrown,
You mightn't intend to use it, nonetheless if it betide,
That you are found to have one, then you'll be disqualified."

The Incantation starts; the Fiends of Lucifer arise
Invisible to all but to the candidates' sad eyes:
The papers they are handed out, electrics handed in,
And finally: "Is anyone not ready to begin? "

"You may begin", - how long, how long 'twill be before this torment end!
The examined write their answers as the time itself doth spend –
And now there are remaining but ten lingering minutes more, -
A boy needs a spare pen - he lifts his hand (from writing sore) :

How leisurely the lady walks, as if a country stroll,
As if she did not know that rapid time away did roll:
She sees what he requires, and asks him whether he needs a "Spare pen? "
And so she turns to walk towards the front of the hall again.

The boy sitting in front of him shows her he has a spare,
By lifting up a ballpoint pen into the dismal air;
The invigilatrix smiles and says that that was very kind,
But "we are not allowed" - these rules confuse my simple mind!

She gives the ill-starred student a spare pen right from the front –
He takes it with a gruff, but nonetheless a courteous, grunt:
He writes some words, but now 'tis time to "finish the sentence you're on, "
And all the rest of it - how soon the Impartial Time has gone!
"I will dismiss you row by row, and not across the room",
The invigilator says through the exasperating gloom;
"This row may go" - and now a too familiar creaking sound,
When jerks of chairs the entire atmosphere seem to fill round.

They breathe at last! At last they speak! A lilting Scottish voice
Requests that they take their discussion elsewhere to rejoice
Or weep with weary woe about what shortly was begun,
But now, as Prospero says, it is "a heaviness that's gone".
The sorrow of the dread examination now is o'er;
It will be in the future as it was in time of yore:
Neglecting education, the conscientious student crams
His head with trivia to pass his soul-destroying exams.

(Tuesday, 16th May, 2006.)

David Mitchell

The Poet, Walking Over Hill

The poet, walking over hill,
Beside fastflowing streams,
Finds that his soul is lifted up
To form poetic dreams,

And, reading nature's epic book,
Whose rivers are its reams,
He finds that she with beauteous things
And inspiration teems.

(Branton, Thursday, 6th April, 2006.)

David Mitchell

The Red Squirrel

I do not think I ever saw
A squirrel red before:
I do not think that I shall see
Another evermore.

I only saw that fair rare sight
Briefly, but I'll not let
My memory that creature fair
At any time forget.

It was a creature surely never
Equalled in its fairness;
The sight was made more precious, still,
Because of its great rareness.

David Mitchell

The Room

Scarcely a sound is heard within this place:
The intermittent rush of cars that race
Past on the road to some far destination -
What place soever be their allocation.
The room becomes a box. And does this room
(In this lugubrious and dismal gloom)
Become the universe? What do I see
Outside this room? Nothing, so are we free
Within the universe? Is it a cell?
Outside it is there heaven? And is this hell?

(Wednesday, 8th March, 2006.)

David Mitchell

The Seasons Of The Year

The mild fresh air of spring
The wind bears on its wing,
And effortlessly drives the cold away;
The summer sun brings mirth
Spreading his rays on earth,
As life he gives to earth from day to day.

The gentle autumn breeze
Rustles through the trees,
As from their branches coloured leaves do fall;
The icy cold white snow
Falls on grounds both high and low,
Then melts, as if it never was at all.

(Monday, 21st November, 2005.)

David Mitchell

The Spark Of Life

The spark of life
Lights us all,
Shining bright
Till we fall

Dead, and then
Darkness comes
And forgets.
Silence hums

In the dark
Endless night
When the far
Distant light

Shines no more -
Then we cease:
And we all
Are at peace:

Thus exists
Not but man:
Bird, snake, fish,
Lion, can,

Do, and must
Have a mind,
Live, die: tough
All life find.

Though it all
End in dark,
All share warm
Life's bright spark.

(Sunday, 19th March, 2006.)

David Mitchell

The Summer Sun

Before the day's mild sunrise breaks,
Before the restful world awakes,
I view the glimmering sky,
And like the softly stirring morn,
From dark to light am gently borne,
Toward the heaven on high.

And as the sun's effulgent rays
In fiery glory he displays
And as they warm the earth,
Through cloudless azure skies a light
He gives us with majestic might
And heat his wonder worth.

The sun's orb now is seen no more,
Now div'd beneath the western floor.
Though some slight light we see;
The twittering tones of the evening lark
Foretell the vast engulfing dark
That very soon shall be.

David Mitchell

The Sun Shines Bright Through Azure Skies

The sun shines bright through azure skies,
Perpetually shedding his rays,
Even when into the dark he hies, —
All nights at length turn into days.

The moon, when day turns into night,
Reflects the sun with silver rays,
Stealing his incandescent light,
Transforming it to twilight haze.

[(Saturday,29th October,2005.)]

David Mitchell

The Swan

Slender, swimming, silent swan!
How gracefully you glide along!
Your coat of white, purer than snow;
You see, with lofty eyes, to grow
Ducklings and fowl that squawk and screech;
How different you are from each
Of them; how beautiful and quiet,
Indifferent to their childish riot!
Peaceful and noiseless and relax'd,
To full and mighty splendour wax'd;
We see you, glorious, today,
But know you soon must swim away.

(Wednesday, 15th February, 2006.)

David Mitchell

The Truth Of Love

They say that Love is like a flow'r
Whose beauty blooms in June:
They have not known Love's awful pow'r
Whose fancy fades so soon.

It is not Love thus fades away;
'Tis but a youthful whim
That shines beneath the light of day,
And, when night comes, grows dim.

They say that Love light lightning
Strikes the soul, and soon decreases;
That Time and Love fly (fright'ning) ,
That Love goes just when Love pleases -

Had they but known the truth of love,
Their tongues they would restrain:
For no man 'neath the vault above
Has ever loved in vain.

2006 - 14th December 2012

David Mitchell

There Is A God

That is what I firmly believe.

I understand that some people find it hard to believe in God.

So do we all, at times.

We are human beings.

Why does God let us commit these sins against our own kind?

Because, I believe, we would not be people if we did not have freedom to think for ourselves.

Why then does God let us suffer tragedies that the earth herself is guilty of?

We live in a physical world, and such are its constraints.

If you were God yourself, you would understand.

But just because you are not God does not mean that you should not try to understand.

(Friday, 4th November, 2005.)

David Mitchell

This Too Shall Pass

Condemn'd to think, condemn'd to feel,
Condemn'd to languid sorrow,
I wonder when Death comes to heal
And take me to Tomorrow.

I've lived for long enough to yearn
For something I can bear:
But where on earth have I to turn
From sorrow and despair?

I will not cease my earthly life
Until my dying hour:
No more will this soul-crushing strife
While I to breathe have power.

I sometimes feel, I sometimes think,
I can no more go on;
Then into an abyss I sink
And weep there, woebegone.

So where have I to turn on earth
That I to life may cleave?
Where may I find some joy or mirth,
That sighs I need not heave?

I may not find mirth anywhere –
For me, at any rate;
But while there still are some who care,
Then I can bear this weight.

I do not think that I could cope
For ever on my own:
But sometimes I cannot but mope
And sob and sigh, alone.

I know in time THIS TOO SHALL PASS
And done shall be my sorrow:
And Gabriel sounds the final brass
And we will wake tomorrow.

David Mitchell

Thoughts Arising From Twilight

The darkness of the imminent night
Will soon arrive, by spatial law;
The stars not yet their radiant light
Shine forth and compass us in awe.

The sun his daily course has run;
And trudges wearily to bed;
Our mortal day is almost done,
All actions done, all our words said.

And as the sun, howe'er unwilling,
Other parts of the world to glad,
Moves on, I see an almost thrilling
Light, eerie, desperate, and sad.

The clouds not high above it show
By their grim hue of darkling death
That they are sorry he must go
And the Sun's Light this witnesseth.

I look around; what do I see
At this unjoyful twilight hour?
All that surrounds me seems to be
More dark by night, and reft of power.

What light there is is made by man,
Except those evanescent rays
The sun gave as his course he ran,
And e'er does these declining days.

Am I alone in being brought,
This hour which they say is glad,
To thinking melancholy thoughts,
And being render'd, thereby, sad?

The darkness deepens; still no star
Adorns the heavens the LORD GOD made;
But tho' invisible, there they are,
Made clear to us by nightly shade;

There must therefore in ev'ry plight
Some faintest glimmer of hope be,
And, come what may, the darkest night
A glorious rising sun must see.

(Saturday, 27th August, 2005.)

David Mitchell

Time

Time can only go forwards,
It may not pause;
It may not retrace its steps;
It may not speed up;
It may not slow down;
It is a one-dimensional direction;
To travel backwards in time
 is a paradox, and impossible;
Likewise to travel faster than it,
Likewise slower,
Likewise without it,
Likewise independent of it;
To travel within time would require another time,
Such as we have not;
Therefore it is impossible.
We are constrained by time,
Likewise by space,
Likewise by our own bodies.
Time permeates creation,
As does space.
Time seems to us to be infinite;
It may be,
But yet probably is not,
No more than space.
We cannot imagine
 (in our waking hours)
A timeless space,
Nor yet a spaceless time,
Nor timeless time,
Nor yet a spaceless place;
For we think but as men, and not as God.
There may be stuff not in this universe,
Not material, or perhaps so.
Yet there is only one universe.
Hereafter is no time,
And perhaps no space.
We have not much time here.

(Sunday, 20th March, 2005) .

David Mitchell

Time Rolls By

Time rolls by like a ceaseless and bubbling stream:
Time rolls by while we wake, time rolls by while we dream:
Time rolls slowly but sure when we want it to rush:
When we want Time to stop, O how fast the stream's gush!

Time is constant alone in this world of decay:
We may trust the succession of night and of day:
We are born, and we die, all surrounded by change;
But the river of Time from its course shall not range.

What shall be, when the river arrive at the sea,
When the Lord shall proclaim each one's last destiny?
When our tears are in vain, and repentance too late,
If we're still unprepared for our ultimate fate?

David Mitchell

To A Book By C.S. Lewis

Oh, Jack, I'm sorry - tears cannot express
My pity for your situatedness
Next to an atheist's bawlings: all my heart
Demands that I should tear you foes apart –
What rage you must have felt - forgive me, Jack,
For you no longer need bear Richard's flak
Of furious scientism; for now, calm,
I hold your soothing rhetoric in my palm,
And, seeing you plead so helpless for release,
I'll loosen you from chains and give you peace.

David Mitchell

To A Crying Baby

What is it that ails you, as young as you are?
Through a sea full of sorrows you must travel far,
Before all is over; what troubles you, child,
Why was it you cried when we wished that you smiled?

Are you hungry, or thirsty, or weary, or lost?
By the storm-winds of life are you violently tossed?
Are you frightened of life, are you frightened to die?
If so, I cannot blame you, for you are as I.

(1st February,2006; pub.8th January,2009.)

David Mitchell

To A Day

Specifically, Thursday, the eleventh of May, A.D.2006.

Come back! Come back! Have you once fled
And never will return?
Are you, past hour, forever dead
That then so warm did burn?

You were not then so far away
From my yet yearning arms,
And kept unhappy thoughts at bay
Turning life's storms to calms.

You summer's day, so quickly gone...
How quickly time goes by:
So swiftly is our past life flown:
So swiftly we shall die.

(Tuesday,7th August,2007.)

David Mitchell

To A Seagull

Do not torment me, unimprison'd bird!
For thou art free above the earth to soar
Whither thou wilt, flying, without a word,
Away from me, who will never see thee more;

But I am bound, foot-fast, to the stern ground,
I am entrapp'd, restricted, and constrain'd:
Here happiness is never to be found,
But forcéd smiles through aching sorrow feign'd.

Now thou art gone - and whither art thou fled?
To some more pleasant clime than this grey gloom?
But both of us will very soon be dead,
And meet with our inevitable doom.

I wish that I had been a bird like thee
To suffer and not know this direful pain:
For then, oh! then, I'd have been fully free,
And then I might know happiness again.

David Mitchell

To Jesus Christ

Lord protect me,
Lord defend me,
Lord select me,
Lord befriend me.

Jesus, save me,
Christ above me,
With Thee have me,
Help me love Thee.

Lord about me,
Jesus, let me
Never doubt Thee
Nor forget Thee.

Lord of Power,
I entreat Thee
When Thou tower,
As I meet Thee,
High above me,
I may cower
As in fear
But to me be
Always near:
So may we see
In that hour
How to love Thee.

Lord, forgive all the sins that are past,
And then make us to live with Thee for ever at the last.

(Monday, 2nd July, 2007.)

David Mitchell

To Ludwig Van Beethoven

Cecilia chose her greatest strains
To be by you alone conceived:
But Satan rose from hell's domains
And you of hearing were bereaved.

O cruel fate! You did no wrong
To bring this mischief upon you;
It was your lot to sing a song
Whose sorrow none before you knew.

What other man, in such a state,
Imprison'd in a silent hell,
Could so defy a certain fate,
And triumph over it so well?

Upon the brink of suicide,
(How much to us had then been lost!)
You cast your suffering aside,
And by life's waves were tempest-tossed.

How could your genius brain conceive
In silence sounds so marvellous?
How could the pow'r of hearing leave
You? How could you depart from us?

Condemn'd to suffer silently,
You did not, for you could not, hear,
And, with your back to us, did not see,
The thunderous applause and cheer.

Ev'ry musician's darkest dream:
A soundless world, which you lived in:
Our sympathetic tears will stream
For you, who fought your fiends - to win.

And on one gloomy afternoon
For ever cursed, you heaven defied;
You raised your fist to heaven, and soon,
Too soon, but fin'lly happy, died.

(Saturday, 12th August, 2006.)

David Mitchell

To Our Lord At Dawn

Lord Jesus Christ, I thank Thee for the morning,
That dawning hour before the world awakes,
Beginning with the songbirds' early warning
Telling us the first shaft of daylight breaks.

After a tiring night of broken sleeping,
After fatigue has weigh'd upon my eyes,
How grateful am I at the twilight's creeping
And that the day and I should now arise.

Lord Jesus Christ, when I reach my last hour,
When I am slain by all-devouring death,
I pray that Thou wilt show to me Thy Power,
My Saviour, Jesus Christ of Nazareth.
When I am dead, save me, O Lord, I pray,
From endless Night, with everlasting day.

(Monday, 2nd July, 2007.)

David Mitchell

To St Augustine Of Hippo

Strange consolation! Anguish and despair
Are in Augustine's sorrow-laden face
As in some distant solitary place
He bends his head, and rushing tears of care
Roll from his eyes down to his cov'ring hands –
The most intelligent man who has lived
At inward melancholy has arrived
In silent stillness on deserted sands.
What ails thee, father? art thou rack'd with guilt,
Or hast thou suffer'd irreplaceable loss?
Let me weep with thee, brother, tear for tear,
As both our sorrow-water forth is spilt,
Be we both mindful of the bitter Cross,
At once the best and worst, forgetting fear.

David Mitchell

To The Greatest Poet We Have Ever Known

'My gentle verse,
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read,
And tongues to be, your being shall rehearse,
When all the breathers of this world are dead,
You still shall live (such virtue hath my pen)
Where breathe most breathes, even in the mouths of men.'

William Shakespeare, I am in awe of you.
Your work has been read, studied, loved, hated, adapted, plagiarized, and
admired, continuously for four hundred years.
Milton alone is within a thousand miles of your genius.
You went to heaven nearly four hundred years ago: would that you were still
with us!
But you will always be with us.

It is amazing what one human being can do.

(Thursday, 3rd November, 2005.)

David Mitchell

To The Mother Of God

O Mary, deign to look on me with pity,
A weak and troubled sinner gone astray,
Help me to reach your Son's celestial city
Where His Light shines in endless tireless day.

Pray for me, Tower of Ivory,
Pray for me, House of Gold,
Pray for me, Cause of All Our Joy,
And lead me to joys untold.

I see you, Mary, with your Infant Son,
The God whom all my sins have crucified;
I shudder at the evil I have done,
And know that there is nowhere I can hide.

Pray to your Son for me, Morning Star,
Pray for me, Mystic Rose,
Pray for me, though I have wandered far
From the grace your Son bestows.

Mary, the child you carried in your womb
Is God, and came to expiate our crime;
Your Baby Boy, who overcame the tomb
Will come to judge me at the end of time.

Pray for me, Holy Mother of God,
O Virgin most renowned;
Help us to reach your Son's abode
And as His Saints be crowned.

David Mitchell

To The Muse Of Poetry

Il hail the Muse of Poetry,
The spark that gives us light;
The gleam of inspiration that
Can make dull darkness bright!

In vain we seek for our next poem,
Frustrate our weary minds;
But when the Muse, unlooked for, comes,
What buried gold she finds!

And when we try to write without
The Muse's inspiration,
We find our song's a harsh discord
And jars in intonation;

So write when Inspiration comes,
But never look too far;
Bad poems are sometimes from the heart,
But good ones always are.

(Monday, 16th January, 2006.)

David Mitchell

To The Reader

Thank you for reading this uncalled-for verse:
I hope that, somehow, it will give you pleasure:
If not, reflect that it could have been worse;
And read it, if you want to, at your leisure.

A writer's happiness amounts to this:
That if his work is read, and liked, and known,
His knowledge of this is akin to bliss:
He's satisfied that he is not alone.

(Colchester, Friday, 31st March, 2006.)

David Mitchell

Twilight

The twilight hour arrives, the sun
Has sunk beneath the skies;
The birds now sing their merry song
And soon their music dies.

The clouds in heaven are inky blue
And float and hover still,
And streaks of colour of the sun
Remain above the hill.

I lean over my window ledge
And feel the chilly breeze;
As the vast sky becomes so dim
That black are the green trees.

This is the day the Lord has made;
It dwindles to its end;
The heavens proclaim His glory now,
Our Master and our Friend.

I gaze in wonder at His works;
The birds that sang now cease;
I wish the world might always know
This welcome tranquil peace.

David Mitchell

Vicious Circle

I put my glasses on; behold!
A headache comes to me:
I take my glasses off, and then
I find I cannot see.

I find I cannot see, therefore
My glasses I replace;
Again a headache comes: I take
My glasses from my face.

Conclusion: I need new glasses.

(Friday, 20th January, 2006.)

David Mitchell

Wasps, Cats, And Caravans

What is the purpose of wasps, cats, and caravans?

The world would be so much happier

Without wasps, cats, caravans,

Unless you were a wasp of course,

Or a caravan, or a cat.

Why do people use caravans anyway?

What fun to be stuck behind one for seventy miles.

Wasps are pointless, though, aren't they?

Bees pollinate plants. They're quite pretty—

Wasps, that is. People like cats.

I don't mind them particularly but—

Oh well, never mind. Every creeping thing

That creepeth upon the earth. Insects

Are a nuisance. Why is he afraid of spiders?

(Monday, 31st October, 2005.)

David Mitchell

We Do Not Choose Our Subjects. They Choose Us.

I try not to search for things to write about.

If I do that, I write gibberish.

But, being a poet, I think — too much, perhaps.

Sometimes I write iambic pentameters without intending to.

I write what comes to me. That's the best way.

(Saturday, 5th November, 2005.)

David Mitchell

What Is A Poet?

What is a poet? a person who writes
And longs to ascend to Olympian heights;
A person who's seized with irregular madness,
Who's joyous when glad and depressed in his sadness;
An enigma, a puzzle; someone who writes well,
Or whose half-rhymed enjambments condemn him to hell;
A poet is someone who finds it his duty
To remark on the world and its natural beauty;
He'll go on about life and our shortness of breath,
He will bore you, the reader, to unpleasant death;
And he hopes you will read him again and again;
But above all, a poet's COMPLETELY INSANE.

(Northumberland, April 2006.)

David Mitchell

Who Would Be A Newsreader?

It must be terrible to read the news,
Sitting and reading words from autocues
Day after day, pretending that you care
About the latest trophy that the mayor
Has given to some well-deserving chap,
When you don't care unless some grave mishap
Has taken place, particularly if
It has to do with you. If some old cliff
Is likely soon to fall into the sea
That rolls against a coastline that, maybe,
Is not near to your home, or if someone
Has hurt his neck in Norwich, 'twas not fun
For him, nor can it be for you, with zeal
To talk of things about which you don't feel
Particularly strongly: you don't know
Much about sport, but you are forced to go
To football-matches you don't wish to view
With feign'd enthusiasm; nor do you
Know anything at all about the stocks
And shares: to you they're only stumblingblocks.
In view of this, it makes me wonder why
People become newsreaders ere they die.

David Mitchell

Why Is A Poet?

It is the part of the poet
To tell his readers
What they already know
and know they know
So that they understand it
a little better

(Saturday, 5th November, 2005.)

David Mitchell

Winter

'If winter comes, can spring be far behind? '
These words are like a medicine to me,
That lift up high my all too weary mind,
Foretelling unknown joys that soon must be:
I wandered through the meadows yesterday,
The grass I trod upon was white with rime;
Cast back my thoughts to things long passed away,
And shuddered at the frowardness of time.

—This morning came; I took a book in hand,
That time and thought should not slip through my fingers
As on a beach a child picks up some sand
That straightway flees his grasp, as there he lingers:
—Then, when I read that prophecy of spring,
I found my drooping spirit at last take wing.

(Saturday, 10th January, 2009.)

David Mitchell

Written During A Downpour

The fierce rain falling fast from angry clouds
Descends suddenly, not in silence; its fall is swift;
It rolls down rapidly, the rain so sad,
Muffling the music of many a lark's sweet song,
With its loud and luscious but unlovely sound.
The sorrow of the shower is short. For now
The song has ceased. A more splendid melody begins,
Or continues a tune that was taken away by a firmer sound.
The music we hear more clearly now is the melody of many a winged creature.
The rain has not ceased to roll from the once-roaring heaven:
But the magic of its music, that was so marvellous, is now lost:
Lost for a time, a transient loss: the sound is not taken from our ears for ever.
A time will come when the cuckoo, the kestrel, the blackbird,
The skylark, the seagull, and every songbird shall be silenced.
Then every sound and every sight that has been seen or heard
Shall be no more: the music and the melodies of the earth shall be inaudible.
The rising sun, the stars themselves, shall dissolve, with all the rest of the
universe;
All, all shall suffer, and, like snow, all creation, no stronger than sand, shall melt
away.
Dreadful will be the day of the descent of the Almighty!

(David Mitchell, Wednesday, 24th May, 2006.)

David Mitchell

Written In Early January

The days are short, the nights are long,
The wind bites sharp and cold;
And many memories stark and strong
Within the mind unfold.

There is a stillness in the air,
That quites perturbs the soul;
The gushing falls of time are there;
You hear time's river roll.

Backwards in time my thoughts I cast;
Where have the moments gone? -
The happy moments of the past
In memory live alone:

And when all by myself am I
I cannot help but find
My thoughts return to days gone by -
Time truly is unkind.

(Completed Thursday, 8th January, 2009.)

David Mitchell