

## Alfred Lord Tennyson, "Mariana" (1830)

"Mariana in the moated grange." —*Measure for Measure* (Shakespeare).

With blackest moss the flower-plots  
Were thickly crusted, one and all:  
The rusted nails fell from the knots  
That held the peach to the garden-wall.  
The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:  
Unlifted was the clinking latch;  
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch \**straw roof*  
Upon the lonely moated grange.  
She only said, "My life is dreary, \**dull*  
He cometh not," she said; \**doesn't come* (arch.)  
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!"

Her tears fell with the dews at even; \**evening moisture*  
Her tears fell 'ere the dews were dried; \**before*  
She could not look on the sweet heaven,  
Either at morn or eventide.  
After the flitting of the bats,  
When thickest dark did trance the sky,  
She drew her casement-curtain by, \**window*  
And glanced athwart the glooming flats. \**darkening*  
She only said, "The night is dreary,  
He cometh not," she said;  
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!"

Upon the middle of the night,  
Waking she heard the night-fowl crow:  
The cock sung out an hour ere light:  
From the dark fen the oxen's low \**cows' sound*  
Came to her: without hope of change,  
In sleep she seem'd to walk forlorn, \**lost, alone*  
Till cold winds woke the gray-eyed morn  
About the lonely moated grange. \**ditch*  
She only said, "The day is dreary,  
He cometh not," she said;  
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!"

About a stone-cast from the wall  
A sluice with blacken'd waters slept,  
And o'er it many, round and small,  
The cluster'd marish-mosses crept. \**marsh*  
Hard by a poplar shook alway,  
All silver-green with gnarled bark: \**twisted (tree)*

For leagues no other tree did mark  
The level waste, the rounding gray. \**surrounding*  
She only said, "My life is dreary,  
He cometh not," she said;  
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!"

And ever when the moon was low,  
And the shrill winds were up and away, \**high noise*  
In the white curtain, to and fro,  
She saw the gusty shadow sway. \**windy*  
But when the moon was very low,  
And wild winds bound within their cell,  
The shadow of the poplar fell  
Upon her bed, across her brow. \**forehead*  
She only said, "The night is dreary,  
He cometh not," she said;  
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!"

All day within the dreamy house,  
The doors upon their hinges creak'd; \**dobradiças*  
The blue fly sung in the pane; the mouse  
Behind the mouldering wainscot shriek'd,  
Or from the crevice peer'd about. \**wooden wall-covering*  
Old faces glimmer'd thro' the doors,  
Old footsteps trod the upper floors,  
Old voices called her from without. \**outside*  
She only said, "My life is dreary,  
He cometh not," she said;  
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,  
I would that I were dead!"

The sparrow's chirrup on the roof,  
The slow clock ticking, and the sound,  
Which to the wooing wind aloof \**indifferent (mood)*  
The poplar made, did all confound  
Her sense; but most she loathed the hour \**hated*  
When the thick-moted sunbeam lay \**dust specks*  
Athwart the chambers, and the day \**across*  
Was sloping toward his western bower.  
Then, said she, "I am very dreary,  
He will not come," she said;  
She wept, "I am aweary, aweary,  
O God, that I were dead!"

Mariana, a character in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, is betrayed by Angelo who is then appointed to clean up the morals of Vienna while the Duke conveniently takes a break. Angelo, a puritan, condemns Claudio to death for just such an offence and then offers to release him if the lovely Isabella sleeps with him (Angelo). Isabella devises a plan in which Mariana will occupy the bed, forcing Angelo to acknowledge his relationship with her in front of the Duke. In the opening act, Mariana has retired to a 'moated grange' [a farm with protecting ditch] to mourn her loss. Tennyson's poem is a richly-detailed commentary on the sense of desertion which is his recurrent theme. Christopher Ricks has called it an example of his "art of the penultimate." In Shakespeare's play Angelo marries Mariana on the Duke's instructions—just one reason why it is called "a Problem Play"!