

# POETRY

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TONY ROBERTS

## Lord Nelson's Brandy

Nelson's corpse was casked in brandy, myrrh  
And camphor for the seven days the *Victory*  
Struggled lamely on towards Gibraltar.

Once there and stowed in spirits of wine,  
In a lead-lined coffin for the journey home,  
Sailors sampled brandy from that cask,

From that malarial and scurvied spa,  
Their idolatry a devotion sparked  
With devilry. I think of them, those tars

Who had survived the pulverising blood  
And wood strewn seas off Cape Trafalgar.  
Though they've long ago gone down with their ships

A health to each and every man, and two  
To those whose bold show of perversity  
Brings tartly back an old world rude as paint.