

Chaucer

You may ask him any question you like;
He'll answer it two, maybe twenty ways.
You may rest assured it's not out of spite
But simply his knack for knowing it pays

To give Lady Fortune only her due—
She has her wheel (securely) in her hands—
Lest she spin until you're no longer you
But some rag-a-tag beggar in alien lands.

Where got he this knack, how came he by it?
His poetry suggests a weird response—
Very few nowadays would try it—
He listened to people fumble their wants

And learned how hard they find it to speak
Unless a story be by in which they hear
Versions of their wants just that oblique
They can cry—“Yis! Thus myght I appere!”

Then, when they suffer, as everyone must,
The tales, he knew, redeem them from history:
They offer them a light beyond their dust—
They know they're part of telling memory,

A spell that defies the satiety of time
And alchemystery that still succeeds,
The fortuitous rectitude of rime
That repairs the coupling memory needs.