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Fall 2021: Global Vistas of Lyric


Cowan Center Seminars

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Meeting 1: Selected Poems

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Lyric Poems Mentioned in the “Lyric Imagination” Lecture

Anon., As life what is so sweet

As life what is so sweet,
What creature would not choose thee?
The wounded hart doth weep
When he is forced to lose thee:
The bruised worm doth strive ‘gainst fear of death,
And all choose life with pain ere loss of breath.

— Westron Wind

Ben Jonson, Have you seen but a white lily grow

Have you seen but a whyte Lilie grow
before rude hands had touch'd it;
Have you mark'd but the fall of the snow
before the Earth hath smucht it.
Have you felt the wool of Beaver,
Or Swansdown ever;
or have smelt of the Bud of the Bryer,
Or the Nard in the fire;
Or have tasted the Bag of the Bee;
O so whyte, O so soft, O so sweet, so sweet,
so sweet is she!
O so whyte, O so soft, O so sweet,
so sweet, so sweet is she!

Shakespeare, Song: Full fathom five (from *The Tempest*)

Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:
Ding-dong.
Hark! now I hear them,—ding-dong, bell.

— Sonnet 30: When to the sessions...

— Sonnet 138: When my love swears she is made of truth

When my love swears that she is made of truth,
I do believe her, though I know she lies,
That she might think me some untutored youth,
Unlearnèd in the world's false subtleties.

Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although she knows my days are past the best,
Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue:
On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed.

But wherefore says she not she is unjust?
And wherefore say not I that I am old?
Oh, love's best habit is in seeming trust,
And age in love loves not to have years told.

Therefore I lie with her and she with me,
And in our faults by lies we flattered be.

John Donne, The Canonization

Andrew Marvell, To His Coy Mistress

William Blake, Ah Sun-flower

Ah Sun-flower! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the Sun:
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the travellers journey is done.

Where the Youth pined away with desire,
And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow:
Arise from their graves and aspire,
Where my Sun-flower wishes to go.

— O Rose thou art sick



Keats, Ode on Grecian Urn

— Ode to a Nightingale

Hopkins, The Windhover

Frost, Dust of Snow (already in full in lecture)

Pound, In a Station of the Metro (already in full in lecture)

Some Psalms

Added in “Introduction: The Lyric Nostalgia”

Housman, Into my heart an air

Into my heart an air that kills
 From yon far country blows:
 What are those blue remembered hills,
 What spires, what farms are those?

That is the land of lost content,
 I see it shining plain,
 The happy highways where I went
 And cannot come again.

Hopkins, God's Grandeur

Spring and Fall: To a Young Child

I wake and feel the fell

I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day.
 What hours, O what black hours we have spent
 This night! what sights you, heart, saw; ways you went!
 And more must, in yet longer light's delay.

With witness I speak this. But where I say
 Hours I mean years, mean life. And my lament
 Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent
 To dearest him that lives alas! away.

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree
 Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me;
 Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse.

Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours. I see
 The lost are like this, and their scourge to be
 As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse.

Donne, Elegy XIX

Twicknam Garden

Nocturnal upon St. Lucy's

Song of Songs 8:6

Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.

Shakespeare, Sonnet 65

Ransom, Piazza Piece

— Bells for John Whiteside's Daughter

William Dunbar, Litany in Time of Plague

Dylan Thomas, A Refusal to Mourn

Do Not Go gentle into That Good Night

Frost, Birches

The Oven Bird

Directive

Psalm 137 By the Waters of Babylon

23 The LORD is my Shepherd

Blake, London

Eliot, Preludes

Tate, Aeneas at Washington

Ode to the Confederate Dead

Shelley, Ode to the West Wind

Yeats, Sailing to Byzantium

Wild swans at Coole

Stevens, The World as Meditation

Anecdote of the Jar

Plath, Black Rook in Rainy Weather

Marvell, The Garden

Wyatt, They Flee from Me

Eberhart, The Groundhog

Theodore Roethke, In a Dark Time

In a dark time, the eye begins to see,
 I meet my shadow in the deepening shade;
 I hear my echo in the echoing wood—
 A lord of nature weeping to a tree.
 I live between the heron and the wren,
 Beasts of the hill and serpents of the den.

What's madness but nobility of soul
 At odds with circumstance? The day's on fire!
 I know the purity of pure despair,
 My shadow pinned against a sweating wall.
 That place among the rocks—is it a cave,
 Or winding path? The edge is what I have.

A steady storm of correspondences!
 A night flowing with birds, a ragged moon,
 And in broad day the midnight come again!
 A man goes far to find out what he is—
 Death of the self in a long, tearless night,
 All natural shapes blazing unnatural light.

Dark, dark my light, and darker my desire.
 My soul, like some heat-maddened summer fly,
 Keeps buzzing at the sill. Which I is I?
 A fallen man, I climb out of my fear.
 The mind enters itself, and God the mind,
 And one is One, free in the tearing wind.

Jorie Graham, San Sepolcro

In this blue light
 I can take you there,
 snow having made me
 a world of bone
 seen through to. This
 is my house,

 my section of Etruscan
 wall, my neighbor's
 lemontrees, and, just below
 the lower church,
 the airplane factory.
 A rooster

crows all day from mist
outside the walls.

There's milk on the air,
ice on the oily
lemonskins. How clean
the mind is,

holy grave. It is this girl
by Piero
della Francesca, unbuttoning
her blue dress,
her mantle of weather,
to go into

labor. Come, we can go in.
It is before
the birth of god. No one
has risen yet
to the museums, to the assembly
line—bodies

and wings—to the open air
market. This is
what the living do: go in.
It's a long way.
And the dress keeps opening
from eternity

to privacy, quickening.
Inside, at the heart,
is tragedy, the present moment
forever stillborn,
but going in, each breath
is a button

coming undone, something terribly
nimble-fingered
finding all of the stops.

Proverbs 8

Dickinson, Hope Is the Thing with Feathers

Auden, In Memory of W.B. Yeats

(Part III only)

Earth, receive an honoured guest:
William Yeats is laid to rest.
Let the Irish vessel lie
Emptied of its poetry.

In the nightmare of the dark
All the dogs of Europe bark,
And the living nations wait,
Each sequestered in its hate;

Intellectual disgrace
Stares from every human face,
And the seas of pity lie
Locked and frozen in each eye.

Follow, poet, follow right
To the bottom of the night,
With your unconstraining voice
Still persuade us to rejoice;

With the farming of a verse
Make a vineyard of the curse,
Sing of human unsuccess
In a rapture of distress;

In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise.