

## Lyric Poetry

"Lyric embodies not the larger human actions of a community or individual (as epic, tragedy, comedy do) but calls to presence and unfolds a single moment in the life of the heart--whether a moment of anticipation, consummation, or lament." –Louise Cowan, "The Prospect of Lyric"

### Psalm 42

As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?

When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.

Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.

Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the day time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.

I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?

Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

### Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

**As Kingfishers Catch Fire**  
*by Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889)*

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;  
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells  
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's  
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;  
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:  
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;  
Selves – goes itself; myself it speaks and spells,  
Crying *Whát I dó is me: for that I came.*

I say móre: the just man justices;  
Keeps grace: *thát* keeps all his goings graces;  
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is –  
Christ – for Christ plays in ten thousand places,  
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his  
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

**God's Grandeur**  
*by Gerard Manley Hopkins*

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;  
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil  
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?  
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;  
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;  
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil  
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;  
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;  
And though the last lights off the black West went  
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs –  
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

**The Windhover**

*by Gerard Manley Hopkins*

*To Christ our Lord*

Highlight Actions Disable annotations  
I caught this morning morning's minion, king-  
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding  
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding  
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing  
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,  
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding  
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding  
Stirred for a bird, – the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here  
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion  
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down sillion  
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,  
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

**Pied Beauty**  
*by Gerard Manley Hopkins*

Glory be to God for dappled things –  
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;  
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;  
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;  
Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;  
And áll trādes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
Praise him.

**Spring and Fall**  
*by Gerard Manley Hopkins*

*to a young child*

Márgarét, áre you grieving  
Over Goldengrove unleaving?  
Leáves like the things of man, you  
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?  
Ah! ás the heart grows older  
It will come to such sights colder  
By and by, nor spare a sigh  
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;  
And yet you will weep and know why.  
Now no matter, child, the name:  
Sórrów's spríngs áre the same.  
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed  
What heart heard of, ghost guessed:  
It is the blight man was born for,  
It is Margaret you mourn for.

### **Supernatural Love**

*by Gjertrud Schnackenberg (1953-present)*

My father at the dictionary-stand  
Touches the page to fully understand  
The lamplit answer, tilting in his hand

His slowly scanning magnifying lens,  
A blurry, glistening circle he suspends  
Above the word "Carnation." Then he bends

So near his eyes are magnified and blurred,  
One finger on the miniature word,  
As if he touched a single key and heard

A distant, plucked, infinitesimal string,  
"The obligation due to every thing  
That's smaller than the universe." I bring

My sewing needle close enough that I  
Can watch my father through the needle's eye,  
As through a lens ground for a butterfly

Who peers down flower-hallways toward a room  
Shadowed and fathomed as this study's gloom  
Where, as a scholar bends above a tomb

To read what's buried there, he bends to pore  
Over the Latin blossom. I am four,  
I spill my pins and needles on the floor

Trying to stitch "Beloved" X by X.  
My dangerous, bright needle's point connects  
Myself illiterate to this perfect text

I cannot read. My father puzzles why  
It is my habit to identify  
Carnations as "Christ's flowers," knowing I

Can give no explanation but "Because."  
Word-roots blossom in speechless messages  
The way the thread behind my sampler does

Where following each X I awkward move  
My needle through the word whose root is love.  
He reads, "A pink variety of Clove,

Carnatio, the Latin, meaning flesh."  
As if the bud's essential oils brush  
Christ's fragrance through the room, the iron-fresh

Odor carnations have floats up to me,  
A drifted, secret, bitter ecstasy,  
The stems squeak in my scissors, Child, it's me,

He turns the page to "Clove" and reads aloud:  
"The clove, a spice, dried from a flower-bud."  
Then twice, as if he hasn't understood,

He reads, "From French, for clou, meaning a nail."  
He gazes, motionless. "Meaning a nail."  
The incarnation blossoms, flesh and nail,

I twist my threads like stems into a knot  
And smooth "Beloved," but my needle caught  
Within the threads, Thy blood so dearly bought,

The needle strikes my finger to the bone.  
I lift my hand, it is myself I've sewn,  
The flesh laid bare, the threads of blood my own,

I lift my hand in startled agony  
And call upon his name, "Daddy daddy"—  
My father's hand touches the injury

As lightly as he touched the page before,  
Where incarnation bloomed from roots that bore  
The flowers I called Christ's when I was four.

**Loveliest of trees, the cherry now**  
*by A.E. Housman (1859-1963)*

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now  
Is hung with bloom along the bough,  
And stands about the woodland ride  
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,  
Twenty will not come again,  
And take from seventy springs a score,  
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom  
Fifty springs are little room,  
About the woodlands I will go  
To see the cherry hung with snow.

**The Mother of God**  
*by W.B. Yeats (1865-1939)*

The threefold terror of love; a fallen flare  
Through the hollow of an ear;

Wings beating about the room;  
The terror of all terrors that I bore  
The Heavens in my womb.  
Had I not found content among the shows  
Every common woman knows,  
Chimney corner, garden walk,  
Or rocky cistern where we tread the clothes  
And gather all the talk?  
What is this flesh I purchased with my pains,  
This fallen star my milk sustains,  
This love that makes my heart's blood stop  
Or strikes a sudden chill into my bones  
And bids my hair stand up?

**The Illiterate**  
*by William Meredith (1919-2007)*

Touching your goodness, I am like a man  
Who turns a letter over in his hand  
And you might think this was because the hand  
Was unfamiliar but, truth is, the man  
Has never had a letter from anyone;  
And now he is both afraid of what it means  
And ashamed because he has no other means  
To find out what it says than to ask someone.

His uncle could have left the farm to him,  
Or his parents died before he sent them word,  
Or the dark girl changed and want him for beloved.  
Afraid and letter-proud, he keeps it with him.  
What would you call his feeling for the words  
That keep him rich and orphaned and beloved?

**Those Winter Sundays**  
*by Robert Hayden (1913-1980)*

Sundays too my father got up early  
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,  
then with cracked hands that ached

from labor in the weekday weather made  
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.  
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,  
and slowly I would rise and dress,  
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him,  
who had driven out the cold  
and polished my good shoes as well.  
What did I know, what did I know  
of love's austere and lonely offices?

**"O Western Wind"**  
*Anonymous, c. 13th C?*

O Western Wind, when wilt thou blow,  
The small rain down can rain.  
Christ! my love were in my arms  
and I in my bed again.

**Nothing Gold Can Stay**  
*by Robert Frost (1874-1963)*

Nature's first green is gold,  
Her hardest hue to hold.  
Her early leaf's a flower;  
But only so an hour.  
Then leaf subsides to leaf.  
So Eden sank to grief,  
So dawn goes down to day.  
Nothing gold can stay.

**"Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art"**  
*by John Keats (1795-1821)*

Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art—  
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night  
And watching, with eternal lids apart,  
Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,

The moving waters at their priestlike task  
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,  
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask  
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—  
No—yet still stedfast, still unchangeable,  
Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,  
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,  
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,  
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,  
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

**The Passionate Shepherd to His Love**  
*by Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593)*

Come live with me and be my love,  
And we will all the pleasures prove,  
That Valleys, groves, hills, and fields,  
Woods, or steepy mountain yields.

And we will sit upon the Rocks,  
Seeing the Shepherds feed their flocks,  
By shallow Rivers to whose falls  
Melodious birds sing Madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of Roses  
And a thousand fragrant posies,  
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle  
Embroidered all with leaves of Myrtle;

A gown made of the finest wool  
Which from our pretty Lambs we pull;  
Fair lined slippers for the cold,  
With buckles of the purest gold;

A belt of straw and Ivy buds,  
With Coral clasps and Amber studs:

And if these pleasures may thee move,  
Come live with me, and be my love.

The Shepherds' Swains shall dance and sing  
For thy delight each May-morning;  
If these delights thy mind may move,  
Then live with me, and be my love.

**The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd**  
*Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1618)*

If all the world and love were young,  
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,  
These pretty pleasures might me move  
To live with thee and be thy love.

Time drives the flocks from field to fold  
When rivers rage and rocks grow cold,  
And Philomel becometh dumb;  
The rest complains of cares to come.

The flowers do fade, and wanton fields  
To wayward winter reckoning yields;  
A honey tongue, a heart of gall,  
Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall.

Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of roses,  
Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies  
Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten--  
In folly ripe, in reason rotten.

Thy belt of straw and ivy buds,  
Thy coral clasps and amber studs,  
All these in me no means can move  
To come to thee and be thy love.

But could youth last and love still breed,  
Had joys no date nor age no need,  
Then these delights my mind might move  
To live with thee and be thy love.

**The Good-Morrow**  
*by John Donne (1552-1663)*

I wonder, by my troth, what thou and I  
Did, till we loved? Were we not weaned till then?  
But sucked on country pleasures, childishly?  
Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers' den?  
'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.  
If ever any beauty I did see,  
Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.

And now good-morrow to our waking souls,  
Which watch not one another out of fear;  
For love, all love of other sights controls,  
And makes one little room an everywhere.  
Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,  
Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have shown,  
Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is one.

My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,  
And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;  
Where can we find two better hemispheres,  
Without sharp north, without declining west?  
Whatever dies, was not mixed equally;  
If our two loves be one, or, thou and I  
Love so alike, that none do slacken, none can die.