

Hello everyone! Thank you for taking an interest in poetry and its role in our lives as Christians. For our seminar, please read the below poems, paying close attention to a few specific attributes.

- Imagery: The poets create an image of places, or times, which are far away or no longer exist, yet images continue to exist and make themselves present in the poems. Is there a sense that some of the poets are pursuing immortality? Do some pursue it through God, while others seek it in pure imagery?
- Paradox: The poets find apparent contradictions, such as mundane everyday things being viewed as extraordinary.
- I have chosen to place Psalm 137 first in this list, keep it in mind as you read the rest of the selected poems. In the Psalm, there is a lamentation of the loss of Jerusalem, and Israel's exile in Babylon. Consider what some of the other poets are lamenting the loss of and remember that we, humanity, are pilgrims in this world.

I can't wait to meet with you all in April and talk about what we can draw from these, some of my favorite poets, to help us in deepening our relationship with God.

--Mr. Andrew Kays

Psalm 137

By the rivers of Babylon
there we sat weeping
when we remembered Zion.

On the poplars in its midst
we hung up our harps.

For there our captors asked us
for the words of a song;
Our tormentors, for joy:
"Sing for us a song of Zion!"

But how could we sing a song of the LORD
in a foreign land?

If I forget you, Jerusalem,
may my right hand forget.

May my tongue stick to my palate
if I do not remember you,
If I do not exalt Jerusalem
beyond all my delights.

Remember, LORD, against Edom
that day at Jerusalem.
They said: "Level it, level it
down to its foundations!"

Desolate Daughter Babylon, you shall be destroyed,
blessed the one who pays you back
what you have done us!

Blessed the one who seizes your children
and smashes them against the rock.

J.R.R. Tolkien

Journey's End

In western lands beneath the Sun
The flowers may rise in Spring,
The trees may bud, the waters run,
The merry finches sing.
Or there maybe 'tis cloudless night,
And swaying branches bear
The Elven-stars as jewels white
Amid their branching hair.

Though here at journey's end I lie
In darkness buried deep,
Beyond all towers strong and high,
Beyond all mountains steep,
Above all shadows rides the Sun
And Stars for ever dwell:
I will not say the Day is done,
Nor bid the Stars farewell.

W.B. Yeats

Sailing to Byzantium

That is no country for old men. The young
In one another's arms, birds in the trees,
—Those dying generations—at their song,
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect.

II

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium.

III

O sages standing in God's holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
And be the singing-masters of my soul.
Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is; and gather me

Into the artifice of eternity.

IV

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

The Wild Swans at Coole

The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky;
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine-and-fifty swans.

The nineteenth autumn has come upon me
Since I first made my count;
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings.

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,
And now my heart is sore.
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,
The first time on this shore,
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,
Trode with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air;
Their hearts have not grown old;
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still water,
Mysterious, beautiful;
Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake's edge or pool
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day
To find they have flown away?

Robert Frost

Birches

When I see birches bend to left and right
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay
As ice-storms do. Often you must have seen them
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
After a rain. They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises, and turn many-colored
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells
Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust—
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.
They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load,
And they seem not to break; though once they are bowed
So low for long, they never right themselves:
You may see their trunks arching in the woods
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground
Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair
Before them over their heads to dry in the sun.
But I was going to say when Truth broke in
With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm

I should prefer to have some boy bend them
As he went out and in to fetch the cows—
Some boy too far from town to learn baseball,
Whose only play was what he found himself,
Summer or winter, and could play alone.
One by one he subdued his father's trees
By riding them down over and over again
Until he took the stiffness out of them,
And not one but hung limp, not one was left
For him to conquer. He learned all there was
To learn about not launching out too soon
And so not carrying the tree away
Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise
To the top branches, climbing carefully
With the same pains you use to fill a cup
Up to the brim, and even above the brim.
Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,
Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.
So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
And so I dream of going back to be.
It's when I'm weary of considerations,
And life is too much like a pathless wood
Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs
Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
From a twig's having lashed across it open.
I'd like to get away from earth awhile
And then come back to it and begin over.
May no fate willfully misunderstand me
And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:
I don't know where it's likely to go better.
I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,
And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
But dipped its top and set me down again.
That would be good both going and coming back.
One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

Billy Joel

Goodnight My Angel

Goodnight, my angel time to close your eyes
And save these questions for another day
I think I know what you've been asking me
I think you know what I've been trying to say
I promised I would never leave you
And you should always know
Wherever you may go
No matter where you are
I never will be far away

Goodnight, my angel now it's time to sleep
And still so many things I want to say
Remember all the songs you sang for me
When we went sailing on an emerald bay
And like a boat out on the ocean
I'm rocking you to sleep
The water's dark and deep
inside this ancient heart
You'll always be a part of me

Goodnight, my angel
Now it's time to dream
And dream how wonderful
Your life will be
Someday your child may cry
And if you sing this lullaby
Then in your heart
There will always be a part of me

Someday we'll all be gone
But lullabies go on and on
They never die
That's how you
And I will be

Rainer Maria Rilke

Sonnet to Orpheus 19

Like the shapes of clouds,
So swiftly changes the world.
All consummations
Return to the primaeval.

Above mutability and progress,
Towards the boundless and liberation,
Your song as prelude endures,
God with the lyre.

Nor are sorrows understood.
Nor has love been learned.
And what recedes from us into death

Is not revealed.
Only the Song above the world
Sanctifies, holds celebration.

Robert Burns

Highland Mary

Ye banks, and braes, and streams around
 The castle o' Montgomery,
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
 Your waters never drumlie!
There Simmer first unfald her robes,
 And there the langest tarry:
For there I took the last Fareweel
 O' my sweet Highland Mary.

How sweetly bloom'd the gay, green birk,
 How rich the hawthorn's blossom;
As underneath their fragrant shade,
 I clasp'd her to my bosom!
The golden Hours, on angel wings,

Flew o'er me and my Dearie;
For dear to me as light and life
Was my sweet Highland Mary.

Wi' mony a vow, and lock'd embrace,
Our parting was fu' tender;
And pledging aft to meet again,
We tore oursels asunder:
But Oh! fell Death's untimely frost,
That nipt my Flower sae early!
Now green's the sod, and cauld's the clay,
That wraps my Highland Mary!

O pale, pale now, those rosy lips,
I aft hae kiss'd sae fondly!
And clos'd for ay the sparkling glance,
That dwalt on me sae kindly!
And mouldering now in silent dust,
That heart that lo'ed me dearly!
But still within my bosom's core
Shall live my Highland Mary.

G.K. Chesterton

The Rolling English Road

Before the Roman came to Rye or out to Severn strode,
The rolling English drunkard made the rolling English road.
A reeling road, a rolling road, that rambles round the shire,
And after him the parson ran, the sexton and the squire;
A merry road, a mazy road, and such as we did tread
The night we went to Birmingham by way of Beachy Head.

I knew no harm of Bonaparte and plenty of the Squire,
And for to fight the Frenchman I did not much desire;
But I did bash their baggonets because they came arrayed
To straighten out the crooked road an English drunkard made,
Where you and I went down the lane with ale-mugs in our hands,
The night we went to Glastonbury by way of Goodwin Sands.

His sins they were forgiven him; or why do flowers run
Behind him; and the hedges all strengthening in the sun?
The wild thing went from left to right and knew not which was which,
But the wild rose was above him when they found him in the ditch.
God pardon us, nor harden us; we did not see so clear
The night we went to Bannockburn by way of Brighton Pier.

My friends, we will not go again or ape an ancient rage,
Or stretch the folly of our youth to be the shame of age,
But walk with clearer eyes and ears this path that wandereth,
And see undrugged in evening light the decent inn of death;
For there is good news yet to hear and fine things to be seen,
Before we go to Paradise by way of Kensal Green.

Gloria In Profundis

There has fallen on earth for a token
A god too great for the sky.
He has burst out of all things and broken
The bounds of eternity:
Into time and the terminal land
He has strayed like a thief or a lover,
For the wine of the world brims over,
Its splendour is spilt on the sand.

Who is proud when the heavens are humble,
Who mounts if the mountains fall,
If the fixed stars topple and tumble
And a deluge of love drowns all-
Who rears up his head for a crown,
Who holds up his will for a warrant,
Who strives with the starry torrent,
When all that is good goes down?

For in dread of such falling and failing
The fallen angels fell
Inverted in insolence, scaling
The hanging mountain of hell:
But unmeasured of plummet and rod
Too deep for their sight to scan,

Outrushing the fall of man
Is the height of the fall of God.

Glory to God in the Lowest
The spout of the stars in spate-
Where thunderbolt thinks to be slowest
And the lightning fears to be late:
As men dive for sunken gem
Pursuing, we hunt and hound it,
The fallen star has found it
In the cavern of Bethlehem.