

Annie Finch Lectures

THE HEALING OF METER AND THE METER OF WATER (DACTYLS)

Sample Poems

Annie Finch

AMULET FOR BRAVE WOMEN

Women have voices it's time to believe in.

Brave women's words, spoken out clear and steady,  
move us through generous ways of achieving.

Women have voices it's time to believe in,  
braiding sweet worlds. This grave, loving weaving  
is singing our lives back, and women are ready—  
women have voices. It's time to believe in  
brave women's words, spoken out clear and steady,

Patricia Smith

UP ON THE ROOF

Up on the roof, stumbling slickstep, you wave all your sheets and your blouses,  
towels, bandannas, and denims, and etch what you ask on the morning:

*When are they coming to save us?* cause sinking is all that you're feeling.  
Blades spin so close to your breathing. Their noise, crazy roar, eats invective,

blotting out words as you scream them. They turn your beseeching to vapor.  
Water the dark hue of anger now laps at the feet you can't stand on.

Cameras obsess with your chaos. Now think how America sees you:  
Gold in your molars and earlobes. Your naps knotted, craving a brushing.

You clutch your babies regardless, keep roaring your spite to where God is.  
Breast pushes hard past your buttons. Then mud cracks its script on your forearm,

each word a misspelled agenda. But here come the flyboys to save you,  
baskets to cram your new life in, the drama of fetching and swinging.

Some people think that you're crazy. As you descend from the heavens,  
you choose to head for the questions. The earth and its water. The swallow.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

*From EVANGELINE*

This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks,  
Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the twilight,  
Stand like Druids of eld, with voices sad and prophetic,  
Stand like harpers hoar, with beards that rest on their bosoms.  
Loud from its rocky caverns, the deep-voiced neighboring ocean  
Speaks, and in accents disconsolate answers the wail of the forest.

This is the forest primeval; but where are the hearts that beneath it  
Leaped like the roe, when he hears in the woodland the voice of the huntsman  
Where is the thatch-roofed village, the home of Acadian farmers,

Men whose lives glided on like rivers that water the woodlands,  
Darkened by shadows of earth, but reflecting an image of heaven?  
Waste are those pleasant farms, and the farmers forever departed!  
Scattered like dust and leaves, when the mighty blasts of October  
Seize them, and whirl them aloft, and sprinkle them far o'er the ocean  
Naught but tradition remains of the beautiful village of Grand-Pré.

Ye who believe in affection that hopes, and endures, and is patient,  
Ye who believe in the beauty and strength of woman's devotion,  
List to the mournful tradition still sung by the pines of the forest;  
List to a Tale of Love in Acadie, home of the happy.

June Jordan

#### SOMETHING LIKE A SONNET FOR PHILLIS MIRACLE WHEATLEY

Girl from the realm of birds florid and fleet  
flying full feather in far or near weather  
Who fell to a dollar lust coffled like meat  
Captured by avarice and hate spit together  
Trembling asthmatic alone on the slave block  
built by a savagery travelling by carriage  
viewed like a species of flaw in the livestock  
A child without safety of mother or marriage

Chosen by whimsy but born to surprise  
They taught you to read but you learned how to write  
Begging the universe into your eyes:  
They dressed you in light but you dreamed  
with the night.  
From Africa singing of justice and grace,  
Your early verse sweetens the fame of our Race.

Paul Laurence Dunbar

ODE FOR MEMORIAL DAY

Done are the toils and the wearisome marches,  
    Done is the summons of bugle and drum.  
Softly and sweetly the sky overarches,  
    Shelt'ring a land where Rebellion is dumb.  
Dark were the days of the country's derangement,  
    Sad were the hours when the conflict was on,  
But through the gloom of fraternal estrangement  
    God sent his light, and we welcome the dawn.  
O'er the expanse of our mighty dominions,  
    Sweeping away to the uttermost parts,  
Peace, the wide-flying, on untiring pinions,  
    Bringeth her message of joy to our hearts.

Ah, but this joy which our minds cannot measure,  
    What did it cost for our fathers to gain!  
Bought at the price of the heart's dearest treasure,  
    Born out of travail and sorrow and pain;  
Born in the battle where fleet Death was flying,  
    Slaying with sabre-stroke bloody and fell;  
Born where the heroes and martyrs were dying,  
    Torn by the fury of bullet and shell.  
Ah, but the day is past: silent the rattle,  
    And the confusion that followed the fight.  
Peace to the heroes who died in the battle,  
    Martyrs to truth and the crowning of Right!

Out of the blood of a conflict fraternal,  
    Out of the dust and the dimness of death,  
Burst into blossoms of glory eternal  
    Flowers that sweeten the world with their breath.  
Flowers of charity, peace, and devotion  
    Bloom in the hearts that are empty of strife;  
Love that is boundless and broad as the ocean  
    Leaps into beauty and fullness of life.  
So, with the singing of paeans and chorals,  
    And with the flag flashing high in the sun,  
Place on the graves of our heroes the laurels  
    Which their unfaltering valor has won!

Sylvia Plath

## MUSHROOMS

Perfectly voiceless,  
  
Widen the crannies,  
  
Shoulder through holes. We

Diet on water

Thomas Hardy

THE VOICE

Woman much missed, how you call to me, call to me,  
Saying that now you are not as you were  
When you had changed from the one who was all to me,  
But as at first, when our day was fair.

Can it be you that I hear? Let me view you, then,  
Standing as when I drew near to the town  
Where you would wait for me: yes, as I knew you then,  
Even to the original air-blue gown!

Or is it only the breeze, in its listlessness  
Travelling across the wet mead to me here,  
You being ever dissolved to wan wistlessness,  
Heard no more again far or near?

Thus I; faltering forward,  
Leaves around me falling,  
Wind oozing thin through the thorn from norward,  
And the woman calling.

Annie Finch

WILD YEASTS

Rumbling a way up my dough's heavy throat to its head,  
seeping the trailed, airborne daughters down into the core,  
bubbles go rioting through my long-kneaded new bread;  
softly, now, breath of the wildest yeast starts to roar.

My hands work the peaked foam, push insides out into the light,  
edge shining new sinews back under the generous arch  
that time's final sigh will conclude. (Dry time will stretch tight  
whistling stops of quick heat through my long-darkened starch.)

How could I send quiet through this resonant, strange, vaulting roof  
murmuring, sounding with spores and the long-simple air,  
and the bright free road moving? I sing as I terrace a loaf  
out of my hands it has filled like a long-answered prayer.  
Now the worshipping savage cathedral our mouths make will lace  
death and its food, in the moment that refracts this place.



