

## Annie Finch Lectures

### THE LANGUAGE OF METER AND THE METER OF EARTH (TROCHEES)

#### Sample Poems

Annie Finch

#### WHEEL

Turn me. Touch me. Heal me. Change me,  
Seasons of the changing year.  
Move me. Make me. Rearrange me.  
Lead me home again. Here.

Turn us. Touch us. Heal us. Change us,  
Seasons of the changing year.  
Move us. Make us. Rearrange us.  
Lead us home again. Here.

Turn them. Touch them. Heal them. Change them,  
Seasons of the changing year.  
Move them. Make them. Rearrange them.  
Lead them home again. Here.

Gwendolyn Brooks

First half of THE ANNIAD (1949)

Think of sweet and chocolate,  
Left to folly or to fate,  
Whom the higher gods forgot,  
Whom the lower gods berate;  
Physical and underfed  
Fancying on the feather bed  
What was never and is not.

What is ever and is not.  
Pretty tatters blue and red,  
Buxom berries beyond rot,  
Western clouds and quarter-stars,  
Fairy-sweet of old guitars  
Littering the little head  
Light upon the featherbed.

Think of ripe and rompabout,  
All her harvest buttoned in,  
All her ornaments untried;  
Waiting for the paladin,  
Prosperous and ocean-eyed,

Who shall rub her secrets out  
And behold the hinted bride.

Watching for the paladin  
Which no woman ever had,  
Paradisaical and sad  
With dimple in his chin  
And the mountains in the mind;  
Ruralist and rather bad,  
Cosmopolitan and kind.

Think of thaumaturgic lass  
Looking in her looking-glass  
At the unembroidered brown;  
Printing bastard roses there;  
Then emotionally aware  
Of the black and boisterous hair,  
Taming all that anger down.

William Shakespeare

From MACBETH

Double, double toil and trouble;  
Fire burn and caldron bubble.  
Fillet of a fenny snake,  
In the caldron boil and bake;  
Eye of newt and toe of frog,  
Wool of bat and tongue of dog,  
Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,  
Lizard's leg and howlet's wing,  
For a charm of powerful trouble,  
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

Double, double toil and trouble;  
Fire burn and caldron bubble.  
Cool it with a baboon's blood,  
Then the charm is firm and good.

William Blake

THE TYGER

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,

In the forests of the night;

What immortal hand or eye,

Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.

Burnt the fire of thine eyes?

On what wings dare he aspire?

What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,

Could twist the sinews of thy heart?

And when thy heart began to beat.

What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,

In what furnace was thy brain?

What the anvil? what dread grasp.

Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears

And water'd heaven with their tears:

Did he smile his work to see?

Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger burning bright,

In the forests of the night:

What immortal hand or eye,

Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

W.H. Auden

LULLABY

Lay your sleeping head, my love,

Human on my faithless arm;

Time and fevers burn away

Individual beauty from

Thoughtful children, and the grave

Proves the child ephemeral:  
But in my arms till break of day  
Let the living creature lie,  
Mortal, guilty, but to me  
The entirely beautiful.

Soul and body have no bounds:  
To lovers as they lie upon  
Her tolerant enchanted slope  
In their ordinary swoon,  
Grave the vision Venus sends  
Of supernatural sympathy,  
Universal love and hope;  
While an abstract insight wakes  
Among the glaciers and the rocks  
The hermit's carnal ecstasy.

Certainty, fidelity  
On the stroke of midnight pass  
Like vibrations of a bell,  
And fashionable madmen raise  
Their pedantic boring cry:  
Every farthing of the cost,  
All the dreaded cards foretell,  
Shall be paid, but from this night  
Not a whisper, not a thought,  
Not a kiss nor look be lost.

Beauty, midnight, vision dies:  
Let the winds of dawn that blow

Softly round your dreaming head  
Such a day of welcome show  
Eye and knocking heart may bless,  
Find the mortal world enough;  
Noons of dryness find you fed  
By the involuntary powers,  
Nights of insult let you pass  
Watched by every human love.

Countee Cullen  
HERITAGE (1925)

What is Africa to me:  
Copper sun or scarlet sea,  
Jungle star or jungle track,  
Strong bronzed men, or regal black  
Women from whose loins I sprang  
When the birds of Eden sang?  
One three centuries removed  
From the scenes his fathers loved,  
Spicy grove, cinnamon tree,  
What is Africa to me?  
So I lie, who all day long  
Want no sound except the song  
Sung by wild barbaric birds



Goaded massive jungle herds,  
Juggernauts of flesh that pass  
Trampling tall defiant grass  
Where young forest lovers lie,  
Plighting troth beneath the sky.  
So I lie, who always hear,  
Though I cram against my ear  
Both my thumbs, and keep them there,  
Great drums throbbing through the air.  
So I lie, whose fount of pride,  
Dear distress, and joy allied,  
Is my somber flesh and skin,  
With the dark blood dammed within  
Like great pulsing tides of wine  
That, I fear, must burst the fine  
Channels of the chafing net  
Where they surge and foam and fret.  
Africa? A book one thumbs  
Listlessly, till slumber comes.  
Unremembered are her bats  
Circling through the night, her cats  
Crouching in the river reeds,  
Stalking gentle flesh that feeds  
By the river brink; no more  
Does the bugle-throated roar  
Cry that monarch claws have leapt  
From the scabbards where they slept.  
Silver snakes that once a year  
Doff the lovely coats you wear,

Seek no covert in your fear  
Lest a mortal eye should see;  
What's your nakedness to me?  
Here no leprous flowers rear  
Fierce corollas in the air;  
Here no bodies sleek and wet,  
Dripping mingled rain and sweat,  
Tread the savage measures of  
Jungle boys and girls in love.  
What is last year's snow to me,  
Last year's anything? The tree  
Budding yearly must forget  
How its past arose or set  
Bough and blossom, flower, fruit,  
Even what shy bird with mute  
Wonder at her travail there,  
Meekly labored in its hair.  
One three centuries removed  
From the scenes his fathers loved,  
Spicy grove, cinnamon tree,  
What is Africa to me?  
So I lie, who find no peace Night or day,  
no slight release  
From the unremittent beat  
Made by cruel padded feet  
Walking through my body's street.  
Up and down they go, and back, T  
reading out a jungle track.  
So I lie, who never quite

Safely sleep from rain at night—  
I can never rest at all  
When the rain begins to fall;  
Like a soul gone mad with pain  
I must match its weird refrain;  
Ever must I twist and squirm,  
Writhing like a baited worm,  
While its primal measures drip  
Through my body, crying, "Strip!  
Doff this new exuberance.  
Come and dance the Lover's Dance!" I  
In an old remembered way  
Rain works on me night and day.  
Quaint, outlandish heathen gods  
Black men fashion out of rods,  
Clay, and brittle bits of stone,  
In a likeness like their own,  
My conversion came high-priced;  
I belong to Jesus Christ,  
Preacher of humility;  
Heathen gods are naught to me.  
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
So I make an idle boast;  
Jesus of the twice-turned cheek,  
Lamb of God, although I speak  
With my mouth thus, in my heart  
Do I play a double part.  
Ever at Thy glowing altar  
Must my heart grow sick and falter,

Wishing He I served were black, T  
hinking then it would not lack  
Precedent of pain to guide it,  
Let who would or might deride it;  
Surely then this flesh would know  
Yours had borne a kindred woe.  
Lord, I fashion dark gods, too,  
Daring even to give You  
Dark despairing features where,  
Crowned with dark rebellious hair,  
Patience wavers just so much as  
Mortal grief compels, while touches  
Quick and hot, of anger, rise  
To smitten cheek and weary eyes.  
Lord, forgive me if my need  
Sometimes shapes a human creed.  
All day long and all night through,  
One thing only must I do:  
Quench my pride and cool my blood,  
Lest I perish in the flood.  
Lest a hidden ember set  
Timber that I thought was wet  
Burning like the dryest flax,  
Melting like the merest wax,  
Lest the grave restore its dead.  
Not yet has my heart or head  
In the least way realized  
They and I are civilized.

William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a Cloud

That floats on high o'er Vales and Hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host of golden Daffodils;  
Beside the Lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine

And twinkle on the Milky Way,  
They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they

Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:—  
A Poet could not but be gay  
In such a jocund company:  
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
What wealth the shew to me had brought:

For oft when on my couch I lie

In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude,  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the Daffodils.

Claude McKay

IF WE MUST DIE (1919)

If we must die, let it not be like hogs  
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,  
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,  
Making their mock at our accursèd lot.  
If we must die, O let us nobly die,  
So that our precious blood may not be shed  
In vain; then even the monsters we defy  
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!  
O kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!  
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,  
And for their thousand blows deal one death-blow!  
What though before us lies the open grave?  
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,  
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

Annie Finch

SAMHAIN (The Celtic Halloween)

In the season leaves should love,  
since it gives them leave to move  
through the wind, towards the ground  
they were watching while they hung,  
legend says there is a seam  
stitching darkness like a name.

Now when dying grasses veil  
earth from the sky in one last pale  
wave, as autumn dies to bring  
winter back, and then the spring,  
we who die ourselves can peel  
back another kind of veil

that hangs among us like thick smoke.

Tonight at last I feel it shake.

I feel the nights stretching away

thousands long behind the days  
till they reach the darkness where  
all of me is ancestor.

I move my hand and feel a touch  
move with me, and when I brush  
my own mind across another,  
I am with my mother's mother.  
Sure as footsteps in my waiting  
self, I find her, and she brings

arms that carry answers for me,  
intimate, a waiting bounty.

"Carry me." She leaves this trail  
through a shudder of the veil,  
and leaves, like amber where she stays,  
a gift for her perpetual gaze.

till they reach the darkness where



all of me is ancestor.

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