

Schumann: *Frauenliebe und Leben* (Women's Life and Love)

Text by Adelbert von Chamisso; tr. © Kyle Gee

1 (*played in class*)

Ever since first seeing him,
I think I must have gone blind;
Wherever I happen to look
I can only see him alone;
As if I'm daydreaming,
his image hovers in front of me,
rising up even from the deepest darkness,
brighter and brighter still.

Everything else around me
is missing light and color,
I no longer have any desire
to play games with my sisters,
I would rather be weeping
all alone in my little room;
Ever since first seeing him,
I think I must have gone blind.

2

He, the most magnificent of them all,
how gentle and good he is!
Enchanting lips, luminous eyes,
an open mind, and strong courage!

Just like that bright and glorious star
in the deep blue heavens,
he is bright and glorious in my heaven,
illustrious, and so far above me.

Follow, follow your own path,
just to gaze upon your radiance—
just to humbly gaze upon it,
is to be both blissful and melancholy.

Don't bother to hear my quiet prayer,
dedicated solely to your happiness;
You don't need to know this irrelevant girl,
you sublime and glorious star!

Only the worthiest one of them all
should be made happy by your choice,
And I will bless that elevated one
a thousand times over.

Then I shall rejoice and weep,
blissful, I will be blissful then,
and if then my heart breaks:
Break, heart! Why does it matter?

3

I can't grasp or believe it,
I must've been dreaming;
Why would he, of all people,
choose to honor and bless *me*?

I think he may have said:
"I am eternally yours."
I think—no, I'm still dreaming!
This could never be true!

Oh let me die in this dream,
nestled against his breast,
let me drink a blissful death
of eternally delighted tears.

4 (*played in class*)

You, ring on my finger,
my little golden ring,
I press you devoutly to my lips,
to my heart.

I had dreamed time and time again,
the peacefully beautiful childhood dream,
I found myself lost
in an empty, endless space.

You, ring on my finger,
you have just now taught me,
you have opened up my eyes
to the infinitely deep value of life.

I want to serve him, to live for him,
to belong to him completely,
to fully give myself to him,
and to find myself transfigured in his radiance.

You, ring on my finger,
my little golden ring,
I press you devoutly to my lips,
to my heart.

5

Help me, my sisters,
help me beautify myself,
serve this happy woman today.
Busily braid
around my forehead
the ornament of blooming myrtle.

When I used to lie contented,
my heart full of joy,
in the arms of my beloved,
he always begged,
his heart full of longing,
impatiently for this day to come.

Help me, my sisters,
help me chase away
this childish anxiety,
so that I may receive him
with clear eyes,
he, the source of all my joyousness.

Have you, my beloved,
appeared before me,
to give me your light, oh my sun?
Let me in devotion,
let me in humility,
let me bow down before my lord.

Scatter, my sisters,
scatter flowers before him,
present him with budding roses.
But you, my sisters,
I bid you a melancholy farewell,
as I nevertheless joyously leave your flock.

6

Sweet friend, you look
at me in awe;
You can't understand
how I can weep.
Let the unique ornament
of glistening pearls
tremble joyfully
and brightly in my eyes.

How anxious my heart is,
and how blissful!
If only I knew
how to say it with words;
Come and hide your face
here at my breast,
I want to whisper
all of my excitement into your ear.

Here by my bed
there's room for a cradle,
where it may quietly
shelter my lovely dream.
the morning will come
when the dream awakes,
and from the cradle
your image smiles up at me!

7

At my heart, at my breast,
you my bliss, you my joy!
Happiness is love, love is happiness,
I've said it and won't take it back!
I thought I was rapturous before,
but I am even more supremely happy now.

Only one who nurses, only she
who loves the child she nurses,
only a *mother* knows
what it means to love and be happy.
Oh how I feel sorry for a man
because he cannot feel a mother's happiness!

You dear, dear angel you,
you look at me and you smile!

At my heart, at my breast,
you my bliss, you my joy!

8 (*played in class*)

Now you've hurt me for the first time—
but this blow struck deep.
You sleep, you hard, cruel man,
the sleep of death.

The abandoned one stares ahead,
the world is completely empty.
I've loved and lived;
I'm no longer living.

I quietly withdraw into my inner self;
the veil falls.
Only there do I have you and my lost happiness,
you who were my world!

Mahler: *Kindertotenlieder* (Songs on the Death of Children)

Text by Friederich Rückert; tr. © Emily Ezust

1

Now the sun will rise as brightly
as if no misfortune had occurred in the night.
The misfortune has fallen on me alone.
The sun—it shines for everyone.

You must not keep the night inside you;
you must immerse it in eternal light.
A little light has been extinguished in my household;
Light of joy in the world, be welcome.

2

Now I see well why with such dark flames
your eyes sparkled so often.
O eyes, it was as if in one full glance
you could concentrate your entire power.

Yet I did not realize—because mists floated about me,
woven by blinding fate—
that this beam of light was ready to be sent home
to that place whence all beams come.

You would have told me with your brilliance:
we would gladly have stayed near you!
But it is refused by Fate.

Just look at us, for soon we will be far!
What to you are only eyes in these days—
in future nights shall be stars to us.

3

When your mother
steps into the doorway
and I turn my head
to see her,
my gaze does not alight
first on her face,
but on the place
nearer to the threshold;
there, where
your dear face would be
when you would step in
with bright joy,
as you used to, my little daughter.

When your mother steps
into the doorway
with the gleam of a candle,

it always seems to me as if
you came in as well,
slipping in behind her,
just as you used to come into the room!
O you, a father's cell,
alas! too quickly
you extinguish the gleam of joy!

4

Often I think that they have only stepped out -
and that soon they will reach home again.
The day is fair —O don't be afraid—
They are only taking a long walk.

Yes: they have only stepped out
and will now return home.
O don't be anxious—the day is fair.
They are only taking a walk to those hills.

They have simply gone on ahead:
they will not wish to return home again.
We'll catch up to them on those hills.
In the sunshine the day is fair upon those hills.

5 (*played in class*)

In this weather, in this windy storm,
I would never have sent the children out;
They were carried outside—
I could say nothing about it!

In this weather, in this roaring storm,
I would never have let the children out.
I was afraid they had fallen ill,
but these thoughts are now idle.

In this weather, in this cruel storm,
I would never have let the children out;
I was worried they would die the next day—
but this is now no concern.

In this weather, in this cruel storm,
I would never have sent the children out;
They were carried outside—
I could say nothing about it!

In this weather, in this roaring, cruel storm,
they rest as they did in their mother's house:
they are frightened by no storm,
and are covered by the hand of God.

Poems Read in Class

Shakespeare: *Sonnet LXXIII*

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

Anne Bradstreet: *To My Dear and Loving Husband*

If ever two were one, then surely we.
If ever man were loved by wife, then thee.
If ever wife was happy in a man,
Compare with me, ye women, if you can.
I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold,
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.
My love is such that rivers cannot quench,
Nor ought but love from thee give recompense.
Thy love is such I can no way repay;
The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.
Then while we live, in love let's so persevere,
That when we live no more, we may live ever.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning: *Sonnets from the Portuguese, #43*

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for right.
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

Christina Rossetti: *A Birthday*

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a water'd shoot;
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me.
Raise me a dais of silk and down;
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.

Ada Limón: *Love Poem, with Apologies for my Appearance*

Sometimes, I think you get the worst
of me. The much-loved loose forest-green
sweatpants, the long bra-less days, hair
knotted and uncivilized, a shadowed brow
where the devilish thoughts do their hoofed
dance on the brain. I'd like to say this means
I love you, the stained white cotton T-shirt,
the tears, pistachio shells, the mess of orange
peels on my desk, but it's different than that.
I move in this house with you, the way I move
in my mind, unencumbered by beauty's cage.
I do like I do in the tall grass, more animal-me
than much else. I'm wrong, it is that I love you,
but it's more that when you say it back, lights
out, a cold wind through curtains, for maybe
the first time in my life, I believe it.

Joe Mills: *How Do You Know?*

How do you know if it's love? she asks,
and I think if you have to ask, it's not,
but I know this won't help. I want to say
you're too young to worry about it,
as if she has questions about Medicare
or social security, but this won't help either.
"You'll just know" is a lie, and one truth,
"when you still want to be with them
the next morning," would involve too

many follow-up questions. The difficulty with love, I want to say, is sometimes you only know afterwards that it's arrived or left. Love is the elephant and we are the blind mice unable to understand the whole. I want to say love is this desire to help even when I know I can't, just as I couldn't explain electricity, stars, the color of the sky, baldness, tornadoes, fingernails, coconuts, or the other things she has asked about over the years, all those phenomena whose daily existence seems miraculous. Instead I shake my head. *I don't even know how to match my socks. Go ask your mother.* She laughs and says, *I did. Mom told me to come and ask you.*

Mary Oliver: *When Death Comes*

When death comes
like the hungry bear in autumn;
when death comes and takes all the bright coins from his purse

to buy me, and snaps the purse shut;
when death comes
like the measles-pox

when death comes
like an iceberg between the shoulder blades,

I want to step through the door full of curiosity, wondering:
what is it going to be like, that cottage of darkness?

And therefore I look upon everything
as a brotherhood and a sisterhood,
and I look upon time as no more than an idea,
and I consider eternity as another possibility,

and I think of each life as a flower, as common
as a field daisy, and as singular,

and each name a comfortable music in the mouth,
tending, as all music does, toward silence,

and each body a lion of courage, and something
precious to the earth.

When it's over, I want to say all my life
I was a bride married to amazement.
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder
if I have made of my life something particular, and real.

I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,
or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.

Carol Ann Duffy: *Premonitions*

We first met when your last breath
cooled in my palm like an egg;
you dead, and a thrush outside
sang it was morning.
I backed out of the room, feeling
the flowers freshen and shine in my arms.

The night before, we met again, to unsay
unbearable farewells, to see
our eyes brighten with re-strung tears.
O I had my sudden wish—
though I barely knew you—
to stand at the door of your house,
feeling my heartbeat calm,
as they carried you in, home, home and healing.
Then slow weeks, removing the wheelchair, the drugs,
the oxygen mask and tank, the commode,
the appointment cards,
until it was summer again
and I saw you open the doors to the gift of your garden.

Strange and beautiful to see
the roses close to their own premonitions,
the grass sweeten and cool and green
where a blackbird eased a worm into the lawn.
There you were,
a glass of lemony wine in each hand,
walking towards me always, your magnolia tree
marrying itself to the May air.

How you talked! And how I listened,
spellbound, humbled, daughterly,
to your tall tales, your wise words,
the joy of your accent, unEnglish, dancey, humorous;
watching your ash hair flare and redden,
the loving litany of who we had been
making me place my hands in your warm hands,
younger than mine are now.
Then time only the moon. And the balm of dusk.
And you my mother.

Lyrics of Songs Played in Class

Train: *Marry Me*

Forever can never be long enough for me
To feel like I've had long enough with you
Forget the world now, we won't let them see
But there's one thing left to do
Now that the weight has lifted
Love has surely shifted my way

*Marry me
Today and every day
Marry me
If I ever get the nerve to say hello in this café
Say you will*

Together can never be close enough for me
To feel like I am close enough to you
You wear white, and I'll wear out the words I love you
And you're beautiful
Now that the wait is over
And love and has finally showed her my way

Promise me you'll always be
Happy by my side
I promise to sing to you
When all the music dies

John Lennon: *Beautiful Boy*

Close your eyes
Have no fear
The monster's gone, he's on the run
And your daddy's here

*Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful
Beautiful boy*

Before you go to sleep
Say a little prayer
Every day in every way
It's getting better and better

Out on the ocean
Sailing away
I can hardly wait
To see you come of age
But I guess we'll both just have to be patient

'Cause it's a long way to go
A hard row to hoe
Yes, it's a long way to go
But in the meantime

Before you cross the street
Take my hand
Life is what happens to you
While you're busy making other plans

Darlin', darlin', darlin' Sean
Good night, Sean
See you in the morning
Bright and early.

Leonard Cohen: *Dance Me to the End of Love*

Dance me to your beauty with a burning violin
Dance me through the panic 'til I'm gathered safely in
Lift me like an olive branch and be my homeward dove
Dance me to the end of love

Let me see your beauty when the witnesses are gone
Let me feel you moving like they do in Babylon
Show me slowly what I only know the limits of
Dance me to the end of love

Dance me to the wedding now, dance me on and on
Dance me very tenderly and dance me very long
We're both of us beneath our love, we're both of us above
Dance me to the end of love

Dance me to the children who are asking to be born
Dance me through the curtains that our kisses have outworn
Raise a tent of shelter now, though every thread is torn
Dance me to the end of love.

Taylor Swift: *Bigger than the Whole Sky*

No words appear before me in the aftermath
Salt streams out my eyes and into my ears
Every single thing I touch becomes sick with sadness
'Cause it's all over now
All out to sea

*Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye
You were bigger than the whole sky
You were more than just a short time
And I've got a lot to pine about
I've got a lot to live without
I'm never gonna meet
What could've been, would've been
What should've been you
What could've been, would've been you*

Did some bird flap its wings over in Asia?
Did some force take you because I didn't pray?
Every single thing to come has turned into ashes
'Cause it's all over, it's not meant to be
So I'll say words I don't believe

*Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye
You were bigger than the whole sky
You were more than just a short time
And I've got a lot to pine about
I've got a lot to live without
I'm never gonna meet
What could've been, would've been
What should've been you.*

Ed Sheeran: *Supermarket Flowers*

I took the supermarket flowers from the windowsill
I threw the day-old tea from the cup
Packed up the photo album Matthew had made
Memories of a life that's been loved
Took the get well soon cards and stuffed animals
Poured the old ginger beer down the sink
Dad always told me, "Don't you cry when you're down"
But mum, there's a tear every time that I blink

Oh, I'm in pieces, it's tearing me up, but I know
A heart that's broke is a heart that's been loved

So, I'll sing Hallelujah
You were an angel in the shape of my mum
When I fell down, you'd be there holding me up
Spread your wings as you go
And when God takes you back
He'll say, "Hallelujah, you're home"

I fluffed the pillows, made the beds, stacked the chairs up
Folded your nightgowns neatly in a case
John said he'd drive then put his hand on my cheek
And wiped a tear from the side of my face
And I hope that I see the world as you did, 'cause I know
A life with love is a life that's been lived

So, I'll sing Hallelujah
You were an angel in the shape of my mum
When I fell down, you'd be there holding me up
Spread your wings as you go
And when God takes you back
He'll say, "Hallelujah, you're home"

Hallelujah
You were an angel in the shape of my mum
You got to see the person I have become
Spread your wings and I know
That when God took you back
He said, "Hallelujah, you're home".

James Taylor: *You Can Close Your Eyes*

Well the sun is surely sinkin' down
But the moon is slowly risin'
So this old world must still be spinnin' around
And I still love you

*So close your eyes
You can close your eyes, it's all right
I don't know no love songs
And I can't sing the blues anymore
But I can sing this song
And you can sing this song
When I'm gone*

It won't be long before another day
We gonna have a good time
And no one's gonna take that time away
You can stay as long as you like.

*So close your eyes
You can close your eyes, it's all right
I don't know no love songs
And I can't sing the blues anymore
But I can sing this song
And you can sing this song
When I'm gone*