

## Unit # 4: The Darker Side of Love

Quiz Tuesday, February 24<sup>th</sup>

Poem Due Thursday, February 26<sup>th</sup>

Typed, 25 lines (This poem must have a title)

*"A poem begins with a lump in the throat, a home-sickness or a love-sickness. It is a reaching-out toward expression; an effort to find fulfillment. A complete poem is one where the emotion has found its thought and the thought has found the words."*

-Robert Frost, First published in Robert Frost: The Man and His Work.  
New York: Henry Holt, 1923.

What a great image Robert Frost presents in this profound reflection on the creative process. In this quote, he suggests that poetry begins with dissatisfaction and ends in yearning. This week we will be delving into our own love-sickness as a source of poetic inspiration. As you edit your final poem, keep Frost's words in mind, and try to find a balance between thought and feeling. And remember: honesty is more powerful than sentimentality. This is especially important when writing about love!

### Reading:

Margaret Atwood, "You Fit Into Me"

W.S. Merwin, "Separation"

June Jordan, "Poem About Heartbreak that Go On and On"

Dorothy Parker, "Review of the Sex Situation"

Langston Hughes, "Luck"

Susan Hornik, "Goodbye"

E.E. Cummings, "may i feel said he"

Lyn Lifshin, "he'd rather have a paper doll, she said"

Charles Bukowski, "Freedom"

Langston Hughes, "Madam and Her Might have been"

Tennessee Williams, "Life Story"

Pablo Neruda, "Tonight I Can Write"

Nizar Kibbani, "Pull out the Dagger"

Anne Sexton, "For My Lover, Returning to His Wife"

### Option #1 Short But Not Sweet

Write a compact poem about a break-up. Consider coming up with a metaphor that perfectly describes a break up or a bad love experience looking at the poems by June Jordan, W.S. Merwin, and Margaret Atwood as examples. **Note:** If you choose this option, you must write several poems so that you reach 20-25 lines.

**Option #2 In the Bedroom**

Write a poem set in the bedroom, but instead of focusing the poem on the elicited details of a sexual encounter, emphasize the psychological interplay between the partners as done by Tennessee Williams,

**Option #3 Tragic Love**

Using the poems by Bukowski and Cummings as models, write a poem about an imaginary couple. Use the third person when writing this poem (she, he, they). Tell the story of their affair or break up using vivid language or dialogue that draws the reader into the world of the poem.

**Option #4 Longing for Love**

Write a deep, emotionally raw poem about unrequited love. See Neruda and Kibani.

### **Separation**

*W.S. Merwin*

Your absence has gone through me  
Like thread through a needle  
Everything I do is stitched with its color

### **Poem About Heartbreak that Go On and On**

*June Jordan*

bad love last like a big ugly lizard crawl around the  
house  
forever  
never die  
and never change itself  
into a butterfly

### **You Fit Into Me**

*Margaret Atwood*

you fit into me  
like a hook in an eye

a fish hook  
an open eye

### **General Review of the Sex Situation**

*Dorothy Parker*

Woman wants monogamy;  
Man delights in novelty.  
Love is woman's moon and sun;  
Man has other forms of fun.  
Woman lives but in her lord;  
Count to ten, and man is bored.  
With this gist and sum of it,  
What earthly good can come of it?

**Luck**

*Langston Hughes*

Sometimes a crumb falls  
From the tables of joy  
Sometimes a bone  
Is flung.

To some people  
Love is given,  
To others  
Only heaven.

**Goodbye**

*Susan Hornik*

I fed the pumpkin muffins I baked you  
to the pigeons.  
They reminded me of you.  
They never said  
Thank you.

**may i feel said he**

**E. E. Cummings (1935)**

may i feel said he  
(i'll squeal said she  
just once said he)  
it's fun said she

(may i touch said he  
how much said she  
a lot said he)  
why not said she

(let's go said he  
not too far said she  
what's too far said he  
where you are said she)

may i stay said he  
(which way said she  
like this said he  
if you kiss said she

may i move said he  
is it love said she)  
if you're willing said he  
(but you're killing said she

but it's life said he  
but your wife said she  
now said he)  
ow said she

(tiptop said he  
don't stop said she  
oh no said he)  
go slow said she

(cccome? said he  
ummm said she)  
you're divine! said he  
(you are Mine said she)

## Freedom

Charles Bukowski

he drank wine all night of the  
28th, and he kept thinking of her:  
the way she walked and talked and loved  
the way she told him things that seemed true  
but were not, and he knew the color of each  
of her dresses  
and her shoes-he knew the stock and curve of  
each heel  
as well as the leg shaped by it.

and she was out again and when he came home, and  
she'd come back with that special stink again,  
and she did  
she came in at 3 a.m in the morning  
filthy like a dung eating swine  
and  
he took out a butchers knife  
and she screamed  
backing into the rooming house wall  
still pretty somehow  
in spite of love's reek  
and he finished the glass of wine.

that yellow dress  
his favorite  
and she screamed again.  
and he took up the knife  
and unhooked his belt  
and tore away the cloth before her  
and cut off his balls.

and carried them in his hands  
like apricots  
and flushed them down the  
toilet bowl  
and she kept screaming  
as the room became red

GOD O GOD!  
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

and he sat there holding 3 towels  
between his legs  
no caring now whether she left or  
stayed  
wore yellow or green or  
anything at all.  
and one hand holding and one hand lifting he  
poured  
another wine

a porn woman. I'd  
soak in a tub of bath  
oil an hour come back  
and drop the towel and  
he'd roll over. Even  
our honeymoon he  
was out getting skin  
flicks. He had Play  
boy and Penthouse. Then,  
things in brown enveloped  
stashed behind furniture,  
films, I was in competition  
even that week in Las  
Vegas but I tried  
8 and a half years  
I had my breasts done,  
belly, but he'd lock him  
self in the bathroom for  
3 hours. I could hear  
paper turning. He said it  
had nothing to do with  
me and he'd been such a  
gentleman. Five dates  
before he even kissed me.  
My father told his three  
girls men just want one  
thing. I wear teddies to  
bed, eyelashes I tried  
suicide twice never told  
anyone, thought if I just  
bought the right nylon  
or lace. A real woman  
scares him. On paper, he  
can have as many, never  
with cellulite, or scars  
hair where it should  
not be, doing what  
ever he can imagine



## Madam and Her Might Have Been

Langston Hughes

I had two husbands  
I could have had three—  
But my Might-Have-Been  
Was too good for me.

When you grow up the hard way  
Sometimes you don't know  
What's too good to be true,  
Just might be so.

He worked all the time,  
Spent his money on me—  
First time in my life  
I had anything free.

I said, Do you love me?  
Or am I mistaken?  
You're always giving  
And never taking.

He said, Madam, I swear  
All I want is you.  
Right then and there  
I knowed we was through!

I told him, Jackson,  
You better leave—  
You got some'n else  
Up your sleeve:

When you think you got bread  
It's always a stone—  
Nobody loves nobody  
For yourself alone.

He said, In me  
You've got no trust  
I said, I don't want  
My heart to bust.

## Life Story

Tennessee Williams

After you've been to bed together for the first time,  
without the advantage or disadvantage of any prior acquaintance,  
the other party very often says to you,  
Tell me about yourself, I want to know all about you,  
what's your story? And you think maybe they really and truly do

sincerely want to know your life story, and so you light up  
a cigarette and begin to tell it to them, the two of you  
lying together in completely relaxed positions  
like a pair of rag dolls a bored child dropped on a bed.

You tell them your story, or as much of your story  
as time or a fair degree of prudence allows, and they say,  
Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh,  
each time a little more faintly, until the oh  
is just an audible breath, and then of course

there's some interruption. Slow room service comes up  
with a bowl of melting ice cubes, or one of you rises to pee  
and gaze at himself with the mild astonishment in the bathroom mirror.  
And then, the first thing you know, before you've had time  
to pick up where you left off with your enthralling life story,  
they're telling you *their* life story, exactly as they'd intended to all along,

and you're saying, Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh,  
each time a little more faintly, the vowel at last becoming  
no more than an audible sigh,  
as the elevator, halfway down the corridor and a turn to the left,  
draws one last, long, deep breath of exhaustion  
and stops breathing forever. Then?

Well, one of you falls asleep  
and the other one does likewise with a lighted cigarette in his mouth,  
and that's how people burn to death in hotel rooms.

## **Tonight I Can Write**

**Pablo Neruda**

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.

Write, for example, 'The night is starry  
and the stars are blue and shiver in the distance.'

The night wind revolves in the sky and sings.

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.  
I loved her, and sometimes she loved me too.

Through nights like this one I held her in my arms.  
I kissed her again and again under the endless sky.

She loved me, sometimes I loved her too.  
How could one not have loved her great still eyes.

Tonight I can write the saddest lines.  
To think that I do not have her. To feel that I have lost her.

To hear the immense night, still more immense without her.  
And the verse falls to the soul like dew to the pasture.

What does it matter that my love could not keep her.  
The night is starry and she is not with me.

This is all. In the distance someone is singing. In the distance.  
My soul is not satisfied that it has lost her.

My sight tries to find her as though to bring her closer.  
My heart looks for her, and she is not with me.

The same night whitening the same trees.  
We, of that time, are no longer the same.

I no longer love her, that's certain, but how I loved her.  
My voice tries to find the wind to touch her hearing.

Another's. She will be another's. As she was before my kisses.  
Her voice, her bright body. Her infinite eyes.

I no longer love her, that's certain, but maybe I love her.  
Love is so short, forgetting is so long.

Because through nights like this one I held her in my arms  
my soul is not satisfied that it has lost her.

Though this be the last pain that she makes me suffer  
and these the last verses that I write for her.

## **Pull out the Dagger**

**Nizar Kibbani**

Pull out the dagger buried in my side.  
Let me live.  
Pull out your scent from my skin.  
Let me live.  
Give me a chance  
To meet a new woman  
To cross out your name from my diary  
To cut the braids of your hair  
Wrapped around my neck.  
Give me a chance  
To search for roads where  
I have never walked with you,  
For seats  
Where I have never sat with you,  
For places  
That have no memory of you.  
Give me a chance  
To search for the women  
Whom I left for you  
And killed for you  
So I can live again.

*Translation by Bassam K. Frangieh  
and Clementina R. Brown*

## ***For My Lover, Returning To His Wife***

**Poem:** "For My Lover, Returning To His Wife," by Anne Sexton from *Love Poems* (Houghton Mifflin).

She is all there.  
She was melted carefully down for you  
and cast up from your childhood,  
cast up from your one hundred favorite aggies.

She has always been there, my darling.  
She is, in fact, exquisite.  
Fireworks in the dull middle of February  
and as real as a cast-iron pot.

Let's face it, I have been momentary.  
A luxury. A bright red sloop in the harbor.  
My hair rising like smoke from the car window.  
Littleneck clams out of season.

She is more than that. She is your have to have,  
has grown you your practical your tropical growth.  
This is not an experiment. She is all harmony.  
She sees to oars and oarlocks for the dinghy,

has placed wild flowers at the window at breakfast,  
sat by the potter's wheel at midday,  
set forth three children under the moon,  
three cherubs drawn by Michelangelo,

done this with her legs spread out  
in the terrible months in the chapel.  
If you glance up, the children are there  
like delicate balloons resting on the ceiling.

She has also carried each one down the hall  
after supper, their heads privately bent,  
two legs protesting, person to person  
her face flushed with a song and their little sleep.

I give you back your heart.  
I give you permission—

for the fuse inside her, throbbing  
angrily in the dirt, for the bitch in her  
and the burying of her wound—  
for the burying of her small red wound alive—

for the pale flickering flare under her ribs,  
for the drunken sailor who waits in her left pulse,  
for the mother's knee, for the stockings,  
for the garter belt, for the call—

the curious call  
when you will burrow in arms and breasts  
and tug at the orange ribbon in her hair  
and answer the call, the curious call.

She is so naked and singular.  
She is the sum of yourself and your dream.  
Climb her like a monument, step after step.  
She is solid.

As for me, I am a watercolor.  
I wash off.