

Passionate Poetry of Romantic Love: Class One

Arguably the most well-known topic of Passionate Poetry is Romantic Love. For hundreds of years this has been so. Grief and loss are two other themes that dominate the poetic expression of passion.

But what is "passion?" It is emotional, always intense, often intimate with a universal depth. In this first class we focus on the poetry of passionate relationships. In other classes we explore passion for nature, for art, and for care-giving. Whatever the theme's intensity is poetic passion's keynote.

CLASS ONE: ROMANTIC LOVE.

THE THIRD WATCH

ANONYMOUS (Korean)

It is the third watch. The girl
in the bridal bedroom is so gentle,
so beautiful, I look and look again;
I can't believe my eyes.
Sixteen years old, peach blossom complexion
 golden hairpin, white ramie skirt,
 bright eyes a gleam in playful glance,
lips half parted in a smile.
My love! my own true love!
Need I say aught
 Of the silver in her voice
 and the wonder of her under the quilt.

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THE WHITE LILIES

Louise Gluck

As a man and woman make
a garden between them like
a bed of stars, here
they linger in the summer evening
and the evening turns
cold with their terror: it
could all end, it is capable
of devastation. All, all
can be lost, through scented air

the narrow columns
uselessly rising, and beyond,
a churning sea of poppies--

Hush, beloved. It doesn't matter to me
how many summers I live to return:
this one summer we have entered eternity.
I felt your two hands
bury me to release its splendor.

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I DO NOT LOVE YOU
Pablo Neruda

I do not love you as if you were a rose or topaz,
or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off.
I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,
secret, between the shadow and the soul.

I love you as the plant that never blooms
but carries in itself the light of hidden flowers:
Thanks to your love a certain solid fragrance,
,Risen from the earth, lives darkly in my body,

I love you without knowing how, or when or from where.
I love you straightforwardly without complexities or pride:
So I love you because I know no other way

than this:where I does not exist, nor you,
so close that your hand my chest is my hand,
so close that your eyes close when I fall asleep.

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THANK YOU, MY FATE
Anna Swir

Great humility fills me,
great purity fills me,
I make love with my dear
as if I made love dying
as if I made love praying,
tears pour

over my arms and his arms.
I don't know whether this is joy
or sadness, I don't understand
what I feel, I'm crying,
I'm crying, it's humility
as if I were dead,
gratitude, I thank you, my fate,
I'm unworthy, how beautiful
my life.

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WILD NIGHTS - WILD NIGHTS!
Emily Dickinson

Wild nights - Wild nights!
Were I with thee
Wild nights should be
Our luxury!

Futile - the winds -
To a Heart in port -
Done with the Compass -
Done with the Chart!

Rowing in Eden -
Ah - the Sea!
Might I but moor - tonight -
In thee!

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WHAT A NIGHT
translated by Kenneth Rex Roth

Good God, what a night that was,
The bed so soft, and how we clung,
Burning together, lying this way and that,
Our uncontrollable passions
Flowing through our mouths.
If only I could die that way,
I'd give up on the business of living.

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SONNET 116

William Shakespeare

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

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YOUR LAUGHTER

Pablo Neruda

Your Laughter
Take bread away from me, if you wish,
take air away, but
do not take from me your laughter.

Do not take away the rose,
the lance flower that you pluck,
the water that suddenly
bursts forth in joy,
the sudden wave
of silver born in you.

My struggle is harsh and I come back
with eyes tired
at times from having seen
the unchanging earth,
but when your laughter enters
it rises to the sky seeking me
and it opens for me all
the doors of life.

My love, in the darkest
hour your laughter
opens, and if suddenly
you see my blood staining
the stones of the street,
laugh, because your laughter
will be for my hands
like a fresh sword.

Next to the sea in the autumn,
your laughter must raise
its foamy cascade,
and in the spring, love,
I want your laughter like
the flower I was waiting for,
the blue flower, the rose
of my echoing country.

Laugh at the night,
at the day, at the moon,
laugh at the twisted
streets of the island,
laugh at this clumsy
boy who loves you,
but when I open
my eyes and close them,
when my steps go,
when my steps return,
deny me bread, air,
light, spring,
but never your laughter
for I would die.

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FUNERAL BLUES

W H Auden

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead
Scribbling on the sky the message He Is Dead,
Put crepe bows round the white necks of the public doves,
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last for ever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now: put out every one;
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun;
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood;
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

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THE TREE OF FIRE

Ada Limon

(Exerpt)

The tree came to me
For the first time in weeks.
When did all its colors
Start shooting out of its skin.
This morning we made hot love
And now, this tree
Breaks into view, red leaves
That demand a clanging,
Screaming alarm and I think---
This tree has been here
All this time and I didn't notice.
I swear, I'll try harder not to
Miss as much: the tree, or how
Your fingers under still
Sleep-stunned sheets
Coaxed all my colors back

[illegible]