Bard Con Virtual

presents

Rhythm and Meter in Poetry

A virtual mini seminar

with

Alex Edwards-Bourdrez

Though we must be distanced physically,
We’re not forced to be distanced psychically.
DEFINITIONS

Rhythm

beat + pace

Steady
unsteady
fast
slow

Meter

# beats in syllabic group + Pattern in a series of syllabic groups

[Meter influences rhythm—but so do other language elements.]

for example, iambic pentameter

Shall I compare the to a summer’s day?

unstressed stressed
DUST OF SNOW by Robert Frost

1 The way a crow
2 Shook down on me
3 The dust of snow
4 From a hemlock tree
5 Has given my heart
6 A change of mood
7 And saved some part
8 Of a day I had rued.
Hope is the thing with feathers
by Emily Dickinson

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

I’ve heard it in the chillest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.
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10 And on the strangest sea;
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12 It asked a crumb of me.
I dwell in Possibility by Emily Dickinson

I dwell in Possibility—
A fairer House than Prose—
More numerous of Windows—
Superior—for Doors—

Of Chambers as the Cedars—
Impregnable of eye—
And for an everlasting Roof
The Gambrels of the Sky—

Of Visitors—the fairest—
for Occupation—This—
The spreading wide my narrow Hands
To gather Paradise—
LET EVENING COME by Jane Kenyon

Let the light of late afternoon
shine through the chinks in the barn, moving
up the bales as the sun moves down.
Let the cricket take up chafing
as a woman takes up her needles
and her yarn. Let evening come.

Let dew collect on the hoe abandoned
in long grass. Let the stars appear
and the moon disclose her silver horn.
Let the fox go back to its sandy den.
Let the wind die down. Let the shed
go black inside. Let evening come.

To the bottle in the ditch, to the scoop
in the oats, to the air in the lung
let evening come.

Let it come, as it will, and don’t
be afraid. God does not leave us
comfortless, so let evening come.
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COMA MEDITATION

Sit. Be with your dad, she said.
She shuffled soft-shoed
Then slid away—a ghost
Left behind a wisp of warmth

I descended—unconscious—
To the chair—still—
Floated there
Soaked in wonder—gaze
Caressing his contours.

Hundreds of times it has been so
Since—every pore alive as then
When every breath prepared
His peaceful death

THE MILL

The flow of a song so soft,
rolling relentless and pristine,
fills each cup of recollection
to turn the wheel on a sagging mill
and grind the grist
of nostalgia and regret.

It’s an ingenious science:
the freshness of the passing moments
in this mechnical way usurped
to serve a retrograde purpose,
no sooner harnessed than spilled
in a lazy, disappearing splash.

And so the generations flowed;
the mill, weathered and peeled, indulged
its churning habit in gentle rhythms,
whipped in showdrifts, soaked in torrents,
dappled in sunlight, adorned in dying leaves,
striving to capture its fleeting life.

Thank you for taking this walk with me.  
I would cherish you feedback: alexeb2@gmail.com.