



The Future of the Lyric Encounter

**PROFESSOR DAVID FEARN**

## Time, Space, Light: Problems in Modelling Lyric (and Photographic) Contemplation, Desire, and Environmental Commitment

**'In this glum desert**, suddenly a specific photograph reaches me; it animates me, and I animate it. So that is how I must name the attraction which makes it exist: **an *animation***. The photograph itself is in no way animated (I do not believe in "lifelike" photographs), but it animates me: **this is what creates every adventure.'**  
**Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida***

'Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" does not posit a fictional universe in which people talk to birds, but articulates **desires in our world.'**  
**Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric***

**'The poem is [? might be?] a halting point.** It stops language in its tracks and prohibits its squandering in the vast commerce that is the world today. Against the obscenity of "everything to be seen" and "everything to be said", the showing, pulling, and commenting of everything, the poem is **[? might be?]** the guardian of the decency of the saying.'  
**Alain Badiou, *Age of the Poets***

'By thinking rightness and truth as the highest possible elevation, **as cynical transcendence**, I think Earth and its biosphere as the stage set on which I prance for the amusement of my audience.'  
**Tim Morton, *Hyperobjects, on environmentalist hypocrisy***

**"How does distance look?"** is a simple direct question. It extends from a **spaceless within to the edge of what can be loved. It depends on light.'**

**Anne Carson, *Autobiography of Red***

**'Blueprints for being perhaps'** ('Daseinsentwürfe vielleicht');

'I find something that consoles me a little for having taken ... this impossible route, this route of the impossible. **I find what connects and leads, like the poem, to an encounter.'**  
**Paul Celan, *The Meridian Speech***

# “Good Light”

νῦν δὲ Λύδαισιν ἐμπρέπεται γυναί-  
κεσσιν ὡς **ποτ’** ἀελίῳ  
δύντος ἃ βροδοδάκτυλος σελάννα

πάντα περρέχοισ’ ἄστρα· **φάος** δ’ ἐπί-  
σχει θάλασσαν ἐπ’ ἀλμύραν  
ἴσως καὶ πολυανθέμοις ἀρούραις·

ἃ δ’ ἐέρσα κάλα κέχυται, τεθά-  
λαισι δὲ βρόδα κᾶπαλ’ ἄν-  
θρυσκα καὶ μελίλωτος ἀνθεμώδης·

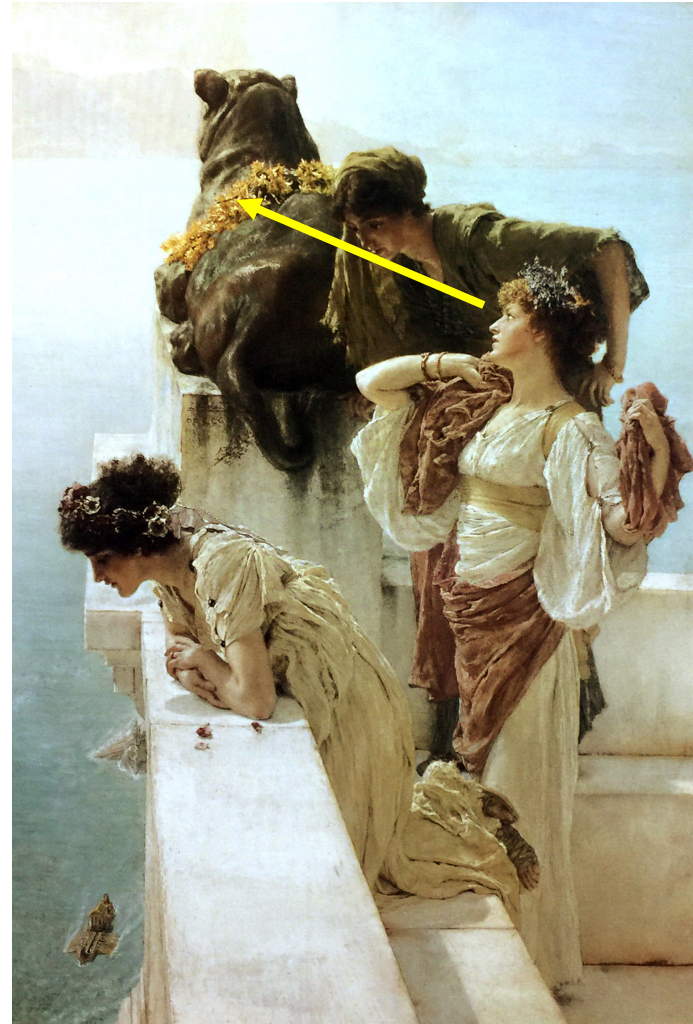
But now she stands out among Lydian  
women as **sometimes** at sunset  
the rosy-fingered moon

surpasses all the stars. **Light**  
reaches out across salt sea  
as well as flower-deep fields.

And dew pours forth beautiful,  
and roses bloom, and tender  
chervil, and flowering melilot.

**Sappho fragment 96.6–14**

## VANTAGE-POINTS



Lawrence  
Alma-  
Tadema, *A  
Coign of  
Vantage*  
(1895)



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**VANTAGE-POINTS**



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## VANTAGE-POINTS

OR RATHER:

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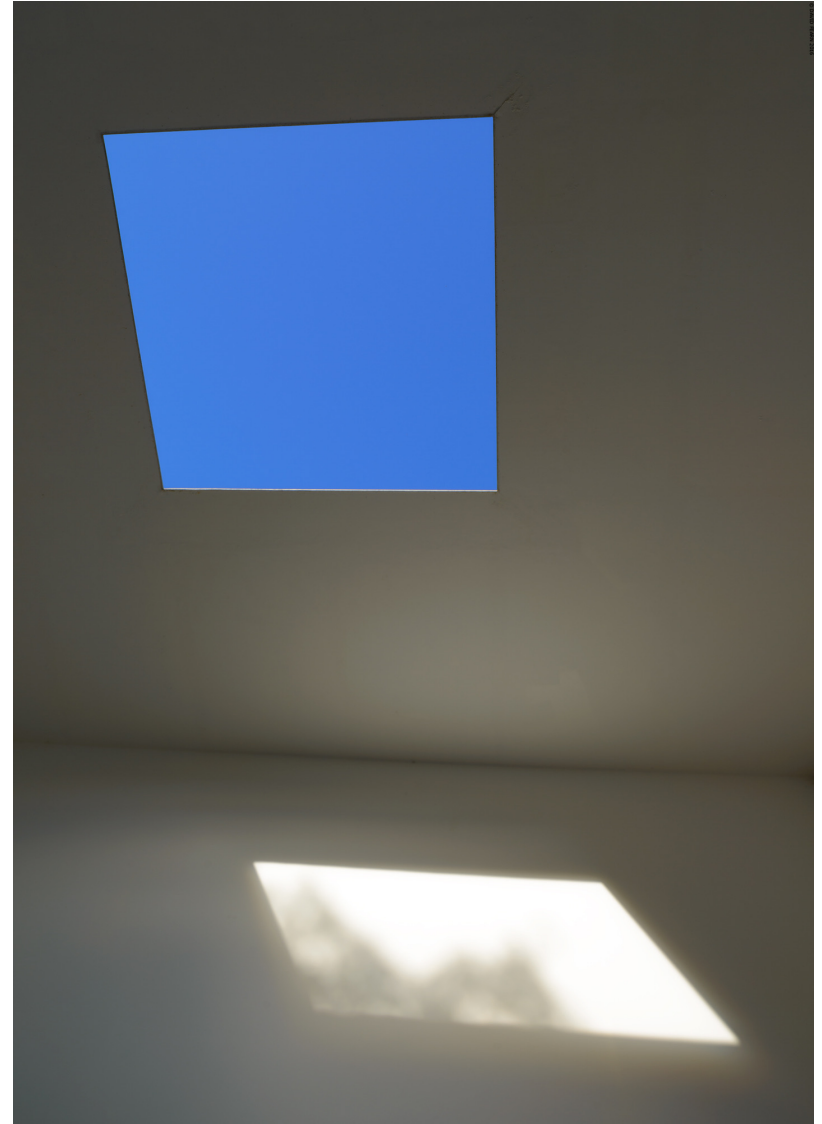


Simon Norfolk  
'The Balloon Seller, Kabul' 2001



Paul Kenny  
'caught by the tide, beach study no. 2'  
2013





*Deer Shelter Skyspace*

**James Turrell, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield**

**(Couple of my photos ?of/in/from)**

## ‘Herakles used to go “Wow!” (sometimes)’

ἀλλ’ οὐ καλὰ δένδρε’ ἔθαλλεν  
χῶρος ἐν βάσσαις Κρονίου Πέλοπος.  
τούτων ἔδοξεν γυμνὸς αὐτῷ **κᾶπος** ὁ-  
ξείαις ὑπακουέμεν αὐγαῖς ἀελίου.  
δὴ τότε **ἐς γαῖαν** πορεύεν θυμὸς ὦρμα

**Ἰστρίαν** νιν· ἔνθα Λατοῦς ἵπποσῶα θυγάτηρ  
δέξατ’ ἔλθοντ’ Ἀρκαδίας ἀπὸ δειρᾶν  
καὶ πολυγνάμπτων μυχῶν,  
εὔτε νιν ἀγγελίαις  
Εὐρυσθέος ἔντυ’ ἀνάγκα πατρόθεν  
χρυσόκερων ἔλαφον  
θήλειαν ἄξονθ’, ἄν ποτε Ταῦγέτα  
ἀντιθεῖσ’ Ὀρθωσίᾳ ἔγραψεν ἱεράν.

τὰν μεθέπων ἴδε καὶ κείναν χθόνα  
πνοιαῖς **ὄπιθεν** Βορέα  
ψυχροῦ· **τόθι δένδρεα θάμβαινε σταθείς.**

τῶν **νιν γλυκὺς ἴμερος ἔσχεν**  
δωδεκάγναμτον περὶ τέρμα δρόμου  
ἵππων φυτεῦσαι. καὶ νυν ἐς ταύταν ἔορ-  
τὰν ἴλαος ἀντιθέοισιν νίσεται  
σὺν βαθυζώνοιο διδύμοις παισὶ Λήδας.

τοῖς γὰρ ἐπέτραπεν Οὐλύμπόνδ’ ἰὼν  
θαητὸν ἀγῶνα νέμειν  
ἀνδρῶν τ’ ἀρετᾶς πέρι καὶ ῥιμφαρμάτου  
διφρηλασίας.

... but the ground in the valley  
of Cronian Pelops had not yet put forth  
its radiant forest, and naked of that  
the **garden** seemed to him  
defenceless against the sun’s sharp rays,  
and his heart stirred him to convey him

**back to the land of the Ister**

where Leto’s daughter,  
driver of horses, once had received him  
when he came from Arcadia’s cliffs  
and from its winding recesses  
under compulsion from Zeus  
and Eurystheus’ dispatches, to catch  
and bring away the golden-antlered doe  
that once Ταῦγέτα had dedicated  
*Sacred to Artemis Orthosia.*

In pursuit of her he saw that land too,  
**beyond** the gusts of icy Boreas.

**There he stood in amazement at the trees.**

**Sweet desire for them gripped him,**  
to plant them around the post at the end  
of his racecourse, circled twelve times  
by the chariot-teams.

And now to this feast he comes in good cheer  
with the twin sons of slim-waisted Leda.

For to them he entrusted the care  
of the contests of men  
and the swift cars of the racing  
as he went on his way to Olympos.

**‘Herakles used to go “Wow!”(sometimes)’**

**τόθι δένδρα θάμβαινε σταθείς.**

**There he stood in amazement at the trees.**



# ‘Herakles used to go “Wow!”(sometimes)’

τόθι δένδρα θάμβαινε σταθείς.

There he stood in amazement at the trees.

Embrace the unexpected!

Gentili et al. (2013) 429 ad loc.:

‘il passaggio asindetico, la brevità della frase e la costruzione participiale esprimono **lo stupore e l'improvviso arresto** della corsa di Eracle ammirato alla vista degli alberi; cfr. Omero, Od. V 75 στὰς θηεῖτο.’ [Hermes & Calypso]



Caspar David Friedrich,  
*Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog*  
(1818)

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‘By thinking rightness and truth as the highest possible elevation, **as cynical transcendence**, I think Earth and its biosphere as the stage set on which I prance for the amusement of my audience.’

Tim Morton again,  
on environmentalist hypocrisy

‘And may an **illusion** not creep into the word objectivity even in its highest interpretation? According to this interpretation, **the word means a condition in the historian which permits him to observe an event in all its motivations and consequences so purely that it has no effect at all on his own subjectivity: it is analogous to that aesthetic phenomenon of detachment from personal interest** with which a painter sees in a stormy landscape with thunder and lightning, or a rolling sea, only the picture of them within him, the phenomenon of complete absorption in the things themselves: **it is a superstition**, however, **that the picture** which these things evoke in a man possessing such a disposition **is a true reproduction of the empirical nature of the things themselves. Or is it supposed that at this moment the things as it were engrave, counterfeit, photograph themselves by their own action on a purely passive medium?’**

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations 2*,  
on historical objectivity



“How does distance look?” is a simple direct question. It extends from a spaceless within to the edge of what can be loved. It depends on light.’

**Anne Carson, *Autobiography of Red***

‘And we are enabled to apprehend at all what is sublime and noble only **by the perpetual instilling and drenching of the reality that surrounds us.**’

**Henry David Thoreau, *Walden***

# The Heroic Danube: The Ister Hymn

Friedrich Hölderlin, 1770-1843

**Man nennet aber diesen den Ister.**

**Schön wohnt er.** Es brennet der Säulen Laub,  
Und reget sich. Wild stehn  
Sie aufgerichtet, untereinander; darob  
Ein zweites Maas, springt vor  
Von Felsen das Dach. So wundert  
Mich nicht, daß er  
Den Herkules zu Gaste geladen,  
**Fernglänzend**, am Olympos drunten,  
Da der, **sich Schatten zu suchen**  
Vom heißen Isthmos kam  
Denn voll des Muthes waren  
Daselbst sie, es bedarf aber, der Geister wegen,  
Der Kühlung auch. Darum zog jener lieber  
An die Wasserquellen hieher und gelben Ufer,  
Hoch duftend oben, und schwarz  
Vom Fichtenwald, wo in den Tiefen  
Ein Jäger gern lustwandelt  
Mittags, und Wachstum hörbar ist  
An harzigen Bäumen des Isters...

**This one, however, is called the Ister.**

**Beautifully he dwells.** The pillars' foliage burns,  
And stirs. Wildly they stand  
Supporting one another; above,  
A second measure, juts out  
The roof of rocks. No wonder, therefore,  
I say, this river  
Invited Hercules,  
**Distantly gleaming**, down by Olympos,  
When he, **to look for shadows**,  
Came up from the sultry isthmus,  
For full of courage they were  
In that place, but, because of the spirits,  
There's need of coolness too. That is why that hero  
Preferred to come here to the well-springs and yellow banks,  
Highly fragrant on top, and black  
With its fir woods, in whose depths  
A huntsman loves to amble  
At noon, and growth is audible  
In resinous trees of the Ister...

(Lines 21–40; trans. Hamburger)

**The persistence of “wow!”**, despite trauma in transmission:

## **Paul Celan** after Pindar

( and Hölderlin - ‘sich Schatten zu suchen’ indeed, the heroic poetic conceit ...

... and Nietzsche – ‘Let us look each other in the face. We are Hyperboreans ... : even Pindar in his day knew that much about us’)

**AFTER ... AND ... AND ... AND ... : AND YET...**

### **FADENSONNEN**

**Über** der grauschwarzen Ödnis.

**Ein baum-**

**hoher Gedanke**

greift sich den **Lichtton**: es sind

**noch** Lieder zu singen **jenseits**

Der Menschen.

### **THREADSUNS**

**Above** the grayblack wastes.

**A tree-**

**high thought**

Grasps the **light-tone**: there are

**Still** songs to sing **beyond**

mankind.

from *Atemwende (Breathturn)*, 1963,  
trans. Joris

ἀ δὲ **φοινικόκροκον** ζώναν καταθηκαμένα  
 κάλυπτά τ' **ἀργυρέαν** λόχμας ὑπὸ **κυανέας**  
 τίκτη θεόφρονα κοῦρον. τᾶ μὲν ὁ **χρυσοκόμας**  
 πραῦμητιν τ' Ἐλείθυιαν παρέστασέν τε Μοίρας·

ἦλθεν δ' ὑπὸ σπλάγχων ὑπ' ὦ-  
 δίνος τ' ἐρατᾶς **Ἴαμος**  
**ἔς φάος αὐτίκα**. τὸν μὲν κνιζομένα  
 λείπε χαμαί· δύο δὲ **γλαυκῶπες** αὐτόν  
 δαιμόνων βουλαῖσιν ἐθρέ-  
 ψαντο δράκοντες **ἀμεμφεῖ**  
**ἰῶ** μελισσᾶν καδόμενοι. βασιλεὺς δ' ἐπεὶ  
 πετραέσσας ἐλαύων ἴκετ' ἐκ Πυ-  
 θῶνος, ἅπαντας ἐν οἴκῳ  
 εἶρετο παῖδα, τὸν Εὐά-  
 δνα τέκοι· Φοίβου γὰρ αὐτὸν φᾶ γεγάκειν

πατρός, περὶ θνατῶν δ' ἔσεσθαι μάντιν ἐπιχθονίους  
 ἔξοχον, οὐδέ ποτ' ἐκλείψειν γενεάν.  
 ὡς ἄρα μάνυε. τοὶ δ' οὐτ' ὦν ἀκοῦσαι  
 οὐτ' ἰδεῖν εὐχοντο πεμπταῖ-  
 ον γεγενημένον. ἀλλ' ἐν  
**κέκρυπτο γὰρ** σχοίνῳ βατιᾶ τ' ἐν ἀπειρίτῳ,  
**ἴων ξανθαῖσι** καὶ **παμπορφύροις ἀ-**  
**κτῖσι βεβρεγμένος ἀβρόν**  
**σῶμα**· τὸ καὶ κατεφάμι-  
 ξεν καλεῖσθαι νιν χρόνῳ σύμπαντι μάτηρ

**τοῦτ' ὄνυμ' ἀθάνατον**. τερ-  
 πνᾶς δ' ἐπεὶ **χρυσοστεφάνοιο** λάβειν  
 καρπὸν Ἥβας, Ἄλφεῶ μέσσω καταβαίς  
 ἐκάλεσσε Ποσειδᾶν' εὐρυβίαν,  
 ὄν πρόγονον, καὶ τοξοφόρον Δά-  
 λου θεοδμάτας σκοπόν,  
 αἰτέων λαοτρόφον τιμάν τιν' ἐᾶ κεφαλαῖ,  
**νυκτὸς ὑπαίθριος**. ἀντεφθέγγατο δ' ἀρτιεπῆς  
 πατρία ὄσσα, **μετάλλασέν τέ νιν**. **“Ὀρσο, τέκνον,**  
**δεῦρο πάγκοινων ἐς χώραν ἴμεν φάμας ὀπισθεν!**

...while she  
 unloosed her **purple-threaded** belt, put down  
 in the **blue** shade of the wood  
 her **silver** urn, and bore a godly boy.  
**Gold-haired** Apollo made Eleithyia and the Moirai attend on her.

In welcome labour, **Iamos** came  
 from her womb **into the light, right away**.  
 In her distress, she left him there  
 on the ground.

A pair of **grey-eyed** serpents,  
 by the gods' will,  
 took care of him,  
 fed him the **inviolable poison** of bees.  
 And the king driving from Delphi's cliffs  
 returned,

asking all in the house  
 for the boy Evadna bore: “He is Apollo's son  
 and will be a seer preeminent  
 for all mortal men.

Never will his race fail.”  
 So the king declared, but they  
 swore they had neither heard  
 nor seen  
 the five-days' child.

No wonder, **for he lay hidden**  
 amid tall grass and forbidding brambles,  
**his delicate body drenched**

**in the yellow**  
**and deep blue rays of violets**, from which his mother

then named him **Iamos, a name immortal forever**.  
 And when Hebe downed his cheeks in **gold**  
 he waded midstream in Alpheos, called  
**through the clear night air** on his grandfather Poseidon  
 and on Apollo, asking

an honour to sustain his race.

**Quickly his father's voice replied: “Rise,**  
**my son, and come this way**  
**after my voice, to a place open to all.”**



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