**The Silent Lover**

Passions are likened best to floods and streams:

The shallow murmur, but the deep are dumb;

So, when affections yield discourse, it seems

The bottom is but shallow whence they come.

They that are rich in words, in words discover

That they are poor in that which makes a lover.

Wrong not, sweet empress of my heart,

The merit of true passion,

With thinking that he feels no smart,

That sues for no compassion;

Since, if my plaints serve not to approve

The conquest of thy beauty,

It comes not from defect of love,

But from excess of duty.

For, knowing that I sue to serve

A saint of such perfection,

As all desire, but none deserve,

A place in her affection,

I rather choose to want relief

Than venture the revealing;

Where glory recommends the grief,

Despair distrusts the healing.

Thus those desires that aim too high

For any mortal lover,

When reason cannot make them die,

Discretion doth them cover.

Yet, when discretion doth bereave

The plaints that they should utter,

Then thy discretion may perceive

That silence is a suitor.

Silence in love bewrays more woe

Than words, though ne’er so witty:

A beggar that is dumb, you know,

May challenge double pity.

Then wrong not, dearest to my heart,

My true, though secret, passion:

He smarteth most that hides his smart,

And sues for no compassion.

—Sir Walter Raleigh

**The Habit of Perfection**

Elected Silence, sing to me

And beat upon my whorlèd ear,

Pipe me to pastures still and be

The music that I care to hear.

Shape nothing, lips; be lovely-dumb:

It is the shut, the curfew sent

From there where all surrenders come

Which only makes you eloquent.

Be shellèd, eyes, with double dark

And find the uncreated light:

This ruck and reel which you remark

Coils, keeps, and teases simple sight.

Palate, the hutch of tasty lust,

Desire not to be rinsed with wine:

The can must be so sweet, the crust

So fresh that come in fasts divine!

Nostrils, your careless breath that spend

Upon the stir and keep of pride,

What relish shall the censers send

Along the sanctuary side!

O feel-of-primrose hands, O feet

That want the yield of plushy sward,

But you shall walk the golden street

And you unhouse and house the Lord.

And, Poverty, be thou the bride

And now the marriage feast begun,

And lily-coloured clothes provide

Your spouse not laboured-at nor spun.

—Gerard Manley Hopkins

**After Long Silence**

Speech after long silence; it is right,

All other lovers being estranged or dead,

Unfriendly lamplight hid under its shade,

The curtains drawn upon unfriendly night,

That we descant and yet again descant

Upon the supreme theme of Art and Song:

Bodily decrepitude is wisdom; young

We loved each other and were ignorant.

—W. B. Yeats

**Silence**

My father used to say,

“Superior people never make long visits,

have to be shown Longfellow’s grave

nor the glass flowers at Harvard.

Self reliant like the cat—

that takes its prey to privacy,

the mouse’s limp tail hanging like a shoelace from its mouth—

they sometimes enjoy solitude,

and can be robbed of speech

by speech which has delighted them.

The deepest feeling always shows itself in silence;

not in silence, but restraint.”

Nor was he insincere in saying, “Make my house your inn.”

Inns are not residences.

—Marianne Moore

**Extinction of Silence**

That it was shy when alive goes without saying.

We know it vanished at the sound of voices

Or footsteps. It took wing at the slightest noises,

Though it could be approached by someone praying.

We have no recordings of it, though of course

In the basement of the Museum, we have some stuffed

Moth-eaten specimens—the Lesser Ruffed

And Yellow Spotted—filed in narrow drawers.

But its song is lost. If it was related to

A species of Quiet, or of another feather,

No researcher can know. Not even whether

A breeding pair still nests deep in the bayou,

Where legend has it some once common bird

Decades ago was first not seen, not heard.

—A. E. Stallings