**Poems and Song Lyrics, Continued**

**An Exercise in Examining Imagery**

**Overview:** One way to trace the connection between songs and poems is to look at a particular kind of love song/poem that was already old and tired enough in Shakespeare’s time to be parodied (by him): the “catalogue of the beloved’s charms,” a poetic convention also called **blazon**. A handy poetry [site](http://britrenpoetry.wikidot.com/literary-terms) defines it this way: “A poetic mode wherein the speaker uses metaphor, simile and hyperbole to describe the parts of his or her lover's body.” The **“anti-blazon” poem** is similar in form but lists the beloved person’s flaws, instead. Shakespeare did this in his sonnet 130, listing features of his beloved “Dark Lady of the Sonnets” that fell short of conventional Elizabethan ideals of beauty. Below these early examples are three modern songs, one blazon and two anti-blazon. Note: in modern times, the descriptions aren’t always just physical. Why is that, do you think?

**The assignment**: You have two options. Choose ONE. In all cases focus on the imagery but feel free to discuss other elements.

1. **Read** these four poems, then **write** your own imagery-rich poem/song of either the blazon or anti-blazon type. It doesn’t have to be about the beloved person’s body, but there should be a listing of sorts and liberal use of comparisons, whether similes or metaphors. Briefly **discuss** (in a sentence or two) what this poem says about your attitude toward love and how it has been influenced by conventions, either contemporary ones or older ones.
2. If you know of another song that takes this form, **print out the lyrics** for me and, as above, briefly **discuss** what this song says about the speaker’s attitude about his/her beloved and about love in general. For instance, what seems to be the things this speaker most values about the beloved? What seems to be the relationship between these (or other) elements of love: affection, passion, comfortable familiarity, gratitude, respect, an intellectual and/or spiritual connection, etc.
3. Take one of the modern songs printed below (“My Funny Valentine,” “Sweet Potato Pie,” or “You’re my Meat”) and **analyze** what it says about love. Discuss what this song says about the speaker’s attitude about his/her beloved and about love in general. For instance, what seems to be the things this speaker most values about the beloved? What seems to be the relationship between these (or other) elements of love: affection, passion, comfortable familiarity, gratitude, respect, an intellectual and/or spiritual connection, etc. Since you are neither writing nor hunting, though, make your discussion fuller—at least half a page (typed, double-spaced, please!)

Here’s one sample of blazon poetry by Thomas Campion (1567-1620)

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| **There Is A Garden In Her Face** |
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| There is a garden in her face Where roses and white lilies grow; A heav'nly paradise is that place Wherein all pleasant fruits do flow. There cherries grow which none may buy, Till "Cherry ripe" themselves do cry.  Those cherries fairly do enclose Of orient pearl a double row, Which when her lovely laughter shows, They look like rose-buds fill'd with snow; Yet them nor peer nor prince can buy, Till "Cherry ripe" themselves do cry.  Her eyes like angels watch them still, Her brows like bended bows do stand, Threat'ning with piercing frowns to kill All that attempt with eye or hand Those sacred cherries to come nigh, Till "Cherry ripe" themselves do cry. |

**Sonnet 130** By [William Shakespeare](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/william-shakespeare)

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;

Coral is far more red than her lips' red;

If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;

If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

I have seen roses damasked, red and white,

But no such roses see I in her cheeks;

And in some perfumes is there more delight

Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.

I love to hear her speak, yet well I know

That music hath a far more pleasing sound;

I grant I never saw a goddess go;

My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.

   And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare

   As any she belied with false compare.

**Sweet Potato Pie** By [James Taylor](https://www.google.com/search?biw=1410&bih=901&q=James+Taylor&stick=H4sIAAAAAAAAAONgVuLUz9U3MDQ2sKwAAF67yyENAAAA&sa=X&sqi=2&ved=0ahUKEwjJwYy9pIvQAhXohFQKHXhgDl8QMQgeMAA)

Oh Lord I feel fine today,   
I'm walking on cloud nine today.  
I'm over that line today,   
Happiness is finally mine today.  
I guess I'm just a lucky guy,   
And I'm prepared to tell you why.  
It's strictly on account   
Of my sweet potato pie.

I'm the fellow that she loves the most,   
The main reason why she left the coast.  
She's my little girlzina,   
That much hotter that a jalapeno.  
Tender like a night in June,   
Sweeter than a honeymoon,  
Brighter than a silver spoon,   
Just as crazy as a loon.

Softer than a lullaby,   
Deeper than the midnight sky,   
Soulful as a baby's cry,   
My sweet potato pie.

I used to see her around the neighborhood,   
I wonder how she grew up so good.  
She belonged to Freddy and he was bad,   
And I never was ready to make him mad.  
I'm glad I had to wait awhile,   
A little bit too juvenile.  
I needed to refine my style, a silk suit   
And a crocodile smile.

So let the whole damn world go by   
'Cause I just want to testify  
From now on it's me   
And my sweet potato pie.

**My Funny Valentine** by Rogers and Hart (1937)

My funny valentine,  
Sweet comic valentine  
You make me smile with my heart.  
Your looks are laughable,  
Unphotographable,  
Yet you’re my favorite work of art.  
  
Is your figure less than Greek?  
Is your mouth a little weak?  
When you open it to speak,  
Are you smart?  
  
But don’t change a hair for me,  
Not if you care for me.  
Stay, little valentine stay.  
Each day is Valentine’s day.  
  
Is your figure less than Greek?  
Is your mouth a little weak?  
When you open it to speak,  
Are you smart?  
  
But don’t you change one hair for me,  
Not if you care for me.  
Stay, little valentine, stay.  
Each day is Valentine’s day.

Note: In the original musical this was written for, the speaker is a woman, singing about her man. The song has been recorded by male singers, though, including Frank Sinatra and Chet Baker.

**"You're My Meat" from Joe Jackson’s *Jumpin’ Jive* album (1981)**

Outside in and inside out you're my meat

I, fat and forty but lordy you're my meat

From your feet to your head you knock me dead, you're my meat

I got you covered but baby, you're my meat

In the days of old when knights were bold

They were pious and modest I'm told

Can't you see that couldn't be me

I'd have to talk about your yams and your big fat hams

It excites me so because I know you're my meat

Fat and forty but lordy you're my meat

In the days of old when knights were bold

There were pious and modest I'm told

Can't you see that couldn't be me

I'd have to talk about your yams and your big fat hams

It excites me so because I know you're my meat

Fat and forty but lordy you're my meat

Fat and forty but lordy, lordy, you're my meat

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