



The Challenges of Orpheus: Lyric Poetry and Early Modern England

Heather Dubrow

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As a literary mode "lyric" is difficult to define precisely. While the term has conventionally been applied to brief, songlike poems expressing the speaker's interior thoughts critics have questioned many of the assumptions underlying this definition, calling into doubt the very possibility of self-expression in language.

Whereas much recent scholarship on lyric has centered on the Romantic era, Heather Dubrow turns instead to the poetry of early modern England. *The Challenges of Orpheus* confronts widespread assumptions about lyric, exploring such topics as its relationship to its audiences, the impact of material conditions of production and other cultural pressures, lyric's negotiations of gender, and the interactions and tensions between lyric and narrative.

Offering fresh perspectives on major texts of the period?from Wyatt's "My lute awake" to Milton's Nativity Ode?as well as poems by lesser-known figures, Dubrow extends her critical conclusions to poetry in other historical periods and to the relationship between creative writers and critics, recommending new directions for the study of lyric and of genre.

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