

The Lyric Image I: Association

“I love the freedom that is created when the text and the image are in juxtaposition—that it creates a kind of associative field that I can’t control.” -Claudia Rankine

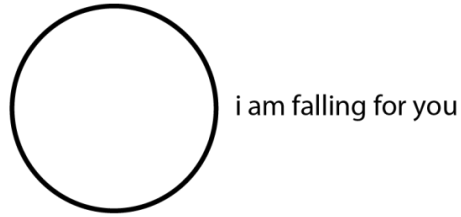
Many lyric poems operate through associative leaps, with no explicit logic linking lines together. Instead, they are linked together by the interiority of the speaker of the poem. Ideas in a lyric poem are often not driven by narrative or by cause and effect, but by thematic or emotional resonance:

Whirl up, sea—
whirl your pointed pines,
splash your great pines
on our rocks,
hurl your green over us,
cover us with your pools of fir.

H.D. – Oread (1913–14)

It can be difficult to describe what a lyric poem is “about,” because unlike a novel, which has a story, or an essay, which has an argument, a lyric poem is often a set of uncertainties (what does the poet mean by this?) that evoke something in the reader.

Therefore, much of the power of a lyric poem happens between the lines, in what is *not* said—in what is felt, understood, or guessed at by the reader based on possibilities expressed in the poem. Visual poems can do this as well, but they can also create these lyric leaps through the friction between lines and images:



Is the circle mimetic—does it represent a hole, thereby illustrating “falling” in love? Or is it meant to evoke a cycle—that the speaker keeps falling in love for someone over and over again? Maybe the circle is the moon, and like Li Bai, the speaker is in love with it.

Poems—all poems, from visual to non-visual to everything in between and beyond—are best served by careful reading, and by multiple readings, and by considering what *might* be being said, while testing it against other things that poem is saying and doing.

Further Examples:

- Roda Avelar – “Jotxland Epic” (Poem)
- Rebecca Cross – “The Transgressive Body in Film” (Poem)
- CAConrad – “Golden in the Morning Crane Our Necks” (Poem)
- Juan Felipe Herrera – “Exile Boulevard” (Poem)
- Carolina Ebeid – Video poems (See: <https://carolinaebeid.com/>)