

Peter Lamarque

Philosophy and the Lyric (Abstract)

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The paper surveys and comments on some of the issues that arise about the lyric in philosophical, principally analytical, aesthetics. In brief these are: definition, expression, paraphrase, form-content unity, experience, and truth and profundity. The paper shows in each case why these issues are important from the perspective of analytical philosophy but also why lyric poetry is not always an easy subject matter to accommodate to standard analytical presuppositions. It might be thought that theories of meaning within philosophy of language (be it semantics, speech act theory or truth-conditions) should be applicable to a full range of linguistic usage. But lyric poetry confounds that expectation and yields a context where familiar models of meaning and communication can seem inadequate. Yet analytical philosophers should not simply dismiss poetry as somehow exceptional or aberrant but would gain from looking afresh at basic assumptions to see how their views about language might be broadened and modified.

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