

English 650
Nineteenth-Century Literature: Victorian Poetry
Winter 2015

Professor: Veronica Alfano
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Schedule: Tues. 9-11:50
Room: 253 PLC
Office Hours: Tues. 12:30-3:30, 519 PLC

Course Description

In an 1849 letter, Matthew Arnold laments that his age is “deeply unpoetical.” Arthur Hugh Clough, writing in 1853, agrees that the times are “prudent and prosaic.” The preeminence of the Victorian novel, and the subsequent marginalization of verse, has since become a critical commonplace – one that we will re-examine in this course. We will survey the works of major Victorian poets and poet-critics, including Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Christina Rossetti, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and Thomas Hardy. In the process, we’ll consider various conceptions of the poet’s position in or out of society (prophet? solitary singer? moralist?) and theorize the role of poetry during a seemingly prose-dominated era. While we will devote a great deal of attention to the formal properties of Victorian poems, we will also reflect on the cultural context in which these verses were composed – with particular emphasis on issues of gender and sexuality.

Required Texts

Please purchase *The Broadview Anthology of Victorian Poetry and Poetic Theory* (eds. Collins and Rundle). You’ll find it at the Duck Store. Additional readings will be emailed and/or handed out.

Course Requirements, Policies, and Grading

In this course, you will write one response paper (3-4 pages) in which you conduct a careful close-reading of a poem – or, if you prefer, several poems – from the syllabus. No outside research is required, though you are of course free to incorporate relevant criticism. On the day your paper is due, you will also give a brief presentation (5 to 10 minutes) in which you summarize your arguments and respond to questions and comments from your colleagues; each week, we will begin our meeting with one or two student presentations. Feel free to supplement your talk with handouts or other media. In addition, you will submit a final research paper (12-15 pages). We will dedicate one class to discussing final paper proposals. And it goes without saying that consistent, informed, and enthusiastic class participation is essential in this seminar.

Grading breakdown:

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|--------------------------------|-----|
| Response paper / presentation: | 20% |
| Final research paper proposal: | 10% |
| Final research paper: | 60% |
| Participation: | 10% |

Please check your UO email frequently, because I will be sending you important messages and documents. And please let me know as soon as possible if you will need extra time to complete any of this work.

I will meet with each member of the seminar about his or her final paper in Week 8; in the meantime, I am happy to talk about any questions or concerns at any time.

If you anticipate needing accommodations for accessible education in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me soon. Please also request that the Accessible Education Center (<http://aec.uoregon.edu>; [541] 346-1155) send a letter outlining your needs.

Course Schedule (subject to change)

These readings will be supplemented with handouts or online resources. Texts listed with page numbers are in *The Broadview Anthology*; others (marked with an asterisk) are in the supplementary handouts. Our class discussions will center mainly on the assigned poetry, so please make this your first priority. I am always glad to recommend additional secondary reading, particularly as you start to outline your final research paper.

Week 1 – January 6: Introduction / Roots / What is Victorianism?

Percy Bysshe Shelley, from “To a Skylark”*
John Keats, from “Ode to a Nightingale”*
Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “The Kraken” (162)
Thomas Hardy, “The Convergence of the Twain”*

Week 2 – January 13: “A graft of the lyric on the dramatic”

William Wordsworth, “The Solitary Reaper”*
Tennyson, “Mariana” (156), “Supposed Confessions...” (157), “The Poet” (160), “The Poet’s Mind” (161), “The Lady of Shalott” (162), “The Palace of Art” (165), “The Lotos-Eaters” (172), “Break, break, break” (194), “Locksley Hall” (195), “The Charge of the Light Brigade” (253)
William Johnson Fox, “Tennyson – Poems, Chiefly Lyrical – 1830” (1181)
Arthur Henry Hallam, “On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry” (1190)
Isobel Armstrong, from *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics**

Week 3 – January 20: Mourning

Tennyson, *In Memoriam* (204)
Alice Meynell, “The Rhythm of Life” (1431)
Jeff Nunokawa, “*In Memoriam* and the Extinction of the Homosexual”*

Week 4 – January 27: The Dramatic Monologue

Tennyson, “Ulysses” (186), “Tithonus” (277)
Robert Browning, “My Last Duchess” (309), “Porphyria’s Lover” (312), “The Bishop Orders His Tomb...” (315), “Fra Lippo Lippi” (319), “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came” (336), “Andrea del Sarto” (363), “Two in the Campagna” (400), “Abt Vogler” (407), “Caliban upon Setebos” (414)
John Stuart Mill, “What is Poetry?” (1212)
Walter Bagehot, “Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning; or, Pure, Ornate, and Grotesque Art in English Poetry” (1308)
Browning, “Essay on Shelley” (1243)
Herbert Tucker, “Dramatic Monologue and the Overhearing of Lyric”*

Week 5 – February 3: Poetry as Activism / The Poet in Crisis (Woman Question I)

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, “The Cry of the Children” (74), all selections from *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (77), “The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point” (78), “A Curse for a Nation” (133), “A Musical Instrument” (134)
Thomas Hood, “The Song of the Shirt” (26)
Matthew Arnold, “Resignation” (694), “The Forsaken Merman” (697), “To Marguerite—Continued” (699), “Dover Beach” (722), “The Buried Life” (723), “Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse” (724)
Arnold, “Preface to the First Edition of *Poems*” (1270)
Arthur Hugh Clough, “Recent English Poetry” (1254)
Angela Leighton, from *Victorian Women Poets: Writing Against the Heart**

Week 6 – February 10: Symbol & Scandal / Sacred & Secular (Woman Question II)

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, “The Blessed Damozel” (806), “My Sister’s Sleep” (808), “Jenny” (809), “The Woodspurge” (817), all selections from *The House of Life* (827) [*cont’d on next page*]

Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market* (848), “After Death” (856), “Song” (857), “Uphill” (858), “A Better Resurrection” (858), all selections from *Monna Innominata* (866), “In an Artist’s Studio” (870), “A Pause”*, “Winter: My Secret”*, “Remember”*

Emily Bronte, “No coward soul is mine” (548)

Alice Meynell, “Cradle-Song at Twilight” (1090)

Robert Buchanan, “The Fleshly School of Poetry: Mr. D. G. Rossetti” (1329)

D. G. Rossetti, “The Stealthy School of Criticism” (1341)

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, from *The Madwoman in the Attic**

Week 7 – February 17: Poetry as Icon & The Word Made Flesh

William Morris, “The Defence of Guenevere” (885), “The Haystack in the Floods” (890), “Riding Together” (893), “Near Avalon” (893), “An Apology” (894), “The Blue Closet,”* “The Tune of Seven Towers”*

Paintings by D. G. Rossetti: “The Tune of Seven Towers”* and “The Blue Closet”*

Algernon Charles Swinburne, “Laus Veneris” (965), “Itylus” (978), “Hymn to Proserpine” (984), “The Leper” (987), “The Garden of Proserpine” (996), “Hertha” (997), “A Forsaken Garden” (1001)

Morris, “Of the Origins of Ornamental Art” (1372)

John Morley, “Mr. Swinburne’s New Poems” (1320)

Jerome McGann, ““A Thing to Mind”: The Materialist Aesthetic of William Morris”*

Week 8 – February 24: Poetry as Pattern and Prayer

Thomas Hardy, “Hap” (1029), “Neutral Tones” (1029), “The Self-Unseeing” (1030), “The Minute Before Meeting” (1031), “The Something that Saved Him” (1032), “Afterwards” (1032), “During Wind and Rain,”* *Poems of 1912-13**

Gerard Manley Hopkins, “The Wreck of the Deutschland” (1041), “God’s Grandeur” (1047), “The Windhover” (1047), “Pied Beauty” (1047), “As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame” (1049), “Spelt from Sibyl’s Leaves” (1051), “Carrion Comfort” (1051), “No worst, there is none” (1051), “I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day” (1052), “Harry Ploughman” (1053), “Spring and Fall”*

Hardy, “Apology” (1441)

Hopkins, “Author’s Preface” (1355)

Michael Sprinker, “Gerard Manley Hopkins on the Origin of Language”*

One-on-one paper conferences will be scheduled for this week

Week 9 – March 3: *Fin de Siècle*

Michael Field (Katherine Bradley & Edith Cooper), “La Gioconda” (1077), “The Birth of Venus” (1077), “It was deep April, and the morn” (1085), “Noon” (1085)

Oscar Wilde, “Hélas!” (1106), “Impressions” (1107), “Symphony in Yellow” (1007)

Ernest Dowson, “Nuns of the Perpetual Adoration” (1156), “Non Sum Qualis...” (1156), “Villanelle of Sunset” (1157), “To One in Bedlam” (1157)

Lionel Johnson, “The Dark Angel” (1160), “In a Workhouse” (1162), “Bagley Wood” (1163), “The Precept of Silence” (1163)

Alfred Edward Housman, selections from *A Shropshire Lad**

Walter Pater, from *The Renaissance* (1349)

Oscar Wilde, “The Critic as Artist” (1384)

James McNeill Whistler, “Ten O’Clock” (1364)

Elaine Scarry, “Counting at Dusk (Why Poetry Matters When the Century Ends)”*

One-page paper proposals due in class (include preliminary bibliography with 6-8 sources)

Week 10 – March 10: The End and Beyond / Branches

Browning, “One Word More”*

Tennyson, “Crossing the Bar” (279) [*cont’d on next page*]

Hardy, "The Darkling Thrush" (1030)
William Butler Yeats, from *The Wind Among the Reeds**
Ezra Pound, "Portrait d'une Femme,"* "In a Station of the Metro"*
Arthur Symons, "The Symbolist Movement in Literature" (1413)

Final paper presentations

Final paper (12-15 pages) due Monday March 16 by noon (via email or to my departmental mailbox)

English Graduate Program Learning Outcomes

By the time they graduate with an MA in English, students:

- 1) will be able to undertake original research with assistance from faculty by (a) identifying new scholarly problems or fields or building on existing ones; (b) locating and assessing current scholarly work in their subject area; (c) framing their own arguments clearly, cogently, and logically, offering convincing evidentiary support for their claims; and (d) explaining how their claims build on, refute, or add to existing scholarly debate and knowledge.
- 2) will be able to write clearly, correctly, and persuasively.
- 3) will be acquainted with a variety of methodologies with which to interpret and analyze literary, film, and/or folkloric texts, and with a variety of fields of literary, film, and/or folkloric study.
- 4) will possess a working understanding of an enthymeme-based composition pedagogy and will be able to design and teach classes in composition that help diverse undergraduate student populations make persuasive arguments.

By the time they graduate with a PhD in English, students:

- 1) will be able to undertake original research on their own, including
 - (a) identifying important new scholarly problems or fields or building on existing ones;
 - (b) locating and assessing current scholarly work in all relevant subject areas;
 - (c) framing their own arguments clearly, cogently, and logically, offering convincing evidentiary support for their claims; and
 - (d) explaining how their claims build on, refute, or add to existing scholarly debate and knowledge.Students will be able to write publishable articles in their fields of expertise and will have completed a book-length work of original scholarship.
- 2) will be able to write clearly, correctly, and persuasively.
- 3) will be acquainted with a wide variety of methodologies with which to interpret and analyze literary, film, and/or folkloric texts, and with a wide variety of fields of literary, film, and/or folkloric study. Students will have deep and broad expertise, sufficient for generating works of original scholarship and for teaching a variety of courses in one or more literary/film/folkloric fields or periods; they will have deep and broad expertise in one or more theoretical and/or interpretive methodologies.
- 4) will possess a working understanding of an enthymeme-based composition pedagogy and will be able to design and teach a variety of classes in composition that help diverse undergraduate student populations make persuasive arguments. Students will also have the ability to design and teach courses in their fields of expertise.