

INTRODUCTION TO POETRY

Hum 215 TuTh 10:10am

SPRING 2004

Stephen Burt

REQUIRED BOOKS:

The Norton Anthology of Poetry, fourth ed. Ferguson, Salter & Stallworthy (*not* the Shorter edition)

Frank O'Hara, *Lunch Poems*

John Hollander, *Rhyme's Reason*

(All may be found at the Mac textbook store on Snelling.)

In this course you'll read, discuss, consider, and write about poetry in English—some of it hundreds of years old, some of it brand-new. You'll also—I hope—learn to enjoy more of it, or to enjoy it more fully. We'll cut poems up into parts; consider how they sound and why; learn about some important forms and traditions; and follow various kinds of voices and arguments as they animate various sorts of poems.

I expect you to do all the reading, show up for all the classes, talk, and listen (participation is 10% of your grade). If you've got some compelling reason why you need to turn in work **late**, I need to know about it in advance, the sooner the better. Late work without a prior notice goes down half a grade per weekday (i.e. a paper due Friday, but turned in the following Tuesday, would go down from A to B+).

I can be emailed at burt@macalester.edu or telephoned in my office at –6388. My home phone is 698-1238; use it sparingly and wisely, if at all. I will keep weekly office hours, in Old Main 202, during which I encourage you to drop by: these will be announced by the second week of class.

ASSIGNMENTS

Exercises. To learn how to talk and write about poems, you'll need to learn how to describe certain features of language (rhythm and metre, for example). You'll do a few written exercises on such matters; you'll also memorize a poem of your choice and recite it to me (in my office). These exercises will not be graded individually: collectively, they're 10% of your grade.

Critical papers. You will write three papers: each will make an argument about a poem, or a group of poems, taking into account how the poem sounds and works. The **first paper** will concentrate on **one poem**; it should last **3-5** pages, and it's 15% of your grade. The **second paper** should also concentrate on **one poem**, but takes up only one side of one single-spaced page; it's 20% of your grade. Your **third paper** will consider more than one poem; it should be **5-10** pages long, and it equals 30% of your grade.

Final exam. There will be one. It's not as important as the papers are, and counts for just 15% of your grade.

INTRODUCTION TO POETRY

SPRING '04

Tu Jan 27 Introduction: some short poems.

Th Jan 29 Poems of self and symbol.

Norton: Tichbourne: Tichbourne's Elegy; Anonymous: Tom O'Bedlam's Song; Herrick: The Vine; Wordsworth: The world is too much with us; Keats: This living hand; Clare: I Am; Lear: How pleasant to know Mr Lear; Berryman: Dream Songs 14 (Life, friends, is boring) and 29 (There sat down, once)

Tu Feb 3 Poems of self and symbol.

Norton: Shakespeare: sonnet 29 (When in disgrace with fortune); Thoreau: I am a parcel of vain strivings; Dickinson: 341 (After great pain); Yeats: The Wild Swans at Coole; Stevens: The Snow Man; Bishop: The Armadillo; Baxter: East Coast Journey; Plath: Elm; Ammons: Pet Panther; Creeley: I Know a Man; Cope: Bloody Men

O'Hara: Music

Th Feb 5 Poems in parts.

Norton: Wyatt: They Flee From Me; Peele: His Golden Locks; Herbert: Virtue; Jonson: Epitaph on his first son; Donne: The Relic, Holy Sonnet 7 (At the round earth's); Wordsworth: A slumber did my spirit seal; Shelley: England in 1819; Whitman: The World Below the Brine

Tu Feb 10 Poems in parts.

Norton: Keats: On First Looking into Chapman's Homer, Browning: Two in the Campagna; Melville: Monody; Hardy: Neutral Tones; Jennings: One Flesh; Heaney: The Skunk; Lowell: Skunk Hour; Ashbery: Brute Image; Dove: Dusting

O'Hara: A Step Away from Them, Poem (Instant coffee)

Th Feb 12 Poetic rhythm and metre.

Norton: Shakespeare: Fear no more; Jonson: On spies, To Fool, To God the Father; Herrick: Upon a Child That Died, Upon Julia's Clothes; Wroth: song from Pamphilia (Love a child); Hardy: The Convergence of the Twain; William Carlos Williams: The Dance

Hollander: 3-19, 21-31

POEMS IN PARTS EXERCISE DUE

Tu Feb 17 Rhythm, metre, rhyme

Norton: Herbert: The Collar; Jonson: A Fit of Rhyme Against Rhyme; Dryden: Song for St Cecilia's Day; Cowper: Lines written during a period of insanity; Hardy: The Voice; Mew: At Nunhead Cemetery; William Carlos Williams: The Yachts; Pound: The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter; MacCaig: Ringed plover; Gunn: My Sad Captains; Hayden: The Night-Blooming Cereus

O'Hara: Three Airs, How to Get There

Th Feb 19 Rhyme, euphony, consonance, dissonance

Norton: Waller: Go, lovely rose; Emerson: Brahma; Tennyson: In Memoriam A. H. H., section 7 (Dark house, by which); Hopkins: The Windhover; Yeats, Leda and the Swan; Robinson: Eros Turannos; H.D.: Helen; Moore: The Fish; Nevertheless; Bogan: Medusa, Roman Fountain

Hollander: 52-60

METRE EXERCISE DUE

Tu Feb 24 Sonnets.

Norton: Wyatt: Whoso list to hunt; Sidney: Astrophil and Stella 1 (Loving in truth), 31 (With how sad steps, O Moon); Shakespeare: sonnet 18 (Shall I compare); Milton: On the late massacre of saints; Wordsworth: Surprised by Joy; Keats: Bright star, When I have fears; Meredith: The Illiterate

Hollander: 19-21

SCHEDULE RECITATIONS

Th Feb 26 Sonnets.

Norton: Donne: Holy Sonnet 18 (Show me, dear Christ); Tuckerman: An upper chamber in a darkened house; Hopkins: As kingfishers catch fire; Gwendolyn Brooks: kitchenette building; Clampitt: The Cormorant in Its Element; Geoffrey Hill: September Song, Lachrimae 1 (Crucified Lord)

Handout: Paul Muldoon: sonnets

Tu Mar 2 Repetitions and forms based on them.

Norton: Dunbar: Lament for the Makaris; Raleigh: The Lie; Nashe, Adieu, farewell, earth's bliss; Herbert: The Forerunners; Aiken: excerpt from Senlin (It is morning); Bishop: Sestina, One Art; Lorde: Hanging Fire

O'Hara: Three Airs, Song (Is it dirty)

Hollander: 37-51

Th Mar 4 Repetitions and forms based on them.

Norton: Smart: excerpt from Jubilate Agno (For I will consider my cat); Tennyson: Songs from The Princess (all three); Emily Bronte: Remembrance; MacNeice: Bagpipe Music; Jarrell: Next Day; Levine: They Feed They Lion; Palmer: Fifth Prose

Handout: Yusef Komunyakaa

Special event: Yusef Komunyakaa reading, Campus Center (Davis lecture hall), 7:30pm

Tu Mar 9 Stories and speakers.

Norton: Anonymous: Sir Patrick Spens; Herbert: Redemption; Blake: London; Browning: My Last Duchess; Dickinson: 754 (My life had stood); Hardy: Channel Firing, During Wind and Rain; Sterling Brown: Chillen Get Shoes

O'Hara: The Day Lady Died

FIRST CRITICAL PAPER DUE

Th Mar 11 Stories and speakers.

Norton: Blake: Songs of Innocence-Introduction, Songs of Experience-Introduction;
Eliot: Journey of the Magi; Larkin: The Explosion; Hecht: "More Light! More Light!";
Wright: A Note Left in Jimmy Leonard's Shack

JIGSAW EXERCISE DUE

SPRING BREAK

Tu Mar 23 Diction and tone.

Norton: Sidney: Astrophil and Stella 71 (Who will in fairest); Shakespeare, sonnet 71 (No longer mourn), 138 (When my love swears); Donne: The Good Morrow; Herbert: Prayer (1); Traherne: Salutation; Leapor: Epistle of Deborah Dough; Johnson: On the Death of Dr. Robert Levet; Dickinson: 249 (Wild Nights); Wright: Speak

Th Mar 25 Diction and tone

Norton: Donne: The Canonization; Hopkins: Thou art indeed just; Frost: Provide, Provide; Williams: Danse Russe; Bishop: Filling Station; Larkin: Sad Steps, Aubade; Mahon: A Disused Shed in Co. Wexford

O'Hara: Fantasy

MAD LIBS EXERCISE (in class)

Tu Mar 30 Description, metaphor, analogy

Norton: Shakespeare: sonnet 73 (That time of year); Campion: Now winter nights enlarge; Herbert: The Windows; Waller: Of the last verses in the book; Charlotte Smith: Written in the church yard at Middleton in Sussex; Wordsworth: Composed upon Westminster Bridge; Keats: To Autumn; Anonymous: Ezekiel saw the wheel; Toomer: Reapers

O'Hara: Poem (Krushev is coming), A Little Travel Diary

SECOND PAPER DUE

Th Apr 1 Description, metaphor, analogy.

Norton: Shelley: Ode to the West Wind; Clare: Badger; Emerson: Days; Longfellow: The Cross of Snow; Stevens: The Emperor of Ice-Cream; Lowell: For the Union Dead; Hill: An Apology for the Revival...; Craig Raine: A Martian Sends a Postcard Home; Jorie Graham: What The End Is For

O'Hara: Personal Poem

Tu Apr 6 Big long poems (1)

Norton: Pope: Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot; Kipling: Epitaphs of the War; Wordsworth: Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey

ANNOTATION EXERCISE

Th Apr 8 Argument and abstraction

Norton: Drayton: Idea, 61 (Since there's no help); Shakespeare: sonnet 129 (Th'expense of spirit); Herbert: Jordan (1); Dickinson: 536 (The heart asks pleasure), 1129 (Tell all the truth); Yeats: Sailing to Byzantium

THIS CLASS MEETING MAY BE RESCHEDULED

Tu Apr 13 Argument and abstraction.

Norton: Donne: A Valediction Forbidding Mourning; Housman: Crossing alone the nighted ferry, Here dead we lie; Frost: Design; Marianne Moore: Peter; Auden: Lullaby (Lay your sleeping head)

O'Hara: Ave Maria

Th Apr 15 Pastoral

Norton: Raleigh: The Nymph's Reply; Marlowe: The Passionate Shepherd; Marvell: The Garden; Keats: Ode on a Grecian Urn; William Morris: The Earthly Paradise (Of heaven or hell); Henry Reed: Lessons of the War, 1 (Naming of parts); Hill: Mercian Hymns (all); Hollander: Adam's Task;

O'Hara: Poem en forme de saw

Tu Apr 20 Big long poems (2)

Norton: Milton: Lycidas; Marvell: An Horatian Ode; Eliot: The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock; Marianne Moore: The Steeple-Jack

Th Apr 22 Literary history and formal change

Norton: Rochester: Love and Life, A Song of a Young Lady; Lovelace: To Lucasta; Phillips: To My Excellent Lucasia; Tennyson: Break, break, break; Whitman: Beat! Beat! Drums; Rich: A Valediction Forbidding Mourning; Howard: Nicholas Mardruz to His Master Ferdinand

Tu Apr 27 Literary history and formal change.

Norton: Keats: On Sitting Down to Read King Lear; Carroll: The White Knight's Song; Robinson: George Crabbe; Marianne Moore: Poetry (long version); Crane: To Emily Dickinson; Reed: Chard Whitlow; Hayden: Paul Laurence Dunbar

Th Apr 29 Big long poems (3)

Norton: Whitman: Crossing Brooklyn Ferry; Browning: Andrea del Sarto; Lowell: My Last Afternoon with Uncle Devereux Winslow; Merrill: Lost in Translation
(OPTIONAL) ROUGH DRAFTS OF THIRD CRITICAL PAPERS DUE

Tu May 4 Wrap-up

Th May 6 THIRD CRITICAL PAPER DUE

Date TBA: FINAL EXAM

INTRODUCTION TO POETRY: STUDENT INFO FORM

Whoever you are! you are he or she for whom the earth is solid and liquid,
You are he or she for whom the sun and moon hang in the sky,
For none more than you are the present and the past,
For none more than you is immortality.

--Walt Whitman, "A Song of the Rolling Earth"

First, who are you?

What's your telephone number?

What's your email address?

Where do you live during this school year?

Where are you from?

What English courses have you already taken? Are you taking other English courses this term?

What languages, besides English, do you read or speak?

What other art forms (theater, painting, jazz, rock, classical music) have you been seriously involved with, and how?

Can you name some of your favorite poets now?

What do you most hope will happen in this course? What do you most fear will happen, or want to avoid? (Use the back of this page if you'd like.)

Louise Bogan
SEVERAL VOICES OUT OF A CLOUD

Come, drunks and drug-takers; come, perverts unnerved!
Receive the laurel, given, though later, on merit; to whom and wherever deserved.

Parochial punks, trimmers, nice people, joiners true-blue;
Get the hell out of the way of the laurel. It is deathless. And it isn't for you.

James Merrill
b o d y

Look closely at the letters. Can you see,
entering (stage right), then floating full,
then heading off—so soon—
how like a little kohl-rimmed moon
o plots her course from *b* to *d*

--as *y*, unanswered, knocks at the stage door?
Looked at too long, words fail,
phase out. Ask, now that *body* shines
no longer, by what light you learn these lines
and what the *b* and *d* stood for.

A. R. Ammons
SMALL SONG

The reeds give
way to the

wind and give
the wind away

Marianne Moore
POETRY

I, too, dislike it.

Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in
it, after all, a place for the genuine.

Langston Hughes
FROSTING

Freedom
Is just frosting
On somebody else's
Cake—
And so must be
Till we
Learn how to
Bake.

C. D. Wright
LAKE RETURN

Maybe you have to be from there to hear it sing:
Give me your water weeds, your nipples,
your shoehorns and four-year letter jackets,
the molded leftovers from the singed pot.
Now let me see your underside, white as fishes.
I lower my gaze against your clitoral light.

Kay Ryan
DIAMONDS

Is the snail
sharpened
by crawling
over diamonds?
Is her foot
hardened
so it can't
carry her?
No. Snails
make mucus.
Even the
most precious
barriers
to lettuce
are useless.