

TWENTIETH-CENTURY POETRY

ENGLISH 350
TuTh 1-2:30pm
Stephen Burt

This course means to introduce some of the best, most interesting, and most important English-language poems and poets of the twentieth century. We'll be looking at poetic language, structures and devices--how they work and how they change. We'll also be looking at the psychological, cultural, and sometimes political energies certain poems seem to embody. We'll look at poems as parts of their era, and as parts of a poet's career; the focus, though, will be on poems as works of art.

The core of the course is the twice-weekly class meetings. I expect you to show up at all of them, and to participate. I do call on people who don't seem to talk. I will also want a good excuse, in advance, if you're going to miss a class; missed classes without excuses will lower your grade. Pegged to each class day on the syllabus is a list of poems we might discuss: you need to have read and thought about all of them--you're encouraged, of course, to read more than just the poems on our list.

You'll write three papers and give one class presentation. The first two will concentrate on one poem (or one part of a long poem). The third must have a broader scope. There will be two ungraded exercises: a (mandatory, but really short) worksheet on metre, and an optional imitation or parody of one of our poets. Your class presentation will introduce all of us, briefly, to a poet not on our syllabus.

Those papers, your presentation, and your participation in class, represent most of your work for the course, and most of your grade will be based on them. I will, however, give a final exam, part of it based on short passages from the poems we've read. Your grade includes your first (10%), second (20%) and third (30%) papers, and your involvement in class (including your presentation (20%). The remaining 20% is the exam. Late work goes down one letter grade per day if you haven't talked to me about it beforehand. If you've got an extraordinary excuse-- or you need extra time for an extraordinary project-- tell me about it beforehand, the sooner the better.

I will have regular office hours, of course, but I won't know what they are for about a week: I try to set them to maximize the number of students who can make it. I encourage and expect--but do not require--you to meet with me every so often to discuss your work, and to show me writing in progress. It should be easy to contact me by email--burt@macalester.edu-- and to find my office, Old Main 202; its phone number is 651 696 6388. My home phone is 651 698 1238; use it sparingly and wisely, please.

We're also lucky enough to have a preceptor for this class, Linnea Ogden (logden@macalester.edu): she, too, will meet with you to discuss your work in progress, and to help you assemble your presentations.

TWENTIETH CENTURY POETRY
Stephen Burt

BOOKS REQUIRED

Thomas Hardy, *SELECTED POEMS*
T.S. Eliot, *SELECTED POEMS* or *COLLECTED POEMS*
W.B. Yeats, *SELECTED POEMS AND FOUR PLAYS*
Gertrude Stein, *THREE LIVES AND TENDER BUTTONS*
Wallace Stevens, *THE PALM AT THE END OF THE MIND*
Langston Hughes, *SELECTED POEMS*
W.H. Auden, *SELECTED POEMS*
Elizabeth Bishop, *COMPLETE POEMS 1927-1979*
Gwendolyn Brooks, *BLACKS*
James K. Baxter, *NEW SELECTED POEMS*
Philip Larkin, *COMPLETE POEMS*
John Ashbery, *SELECTED POEMS*
Liz Waldner, *DARK WOULD (THE MISSING PERSON)*

All these books should be available through the Macalester/ Ruminator textbook store, now relocated to Kagin Commons. All the books here except Waldner, Brooks and Baxter are easily available used. If you're thinking of purchasing an older or cheaper edition—or if you're thinking of purchasing a *Collected/ Complete Poems* rather than a *Selected*—you probably should: any edition is fine, **as long as it has all the poems on our syllabus**, and **with the exception of W.H. Auden**. Note that the commonly available *Selected Brooks* will not have all the poems on our syllabus: you need *Blacks*.

Tues JAN 27

Introduction; Yeats, "The Sorrow of Love";

Thurs JAN 29

Hardy: "The Darkling Thrush," "The Night of the Dance," "Channel Firing," "The Convergence of the Twain," "The Going," "The Phantom Horsewoman," "Exeunt Omnes," "The Oxen," "During Wind and Rain," "In Time of the Breaking of Nations," "Afterwards"

Tues Feb 3

Eliot: "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "Preludes," "Gerontion," "Whispers of Immortality," "Sweeney Among the Nightingales," "Marina"

Thurs Feb 5

Eliot: *The Waste Land*
Presentation ballot due

Tues Feb 10

Yeats: "The Song of Wandering Aengus," "Adam's Curse," "The Fascination of What's Difficult," "The Wild Swans at Coole," "On Being Asked for a War Poem," "Easter 1916," "The Second Coming," "A Meditation in Time of War"
Metre exercise due

Thurs Feb 12

Yeats: "Sailing to Byzantium," "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," "Leda and the Swan," "Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop," "After Long Silence," "Lapis Lazuli," "Cuchulain Comforted," "Long-Legged Fly,"

"John Kinsella's Lament for Mrs. Mary Moore," "The Circus Animals' Desertion"

Tues Feb 17

Stein: *Objects; Food*

Thurs Feb 19

Stein: *Rooms*; Stevens: "Sunday Morning," "Peter Quince at the Clavier," "Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock," "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle," "Anecdote of the Jar," "The Man Whose Pharynx Was Bad," "The Snow Man," "Bantams in Pine Woods," "The Emperor of Ice Cream"

Tues Feb 24

Stevens: "Sea Surface Full of Clouds," "Autumn Refrain," "The Brave Man," "Sailing After Lunch," "Dance of the Macabre Mice," "Anglais Mort a Florence," "Some Friends from Pascagoula," "Farewell to Florida," "A Postcard from the Volcano," "The Dwarf," "The Man on the Dump," "Arrival at the Waldorf"

Thurs Feb 26

Stevens: "The Well-Dressed Man with a Beard," "The Motive for Metaphor," "No Possum, No Sop, No Taters," "The Good Man Has No Shape," *The Auroras of Autumn*, "The Course of a Particular," "Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour," "The Plain Sense of Things," "As You Leave the Room," "Of Mere Being"

Tues Mar 2

Hughes: "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," "Litany," "Spirituals," "The Weary Blues," "Could Be," "Evil," "Seascape," "Beale Street," "50-50," "Maybe," "Delinquent," "Cross," "Madam's Past History," "Madam and Her Madam," "Madam and the Minister," "Madam and Her Might-Have-Been"

Thurs Mar 4

Hughes: *Montage of a Dream Deferred*
First paper due

Tues Mar 9

Auden: poems no. 1, 3, 4, 11, 21, 22, 27, 32, 33, 35, 42

Tues Mar 11

Auden: poems no. 44, 51, 64, 65, 71, 74, 75

SPRING BREAK

Tues Mar 23

Bishop: "The Map," "Large Bad Picture," "Jeronimo's House," "Over 2,000 Illustrations," "At the Fishhouses," "The Armadillo," "Song for the Rainy Season," "Sestina," "Filling Station," "In the Waiting Room," "Poem (About the size of an old-style dollar bill...)," "One Art"

Thurs Mar 25

Bishop, cont'd.; presentations (1)

Tues Mar 30

Baxter: "The Bay," "Elegy for an Unknown Soldier," "Wild Bees," "At Hokianga," "Election 1960"; *Pig Island Letters* 8 and 9; "East Coast

Journey," "The Boys," "Wellington (Otherwise than I had supposed it)," "To Any Young Man Who Hears My Verses...", "Ballad of the Three Monkeys," "The Fear of Change"

Thurs Apr 1

Baxter: *Jerusalem Sonnets* 1, 2, 24, 25, 36, 37; excerpts from *Jerusalem Daybook*; *Autumn Testament* 7, 11, 12, 14, 15, 27, 29, 48; "Letter from the Mountains," "Kumara Poem," "Sestina to Frank McKay"

Tues Apr 6

Brooks: "kitchenette building," "a song in the front yard," "Hattie Scott," "looking," *Notes from the Childhood and the Girlhood* 1 through 6, "The Bean Eaters," "A Lovely Love," "Callie Ford," "Boy Breaking Glass," *The Blackstone Rangers* 1 through 3

Thurs Apr 8

Brooks: "The Egg Boiler," "Beverly Hills, Chicago," "Langston Hughes," "To a Winter Squirrel," "A Bronzeville Mother Loiters...", "The Last Quatrain of the Ballad of Emmett Till," "Medgar Evers," "The Sermon on the Warpland," "Whitney Young," "Tornado at Talladega"-- with guest prof Daylanne English

Tues Apr 13

Larkin: "Wants," "Next, Please," "Arrivals, Departures," "Church Going," "I Remember, I Remember," "Mr Bleaney," "Love Songs in Age," "The Whitsun Weddings," "Dockery and Son," "High Windows," "This Be the Verse," "Aubade," "Love Again"
Second paper due

Thurs Apr 15

Ashbery: "The Instruction Manual," "The Picture of Little J.A....," "Some Trees," "Thoughts of a Young Girl," "Soonest Mended," "Summer," "For John Clare," "Parergon," "As One Put Drunk into the Packet Boat," "Hop O' My Thumb"

Tues Apr 20

Ashbery: "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror," "Street Musicians," "The Other Tradition," "Wet Casements," "And Ut Pictura Poesis Is Her Name," "What Is Poetry," "The Ice-Cream Wars," "Syringa," "Paradoxes and Oxymorons," "Qualm," "Whatever It Is, Wherever You Are"

Thurs Apr 22

Presentations (2)

Tues Apr 27

Presentations (3)

Thurs Apr 29

Waldner: "Where There's a Will (Away)," "A/ppeal A/pple...", "Washed Clean by the Blood," "Forms of A(d)Dress," "Primer," "Interpretation," "Ho, The Isle of Lesbos," "Role Call," "A Particularly Holey Ghost," "A History of Divinity," "Wood (First Daughter)"

Tues May 4

Wrap-up

Thursday May 6
Final paper due

Final exam: date and time TTK

STUDENT INFORMATION FORM
TWENTIETH-CENTURY POETRY

your name

your phone number

your year

your major, if you have one

What other English courses have you taken?

Do you: act, or direct, or otherwise 'do theatre'?

Do you play a musical instrument seriously?

Do you speak, or read fluently, languages other than English?

Have you already read some of the poets we're reading? Which ones?

Are there other poets you care about a lot?

How would you define poetry?

What do you think makes modern poetry different from older poems?

POETS FOR YOUR PRESENTATIONS:

All these people are twentieth-century poets whose work I admire, and whose work at least some people consider "important" or "major." You should pick one from the list and prepare a twelve-minute presentation introducing us to him or her; your presentation should involve a one- or two-page handout containing at least one complete poem. This list also serves as a ballot: **next Thursday, Feb. 5**, you'll be turning it back in with your at least your top four choices marked (from 1 to 4 or more, 1= first choice); the following Tuesday I'll tell you who you get. You should feel free, obviously, to research likely-looking poets (in anthologies, on the Internet, etc.) to see whom you'd like to take. If you'd like to give a presentation, instead, about a poet neither on this list, nor on the syllabus, talk to me soon; it might well be arranged.

THE POETS (all American unless otherwise specified):

Ezra Pound (1885-1972)
William Carlos Williams (1883-1963)
Marianne Moore (1887-1972)
H. D. (1886-1961)
Robert Frost (1874-1963)

Basil Bunting (English; 1900-85)
Stevie Smith (English; 1902-71)
Patrick Kavanagh (Irish; 1905-67)
Hugh MacDiarmid (Scottish; 1892-1978)
Hart Crane (1899-1932)

Robert Lowell (1917-77)
Randall Jarrell (1914-65)
John Berryman (1914-72)
Judith Wright (Australian; 1915-)
Robert Duncan (1919-1988)

James Merrill (1926-95)
A. R. Ammons (1926-2001)
Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997)
James Wright (1927-80)
W. S. Merwin (1927-)

Thom Gunn (English/ American; 1929-)
Adrienne Rich (1929-)
A. K. Ramanujan (Indian/ American; 1929-1993)
Gary Snyder (1930-)
Derek Walcott (St. Lucia; 1930-)

E. K. Brathwaite (Barbados; 1930-)
Geoffrey Hill (English; 1932-)
Sylvia Plath (1932-63)
Seamus Heaney (Irish; 1939-)
Lyn Hejinian (1941-)

Rae Armantrout (1947-)
Anne Carson (Canadian; 1950-)

C. D. Wright (1949-)
Louise Glück (1943-)
Paul Muldoon (Irish; 1951-)

Medbh McGuckian (Irish; 1950-)
Jorie Graham (1951-)
Rita Dove (1952-)
Thylias Moss (1954-)
Donald Revell (1954-)

THE SORROW OF LOVE

W. B. Yeats

The quarrel of the sparrows in the eaves,
 The full round moon and the star-laden sky,
And the loud song of the ever-singing leaves
 Had hid away earth's old and weary cry.

And then you came with those red mournful lips,
 And with you came the whole of the world's tears,
And all the sorrows of her labouring ships,
 And all burden of her myriad years.

And now the sparrows warring in the eaves,
 The crumbling moon, the white stars in the sky,
And the loud chanting of the unquiet leaves,
 Are shaken with earth's old and weary cry.

THE SORROW OF LOVE

W. B. Yeats

The brawling of a sparrow in the eaves,
The brilliant moon and all the milky sky,
And all that famous harmony of leaves,
Had blotted out man's image and his cry.

A girl arose that had red mournful lips
And seemed the greatness of the world in tears,
Doomed like Odysseus and the labouring ships
And proud as Priam murdered with his peers;

Arose, and on the instant clamorous eaves,
A climbing moon upon an empty sky,
And all that lamentation of the leaves,
Could but compose man's image and his cry.

Killarney Clary

The wind stopped for a moment at the end of autumn and twilight; a woman called across the yards to her young son, toward the blueing trees, tired faces of workers who glimpsed the moon beginning. Some things are only bright in the darkness. Some people never have their time. They feel like certain birds and fish designed especially to go through.

THE KNOT

Adrienne Rich

In the heart of the queen anne's lace, a knot of blood.
For years I never saw it,

years of metallic vision,
spears glancing off a bright eyeball,

suns off a Swiss lake.
A foaming meadow; the Milky Way;

and there, all along, the tiny dark-red spider
sitting in the whiteness of the bridal web,

waiting to plunge his crimson knifepoint
into the white apparencies.

Little wonder the eye, healing, sees
for a long time through a mist of blood.

L'ART 1910

Ezra Pound

Green arsenic smeared on an egg-white cloth,
Crushed strawberries! Come, let us feast our eyes.