

HUM633: The Poem, the Poet, and the World:
Documenting Nature and Selfhood in Nineteenth-Century English Poetry
Summer, 2011

Prof. Stephanie Kuduk Weiner
Downey House #300; sweiner@wesleyan.edu; 860-685-3634
Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description: This course traces a tradition of English poetry that strove to capture the vitality and particularity of the natural world and the complex inner life of the poet—and to understand the relationship between them. The poems we will study were responsible for making observation and reflection indispensable skills for the poet; for inventing the meditative lyric and placing it at the center of modern poetry; and for establishing a close association between the patterns and orders of nature and the structures of poetry. These poems offer important statements about the value of the natural world—in its own right as well as in fostering the intellectual, creative, and spiritual pursuits of human beings. And they explore in exceptionally rich and nuanced ways questions of enduring purchase for the study of poetry: questions about representation and imagery, about truth and imagination, and about poetic form. Although the subject of this course is poetry and our conversations will focus intensively on matters of literary theme and form, students interested in ecology, psychology, and the arts are warmly welcome.

Course Requirements: five critical or creative responses such as essays, drawings, or poems (one due each week); final paper or project; class participation.

Tues. 7/5: “The Greater Romantic Lyric”

- M. H. Abrams, “Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric” (moodle)
- Coleridge, “The Eolian Harp,” “Frost at Midnight” (moodle)
- Wordsworth, [A Night-Piece], “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey”
- Tennyson, from *In Memoriam A. H. H.*: poems 15, 89, 95
- Hopkins, “The Sea and the Skylark,” “Hurrahing in Harvest”
- Recommended: Coleridge, “This Lime-Tree Bower, My Prison” and J. H. Van den Berg, “The Subject and his Landscape” (moodle)

Thurs. 7/7: The aesthetic of particularity

- Carol Christ, from *The Finer Optic* (moodle)
- Wordsworth, “Tintern Abbey” (again); “There is an Eminence,—of these our hills,” “A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags,” “To M.H.,” “The Small Celandine” and from the 1850 *Prelude*: Book VI, lines 581-680
- Clare, “Emmonsails Heath in Winter,” “The Firetails Nest,” “The Wrywrecks Nest”
- Tennyson, “Mariana”
- Hopkins, “Spring”
- Yeats, “The Wild Swans at Coole”

Tues. 7/12: Wordsworth; mountains

- Wordsworth
 - Wordsworth, Preface to *Poems* (1815)
 - Wordsworth, from the 1850 *Prelude*: Book XI, lines 138-end; Book XII, lines 354-end
 - Recommended: Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*
- Mountains
 - Wordsworth, “Tintern Abbey” (again!), 1850 *Prelude*: Book XIII, lines 1-170
 - Keats, “Sonnet to Ailsa Rock,” “Read me a Lesson muse, and speak it loud”
 - Arnold, “Stanzas in Memory of the Author of ‘Obermann’” (moodle)

Thurs. 7/14: Keats; birdsong

- Keats
 - Keats letters:
 - To J. H. Reynolds, 17, 18 April 1817 (p. 349-51)
 - To Benjamin Bailey, 22 Nov. 1817 (p. 364-67)
 - To Reynolds, 22 Nov. 1817 (p. 367-69)
 - To George and Tom Keats, 21, 27 Dec. 1817 (p. 369-70)
 - To John Taylor, 27 Feb. 1818 (p. 379-80)
 - To Bailey, 13 March 1818 (p. 381-83)
 - To Tom Keats, 25-27 June 1818 (p. 400-402)
 - To J. A. Hessey, 8 Oct. 1818 (p. 417-18)
 - To Richard Woodhouse, 27 Oct. 1818 (p. 418-19)
 - To James Rice, 14, 16 Feb. 1820 (p. 522-23)
 - Keats poems: “I stood tip-toe upon a little hill,” “On seeing the Elgin Marbles,” “On the Sea,” “When I have fears that I may cease to be,” “The Human Seasons,” “Why did I laugh tonight? No voice will tell,” “La belle dame sans merci,” “Ode to Psyche,” “Ode on Indolence,” “Shed no tear—O shed no tear,” “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” “Ode on Melancholy,” “To Autumn,” “The day is gone, and all its sweets are gone”
- Birdsong
 - Keats, “Ode to a Nightingale”
 - Wordsworth, “To the Cuckoo”
 - Tennyson, *In Memoriam* 88
 - Hopkins, “The Woodlark,” “Repeat that, repeat”

Tues. 7/19: Clare; disenchantment

- Clare
 - Clare, [Nature Notes], [Letter to Messrs Taylor and Hessey, I], [Taste]
 - Clare, “The Progress of Rhyme,” “Birds Nests,” “Sand Martin,” “The Fern Owls Nest,” “The March Nightingale,” “The Thrushes Nest,” “The Wren,” “The Pettichaps Nest,” “The Yellowhammers Nest,” “The Yellow Wagtails Nest,” “The Landrail,” [Autumn Morning], [November], [Autumn Birds], [Farmer’s Boy], “Song Last Day,” “[Summer is on the earth and in the sky],” “[The thunder mutters louder and more loud],” “[God looks on nature with a glorious eye],” “A Vision,” “An Invite to Eternity,” “The Invitation,” “Song [Love lives beyond],” “My Early Home Was This,” “Song (I Fly from All I Prize the Most),” “Larks and Spring,” “Sonnet: Wood Anemone,” “[I love thee nature with a boundless love],” “The Yellowhammer,” “To John Clare,” “Birds Nests (‘Tis spring warm glows the South)”
- Disenchantment
 - Clare, “I Am,” “Sonnet: I Am,” “Birds: Why are ye silent?”
 - Wordsworth, “Ode [There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream]”
 - Arnold, “Dover Beach” (moodle)

Thurs. 7/21: Tennyson; language

- Tennyson
 - *In Memoriam*, A.H.H. Read as much as you can, but make sure carefully to read sections #1-11, 28-31, 36, 50-51, 78-79, 103-105, 108, 115, 119, and 129-31
- Language
 - *In Memoriam*, sections 5, 16, 20, 48, 57, 75, 77
 - Arnold, “The Buried Life” (moodle)
 - Hopkins, “Nondum” and [Oxford, 1863] excerpt from *Early Diaries* (p. 185)

Tues. 7/26: Arnold; the sky

- Arnold
 - Arnold, “Switzerland,” “The River,” “Despondency,” “Self-Deception,” “A Summer Night,” “Lines Written in Kensington Gardens,” “A Wish,” “The Scholar Gypsy,” “Thyrsis,” “Memorial Verses,” and “Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse” (moodle)
 - Arnold, “Preface” to 1853 *Poems* (moodle)
- The sky
 - Arnold, “Self-Dependence,” [The Philosopher and the Stars] excerpt from *Empedocles on Etna* (moodle)
 - Keats, “Bright Star, would I were stedfast as thou art,”
 - Hopkins, “—Hill/Heaven,” “Moonrise June 19 1876,” “The Starlight Night,” “The dark-out Lucifer”

Thurs. 7/28: Hopkins; water

- Hopkins
 - Hopkins, “During the eastering,” “Distance/Dappled,” “The peacock’s eye,” “Love preparing to fly,” “Or else their cooings,” “It was a hard thing,” “A Voice from the World,” “Boughs being pruned,” “(Dawn),” “God’s Grandeur,” “Easter Communion,” “O Death, Death,” “Let me be to Thee,” “The Habit of Perfection,” “In the Valley of the Elwy,” “The May Magnificat,” “Spring and Fall,” “The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo,” “The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air we Breathe,” “As kingfishers catch fire,” “The Lantern out of Doors,” “Binsey Poplars,” “Spelt from Sibyl’s Leaves”
 - Hopkins, [August-September 1864] from *Early Diaries* (p. 185-86); *Journal*, p. 191-99; letters to Bridges and Dixon, p. 237-40, 240-41, 246-59;
- Water
 - Hopkins, “Inversnaid,” “I hear a noise of waters”
 - Wordsworth, “Brooke, that hast been my solace days and weeks,” and from *The Prelude*, Book I: lines 272-304
 - Yeats, “The Lake Isle of Innisfree”

Tues. 8/2: Hopkins; the wind

- Hopkins
 - Hopkins, “To seem the stranger lies my lot, my life,” “I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day,” “Strike, churl; hurl, cheerless wind, then; heltering hail”, “(Carrion Comfort),” “Patience, hard thing! the hard thing but to pray,” “My own heart let me more have pity on”
 - Hopkins, “Sermon for Mondays Evening Oct. 25,” p. 278-81; spiritual exercise for Aug 7, 1882, p. 282; “The Principle or Foundation” and “Meditation on Hell,” p. 290-95
- Wind
 - Hopkins, “The Windhover,” “No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief”
 - Wordsworth, “A whirl-blast from behind the hill”; from the 1850 *Prelude*: Book I, lines 1-54
 - Clare, “Clock a clay”
 - Yeats, “He reproves the Curlew,” “He hears the Cry of the Sedge”

Thurs. 8/4: Yeats; patterns

- Yeats
 - Yeats, from “The Symbolism of Poetry”
 - Yeats, all the poems from *Crossways*, “The Sorrow of Love” (both versions), “When You are Old,” “The White Birds,” and all the poems from *The Wind Among the Reeds* and *In the Seven Woods*
- Patterns
 - Yeats, “The Falling of the Leaves,” “To an Isle in the Water”
 - Hopkins, “Pied Beauty”