Table of Contents
How to Read and Understand Poetry
Parti

How to Read and Understand Poetry

Scope:

This course of twenty-four lectures will introduce students to a subject about which they already know—or remember—something. Even though most educated people can recall poems from childhood, from school, even from their university years, most of them are no longer fans or readers of poetry. There are many explanations for the drop in poetry's popularity since the nineteenth century: families no longer practice reading aloud at home; various forms of prose have gained preeminence; "free verse" has made many people think that poetry has lost its music; the heady days of "modernism," along with T. S. Eliot's insistence that poetry be "difficult," confused and troubled people who wanted things to remain (or so they thought) simple.

Many undergraduates, like many adults, are suspicious of poetry: they think it requires special skills and an almost magical ability to "decipher" it or to discover its "hidden meanings." This course will allay your fears and encourage you to respond to many different kinds of poems; it will (I hope) inspire you to continue to read and to listen to poetry. We will be less interested in those (perhaps nonexistent) hidden or "deep" meanings in poetry, and more concerned with how poets go about their business of communicating thought and feeling through a verbal medium that we all have heard since childhood.

Instead of asking, "What does this poem mean?" the questions I shall encourage you to think about all the time are these:

1. What do I notice about this poem?
2. What is odd, quirky, peculiar about it?
3. What new words do I see or what familiar words in new situations?
4. Why is it the way it is, and not some other way?

Although the course will cover a range of poems—from Renaissance England to contemporary America—it will not really be a historical "survey." Instead, it will focus on poetic techniques, patterns, habits, and genres, and it will do so with a special concern for the three areas which, taken together, can be said to define what poetry is and what distinguishes it from other kinds of literary utterance:

1. *Figurative language.* Whether metaphor, simile, metonymy, synecdoche, irony (all of these terms will be taken up), "figuration" is the crucial component of poetry. Aristotle, the first major Western literary critic, said in the *Poetics* that of all the gifts necessary for a poet, the gift of metaphor was the most important. If you have everything else (a good ear, a sense for plot or character) but you lack the gift of metaphor, you won't be a good poet; if you have it and you *lack* everything else, you'll still be a poet. We shall look at how representative poets seek to convey an idea or a feeling by representing something in terms of something else. Poetry is at once the most

concise literary language ("the best words in the best order," Samuel Taylor Coleridge called it) and the most suggestive. The combination of concision and suggestiveness encourages (indeed, requires) a reader to pay close attention to words and music, to see how things fit together, and to sense what kinds of relationships are stated, implied, or hinted at in the poet's characteristic maneuvers. Precisely because we are engaged in an act of "interpretation," we run the risk of getting it all wrong. There are areas of right and wrong, of course, but the most interesting area is the middle, gray one, in which many possible meanings, feelings, and effects of a poem are up for interpretation. If there were not more than one possible "meaning" or "effect" of a poem, it would not be a poem, but rather, a piece of unmistakable instruction ("Insert Tab A into Slot B") or a tautology ("A rectangle has four sides and four ninety-degree angles"). Even religious commandments ("Thou shalt not kill") are open to interpretation.

2. *Music and sound.* Most poetry in English until quite recently has been written in "formal" ways, hewing to patterns of rhythm and rhyme with which most of us are familiar, even if we don't know the exact nomenclature. When Walt Whitman, in the middle of the nineteenth century, began writing a new kind of "free" verse (but one whose subtle rhythms owe a great deal to the Bible as well as to political speech and operatic song) he began the move toward a new kind of verse, one which Robert Frost said, in a famous dismissal, was like playing tennis with the net down. All good poems, whether in conventional forms or in new, freer ones, have a strong musical basis, and we shall spend some time listening to and for the experiments in sound that all poets have made. Whether a poem is written in "conventional" or "free" verse, it is always a response to a formal problem: that is, the poet has at some point in the composition decided that this particular poem should be written in (say) iambic pentameter, or as a villanelle, a haiku, or a long-lined meditation, rather than in some other way. Sound, form, and meaning are all part of the same package.

3. *Tone of voice.* The subtlest, most elastic, and most difficult thing to "hear" in a poem. We usually define "tone" as the writer's attitude to his or her material, but of course it is a lot more. Almost any simple sentence (" How are you today?" "Pass the salt, please") can be uttered in a variety of ways and with many connotations or ironic suggestions. If we misinterpret the tone of someone's remarks, we can get into a lot of trouble. Delicacy of tone is precisely one of poetry's strongest assets, rather than a curse. Just because a poem is *about* a certain subject (love, death, God, nature) does not mean that it must maintain a prescribed attitude toward that subject. In fact, much of the play of poetry comes from the discrepancy between what we might reasonably expect a poet to say (or the tone of voice in which he or she might say it) *and* what he or she actually does say and in what tone. Once again, it was Frost who said over and over that the speaking voice in poetry is the most important thing of all. If we cannot hear the voice of an imagined person behind the poem, we'd be listening to a machine. Remember: a poem is a printed text that is like a play script. It is a blueprint for performance. Once you have thought through, and read through, a poem many times, you will be able to *say* it *inyour* way, having decided what to play up and what to play down. Once you have it by heart, it will be as much yours as it is the author's.

Because of the thirty-minute length of each lecture, and because we shall be examining poems at close range, we shall have to limit ourselves to shorter works, or to a consideration of parts of longer works. Since this is not a historical survey (that would be another way of arranging a course in poetry), we shall not be able to talk about *big* poems, like Spenser's *The Faerie Queene,* Milton's *Paradise Lost,* Wordsworth's *The Prelude,* nor will we have much to say about medium-length narrative or contemplative poems. The focus will be on poems of no more than two pages in length, poems that you can get into your ears and memory, and learn—essentially—by heart.

The course has been arranged to consider aspects of the three major areas above, but each lecture (and the discussion of most of the individual poems) will deal, to some degree, with all of the areas, veering among them to produce the fullest readings of the works at hand. To get the most out of this course, you should read the poems discussed in the lectures—and others as well. The bibliography lists a number of books of collected poems, including the well-known standard college text, *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* (4th edition, ed. Margaret Ferguson et al.). This is the primary item for "Essential Reading" and will not be mentioned again in the lecture notes. In addition, virtually all of the poems are easy to find elsewhere.

Lecture One What to Look
(and Listen) for in Poems

Scope: After an introduction to the ways in which such a course *might* be
structured (along historical, or even biographical lines), we shall briefly
cover some formal ways to think about poetry. Then we shall focus on
two short poems on a similar theme (a beautiful woman)—Robert
Herrick's "Upon Julia's Clothes" and A. R. Ammons's "Beautiful
Woman"—to begin an exploration of how to read poetry, with emphasis
on how to hear the sounds and music of a poem, how to identify its
"figures of speech," and how to note its formal arrangements.

Outline

I.   The road not taken: we could go through English poetry as a history from its
earliest beginnings (roughly the eighth century AD), although this would
prove difficult and time-consuming for many reasons.

   A.   For one, Old English (or Anglo-Saxon) is essentially a foreign
language, a branch of German, that requires separate study (for
example, *Caedmon 's Hymn,* c. 675 AD).

   B.   After 1066, William the Conqueror made French the language of the
English court, and it gradually permeated all of the spoken and written
language. Middle English (e.g., Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales,* c. 1390-
1400) is more understandable to us, but still not what linguists would
call "modern English."

   C.   After the "great vowel shift" of the fifteenth century, the patterns of
modern English were established.

      1.   Although pronunciation has changed over the past five and one-
half centuries, we can hear and understand Shakespeare and his
contemporaries with less difficulty than we can writers from before
the sixteenth century.

      2.   In the Renaissance, the first major book of lyric poetry is *Tottel's
Miscellany* (1557), which contains sonnets and other poems by Sir
Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542) and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (c.
1517-1547), who translated the sonnets of Francesco Petrarca
(1304-1374).

IF.   Verse and poetry: a distinction. The first is the general term we shall use for
anything involving "rhyme," or conventional "rhythm." A laundry list, a
birthday greeting, any occasional light piece of rhyming can be considered
verse, but we would not call it a serious *poem.*

   A.   Verse is a matter of forms and schemes. We shall examine in
subsequent lectures how the formal arrangements of sound (especially
rhyme), meter (both conventional and free), and stanzaic or generic
forms help to create poetic effects.

   B.   Poetry proper is a matter of figures of speech, metaphors, "tropes."
      1.   We shall examine in fuller detail how figurative language (which
can be used in prose as well as verse) is the crucial determinant of
poetic utterance.
      2.   Thus, Aristotle (in the *Poetics,* fourth century BC), Sir Philip
Sidney {*An Apology for Poetry,* c. 1580), and Percy Bysshe Shelley
{*A Defense of Poetry,* 1820) all argued in vastly different eras of
time.

III.   Some practical examples. We shall examine two short lyrics to see what we
can learn about them and about how they work, trying to answer some of the
questions posed in the general introduction to this series of lectures.

   A.   Robert Herrick (1591-1674), "Upon Julia's Clothes."
      1.   Diction: the poem is straightforward enough; its longest word,
"liquefaction," is both scientific and figurative. "Vibration," which
makes an internal rhyme with "liquefaction," seems to hold a
comparable place in the second stanza. Notice how in a poem with
many one- and two-syllable words, longer words gain special
prominence.
      2.   Stanzas/sentences: the poem is written in two rhetorically parallel
tercets, rhyming "aaa" and "bbb," and following a "first... then"
sequence. This establishes a mini-narrative that also details the
speaker's responses to his lover in various states.
      3.   Grammar: it is never too simplistic to attend to the kinds of words a
poet employs, or to consider the kinds of sentences he uses. In this
case, please pay attention to the verbs in the two stanzas, and what
they say about the poem's (and the poet's) development.

   B.   A. R. Ammons (1926-), "Beautiful Woman." This poem is almost as
short as a poem can be (Ammons veers between very short ones, like
this, and much longer, indeed book-length poems), and about as simple
as well. If it were said aloud, with no attention to its visible appearance
on the page, it would *sound* like a single sentence.
      1.   Lineation and stanzas: part of the effect of much contemporary
verse, we come to realize, derives from the choices the poet makes
with regard to lineation and spacing. Where does one pause? How
does one honor the line and stanza breaks? How does one *say* or
hear this six-line, three-stanza, nine-word work? We'll try it in
different ways.
      2.   The sentence: since it is only one sentence long, with no
subordinate clauses, what can we say about the visible arrangement
and how this affects our experience of the poem, and of the image
(or idea) the poet is conveying?

3. Subject matter and the play of language: it is easy, of course, to understand the "theme" of this lyric (one to which we shall return at the very end of this series of lectures). Roughly, we might call the poem an observation and an elegy, with a touch of regret, for the decay of beauty. But Ammons is always playful and cunning, and the beginning and ending of his poem deliver more than we at first might have suspected. Consider the relation of verbs and nouns, and the multiple suggestions they have. We realize that simple observation has many possible ramifications.

4. Reaching beyond: it is not too much to think that the poem extends our attention to seasonal and mythological dimensions as well as to the nominal subject at hand. The title, and the many senses of "fall," are our primary cues.

5. Substitution: he uses the woman's (implied) foot to stand for her, a technique called synecdoche.

Suggested Reading:

Ammons, A. R., *Brink Road.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Compare the two poems discussed in this lecture. What kinds of action are described or implied in each (consider both the subject and the observer). Why is this action important to the poem?

2. Is there one "key" word in Ammons' poem? If so, what do you think it is, and why?

Lecture Two Memory and Composition

Scope: We shall examine two poems by the same poet on a similar theme (the workings of memory) to see how they reflect each other and play with the reader's expectations. This lecture will serve to introduce us to William Wordsworth, a key figure in the British Romantic movement, and his characteristic maneuvers, themes and language.

Outline

I. William Wordsworth (1770-1850), "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud." A. Background of the poem: Wordsworth wrote the poem in 1804, two years after a walk around Ullswater in his native Lake district. His sister Dorothy recorded *her* experience of the same walk, and it is interesting (although not necessary) to see the differences between her prose account and his later version of the same experience.

    1. Interestingly, in the poem, Dorothy is not mentioned.

    2. Her account of coming upon the scene is more gradual; his poetic rendering is an epiphany.

B. The force of simile: the poem serves as an introduction to some simple (and other, not-so-simple) modes of poetic figuration (or "troping"). It begins with a simile (I was *like* a cloud) and moves into other kinds of comparisons.

    1. He (Wordsworth) is solitary, but he is also part of a group.

    2. In another simile, he makes the daffodils themselves solitary, or removed.

C. The role of personification: Wordsworth chooses to humanize (or personify) his daffodils, and we may wonder why. There is a continual exchange between him and his flowers, as he surveys his position by comparison with theirs.

D. Grammar and word choice: once again, as I have already suggested, it is important to examine a poet's *diction* and to ask why he chooses certain words instead of other, almost equivalent ones. What do we make of "host," "golden," "wealth," "show," and the lines "A poet could not but be gay/In such a jocund company"?

E. Importance of repetition and variation: One thing we notice is that many of the poem's opening details are repeated, though with variation, in subsequent stanzas, and we must determine the force of such repetition. Above all, we notice two special twists in stanza 4: a repetition of all of the previous details and a shift in tense from the past to the generalized present.

1. Wordsworth also includes—and in some cases repeats—references to the four classical elements: air, earth, fire, water.
2. The words "dance" or "dancing" appear in all four stanzas.

F. Overall unity: the poem not only recounts, but also dramatizes, the workings of the human mind (one of Wordsworth's great themes) and makes an important statement about the independent, unwilled, and uncontrollable faculty of memory. It does so, at its climax, with a telling and delightful use of alliteration and a particular emphasis on a preposition (a part of speech that Wordsworth used to great advantage), in this case "with," that links him to the flowers.

II. "The Solitary Reaper" (1805).

A. As "mirror image" of "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud": this poem is also an encounter of sorts, with a distant human being instead of a field of flowers.
1. It is in a real way a mirror image of the daffodils poem.
2. Look at its tenses: where is the poet, and where are we, at the poem's start, and at its finish?
3. There is a reversal of the tenses as we encountered them in "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud."

B. As an encounter poem: "The Solitary Reaper" fits, as well, into a genre of poems (Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" and Wallace Stevens' "The Idea of Order at Key West" are other examples) that record a poet's experience of music, whether from a human or a non-human source. It is natural, of course, for a poet to be interested in music, and we can infer some specific reasons for Wordsworth's experience here.

C. Poetry between music and language: one of the main themes of the poem is, of course, the poet's attraction to sheer music, a song being sung in a language he cannot understand (Erse or Gaelic). So the solitary reaper is herself de-personified and made into something like a bird.

D. Themes of life and death: at the same time, we sense a kind of suggestiveness in her role as a reaper (not grim, certainly, but connected to the harvest).
1. Solitude is definitely a theme.
2. Perhaps the poem has other possibilities? In fact, once we realize that the direct address ("Behold," "stop," and so forth) to either the reader or the poet himself echoes the traditional language of epitaph poetry, then we get the sense that Wordsworth is recounting something like an experience from another dimension.
3. Wordsworth is addressing himself from within himself.

E. Reaching toward eternity.
1. Such a dimension is implicit in the poem's commands, its address, its titular figure, its speaker's trouble with understanding her song,

the various possibilities he infers for its themes, and above all, by its own use of present and past tenses.
2. She is always singing to him in a continual present, alive, although far away and long ago herself.
3. He hears her song in his heart, like a burden.

F. But did it happen this way? Unlike "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," "The Solitary Reaper" has no autobiographical origin. Wordsworth read a travel account describing the scene.
1. We shall see whether this fact makes any difference in our appreciation and understanding of this poem—or perhaps of any poem.
2. The nature of the "first-person speaker" in a lyric is as much a piece of fiction as any fable the poet can choose to employ.
3. Never assume that it is the poet him- or herself who is actually having the experience, even when the poet is William Wordsworth, whose work is almost always about himself. One can be fooled.

Suggested Reading:

Hartman Geoffrey. *Wordsworth 's Poetry 1787-1814.*

Stillinger, Jack *(ed.). Selected Poems and Prefaces of William Wordsworth.*

Questions to Consider:

1. If dancing is a motif of "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," what physical action is a motif of "The Solitary Reaper"? How does Wordsworth play on this to affect the scene, sense, and sound of the poem?

2. Analyze the following words in "The Solitary Reaper" as we did those in "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (Paragraph I.D): "single" and "profound" (stanza 1); "chaunt" and "Cuckoo-bird" (stanza 2); "lay" and "natural sorrow" (stanza 3); "song" and "bending" (stanza 4). Why are these certain words selected by the poet instead of synonyms that might have been used?

Lecture Three Poets
Look at the World

Scope: What do poets look for and look at? How do they record their visions? How does imagery work its way into a poem? This lecture will deal with imagery that does not (at least appear to) involve complicated figures of speech. In pursuing this topic, we will look at one strand of twentieth-century American poetry, namely "Imagism," and the importance of pared-down language in poets like William Carlos Williams.

Outline

I. Twentieth-century "Imagism": William Carlos Williams (1883-1963).

A. "No ideas but in things": this little programmatic aphorism was repeated by Williams (a pediatrician/obstetrician as well as a poet) in several places.
1. Clearly, part of his poetic achievement came from trying to reduce poetry, in both size and diction, and to get away from the worst excesses (as he perceived them) of late-nineteenth-century lushness (about which we'll have more to say in later classes on poetic sounds and rhythms).
2. Influenced in part by his friend Ezra Pound, who himself came under the influence of Amy Lowell (1874-1925), and by translations from Japanese poetry, Williams urged upon poets a close, fresh look at the things of this world.
3. His simplicity in form, his freedom of lineation, his unpretentious diction have all had a major effect on poetry by Americans in this century. Even A. R. Ammons, a more playful and speculative poet. can be said to have learned from Williams. We'll take a look at three famous short lyrics.

B. "The Red Wheelbarrow" (1923): what is missing from this poem? Why is it spaced and lineated as it is? Is it powerful in its simplicity or merely clever? How does the picture-making work, and how is it related to the poem's *sounds'}*

C. "This Is Just to Say . . ." (1934): a poem addressed to the poet's wife, this could refer to any domestic situation between two people.
1. The question here (as above) is whether the poem is strong enough to carry the weight of its emotional or psychological impulses.
2. One thing we notice about Williams is that, like Hemingway, his contemporary in prose, he is sparing in his use of adjectives.
3. Does this fact make them—when we come upon them—more, or less, significant? "Delicious," sweet," and "cold": would they work as well with other fruits?

D. "Poem" (1934): at last, a poem with a bit of action in it.
1. Here is an example of a poetic vignette whose major impact is felt by the relation of language to spacing (as with Ammons' short poem from Lecture One).
2. We must hear short pauses between the lines, and slightly longer pauses between the stanzas, in order to register the full *aural* effect of the poem's effort to depict feline activity.

II. Lists as poetic form: Robert Herrick (1591-1674). "The Argument of His Book."

A. You are already a little familiar with Herrick's work, so here's the poem that stands as the introduction to his collected poems, all published in 1648.1 call your attention to the way in which a simple statement of purpose, a catalogue, or a list, can have poetic effect.

B. Notice he goes from the things of this world to things of the next.

C. Notice, as well, the delicacy of alliteration at the beginning, to give a sense of order, and how that order in *sound* is extended by the temporal order of the months of the year in line 2.

D. In addition to the moving outwards—to the human realm of youth, and love, and (the wonderful phrase in the poem's midst) "cleanly wantonness"—the moving upwards, toward weather, the exotic, and to the very processes of nature. The poem ends appropriately with a hope for heavenly favor. (Herrick was an Anglican clergyman as well as a poet.)

E. And we notice, as well, the alternation between "I sing" and "I write."
1. The effect stations us in our understanding of the poet's progress, but also reminds us of the convention that the earliest poets (such as Homer) were bards, who delivered their work orally instead of writing it down.
2. Herrick handles the trope of singing as a synonym for, as well as an opposite to, the more modern art of "writing."

III. Imagery and social commentary: John Clare (1793-1864). "Gypsies" (c. 1840).

A. Here, at last, is a poem full of verbs, that details an action, and that uses its imagery as a means of making a social commentary.

B. Notice how unembellishcd the imagery is. There is nothing we could legitimately call "metaphor": rather, simple details do the job of conveying a picture.

C. Internal rhyme (e.g., "tainted," "wasted," "half-wasted"), however, actually helps to brings differing things into conjunction with one another.

D. Finally, the closing couplet packs the wallop Clare intended. By waiting until the end for his political summary, Clare has successfully prepared

his audience by means of the seemingly innocuous details he has been building up.

IV. Sight and sound.

    A. William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" (1892).

        1. We end with two poems whose combination of visual detail, mostly unembellished with figurative language, and musical nuance, demonstrate the effectiveness of "imagery" in conjunction with sound.

        2. Yeats's famous early poem uses repetition at the start to establish a musical lilt and, in conjunction with syntactic inversion and specific details, to render the scene both dreamy and practical.

        3. It is easy to envision the individual details and to hear the soft, languorous rhythms in which Yeats lists them.

        4. Here is a man eager, indeed anxious, to make an escape from "the pavements gray" of the dull city to the "purple glow" of noon in his Irish island retreat.

    B. Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950), "The Buck in the Snow" (1928).

        1. A lovely poem by a poet now less well thought of than during her lifetime. Like Yeats, Millay wants to combine simple visualization with complex musical effects.

        2. The picture of the deer and the direct address to the sky establish a semi-reverie in the first stanza (notice the rhymes and the irregular meter), which is both shattered and continued by the daring single sixth line (notice the rhyme and the syntactic inversion) and the semi-metaphoric participle "scalding."

        3. Unlike Yeats, Miilay wishes to use her visual and musical senses to make a statement about human intrusiveness in nature, but she does so without overt condemnation. Notice the diction ("How strange a thing is death"), and the very absence in the poem of the real cause of death—the human hunter who has brought the buck down.

        4. The poem ends with the image of the doe looking out on the scene.

Questions to Consider:

1. How effective is the "still life" poem "The Red Wheelbarrow" of Williams? Does the poem live up to its assertion that "so much depends on" the object described? Compare it to "Poem."

2. Compare and contrast "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" to Wordsworth's two "memory" poems studied in Lecture Two. To what extent is Yeats a "romantic" and subjective poet in the mold of Wordsworth? Can you reverse some of the images Yeats uses in describing the idyllic imagined life on Innisfree to figure out what is really going on in the life of the narrator?

Lecture Four
Picturing Nature

Scope: This lecture continues our investigation of imagery by looking at some suggestive poems from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a way of seeing how and why poets treat aspects of nature. Materiality in the last two centuries has become a major preoccupation of poetry.

Outline

I. We shall begin with a short poem by a friend and contemporary of Ezra Pound, namely, H. D. (Hilda Doolittle, 1886-1961); the poem is "Sea Violet" (1916).

   A. Clearly, for H. D., unlike Williams, there's more to be done than merely reporting the appearance of a thing. And again, unlike Clare or Millay, she does not want to use her titular flower as an example of some human theme.

   B. But we also notice that something in her description of the sea violet tends to personify it.

      1. Her verbs and adjectives ("fragile," "lies fronting," "frail," "catch the light"), without specifically rendering it human, make it at least not unlike a character in our world.

      2. In the third stanza, the direct address clinches the sense we have that the speaker might be identifying with the delicate blossom.

   C. And the last image, a metaphor really, lifts the delicate violet from its precarious position on the beach to a position of elevated prominence in the heaven.

   D. Poetic allusiveness: it may be that H. D. is thinking, at the end of her poem, of another violet, this one in a short lyric by Wordsworth, concerning a young girl who has died.

      1. In "She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways," Wordsworth compares his Lucy to

> A violet by a mossy stone Half hidden from the eye! —Fair as a star, when only one Is shining in the sky.

      2. H. D., like Wordsworth, uses movement between small and large, near and far, weak and strong, sensual exactness and metaphysical suggestiveness, to achieve her effect.

II. We will investigate two poems, written almost one hundred years apart, to discuss the idea we might term "nature and warnings."

   A. Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892), "The Kraken" (1830).

      1. This poem by the very young future poet laureate is not only an example of the apocalyptic use of nature imagery in a short lyric; it is also an experiment in verse form and in description itself.

      2. One thing we notice from the start is that the poem *sounds* and *looks* like a sonnet, but is not. (For more on sonnets, we will wait until Lectures Fourteen to Sixteen). The first eight lines are two quatrains (with different rhyme patterns), and the next seven lines (as opposed to six—which would be normal for a sonnet) follow yet a third pattern. In addition, the first sentence of the poem ends at line 10, thereby breaking the poem into two parts, the first of which is twice as long as the second, but which extend beyond the normal divisions established by the poem's sounds. Why does Tennyson make such an experiment?

      3. Another interesting facet of the poem is the nature of its language and its descriptions. The kraken itself—a mythic sea-beast resembling the leviathan—is described mostly in terms of its surroundings (*his* surroundings, I should say). We do not have any real sense of what he looks like, only the world he inhabits.

      4. And along with this, we notice that all of the *adjectives* in the poem (those words one would expect to be multiple in any descriptive effort) relate to the kraken's surroundings and not to his appearance. He is, in fact, a vague menacing presence, sleeping with his "shadowy sides," which we cannot really see.

      5. The true shock of the poem—and one sign of Tennyson's early mastery—is that the monster awakes and appears only in the last two lines. Notice how he is seen—in the passive rather than the active voice—by "men and angels"—right before his only action in the poem: he roars, rises, and dies.

      6. There is an element of excess in the poem, which becomes understandable only at the end, as a sign of the end of the world. For one thing, there is the addition to what might have been a normal sonnet. For another, there is the ominous build-up to the last lines; third, and perhaps most important of all, there is the fact that the last line is an *alexandrine* (a line of twelve syllables, or six poetic feet), which signals—along with the rhetorical balance of sounds and verbs—the finality of the end of the world.

   B. Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), "In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations'" (1915).

      1. This poem, whose title alludes to a verse from Jeremiah 51.20, and which appeared as World War I began, shows how the unembellished use of simple details can stand in for much preaching.

      2. We notice that the first quatrain is merely a sentence fragment, a small picture of a man, as if caught in an eternal progress.

3. The second stanza, by contrast, begins the same way ("Only") but then gives us a more complete sentence. It is as if Hardy is saying: "Here is a small detail" (stanza 1); then, "here is another small detail, but one which will endure" (stanza 2).
4. The third stanza offers yet a third vignette, this time with two independent clauses (subjects and verbs) that point to the end of the hostilities and the (paradoxical) relative unimportance of war, "annals," and "dynasties" in the face of ordinary human activities.
5. Hardy uses his miniatures, in other words, to stand against the big horrors implicit in the war that is about to destroy European civilization.

III. Gerard Manly Hopkins (1844-1889), "Pied Beauty" (1877).
A. This "catalog" poem clearly demonstrates the importance of lushness in observation and diction.
1. Hopkins (to whom we shall return in later lectures) was a Jesuit priest who followed a double vocation: he made poetry out of religious themes. This poem resembles others we have seen in its structure (it is a list), but it is obviously far richer in sounds and description than most of them. Hopkins, like Dylan Thomas, may be said to have written his own language in his poems.
2. Hopkins' characteristic language and rhythms are always lush, but he shows here that his "style" has a theological justification and dimension.
3. "Dappledness" or "piedness" is his central theme, and the poem proceeds as a list of examples.
B. Let us examine Hopkins' procedures more closely.
1. The form of the poem is simple: "Glory be to God for a, b, c, d, etc. Praise him." But why does Hopkins list the things he does and in the order he does? For one thing, notice how he moves from individual details, single *things* (11. 2-4), to larger, more generalized objects of his attention (11. 5-6), and from animals to landscape to human activity. In addition, he then moves to more general lists ("all things") and ends with a sequence of adjectives that stand in for nouns.
2. In other words, specificity and abstraction go hand in hand.
C. The images: in those opening lines, we notice that Hopkins resorts cunningly to similes, thinking of things in terms of one another. So his opening examples (skies as parallel to cows, rose-moles upon trout) are themselves a complex form of observing nature and of making a larger point about the pied beauty inherent in nature—and also in language.
D. The ordering: by the time we reach the adjectives (11. 7-9) we realize that single words are being followed by pairs of words (line 9) that are themselves opposites. Hopkins has reached the limits of abstraction, and perhaps, we might think, of logic.

E. But the purpose of all this is to thank God, whose own beauty is eternal and pure (as opposed to the constantly changing and spotted or impure things in this world that Hopkins is praising).
1. The very fact that He "fathers-forth" the pied things of an impure world may sound contradictory (after all, should not all of God's creations be as pure as He is?).
2. But Hopkins' greater point is that we see God in His creation (this is the old argument from design, which we shall deal with later in a sonnet by Robert Frost), His "book of nature," and that He is best served or represented by those aspects of His creation that attest to His infinite variety and His inclusion of everything.
3. A thorough account of God's goodness would involve nothing less than a list of all the multiple, impure, paradoxical, self-contradictory things of His world.

Questions to Consider:

1. Compare and contrast H.D.'s "Sea Violet" with Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (Lecture Two), both of which use flowers as their centerpiece. Look especially at the adjectives describing the flowers, then consider the verbs. Finally, what subjective meanings do the flowers have for the respective poets? Can we infer anything about the poets' individual personalities from these meanings?

2. In light of Hopkins' vocation as a priest, consider "Pied Beauty" as a prayer, specifically in comparison to the *"Gloria"* used in Christian services ("Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. We praise You, we worship You, we give you thanks for Your great glory..." etc.). Identify specifically how Hopkins changes the focus of the prayer with humor and human fervor to achieve the aim of glorification.

Lecture Five Metaphor
and Metonymy I

Scope: This is the first of two lectures on metaphor and another poetic device, "metonymy," in which we shall examine how description and imagery (the things we looked at in the previous two lectures) can begin to assume more important and suggestive dimensions for poet and reader. Lecture Five focuses on metaphor, and specifically on simile, in which two things with a shared quality are compared to each other. We will look at three cases and illustrate them with poems drawn from different time periods. We will take up metonymy in Lecture Six.

Outline

I. The first term we want to consider is simile or the simple comparison—"x is like y."

  A. Robert Burns (1759-1796), "A Red, Red Rose" (1796).

    1. Everyone is familiar with this most commonplace of similes. But although the poem begins with two overt similes (my love *is like* a rose; my love *is like* a melody), it moves beyond them in the poem's three other quatrains.

    2. The second quatrain goes from a genuine simile to a comparison involving an "as" ("I am as much in love with you as you are fair"), which is sort of a simile, but sort of not. And the quatrain then moves into a rhetorical hyperbole ("I'll love you until all the seas run dry," etc.) which continues for six lines. The poem ends with another figure, this time one that combines hyperbole (exaggeration) and an implied simile ("my love is so strong that it can encompass vast space and time").

    3. One thing to look for in any simile or metaphor is something we shall see in a moment in a poem by Shelley, namely, the essential proposition that things can resemble one another only if they are not identical. That is, x is like y *because* and *only when* x is *not* y. Difference is as important as similarity. Thus, Burns ignores the commonplace implications of the simile of female beauty to a flower (i.e., that roses fade and so young maidens should make the most of their youthful energy and give themselves to their lovers immediately). But do we, as readers, ignore the same?

    4. Shakespeare in Sonnet 130 provides us with negative twist on the use of similes on the theme of female beauty ("My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun").

  B. Imagery as example: Shakespeare's Sonnet 130 ("My Mistress' Eyes Are Nothing Like the Sun") is a playful, anti-Petrarchan sonnet (we shall look at examples of Petrarchan love sonnets later in these lectures). For the moment, I ask you to pay attention not to its formal arrangement as a sonnet, but to its use of visual material.

    1. An argument as a response: Perhaps Shakespeare has just heard another, more thoroughly conventional sonneteer begin to praise his own mistress, perhaps by saying "My mistress' eyes are very like the sun," and has decided to enter into a debate with him.

    2. His details, all highly imagistic, are in the form of examples; that is, he wants us to sense that he has a greater claim to understanding the real nature of things (love, women, personal attraction) than some highfalutin courtier.

    3. Each detail is, however, rendered in a slightly different way.

      a. Shakespeare is masterful, among other reasons, for the way in which he can vary conventional forms. In this case, it is a simple list of items pertaining to his lady's body.

      b. Notice how the grammar and rhetoric of each detail is slightly different from those of the others.

    4. The poem is in the form of a blazon, a medieval and Renaissance form that describes the lover's body from the top down. The lover is usually a woman, but in the case of Christopher Marlowe in "Hero and Leander," he describes a man.

    5. The trick of the poem, by now conventional to us, is that in spite of—or perhaps because of—all of the woman's imperfections, the poet is able to love her still more. Rhetorical exaggeration comes in at last in the poem's couplet.

  C. Percy B. Shelley (1792-1822), "To a Skylark" (1820).

    1. Similes as a state of mind and a mental habit: Shelley had this more than any other English poet. This complicated but characteristic poem is constructed as a veritable experiment in simile making.

    2. The poet seeks to compare the unseen but audible bird to a list of other things, all of which it resembles in part, for various reasons: it is invisible, it is hieratic, it is inspiring (like a poet), it has quasi-sexual impulses behind its creative endeavors, it is ephemeral (like the rose), and so forth.

    3. The list could go on forever. But what it most proves is that Shelley simply cannot know what anything is *in itself* but only in relation to other things: "what thou art we know not;/What is most like thee?" (11. 31-32). His questions, and subsequent answers, are a virtual demonstration of what all poets do, albeit less flamboyantly than he.

  D. Emily Dickinson (1830-1886), "There's a certain Slant of light" (c. 1861).

    1. Dickinson's famous poem of spiritual warning, despair, and depression is significant for the way it begins and ends with similes, the second at a higher pitch than the first.

2. A mere detail in the weather (the way the light comes down in winter) is immediately characterized as oppressive in the same way as religious melodies. Exactly *what* that way is, we don't immediately know.

3. All we know (by stanza 3) is that the light comes to us (metaphorically), an "imperial affliction" from air (or heaven).

4. And at last we know that it affects humans and nature simultaneously and equivalently; the personified landscape seems to listen (to the light!) when it comes, but when it goes, "'tis like the Distance/On the look of Death." Another image or revelation, indeed of apocalypse, seems all the more troublesome because of its presumed initial ordinariness.

II. The more complex comparison: "x is y."

A. Shakespeare's Sonnet 146 ("Poor soul...") is a wonderful extended metaphor, in which the soul is "figured" in terms of economics, geography, interior and exterior decoration, economics and merchandising, and finally, of eating.

1. Shakespeare's rich and complex handling of his central metaphors ends with a shocking, perhaps even anti-religious message, which is at odds with the nominal Christian message to which the poem can be reduced (i.e., "Soul, take care of yourself and mortify the flesh").

2. He tells the soul that it had better do combat with its enemy on the enemy's terms, as if saying, "Don't give up money, just make proper investments; don't ignore feeding and clothing, just make sure you are feeding yourself in the right way; watch out for the cannibal death, and eat lest you be eaten!"

3. This rich and outrageous poem is not too far in spirit and technique from the equally complex poems of Shakespeare's near contemporary John Donne, whose metaphysical wit we shall examine in a later lecture.

B. Robert Frost (1874-1963), "Design" (1936).

1. A sonnet with a serious purpose, this playful experiment has a title with philosophical suggestions (although we perhaps do not realize them when we begin). The "argument from design" was a standard eighteenth-century way of proving the existence of God by examining the evidence of an orderly universe and then reasoning back from effect to cause.

2. Here, however, the universe is one in which order—an experiment in devilish, murderous whiteness—betokens only a possible malevolent spirit at work in the world.

3. Best of all, the tone of the poem, and the unspecified but implicit connotations of some the metaphors, work against the deadly seriousness of the theme, Consider, for example, line 1 (what would normally be considered "fat and white"?) and the implications of 11. 4 and 5 ("characters," "mixed ready," and "morning right"), as well as the wonderful grammatical ambiguity in "design of darkness to appall." The word "appall" here means "to make white."

III. The unstated comparison: "is x y?"

A. William Blake (1757-1827), "The Sick Rose" (1794).

1. Since we began with one rose, let's think of (almost) ending with another. Blake's poem (from his volume *Songs of Experience)* comes with his own illustration: a picture of a rose that includes two semi-human figures (the worm and a young girl), so we know that he intends his flower to have human significance.

2. But consider the case of my student who once began a paper by saying: "This is a poem addressed to the poet's girl friend, whose name is Rose." Our initial temptation would be to giggle or to correct her. But, in point of fact, we also have the distinct impression that this poem is not merely about some horticultural blight. How do we know?

3. The poem, images, and words work on the horticultural level.

B. Randall Jarrell (1914-1965), "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner" (1945).

1. This simple narrative of a man at war is evidently spoken from beyond the grave. The ball turret was a sphere placed beneath a B-17 bomber, and it held a single gunner who was able to revolve in his sphere in order to shoot at fighter planes beneath him. But this poem is not by any means only literal.

2. It is filled with motifs of successive births and falls: from a physical birth to a fall into military service. This is followed by a second incubation, during which time the gunner (wearing a fur-collared or fur jacket, probably) becomes another fetal creature. His next awaking is to a different reality, one that is paradoxically nightmarish.

3. The multiple metaphoric suggestions of the first four lines all come to a screeching halt in line 5, which is not only a single-lined sentence, but also the line in which the gunner is killed, and becomes (grammatically speaking) an object, a "me."

4. What is the relation of rich figurative language and such an icy finish? (We'll consider matters of tone in subsequent lectures.)

Suggested Reading:

Wimsatt, W. K. *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Select one poem from each of the three categories ("x is like y," "x is y," and "is x y?") and follow a comparison (simile) throughout each poem showing how it is related to a central theme or purpose.
2. Insects and spiders are used in three of the poems as the basis of the simile (Shakespeare's "worm" in Sonnet 146, Frost's "dimpled spider" and dead moth in "Design," and Blake's "worm/That flies" in "The Sick Rose." Compare and contrast the use of this simile. Is one more effective than the others in conveying the essential thought? If so, why?

Lecture Six Metaphor and Metonymy II

Scope: This lecture continues the discussion of specific types of figurative language that we began in Lecture Five, but shifts to metonymy (replacement of the name of one thing with that of something related to it, for example, "the Pentagon" to stand for the U.S. military leadership). Metonymy is not as overt as a simile, which relates (usually) unrelated things ("x is like y"). We will take a close look at only two poems, each of which uses details and figurative language differently.

Outline

I. Details and metonymy as scene setting, background, and implicit comparisons: Robert Lowell (1917-1977), "Skunk Hour" (1957).

  A. The development of the poem: Lowell is one poet whose manuscripts tell us a lot about his processes of composition and his intentions.
    1. Originally, this poem (which he said was indebted to Elizabeth Bishop's "The Armadillo," in which an observation of animals is offset by the possibilities of human decay) began with its fifth stanza.
    2. The surrounding details, in other words, were second thoughts. What do they do?

  B. Notice the poem's construction.
    1. There are four stanzas devoted to individuals of his town.
    2. The poet appears in the middle.
    3. There are two stanzas about the titular animals.

  C. How does the first half of the poem prepare us for the "dark night" (of the soul) and the poet's madness?
    1. The hermit heiress is solitary, rich, absent.
    2. The summer millionaire (is he dead, or merely gone?) is also absent.
    3. The "fairy decorator" is so unsuccessful that he is considering going against his nature and marrying!

  D. Notice the importance of imagery: bright colors and animals abound. (Remember these when we get to the end.)

  E. Consider the various kinds of figurative language the poet uses to suggest his derangement: the "hill's skull" and especially the love-cars that "lay together, hull to hull." This is an example of *catachresis* (cars become boats). Metaphors start to become what a logician might call "category mistakes."

F. Notice the changes in tenses (we have moved from present to past to present again in stanzas 6-8).

G. And finally, the skunks: how does the poet use them and for what purpose?
    1. They are a group, a family, in fact.
    2. They are actively doing something. Notice the verbs the poet applies to them.
    3. Notice the continuation of animal imagery, now for *other* animals! And at last, notice the almost military motif with which Lowell describes the skunks and their activity. Life, however it is rendered, is winning out in some peculiar way, over the dying town and its decaying inhabitants.

II. Extended metaphor/simile as a means of constructing an entire poem: John Keats (1795-1821), "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" (1816).

A. This remarkable sonnet (Keats's first great poem, written when he was twenty) could be examined in terms of its structure (reconsider this when we get to Lectures Fourteen through Sixteen on the nature of the sonnet).
    1. It has a "first... then" or "cause... and effect" or "provocation... and feeling" set-up.
    2. The first eight lines (octave) reach a climax at the moment Keats hears his friend Charles Cowden Clarke read from George Chapman's translation of Homer (done between 1612-1615).

B. But we shall examine it in terms of its implicit and explicit similes and metaphors.
    1. It follows a simple formula: reading is *like* traveling, although it never says so (think of Emily Dickinson's less interesting poem, "There is no Frigate like a Book/to take us Lands away"), and right from the start the speaker identifies himself as a traveler.
    2. Notice the levels of suggestion (and therefore of metaphor) in the vocabulary: "realms of gold" begins an identification with Renaissance explorations and Spanish conquests of the New World; "demesne," "fealty," and to some extent "bard" suggest the Middle Ages; "bard" as well as "Apollo," "western islands," and of course Homer himself return us to the earliest days of Greek civilization.
    3. We notice, as well, that the speaker's travels involve journeys across water.

C. Consider the nature of 11. 7-8, the climax of the first half of the poem. What does it mean to say that he never really "breathed" the pure essence of Homer-land, until he heard Chapman speak?
    1. The poem is a series of displacements: Homer (who performed orally) to Chapman, who translated him (from one language to another and on paper), to Keats's friend Clarke (who read the

poetry aloud to him), to Keats himself, who is *listening* (and perhaps even reading himself).
    2. Being aware of Homer for the first time incites in Keats an excitement he can only describe *in terms* q/"something else.

D. Why the two similes in 11. 9-14? Think how difficult it always is to describe feelings and why (therefore) Keats must say, "I felt ***like.***"
    1. The astronomer (probably based on the contemporary William Herschel, who had discovered Uranus) has a different kind of adventure from the conquistador. (And, yes, Keats made a mistake: it was Balboa, not Cortez, who discovered the Pacific.)
    2. Clearly Keats is only experimenting with the simile of the astronomer first (and devoting less space to it) before proceeding to his climactic simile.
    3. By alluding to Cortez, Keats not only returns to the beginning of the poem (the realms of gold, or *el dorado* that the Spaniards hoped to uncover) but also gives a sense of physicality to his adventure (just as he had done in 11. 7-8): the astronomer doesn't go anywhere, but Cortez does.
    4. And, at the last, we are watching Cortez as he is being observed by his men—another series of displacements that corresponds to what we saw in 11. 7-8.
    5. Cortez is looking out and over the ocean, instead of *up* to the skies: his men are observing his own incredulity at what he sees, presumably because they have not seen it yet themselves. "Silence" is the final, and perhaps the best, response to any such overwhelming provocation, whether in literary or in physical experience.

E. The word "metaphor" in Greek is equivalent to the Latin word "translation!" Everything must be understood in terms of something else. There is no way to have an experience directly! All is metaphor!

Questions to Consider:
1. Identify the instances of metonymy in the two poems discussed in this lecture.
2. Both poems use the figure of "watching" or "looking for"—and of course seeing something that sparks some sort of deep response. Discuss how metonymy and metaphor raise the poems beyond a mere description of what is seen.

Lecture Seven
Poetic Tone

Scope: This lecture is the first of three on the subject of "tone" in poetry, by which I mean both the classic definition of "an author's attitude toward his or her subject" and the predominant mood of a work, which is comparable to the basic "tone" of a piece of music. The speaker's "voice" as well as various rhetorical ways of presenting facts, feelings, and ideas, will be our main focus. Another main thesis will insist that a poem's subject may suggest, but never dictate, its tone. Part of the excitement of experiencing any work of art derives from the relationship between what we might expect (say, a poem of sadness about a sad subject) and what we actually get (a poem that is brittle, witty, even unfeeling about the very same subject).

Outline

I. Setting a mood: two poems of tranquillity.
    A. Wallace Stevens (1879-1955), "The House Was Quiet and the World Was Calm" (1947).
        1. The title and first line establish the evident theme and tone of this poem, but let's consider as well other details of the poem's effects.
        2. Notice the relation of the couplets to the sentences; which sentences are long, which short; the effect of the repeated phrases (to create a somnolent, almost hypnotic effect).
        3. Notice Stevens' characteristic vocabulary: how few verbs there are, other than verbs of "being" (and why this is significant). Notice the more intense verbs in 11. 6-7 ("leaned," "wanted") and why their inclusion and placement are important.
        4. Notice, too, the sense of equation that Stevens is constantly making: x *is* y.
        5. Finally, consider the predominant rhythm or meter of the poem (a subject to be taken up later) and how it affects the mood.
    B. Robert Hayden (1913-1980), "Those Winter Sundays" (1962).
        1. In this autobiographical reminiscence, Hayden uses his language to convey a sense of loneliness and isolation with negative, rather than positive connotations. His apparent simplicity of means reveals a complex emotional response, both to his father and to his sense of his own youthful ignorance and ingratitude.
        2. The first stanza, with simple, predominantly monosyllabic words, and lots of internal rhyming (assonance), presents the father at his accustomed and unpleasant Sunday labors. He is alone in the stanza. The slightly ominous, short second sentence gets us ready for what is to come.

        3. "Cold" is the major word that appears in all three stanzas. Notice, too, that the middle stanza, slightly shorter, gives us an initial sense of Hayden the son as a boy with perhaps legitimate fears, which he never specifies. Notice that he uses the house as a metonymy for the father (it, rather than he, has "chronic angers"). It's as if the people have been subsumed by and into the woodwork, merging with the spirit of the place.
        4. At the end, "indifferently" (the poem's longest word) and "austere" (its most unexpected word) combine to give a sense of the poet's simultaneous blaming of himself and exculpation: how was he supposed to know about such matters as love when he was only a boy? The poem is entirely from the speaker's point of view, never allowing us to hear the father speak for himself. Its achievement is to have given a superb portrait of silent (literally and figuratively) love, obedient to duty.

II. Subject and tone have nothing logical to do with each other.
    A. George Herbert (1593-1633), "Love" (III) (published 1633).
        1. This poem comes last in Herbert's volume *The Temple,* and some critics assume that it details the soul's entry into heaven. Others might assume that it is a rendering of the communion ceremony, as the speaker (Herbert himself, an Anglican clergyman) readies himself to give communion to others by first accepting God's love.
        2. What is most wonderful about this poem is its tone: a veritable ritual of courtliness politeness, in an almost feminine way.
        3. Love Himself is at once the Lord and also a wonderful host, attentive to his guest's needs and uncertainties.
        4. We notice how the effects of long lines against short ones complement the dialogue, a sparring match between the two speakers.
        5. And we notice, too, the gentle wit and punning gestures that Love uses to persuade the unworthy guest to sit and take communion.
        6. Without a knowledge of Christian theology, it might be possible to "hear" the poem in a purely secular vein—that is, its wonder.
    B. Donald Justice (1925-), "Men at Forty" (1967).
        1. Another poem with a "quiet" tone that packs a wallop at the end.
        2. Notice how the sounds, off-rhymes and partial rhymes, give a softness to the tone, which complements the silences that Justice is describing.
        3. And notice the effect of the generalized subject: it is "men," not "I" or "this particular man" who are dealt with. It is universal, but one has the sense (the poet was forty when he wrote it) that it has a distinct autobiographical relevance to its author.
        4. Above all, notice how the fourth stanza falls into the fifth (the technical term is "enjambment"), running over in order to build up

momentum (a momentum increased by the repetition of "filling" and the ominous sound of the crickets, the first image of sound in the poem) and to end with the resounding and desperate adjective that gives the essence of the poem at its close. More than houses, we might assume, have been "mortgaged."

HI. A comparison of poems on a single theme.
A. Ben Jonson (1572-1637), "On My First Son" (1616).
1. The question in this short, elegiac poem is this: how does Jonson persuade us of his grief? Notice that he frames his remarks in laconic heroic couplets and that he never names his son directly (although he alludes—punningly—to his name, Benjamin, which in Hebrew means "child of the right hand").
2. The opening figures of speech involve "sin" and "economics," the conventional motif of being lent a life, which must be repaid.
3. To the extent that this poem has a climax, it reaches it in the middle, with the exclamation "O could I lose all father now!" before retreating into generalizations concerning the good fortunes of an early death. We have the feeling, however, that the poet is using these cliches to mollify his own grief, which he is keeping under check.
4. Notice, as well, that all first-person references disappear from the poem after the mid-point. The poet puts fictive words into the mouth of his son, and then refers to himself rather stoically in the third person in the poem's last lines.
5. The poet concludes by reminding himself that he should not become too attached to any worldly thing, to anything that can be taken from him.
B. Wordsworth (1770-1850), "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal" (1800).
1. This is the concluding poem in a series known as the "Lucy" poems, concerning the death of a young girl. The figure is not based on any (known) person, and even her age in the series of poems is ambiguous.
2. It is hard to imagine a more dispassionate, controlled statement of grief. Notice, among other things, that Lucy's name is not even mentioned in this poem (an appropriate gesture for the last in the series).
3. Notice, too, how the poem hinges on the break between lines 4 and 5: the first stanza is in the past tense, detailing the poet's thoughts and feelings when the girl was alive, and the second stanza is in the present, now that she is dead.
4. The question, however, is: what are we to make of his earlier thoughts? Was he in a dream? Did he think her immortal, only to be rudely shocked into a waking condition by her death?

5. Or was his earlier feeling (that she was "a thing that could not feel") in fact prophetic of her current state of deathly immobility? The "tone" of
6. the poem has been conditioned by its paradoxes. The death of a child, arguably the saddest event one can experience, has been given two different treatments by these two poets.

Questions to Consider:

1. Using the poems discussed in this lecture, identify places where tone, and therefore meaning, change.

2. We noted that the poem "The House Was Quiet and the World Was Calm" creates the tone, or sense, of equation and tranquility (even in the title). Other poems (e.g., "Men at Forty") create a tone of unease. Review the poems used in this lecture and try to arrive at a description of the tone of each. Then analyze the language (key words, unexpected words), construction (lines, stanzas), sound (alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia), and figures of speech (metaphor and metonymy) and explain how these are used by the poet to achieve the effect.

Lecture Eight The
Uses of Sentiment

Scope: This lecture discusses the importance and presentation of "feeling" in poetry and how poets can sometimes encourage emotion and sometimes rein it in. In the previous lecture, we dealt largely with muted expressions of feeling. In this lecture, we shall examine more overt statements of feeling and attempt to draw a line between the expression of sentiment and a crossing of the line into overt sentimentality, which is traditionally defined as "excessive" or "unwarranted," "unproved" emotion. Sometimes the line is very hard to draw. And we shall move from the nineteenth century, supposedly a time of an outpouring of emotion, to various twentieth-century poets, whose wry commentaries on persons, feelings, history, and art have a distinctly cooler tone.

Outline

I. Victorian sentiment.

   A. The supposed reign of sentiment(ality) is the nineteenth century. When Shelley (in "Ode to the West Wind") proclaimed, "I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!" he may have set hearts a-flutter, but he also produced what many subsequent readers have thought to be an outpouring of excessive, narcissistic emotion. The question before us is: when does a statement of emotion seem persuasive, or warranted, and when does it seem merely gushy?

   B. Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861), Sonnet 43 (1845-46).
      1. There is no need to rehearse here the love story of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning. But her *Sonnets from the Portuguese* remains an enduringly popular volume, especially because of its greeting-card sentiments and its bald statements of feeling.
      2. How persuasive is the poem, however? Does it have any originality in structure, statement, or formal arrangement? Is there anything interesting in its language, its metaphors, or its music?
      3. Would it be a different poem if the items in it were rearranged in another order? I think not, and this leads me to suggest that the poem is less interesting *as* a poem than other love poems are.

   C. Christina Rossetti (1830-1894), "Song" ("When I Am Dead, My Dearest," 1848).
      1. Rossetti (whose brother, Dante Gabriel, we shall come to in a moment), has written a more interesting poem than Barrett Browning and for a very simple reason. The music of her "song" lulls us into a sweet sentiment, but the actual "message" she is conveying is one of utter stoicism.
      2. The poem asks the lover *not* to mourn: it urges him to spurn all conventional symbols and signs of lament. An interesting conjunction; the poet brings up all of these standard items, only to dismiss them from her lover's (and her audience's) mind.
      3. Her imagining her own condition after death (stanza 2) combines anesthesia ("I shall be dead and shall feel nothing") and unresponsiveness with a use of a wonderful simile for the nightingale (which "will sing on, as if in pain"), and we wonder where in the poem is the true locus of pain. Obviously, it is in the mourning lover.
      4. But the poem reserves its biggest surprise for its ending: the speaker says, repeating her earlier advice to the lover ("remember or forget: it's all one to me"), that perhaps she actually *will* have some degree of sentience under the ground.
      5. Sentiment and a chilling horror go hand-in-hand.

   D. Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), "The Woodspurge" (1856).
      1. Here is a poem that uses description, narrative, and statement of personal feeling in an interesting combination.
      2. The first quatrain suggests a causal relation between the workings of nature and the speaker's own movements.
      3. The poem makes us think that the speaker's condition (distraction, stoic refusal to speak, attentiveness to surrounding detail) may produce some revelation or at least a further embellishment or discussion of his emotional condition.
      4. But it does not: it refuses to moralize or even to continue its treatment of "perfect grief (or to tell us what has caused that grief). Instead, its focuses simply, almost shockingly, on the flower and ends with what might be considered an inappropriate lesson.
      5. What Rossetti proves, however, is that grief often opens one to the strangest, most inexplicable responses. Banality and simplicity are, after all, cousins.

II. Coldness and objectivity: some poems can shock, with their endings, or maintain a cool tone throughout. Here are some examples.

   A. We will start with the American poet E. A. Robinson (1869-1935), "Richard Cory" (1897).
      1. This is an easy poem to assess, precisely because it is always a surprise to read. Fifteen lines of heightened wonder and praise prepare us for a come-down and a shocking tragedy.
      2. What Robinson refrains from saying explicitly, however, is what gives the poem its frisson: namely, we can never know anyone at all, that between external manners and appearance and internal reality lies no congruence whatsoever.
      3. Although the poem has an unstated moral ("Don't envy anyone anything"), it's clear that this moral is not the major part of the

poem's effect. Instead, that effect comes from the sharp discordancy between the first fifteen lines and the single, climactic last one.

B. Robert Frost (1874-1963), "Acquainted With the Night" (1928).
1. The tone of this simple poem could be far different from what it is. After all, the subject is despair, dejection, isolation, existential horror—a staple of twentieth-century literature—but Frost's method is cool and calm.
2. We notice, for one thing, the use (uncharacteristic for Frost) of Dantean *terza rima* (in sonnet form). The form carries some weight, since it encourages us to think that Frost is paying homage to Dante in his role as a guide to the underworld.
3. For another, we notice the use *of anaphora,* beginning successive lines with a repeated word or sound, to give the poem a hypnotic effect.
4. The bareness lends the poem a more chilling effect than if the poet had given more details concerning his condition.
5. The circularity of the poem—the last line repeats the first—combines with the rhyme scheme of interlocking sounds to give the sense of an eternal, inescapable condition. But the poem neither complains nor laments.

C. Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), "The Convergence of the Twain" (1912).
1. One of the most startling poems ever written about human tragedy, this grim lyric proves that subject matter and treatment have nothing to do with one another.
2. We notice, straightaway, four important things in the poem. First, the oddness of its form: tercets with two short lines followed by a longer one. We might consider the effect of this.
3. Next, we notice the very heavy use of descriptive details—strings of adjectives that make the poem dense and almost cloying.
4. Third, we see that the poem has an almost perfect symmetry: midway through the eleven stanzas the poet turns from the ship to the iceberg, its "sinister mate," and proceeds to demonstrate the perfect marriage of these two partners, arranged by a god-like match-maker.
5. Last of all, whatever else Hardy is doing in this poem, one thing is perfectly clear: there is no lament for the loss of human life. Although personifications aplenty exist, there are no people in the poem, and therefore, no mourning.
6. One might say, in fact, that the tone is one of chilly celebration. How grim.

D. W. H. Auden (1907-1973), "Musee des Beaux Arts" (1940).
1. This famous ekphrastic poem (for *ekphrasis,* consult Lecture Twenty-Two), written on the eve of World War 11, is a wonderful exercise in tone, precisely because it dramatizes the very message it seeks to convey.
2. The speaker's tone is that of a dispassionate tour guide. We have come in the middle of his talk, and we are looking at three pictures by Brueghel.
3. The main "thesis" is that people are normally, even willfully, unaware of and uninterested in, human suffering, which we can see perfectly in the picture of Icarus descending into the sea, ignored by the passers-by.
4. But notice the music of the poem: it seems entirely conversational, with long lines duly imitating human speech. But it also (here's the shock!) rhymes, though in a slightly unpredictable way. By demanding that we *hear* how he is talking, Auden is able to bolster his claim that we are normally inattentive. The very casualness of the poem increases the power of its pronouncement. This is an example of irony, which we will study more in depth in the next lecture.

Questions to Consider:

1. Can you see any possible religious symbolism or allusion in the Rossetti poem "The Woodspurge"? If you think there is, how does this affect the "sentiment" of the poem? (Parenthetically, it is worth reading about his life and the Pre-Raphaelite movement that he helped to found in the mid-nineteenth century.)

2. Compare "The Convergence of the Twain" with Frost's "Design" (Lecture Five) in the context of sentiment. Look at tone, message, construction, and language. Do you think the poets agree on the issue of "design" and "designer"? Is one more "sentimental" than the other?

Lecture Nine The
Uses of Irony

Scope: This lecture will deal with the ancient rhetorical device of irony (by one definition: saying one thing and meaning another; more extensively, a way of undermining with a word, a nod, a tone of voice, something else that has been said). Some of the poems we looked at in the last lecture could easily be put into this category, but I now want to examine some of the other means and reasons for producing an ironic effect in a poem.

Outline

I.   Brittle wit: irony and concision; Dorothy Parker (1893-1967), "Unfortunate Coincidence," "Resume" (1926).

   A.   The facile cynicism of Dorothy Parker is both easy to sense and difficult to produce. These two famous lyrics are, of course, both very funny and very sad, and the relationship between humor and sarcasm is an intimate one. Oscar Wilde defined a cynic as a man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.

   B.   The "charm" (if one can use the term) of "Unfortunate Coincidence" derives in part from the slightly exaggerated diction (a pastiche of old Petrarchan notions of Romantic love), the single continuous sentence, the alternation of masculine and feminine line endings, and the punch delivered by the last line.

   C.   "Resume" charms us with its alternating rhythms (each line has two stresses, but with different numbers of syllables and in different combinations), its nursery rhyme-like sing-song quality, and its resigned affirmation to a life that the speaker would probably prefer to leave.

II. Irony and social protest: William Blake (1757-1827), *Songs of Innocence* (1789).

   A.   "Holy Thursday": This poem, about the annual ritual taking place on Ascension Day, requires us to consider the relationship of piety (and the kind of self-righteousness contained in the last lines) to religious hypocrisy and to religious and social oppression.
   1.   *The Songs of Innocence* were designed to represent a condition, but one whose limited perspective Blake expects his readers to see through.
   2.   Should we praise or condemn the attitude expressed in the poem?

   B.   "The Little Black Boy": Likewise, this poem from *Songs of Innocence* gives us the perspective of the slave child, brought from Africa and living in England under a white master.

   1.   He mouths the pieties of Christian acceptance, which he has been taught by his mother, but (once again) Blake does not specify whether he wishes us to condone or to condemn such cliches.
   2.   The fact that many of the poems in *Songs of Innocence* are paired with others in *Songs of Experience* ("The Lamb" with "The Tyger" for example) means that Blake is balancing opposites in order to show (as he puts it in his subtitle) "the two contrary states of the human soul." The tensions in such contraries are always productive of irony.
   3.   The dialectic of his poetry challenges us to understand his writing on several levels.

III. Irony and social satire: D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930), "The English Are So Nice!" (published 1932).

   A.   Better known for his novels, Lawrence was also a poet, and this work shows him at the top of his form as a satirist.
   1.   The free verse lulls us into thinking we are listening to an ordinary speaking voice.
   2.   The speaker initially seems kindly and polite.
   3.   But then he builds his way up to a climax.

   B.   The point of the poem is a real put-down of the speaker and his point of view.
   1.   We must accept his opening remarks, and then we realize we have been taken in by them.
   2.   The multiple suggestions of the single word "nice" (which even seventy years ago was a practically meaningless term) build up throughout the poem, as we realize that niceness and fear, xenophobia, condescension, ignorance, and hostility are all the same thing.

IV. Irony as give-and-take (or "dialectic"): Henry Reed (1914-1986), "Naming of Parts" (1942).

   A.   The use of two voices in a single poem as a source of irony is wonderfully illustrated in this poem, the first of a three-part sequence entitled "Lessons of War."
   1.   We may not realize until we are well into the poem at what point a second person is speaking.
   2.   The absence of quotation marks is part of the poem's effects.

   B.   The contrast is clear once we have made up our minds to hear the two voices.
   1.   The drill sergeant training his men in combat speaks in a flat, slightly bored and condescending tone.
   2.   And the dreaming soldier, who'd rather be anywhere other than here, picks up the phrases and re-uses them.

C. Irony comes, in part, as a result of repetition, refrain, or echo. Theme and variation lead to a wonderful climax.

D. The *stretto-Wke* ending (the *stretto* is the final section of a fugue, which repeats all of the earlier musical motifs) makes us realize that the main theme of the poem (in case we didn't already know it) has to do with the discrepancy between death and life, warfare and sexuality.

V. Irony and "mock-heroism": Thomas Gray (1716-1771), "On the Death of a Favorite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Goldfishes" (1747).

A. This poem might well be included in Lecture Twenty (on heroism) because it is an "ode," traditionally the highest form of lyric poetry, normally used for praise or for elevated subjects and normally written in elevated language with complex metric arrangements.

B. Mock-heroism is an obvious, delicious version of irony: it is a manifestation of the comic discrepancy between a heightened style or treatment and a lower (if not positively unworthy) subject.
   1. Mock-heroism inflates the low. Cats are not nymphs, after all.
   2. But it simultaneously deflates the high. By bringing two objects, or orders, into conjunction with one another, it creates a kind of middle plane, occupied by nymphs, deities, and heavenly messengers, along with cats and fish.

Questions to Consider:

1. Review some of the other poems introduced in earlier lectures and identify those that demonstrate irony. Show how they achieve the ironic effect: structure, language (use of specific words or figurative language), or tone.

2. Do you find Dorothy Parker's poems ironic or merely cynical? How about the others that we have discussed in this lecture? What is the difference (or perhaps we should ask, the distance) between irony and cynicism?

Lecture Ten Poetic
Forms and Meter

Scope: Lecture Ten begins a series of four lectures on traditional poetic forms and rhythms, and the revolution (known as "free verse") that entered English poetry roughly in the middle of the nineteenth century. This lecture will survey various metric forms and demonstrate the effects of various rhythmic and sonic devices.

Outline

I. The relationship between meter and rhythm.

A. Meter can be thought of as a form, matrix, or grid that establishes the predominant "sound" of a poem.

B. Rhythm: a more casual term to define the actual sound of a line, a sentence, or a poem, as it is being uttered by a reader.

II. Types of metric form.

A. Accentual meter: the basis for Old English (Anglo-Saxon) poetry. Lines are organized by stresses (usually four to a line, with a break—or *caesura*—in the middle), and a heavy use of alliteration (repeated consonantal sounds). Two examples are:
   1. *Caedmon 's Hymn* (mid-seventh century AD).
   2. William Langland's *Piers Plowman* (c. 1375). Langland was a contemporary of Geoffrey Chaucer.

B. Syllabic meter: the basic mode of Japanese and French poetry (e.g., the Japanese **haiku,** with three lines of 5-7-5 syllables, respectively; the French alexandrine with 12 syllables), a mode that is difficult to "hear" in English but was made especially popular by Marianne Moore. Every line in a stanza has a (sometimes arbitrarily) prescribed number of syllables: e.g., Moore's "The Fish," the stanzas of which have five lines with 1-3-9-6-8 syllables, respectively.

C. Accentual-syllabic meter: the predominant English form after Chaucer (d. 1400 AD). This involves a combination of syllables (normally ten to a line for standard iambic pentameter) and "feet," or groups of syllables (five for a line of standard iambic pentameter), with attention paid to the sequence of stressed and unstressed syllables.

D. Quantitative meter: the standard verse forms of Greek and Latin poetry, based on the idea that a *long* syllable counts twice as much a *short* syllable (length determined by kind, or placement, of vowels).
   1. Examples are the epic poems of Homer and Virgil *(Iliad, Odyssey, Aeneid),* which are composed in dactylic hexameter, six feet whose

basic heft goes: / x x / x x / x x / x x / x x / x . (In which "/" = a long syllable, and "x" signifies a short one.)

    2. This is a very hard meter to imitate in English, which uses basically four types of meter: iambic (x /), dactylic (/ x x), anapestic (x x /) and trochaic (/ x). These may be in varying lengths of lines: dimeter (two feet), trimeter (three feet), tetrameter (four feet), pentameter (five feet), hexameter (six feet).

  E. "Free" verse: a kind of poetry popularized in this country by Walt Whitman, which ignores conventional forms and expectations, but makes the "line" of the poem into a central unit.

    1. Such poetry can never be merely sloppy; instead, it must initiate a more delicate music for the reader.

    2. It often plays games with the relationship between line endings and sentence structures. Like all things that look easy, it is hard to do well.

III. Iambic pentameter—our native "poetic" language.

  A. Historical development.

    1. The iambic heft (x /) comes to English after the Norman Conquest (1066 AD), which established French as the language of the court and gradually transformed Old English into a more Romance or Latinate tongue.

    2. By the time of Chaucer at the end of the fourteenth century, what we now hear as iambic pentameter was beginning to gain currency in poetry, although it still vied with the older alliterative and accentual forms.

    3. When Wyatt and Surrey translated the sonnets of Petrarch into English in the 1540s, iambic pentameter had gained primacy and continued to do so in much Elizabethan love poetry.

    4. Following the example of Christopher Marlowe, whose "mighty line" established blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter) as the vehicle for drama, Shakespeare used iambic pentameter blank verse in his plays, and rhymed iambic pentameter in his sonnets.

IV. Two practical exercises in hearing and "scanning" traditional poems.

  A. In Theodore Roethke (1908-1963), "My Papa's Waltz" (1948), we should take note of the following:

    1. The variation in this iambic trimeter form.

    2. Its use of masculine and feminine endings.

    3. The ways in which rhythm and other sonic devices contribute to the poem's tone: jolly and rollicking but also vertiginous and slightly scary.

  B. Next we will analyze John Milton's (1608-1674), "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont" (1655).

    1. We will look at, and listen to, the ways Milton uses iambic pentameter to create this masterful sonnet (a protest poem about the murder of 1,700 Protestants by the Duke of Savoy).

    2. We will talk not only about the meter and where the normal iambic rhythm is changed, but also about other rhythmic effects, such as enjambment (run-on lines) and *caesura* (internal pause).

    3. Also, we will discuss the poem's rhyme scheme and the relation of its formal units (the octave and sestet of the sonnet) to its sentences.

    4. Another consideration is the sound structure and syntax in this poem. There is a single predominate sound, that of the long "o" which appears at the end of virtually every line in the octet (and sometimes in the middle of the line). In the sestet, there is the long "a" sound, reminiscent of a moan of anguish.

    5. The normal break in thought expected in line 8 doesn't occur until line 10.

    6. The majority of the lines are enjambed; they run on into the next line and don't stop on the tenth syllable. This forces us to stop in the middle of the line and mirrors the rolling and falling bodies of the slain Protestants.

    7. Finally, the last enjambment (11. 13-14) shows Milton at his best as a master of syntax. The adverb "early" can be seen to modify both of the verbs "learnt" and "to fly."

Suggested Reading:

Attridge, Derek. *Poetic Rhythm: An Introduction.* Fussell Paul.

Poetic Meter and Poetic Form (revised edition). Hollander,

John. *Rhyme's Reason* (revised edition). Pinsky, Robert. *The*

Sounds of Poetry: A Brief Guide.

Questions to Consider:

1. Go back and read some or all of the other poems studied up to this point and identify the basic meter and number of feet. (Hint: they're not all iambic pentameter!) Note places where the scansion breaks down, with perhaps two long syllables or two short. Why do you think this happens? How does it affect the sound and heft of the poem?

2. Compare the structure and sound of the two poems studied in this lecture. Is there significance to the trimeter used in "My Papa's Waltz"? Is there any predominate sound in this poem as there is in Milton's poem? Depending on your answer, state why the particular sonic quality of "My Papa's Waltz" is important to the overall effect. As for Milton, how well do you think this poem would have worked in other than the sonnet form and iambic pentameter?

Scope: We mentioned sound in the last lecture in connection with Milton's poem "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont." This lecture concerns itself specifically with various kinds of poetic sound effects, especially rhymes, but also alliteration, consonance, caesura, and enjambment, with special reference to nineteenth-century poems in various forms. The British poet Charles Tomlinson begins a poem entitled "The Chances of Rhyme" with a statement that is also a demonstration of a poetic principle:

> The chances of rhyme are like the chances of meeting— In the finding fortuitous, but once found, binding.

Outline

I. The different sounds of some verse forms.

  A. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882), "Hiawatha" and "Evangeline."

    1. We have mentioned these items in the previous lecture, but I wanted you to hear how in English certain non-iambic forms sound a bit foreign.

    2. Thus the trochaic (/ x) tetrameter of "Hiawatha" and dactylic (/ x x) hexameter of "Evangeline" strike us as peculiar experiments in versification. Longfellow was masterful, however, at such effects.

    3. Once the most memorized American poet, Longfellow has fallen from favor due to changing tastes.

  B. Robert Browning (1812-1889), "A Toccata of Galuppi's" (1847).

    1. This is a dramatic monologue, whose theme (the relationship of giddy carelessness, moral degeneration, and civic decay) is carried by rolling anapestic (x x /) meter.

    2. The poem is also based on a musical form, so the strong sonic effects relate both to the "old music" of the composer and to the theme of soul-killing folly.

    3. For an earlier example of galloping meter, read aloud and listen to Lord Byron's "The Destruction of Sennacherib."

II. Varieties and effects of rhyme.

  A. The "comedy of polysyllabic rhyme." Lord Byron, W. S. Gilbert, and Ogden Nash are all masters of this verse technique (think of the "patter songs" from Gilbert and Sullivan).

  B. Off-rhyme and half-rhyme are two other techniques that yield interesting effects.

    1. Emily Dickinson (1830-1886), #613 ("They shut me up in Prose") (1862). We notice how the odd, half-rhyming words in the poem help to develop the mood of confinement and the opposing wish for release. One whole rhyme, right in the poem's middle ("round/Pound") is a sign of oppression and hostility.

    2. Dylan Thomas (1914-1953), "Fern Hill" (1946). A poem of nostalgia for childhood, "Fern Hill" is proof that words that sound alike can mean alike; i.e., rhyme brings ideas and feelings, as well as sounds, into conjunction with one another. Thus, in the first stanza here, the last words have quite audible vowel rhymes, although these are not full rhymes. The effect enriches the poem.

  C. Perfect rhyme: Gerard Manly Hopkins (1844-1889), "God's Grandeur" (1877).

    1. This sonnet is, among other things, an early ecological warning, but that is hardly its first claim on our attention.

    2. Its Petrarchan form demands an octave with an *abba abba* scheme, followed by a sestet with either three or (as in this case) two rhymes.

    3. All the rhymes are perfect; all are monosyllabic.

    4. The internal rhyme of the poem develops and maintains its momentum, and is used for ironic as well as serious purposes (e.g., the tedium implicit in "have trod, have trod, have trod").

    5. The rhymes work in conjunction with the imagery, syntax, and rhythm of the sentences to produce two differing sonic and tonal effects in octave and sestet. The first part of the poem is almost stentorian and aggressive, whereas the second is more fluid, gentle, and hopeful. There are religious dimensions and parallels to these two moods as well: an Old Testament God and a New Testament Holy Spirit in the two parts.

    6. Hopkins is a master of syntax and writes in a new way.

III. Assonance, alliteration, and other kinds of repetition, along with irregularity.

  A. Tennyson (1809-1892), "Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal, Now the White" (1847).

    1. This song (from *The Princess)* is a perfect example of how internal rhyme, plus repetition and end rhyme, go together to produce a musical effect that is appropriate to a poem of seduction.

    2. Rhetorical balance between or within lines complements the parallel sounds and establishes a harmony equivalent to that of the two lovers.

    3. The poem is fourteen lines long but is not a sonnet.

  B. Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), "Dover Beach" (1867).

    1. We notice that the lines and stanzas are of differing lengths but maintain an unpredictable rhyme pattern.

2. Arnold's reasons for constructing his poem this way must have something to do with his effort to depict a world in which there is both constancy (or sameness of situation) between people from one generation to another, and difference.
3. Just like the sea, with which the poem opens, always changing, always the same, the human situation remains predictable and fragile.

Suggested Reading:

Hollander, John. *Rhyme's Reason* (revised edition).

Questions to Consider:

1. Review the poems studied in this lecture (or any previous ones) and identify the uses of *anaphora* (where the same word or phrase is used repeatedly, usually at the start of successive lines), *assonance* (repetition of vowel sounds), and *alliteration* (repetition of consonant sounds). Discuss how these devices enhance the tone of the poem.

2. One device we didn't really discuss is *onomatopoeia* in which the word has the sound of what it means or represents ("buzzing bees" is a common example). Again, review the poems studied already, look for uses of this device, and discuss how it enhances the tone of the poem.

Lecture Twelve Three
Twentieth-Century Villanelles

Scope: Form constitutes a type of muscle flexing for poets, showing that they can conform their vision to any prescribed structure. From Virgil on, the tendency has been to start with smaller forms and work up as mastery is gained. This concluding lecture of Part 1 consists of an investigation of three classic twentieth-century poems written in one such strict form, namely, the villanelle. This lecture will also ready you for three subsequent lectures in Part II (Lectures Fourteen through Sixteen) on that most enduring of strict, but popular, poetic forms, the sonnet.

Outline

I. We will investigate forms for stanzas (with examples).

A. Couplet—two rhymed lines of verse usually of the same length (number of feet). Couplets are a regular feature in European, and especially, English poetry.

B. Tercet—this form consists of three lines as a unit, usually rhyming with themselves or sometimes in an interlocking rhyme scheme with surrounding tercets. The *terza rima* (established by Dante) goes: *aba bcb cdc,* etc.

C. Quatrain—a stanza of four (usually) rhymed lines, the most common arrangement in English poetry and widely used in other European languages as well. There are various rhyme schemes, such as: *abab, abba, abcb.*
   1. Ballads commonly use the quatrain stanzaic structure, usually in *abcb* form.
   2. Hymns tend to use "common measure" (or "common meter"), characterized by four stresses in the first and third lines and three stresses in the second and fourth lines. It is usually iambic and usually, but not always, in the *abab* pattern.

D. "Rhyme Royal"—this form, also known as the Chaucerian stanza because Chaucer was the first to use it, consists of seven lines with five stresses each (iambic pentameter). There is a specific rhyme scheme: *ababbcc.* It was used by many poets into the seventeenth century, but not so much in later periods.

E. *Ottava rima*—this form was developed by Boccaccio (fourteenth century) and is an eight-line stanza with the following rhyme scheme: *abababcc.* It was adapted and adopted by English poets (the main adaptation being a switch from *hendecasyllablic* lines of eleven syllables to iambic pentameter).

F. Spenserian stanza—this form, used in English poetry (for example, by Edmund Spenser in his *Faerie Queen),* has nine iambic lines. The first eight lines are pentameters, while the ninth line is longer (either iambic hexameter or twelve-syllable alexandrine (a four-stress French form). It ends in a couplet and uses the overall rhyme scheme: *ababbcbcc.*

II. Favorite poetic forms with which poets play.

A. Sestina—as the name suggests, this form uses six 6-line stanzas and a three-line conclusion termed an *envoi.* There is no rhyme, but terminal words are repeated in a prescribed (often-complex) way.

B. Ballade—this French form consists of three stanzas (eight lines each), an *envoi* of four lines, and one refrain (each stanza and *envoi* ends with same line).

C. Rondeau—another French form, but used in English poetry as well, that is arranged in thirteen octosyllabic lines, further divided into three stanzas of five, three, and five lines, respectively. It uses only two rhymes *(ab)* and a refrain in a complicated way. The refrain is usually the first word or phrase of the first line.

D. Triolet—this is an eight-line poem with only two rhymes. The first two lines are used as the last two lines and the first line also appears again as the fourth. Again, this is a French form that some English poets have employed.

E. Limerick—this form is an English five-line verse, using anapestic (x x /) meter and the *aabba* rhyme scheme. It is a relatively recent form, dating from the 1820s; its first popularizer was Edward Lear (c. 1846). A limerick is generally humorous and often even vulgar or obscene (or at least suggestive!).

F. Pantoum—this form is written in quatrains, the first two sentences of which are on one subject; the second two sentences, on another.

G. Sonatelle—a sixteen-line form.

H. Heck-Hollander—a double-dactyl eight-line form; a modern development named after its inventors.

III. The villanelle.

A. Origins and form.
1. The Italian "villanella" is a peasant dance or song. It came to England via France (various sixteenth-century French poets used it) and originally involved only a rustic subject and some kind of refrain.
2. It reached its standard form in the seventeenth century: a nineteen-line poem, in five tercets and one concluding quatrain; the first and third line are repeated throughout at prescribed places.
3. It became quite popular in late nineteenth century England and has prospered in this century. In addition to the poets below, the villanelle has received treatment at the hands of W. H. Auden, William Empson, Roy Fuller, Richard Hugo, James Joyce, James Merrill, and Sylvia Plath, among others.

B. Three modern examples of the villanelle.
1. Dylan Thomas (1914-1953), "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" (1951). What we see in all villanelles is not only the importance of adhering to the form but also the choice of the lines that are to be repeated (almost like a refrain). In Thomas's case, the relation of "night" and "light" braces the poem, as does his switch from an imperative verb in the opening tercet, to declarative verbs (and single examples) in the four middle tercets, and back to commands in the concluding stanza.
2. Theodore Roethke (1908-1963), "The Waking" (1953). Thomas's poem worked with the rival claims of "night" and "light"; Roethke's with the complementary ones of "slow" and "go." Like Thomas, Roethke varies his grammatical form—using questions in tercets 2 through 4—and he uses mostly end-stopped lines, as a means of portraying his condition. This is a poem about (I think) recovery: either a hangover (Roethke died of alcoholism) or some more generalized condition in which waking is equivalent to a dream state.
3. Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979), "One Art" (1976). This poem is a bit looser in its adherence to the strict form of the villanelle, but is perhaps the most powerful of the three. Bishop's poem moves from an almost lighthearted opening, a casual (or positively cavalier) assurance that mastery is something possible and desirable, through an ever-growing expansion and explanation of loss (the details are largely autobiographical, but one need not know them), to a final address to a dead lover, whose loss was obviously the original impulse behind the writing of the poem. "Master" and "disaster" are not only a significant pair of rhyming words, but they also point us back to the title. Art refers to poetry, to loss, and to life itself, all of which demand some kind of mastery and all of which exist in an uneasy balance, despite (and because of) Bishop's repeated lines.

Suggested Reading:

Hecht, Anthony, and Hollander, John. *Jiggery Pockery: A Compendium of Double Dactyls*
Hollander, John. *Rhyme's Reason.(re\. ed.)*
Pack, Robert. *A Cycle ofSonnetelles*

Questions to Consider:

1. Now that we have introduced stanzaic forms, review previous poems to find examples of them (bearing in mind that we haven't studied sonnets yet, although we have read some). In general, do you prefer poems in stanzas or do you think it is too constraining to adhere to sometimes complicated structural arrangements of lines and rhymes? Support your opinion and evaluation regardless of which side of the issue you take.

2. Is it only the anaphoric effect of line repetition that gives the villanelle its punch or is there more to it in terms of structure or scansion? For example, compare "One Art" and "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night." To what extent can the villanelle (or any of the other forms in Paragraph II above) be compared (structurally) to contemporary "popular" music, especially that termed "country and western"?

Glossary

Alliteration: the repetition of a consonant or a cluster of consonantal sounds.

Anapest: metrical foot of two unstressed/short and one stressed/long syllables.

Anaphora: the use of a repeated sound, word, or phrase, at the beginning of a sequence of lines.

Apostrophe: a direct address to a present or absent object or person.

Assonance: the repetition of a vowel sound in a sequence of words.

Ballad: a traditional song (often anonymous and often transmitted orally with many variations over a period of time) that tells a story.

Ballade: an old French form inherited by English poets, consisting of three eight-line stanzas (rhyming *ababbcbc)* with a four-line envoy (or *envoi)* (rhyming *bcbc)* to close the ballade.

Blank Verse: unrhymed iambic pentameter. Used for the first time in England by the Earl of Surrey in his 1540 translation of Virgil's *Aeneid,* then popularized in drama by Marlowe and Shakespeare; the standard measure for Milton in his epics.

Blazon (sometimes "blason"): an itemization of a lover's (usually a woman's) features, starting with the hair or head and working down the body. It derives from the heraldic concept of blazon (or arrangement of figures on a knight's flag) and developed in the medieval and Renaissance periods, becoming common in English poetry in the Elizabethan age. In addition to the listing of attributes, the poet used poetic techniques of hyperbole and simile. Shakespeare, in Sonnet 130, creates an engaging parody of this conventional style.

Caesura: from the Latin word for "cutting," a pause in a line of verse, normally occurring as break in the middle of a line.

Catechresis: misuse of a word or extending its meaning in an illogical metaphor.

Chiasmus: a "crossing" or reversal of the order of terms in two parallel clauses.

Couplet: a pair of rhyming lines. The traditional form of Alexander Pope is "heroic" couplets, i.e., two iambic pentameter lines, often closed, with a strong rhyme and a rhetorical balance.

Dactyl: metric foot of one stressed/long and two unstressed/short syllables.

Dialectical Irony: Irony obtained by juxtaposing two different voices, alternating as in a conversation, with a single poem.

Double Dactyl: An eight-line poem in which each of the first three lines is metrically a double dactyl, the fourth and eighth lines rhyme and are abbreviated.

The first line is a nonsense word, on line must be a proper name and on line must be a six-syllable word. This is a relatively recent form.

Ekphrasis: a verbal representation of a visual representation, e.g., any piece of literature that either describes a work of art or else attempts to "speak" on behalf of the work.

Elegy: originally a term for a poem in a specific meter (the alternation of six-foot and five-foot lines); now simply a label for any dirge, lament, or extended meditation on the death of a specific individual.

Enjambment: a run-on line, i.e., one line of poetry that does not pause but, instead, goes swiftly into the following line.

Free Verse: a form that eschews traditional meter in favor of unspecified variety in line length; there are precedents for it in the eighteenth century, but it is essentially of nineteenth-century origin. In English, it is associated primarily with Walt Whitman and his successors.

Iamb: metrical foot of one unstressed/short and one stressed/long syllable.

Imagism: a movement of poetry that flourished immediately before World War I in England and America, the most famous practitioners of which were Amy Lowell and, for a time, Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams. It favored "direct treatment of the thing" in concentrated bursts of imagery and in some ways was modeled on Western ideas of Eastern (especially Japanese) poetry. In rebellion against extraneous description, discursiveness, and preachiness, it attempted to produce a sense of immediacy.

Irony: a term with multiple meanings, stretching back to the figure of Socrates in Plato's dialogues; as an *eiron* (a dissimulator), Socrates is the man who claims to know nothing but is actually wiser than everyone else. Likewise, irony as a rhetorical term is used to signify the process by which one thing can mean another, or say something different from what it purports or intends to do. Dramatic irony is, of course, something related but distinct.

Limerick: a form used in English verse that has five anapestic (q.v.) lines with the rhyme scheme *aabba.* Limericks are usually humorous and often bawdy.

Metaphor: a figure of similarity ("his stomach is a balloon"), normally implied as opposed to direct (in which case it would be a simile). It is at once the basic and most simple and also the most complex of literary figures. Conventionally we speak of a metaphor's *vehicle* (its actual language) and its *tenor* (what is represented or implied). Another way of thinking of metaphor or simile is as a tri-partite figure: A is to B in terms of C ("Bill is like a fox because both are sly").

Meter: from the Greek word for foot or measure. Meter is a means of measuring lines of conventional verse: e.g., tetrameter is four feet; pentameter, five; hexameter, six.

Metonymy: usually distinguished from metaphor (as a figure of comparison), the term refers to substitution, the use of one item to stand for another: e.g., "The White House announced today..."; or, in William Blake's "London": "How the chimney sweeper's cry/Every blackening church appalls" ("the church" stands for the Anglican clergy or the force of the religious establishment, not only the actual edifice that a chimney sweeper might be in or near). A version of metonymy is *synecdoche,* the use of a part for a whole (e.g., "All hands on deck").

Mock-Heroism: the implicit bringing down of heroic, epic, or serious persons and themes by using inflated language, figures, and tones for low or trivial subjects; e.g., Thomas Gray's "Ode: On the Death of a Favorite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Goldfishes."

Ottava Rima: a stanzaic form developed and used in Italian epics and romances of the Renaissance; used most successfully in English by Lord Byron in *Don Juan* and, more seriously, by Yeats in "Among School Children" and "Sailing to Byzantium." The rhyme scheme is *abababcc.*

Pantoun: a poem composed in quatrains, in which the first two lines of each quatrain constitute a single sentence, and the next two lines constitute a separate sentence on a different subject. The two sentences are connected in rhyme, and by a trope, sound, pun or image.

Periphrasis: the use of several words instead of a single phrase or name to describe someone or something in an oblique and "decorous" way.

Personification: referring to animals or non-living things as if human.

Quantitative Meter: the classical meter of Greek and Latin poetry, difficult to maintain in English; based on the *length* or *duration* of syllables (a long syllable is thought to take twice as long to say as a short one) as opposed to hearing them as either stressed or unstressed.

Quatrain: a four-line stanza, typical in ballads, sonnets and hymns. The lines can be rhymed or unrhymed in this most commonly used stanza in Western poetry.

Rhyme: any pattern of repeated sounds, normally at the end of lines of verse. They may be full rhymes, part-rhymes, eye-rhymes (words that look alike although they sound different), or off-rhymes.

Rondeau: medieval French form also used in English. There are various formulas, but the most common is one of 12 eight syllable lines, with stanzas of five, three and five lines. There are only two rhymes, with the first word or phrase repeating (aabba aabR aabbaR, where R is the repeat or refrain).

Sestina: a difficult, complex form, invented in Italy and perfected in the English Renaissance by Sir Philip Sidney (in "Ye gote-herd Gods"); it has six stanzas, with six lines apiece. Each stanza repeats the same end words *(abcdef),* but in

different order (thus, stanza 2 would be *faebdc* and so forth); a three-line envoy repeats all six words one last time.

Simile: a stated, as opposed to an implied, comparison ("x is like y"). See "metaphor."

Sonnet: the standard fourteen-line lyric poem, begun in Italy and transported (and translated) to England by Wyatt and Surrey in the first half of the sixteenth century. It comes, traditionally, in two forms (although with many ingenious and subtle variations). The Italian form has an octave (eight lines that rhyme *abbaabba),* followed by a sestet (six lines with either two or three repeated rhymes). The English (or Shakespearean) sonnet usually has three quatrains and a concluding couplet; the rhyme is *ababcdcdefefgg.* The couplet is often the occasion for a summary or conclusion.

Spenserian Stanza: the nine-line stanza used by Spenser in *The Faerie Queene,* and then by Keats ("The Eve of St. Agnes") and Shelley ("Adonais"); the rhyme scheme is *ababbcbcc* and the last line is always an alexandrine (iambic hexameter).

Spondee: a metrical foot of two stressed/long syllables, often used to vary lines in iambic or other meters.

Stanza: from the Italian word meaning "room," a stanza is any formal unit of verse that stands alone.

Synaesthesia: related to *catechresis;* using a word appropriate for one sensory experience to apply to another sensory experience (e.g., in "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" by Keats, 11. 7-8).

Syntactic Inversion: reversing the normal word order to achieve poetic effect (e.g., to ensure rhyme or meter, or to place emphasis on a given word).

Tercets/7^rza *rima:* a stanza of three lines. *Terza rima* is a three-line stanza with interlocking rhyme (e.g., *aba, bcb, cdc, ded,* and so forth), used by Dante in *La Commedia Divina* and by Shelley in "Ode to the West Wind."

Tone: a speaker's attitude toward a subject; the predominant mood of an utterance.

Triolet: an eight line poem of only two rhymes, the first line repeating as the fourth line and the first two lines repeating as the last two lines *(ABaAabAB).*

Trochee: metrical foot of one stressed/long and one unstressed/short syllable.

Trope: a generic word for all types of literary figuration, including all versions of metaphor and metonymy, as well as irony and various kinds of literary allusions and echoes.

Villanelle: originally French, now a nineteen-line poem in English with five tercets and a concluding quatrain. Lines 1 and 3 are repeated—usually verbatim—at prescribed intervals throughout the poem, and become lines 18 and 19 at the end. Only two rhymes are used throughout.

Cross-Reference by Poem

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
A Blessing	Wright, James	13	Free Verse
A Red, Red Rose	Burns, Robert	5	Metaphor and Metonymy I
A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal	Wordsworth, William	7	Poetic Tone
A Toccata of Galuppi's	Browning, Robert	11	Sound Effects
Acquainted With the Night	Frost, Robert	8	The Uses of Sentiment
Aeneid (Book VI, excerpt)	Virgil	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
Among School Children	Yeats, William Butler	19	Poets Thinking—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
An Essay on Criticism	Pope, Alexander	17	Poets Thinking
An Irish Airman Foresees His Death	Yeats, William Butler	21	Heroism—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
Ars Poetica	Dove, Rita	13	Free Verse
Astrofil and Stella (sonnets 31, 52, 71)	Sidney, Sir Philip	14	The English Sonnet I
Aunt Jennifer's Tigers	Rich, Adrienne	21	Heroism—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
Beautiful Woman	Ammons, A. R.	1	What to Look (and Listen) for in Poems
Beautiful Woman	Ammons, A. R.	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
Composed upon Westminster Bridge	Wordsworth, William	15	The English Sonnet II
Design	"rost, Robert	5	VIetaphor and Metonymy I
Did You Love Well What Very Soon You Left?	"rost, Robert	16	The Enduring Sonnet

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
Diving into the Wreck	Rich, Adrienne	21	Heroism—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night	Thomas, Dylan	12	Three Twentieth-Century Villanelles
Dover Beach	Arnold, Matthew	11	Sound Effects
Easter 1916	Yeats, William Butler	21	Heroism—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
Evangeline	Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth	11	Sound Effects
Fern Hill	Thomas, Dylan	11	Sound Effects
For Elizabeth Bishop	Hollander, John	23	Echoes in Poems
For Robert Frost, in the Autumn, in Vermont	Nemerov, Howard	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
For the Union Dead	Lowell, Robert	21	Heroism—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
Frost at Midnight	Coleridge, Samuel Taylor	18	The Greater Romantic Lyric
God's Grandeur	Hopkins, Gerard Manly	11	Sound Effects
Gypsies	Clare, John	3	Poets Looking at the World
Hiawatha	Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth	11	Sound Effects
His Golden Locks Time Hath to Silver Turned	Peele, George	20	Portrayals of Heroism
Holy Sonnets (sonnets 10, 14)	Donne, John	15	The English Sonnet 11
Holy Thursday	Blake, William	9	The Uses of Irony
Howl	Ginsberg, Alan	13	Free Verse
I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud	Wordsworth, William	2	Memory and Composition
Iliad (Book VI, excerpt)	Homer	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
in Just-	cummings, e. e.	13	Free Verse

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
In the Station of the Metro	Pound, Ezra	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
Inferno (Canto **III,** excerpt)	Dante	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
Jubilate Agno	Smart, Christopher	13	Free Verse
Leda and the Swan	Yeats, William Butler	16	The Enduring Sonnet
Love (**III**)	Herbert, George	7	Poetic Tone
Love That Doth Reign and Live Within My Thought	Henry, Howard, Earl of Surrey	14	The English Sonnet I
Meditation at Lagunitas	Hass, Robert	19	Poets Thinking— Some Twentieth-Century Versions
Men at Forty	Justice, Donald	7	Poetic Tone
Musee des Beaux Arts	Auden, W. H.	8	The Uses of Sentiment
My Papa's Waltz	Roethke, Theodore	10	Poetic Forms and Meter
Naming of Parts	Reed, Henry	9	The Uses of Irony
Never Again Would Birds' Song Be the Same	Frost, Robert	16	The Enduring Sonnet
Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal, Now the White	Tennyson, Alfred Lord	11	Sound Effects
Ode on a Grecian Urn	Keats, John	22	Poets Talking to (and for) Works of Art
Ode to the West Wind	Shelley, Percy Bysshe	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
Ode: On the Death of a Favorite Cat	Gray, Thomas	9	The Uses of Irony
On First Looking into Chapman's Homer	<eats, John	6	Metaphor and Metonymy II
On My First Son	Jonson, Ben	7	³oetic Tone

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
On the Late Massacre in Piedmont	Milton, John	10	Poetic Forms and Meter
On the Late Massacre in Piedmont	Milton, John	15	The English Sonnet II
One Art	Bishop, Elizabeth	12	Three Twentieth-Century Villanelles
Ozymandias	Shelley, Percy Bysshe	15	The English Sonnet II
Paradise Lost (Book 1,11. 295-313)	Milton, John	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
Pied Beauty	Hopkins, Gerard Manly	4	Picturing Nature
Poem	Williams, William Carlos	3	Poets Looking at the World
Poem 613 ("They shut me up in Prose")	Dickinson, Emily	11	Sound Effects
Resume	Parker, Dorothy	9	The Uses of Irony
Richard Cory	Robinson, E. A.	8	The Uses of Sentiment
Sea Violet	Doolittle, Hilda (H.D.)	4	Picturing Nature
Shine, Perishing Republic	Jeffers, Robinson	19	Poets Thinking—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
Sir Patrick Spens	Anonymous Ballad	20	Portrayals of Heroism
Skunk Hour	Lowell, Robert	6	Metaphor and Metonymy II
Song ("When I am dead, my dearest")	Rossetti, Christina	8	The Uses of Sentiment
Song of Myself	Whitman, Walt	13	Free Verse
Sonnet 12 ("When I do count the clock")	Shakespeare, William	14	The English Sonnet I
Sonnet 146 ("Poor soul")	Shakespeare, William	5	Metaphor and Metonymy **1**
Name of Poem	**Name of Author**	**Lecture Number**	**Lecture Title**
Sonnet 43 ("How	Browning,	8	The Uses of Sentiment

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
do I love thee?")	Elizabeth Barrett		
Sonnet 73	Shakespeare, William	14	The English Sonnet 1
The Argument of His Book	Herrick, Robert	3	Poets Looking at the World
The Boy of Winander (from The Prelude, Book V)	Wordsworth, William	23	Echoes in Poems
The Breaking of Nations	Hardy, Thomas	4	Picturing Nature
The Buck in the Snow	Millay, Edna St. Vincent	3	Poets Looking at the World
The Canonization	Donne, John	17	Poets Thinking
The Convergence of the Twain	Hardy, Thomas	8	The Uses of Sentiment
The Dalliance of Eagles	Whitman, Walt	13	Free Verse
The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner	Jarrell, Randall	**5**	Metaphor and Metonymy I
The English Are So Nice!	Lawrence, D. H.	9	The Uses of Irony
The Fish	Bishop, Elizabeth	21	Heroism—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
The Garden	Marvell, Andrew	17	Poets Thinking
The House Was Quiet and the World Was Calm	Stevens, Wallace	7	Poetic Tone
The Kraken	Tennyson, Alfred Lord	4	Picturing Nature
The Lake Isle of Innisfree	Yeats, William Butler	3	Poets Looking at the World
The Little Black Boy	Blake, William	9	The Uses of Irony
The Long Love, That in My Thought Doth Harbor	Wyatt, Sir Thomas	14	The English Sonnet **I**
Name of Poem	**Name of Author**	**Lecture Number**	**Lecture Title**
The Moose	Bishop, Elizabeth	23	Echoes in Poems
The Most of It	Frost, Robert	23	Echoes in Poems
The Oven Bird	Frost, Robert	16	The Enduring Sonnet
The Red Wheelbarrow	Williams, William Carlos	3	Poets Looking at the World
The Sick Rose	Blake, William	5	Metaphor and Metonymy I
The Silken Tent	Frost, Robert	16	The Enduring Sonnet
The Snow Man	Stevens, Wallace	19	Poets Thinking—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
The Solitary Reaper	Wordsworth, William	2	Memory and Composition
The Sun Underfoot Among the Sundews	Clampitt, Amy	13	Free Verse
The Waking	Roethke, Theodore	12	Three Twentieth-Century Villanelles
The Woodspurge	Rossetti, Dante Gabriel	8	The Uses of Sentiment
There's a certain slant of light (#258)	Dickinson, Emily	5	Metaphor and Metonymy 1
This Is Just to Say	Williams, William Carlos	3	Poets Looking at the World
Those Winter Sundays	Hayden, Robert	7	Poetic Tone
Tintern Abbey	Wordsworth, William	18	The Greater Romantic Lyric
To a Locomotive in Winter	Whitman, Walt	13	Free Verse
To a Skylark	Shelley, Percy Bysshe	5	Metaphor and Metonymy I
To the Memory of Mr. Oldham	Dryden, John	20	Portrayals of Heroism
Ulysses	Tennyson, Alfred Lord	20	Portrayals of Heroism
Unfortunate Coincidence	Parker, Dorothy	9	The Uses of Irony
Upon Julia's Clothes	Herrick, Robert	1	What to Look (and Listen) for in Poems

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
When I Consider How My Light Is Spent	Milton, John	15	The English Sonnet II
Written After Swimming from Sestos to Abydos	Byron, Lord George	20	Portrayals of Heroism

Cross-Reference by Poet

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
Beautiful Woman	Ammons, A. R.	1	What to Look (and Listen) for in Poems
Beautiful Woman	Ammons, A. R.	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
Sir Patrick Spens	Anonymous Ballad	20	Portrayals of Heroism
Dover Beach	Arnold, Matthew	11	Sound Effects
Musee des Beaux Arts	Auden, W. H.	8	The Uses of Sentiment
One Art	Bishop, Elizabeth	12	Three Twentieth-Century Villanelles
The Fish	Bishop, Elizabeth	21	Heroism—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
The Moose	Bishop, Elizabeth	23	Echoes in Poems
The Sick Rose	Blake, William	5	Metaphor and Metonymy I
Holy Thursday	Blake, William	9	The Uses of Irony
The Little Black Boy	Blake, William	9	The Uses of Irony
Sonnet 43 ("How do 1 love thee?")	Browning, Elizabeth Barrett	8	The Uses of Sentiment
A Toccata of Galuppi's	Browning, Robert	11	Sound Effects
A Red, Red Rose	Burns, Robert	5	Metaphor and Metonymy I
Written After Swimming from Sestos to Abydos	Byron, Lord George	20	Portrayals of Heroism
The Sun Underfoot Among the Sundews	Clampitt, Amy	13	Free Verse
Gypsies	Clare, John	3	Poets Looking at the World
Frost at Midnight	Coleridge, Samuel Taylor	18	The Greater Romantic Lyric
in Just-	cummings, e. e.	13	Free Verse
Inferno (Canto III, excerpt)	Dante	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
There's a certain slant of light (#258)	Dickinson, Emily	5	Metaphor and Metonymy I

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
"They shut me up in Prose" (poem 613)	Dickinson, Emily	11	Sound Effects
Holy Sonnets (sonnets 10, 14)	Donne, John	15	The English Sonnet II
The Canonization	Donne, John	17	Poets Thinking
Sea Violet	Doolittle, Hilda (H.D.)	4	Picturing Nature
Ars Poetica	Dove, Rita	13	Free Verse
To the Memory of Mr. Oldham	Dryden, John	20	Portrayals of Heroism
Design	Frost, Robert	5	Metaphor and Metonymy I
Acquainted With the Night	Frost, Robert	8	The Uses of Sentiment
The Oven Bird	Frost, Robert	16	The Enduring Sonnet
Never Again Would Birds' Song Be the Same	Frost, Robert	16	The Enduring Sonnet
The Silken Tent	Frost, Robert	16	The Enduring Sonnet
Did You Love Well What Very Soon You Left?	Frost, Robert	16	The Enduring Sonnet
The Most of It	Frost, Robert	23	Echoes in Poems
Howl	Ginsberg, Alan	13	Free Verse
Ode: On the Death of a Favorite Cat	Gray, Thomas	9	The Uses of Irony
Meditation at Lagunitas	Hass, Robert	19	Poets Thinking—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
The Breaking of Nations	Hardy, Thomas	4	Picturing Nature
The Convergence of the Twain	Hardy, Thomas	8	The Uses of Sentiment
Those Winter Sundays	Hayden, Robert	7	Poetic Tone

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
Love That Doth Reign and Live Within My Thought	Henry, Howard, Earl of Surrey	14	The English Sonnet I
Love (III)	Herbert, George	7	Poetic Tone
Upon Julia's Clothes	Herrick, Robert	1	What to Look (and Listen) for in Poems
The Argument of His Book	Herrick, Robert	3	Poets Looking at the World
For Elizabeth Bishop	Hollander, John	23	Echoes in Poems
Iliad (Book VI, excerpt)	Homer	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
Pied Beauty	Hopkins, Gerard Manly	4	Picturing Nature
God's Grandeur	Hopkins, Gerard Manly	11	Sound Effects
Richard Cory	Robinson, E.A.	8	The Uses of Sentiment
The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner	Jarrell, Randall	5	Metaphor and Metonymy I
Shine, Perishing Republic	Jeffers, Robinson	19	Poets Thinking—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
On My First Son	Jonson, Ben	.7	Poetic Tone
Men at Forty	Justice, Donald	7	Poetic Tone
On First Looking into Chapman's Homer	Keats, John	6	Metaphor and Metonymy II
Ode on a Grecian Urn	Keats, John	22	Poets Talking to (and for) Works of Art
The English Are So Nice!	Lawrence, D. H.	9	The Uses of Irony
Hiawatha	Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth	11	Sound Effects
Evangeline	Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth	11	Sound Effects
Skunk Hour	Lowell, Robert	6	Metaphor and Metonymy II

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
For the Union Dead	Lowell, Robert	21	Heroism—Some Twenti eth-Century Versions
The Garden	Marvell, Andrew	17	Poets Thinking
The Buck in the Snow	Millay, Edna St. Vincent	3	Poets Looking at the World
On the Late Massacre in Piedmont	Milton, John	10	Poetic Forms and Meter
On the Late Massacre in Piedmont	Milton, John	15	The English Sonnet II
When I Consider How My Light Is Spent	Milton, John	15	The English Sonnet II
Paradise Lost (Book 1,11. 295-313)	Milton, John	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
For Robert Frost, in the Autumn, in Vermont	Nemerov, Howard	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
Unfortunate Coincidence	Parker, Dorothy	9	The Uses of Irony
Resume	Parker, Dorothy	9	The Uses of Irony
His Golden Locks Time Hath to Silver Turned	Peele, George	20	Portrayals of Heroism
An Essay on Criticism	Pope, Alexander	17	Poets Thinking
In the Station of the Metro	Pound, Ezra	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
Naming of Parts	Reed, Henry	9	The Uses of Irony
Aunt Jennifer's Tigers	Rich, Adrienne	21	Heroism—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
Diving into the Wreck	Rich, Adrienne	21	Heroism—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
My Papa's Waltz	Roethke, Theodore	10	Poetic Forms and Meter

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
The Waking	Roethke, Theodore	12	Three Twentieth-Century Villanelles
Song ("When I am dead, my dearest")	Rossetti, Christina	8	The Uses of Sentiment
The Woodspurge	Rossetti, Dante Gabriel	8	The Uses of Sentiment
Sonnet 146 ("Poor soul")	Shakespeare, William	5	Metaphor and Metonymy I
Sonnet 12 ("When I do count the clock")	Shakespeare, William	14	The English Sonnet 1
Sonnet 73	Shakespeare, William	14	The English Sonnet I
To a Skylark	Shelley, Percy Bysshe	5	Metaphor and Metonymy I
Ozymandias	Shelley, Percy Bysshe	15	The English Sonnet II
Ode to the West Wind	Shelley, Percy Bysshe	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
Astrofil and Stella (sonnets 31, 52, 71)	Sidney, Sir Philip	14	The English Sonnet I
Jubilate Agno	Smart, Christopher	13	Free Verse
The House Was Quiet and the World Was Calm	Stevens, Wallace	7	Poetic Tone
The Snow Man	Stevens, Wallace	19	Poets Thinking—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
The Kraken	Tennyson, Alfred Lord	4	Picturing Nature
Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal, Now the White	Tennyson, Alfred Lord	11	Sound Effects
Ulysses	Tennyson, Alfred Lord	20	Portrayals of Heroism
Fern Hill	Thomas, Dylan	11	Sound Effects

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night	Thomas, Dylan	12	Three Twentieth-Century Villanelles
Aeneid (Book VI, excerpt)	Virgil	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
Song of Myself	Whitman, Walt	13	Free Verse
The Dalliance of Eagles	Whitman, Walt	13	Free Verse
To a Locomotive in Winter	Whitman, Walt	13	Free Verse
The Red Wheelbarrow	Williams, William Carlos	3	Poets Looking at the World
This Is Just to Say	Williams, William Carlos	3	Poets Looking at the World
Poem	Williams, William Carlos	3	Poets Looking at the World
I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud	Wordsworth, William	2	Memory and Composition
The Solitary Reaper	Wordsworth, William	2	Memory and Composition
A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal	Wordsworth, William	7	Poetic Tone
Composed upon Westminster Bridge	Wordsworth, William	15	The English Sonnet II
Tintern Abbey	Wordsworth, William	18	The Greater Romantic Lyric
The Boy of Winander (from The Prelude, Book V)	Wordsworth, William	23	Echoes in Poems
A Blessing	Wright, James	13	Free Verse
The Long Love, That in My Thought Doth Harbor	Wyatt, Sir Thomas	14	The English Sonnet 1
The Lake Isle of Innisfree	Yeats, William Butler	3	Poets Looking at the World
Leda and the Swan	Yeats, William Butler	16	The Enduring Sonnet

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
Among School Children	Yeats, William Butler	19	Poets Thinking—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
An Irish Airman Foresees His Death	Yeats, William Butler	21	Heroism—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
Easter 1916	Yeats, William Butler	21	Heroism—Some Twentieth-Century Versions

Cross-Reference by Lecture

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
Beautiful Woman	Ammons, A. R.	1	What to Look (and Listen) for in Poems
Upon Julia's Clothes	Herrick, Robert	1	What to Look (and Listen) for in Poems
I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud	Wordsworth, William	2	Memory and Composition
The Solitary Reaper	Wordsworth, William	2	Memory and Composition
The Red Wheelbarrow	Williams, William Carlos	3	Poets Looking at the World
This Is Just to Say	Williams, William Carlos	3	Poets Looking at the World
Poem	Williams, William Carlos	3	Poets Looking at the World
The Argument of His Book	Herrick, Robert	3	Poets Looking at the World
Gypsies	Clare, John	3	Poets Looking at the World
The Lake Isle of Innisfree	Yeats, William Butler	3	Poets Looking at the World
The Buck in the Snow	Millay, Edna St. Vincent	3	Poets Looking at the World
Sea Violet	Doolittle, Hilda (H.D.)	4	Picturing Nature
The Kraken	Tennyson, Alfred Lord	4	Picturing Nature
The Breaking of Nations	Hardy, Thomas	4	Picturing Nature
Pied Beauty	Hopkins, Gerard Manly	4	Picturing Nature
A Red, Red Rose	Burns, Robert	5	Metaphor and Metonymy 1
To a Skylark	Shelley, Percy Bysshe	5	Metaphor and Metonymy I
There's a certain slant of light (#258)	Dickinson, Emily	5	Metaphor and Metonymy I
Sonnet 146 ("Poor soul")	Shakespeare, William	5	Metaphor and Metonymy I
Design	Frost, Robert	5	Metaphor and Metonymy I
The Sick Rose	Blake, William	5	Metaphor and Metonymy 1

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner	Jarrell, Randall	5	Metaphor and Metonymy I
Skunk Hour	Lowell, Robert	6	Metaphor and Metonymy II
On First Looking into Chapman's Homer	Keats, John	6	Metaphor and Metonymy 11
The House Was Quiet and the World Was Calm	Stevens, Wallace	7	Poetic Tone
Those Winter Sundays	Hayden, Robert	7	Poetic Tone
Love (III)	Herbert, George	7	Poetic Tone
Men at Forty	Justice, Donald	7	Poetic Tone
On My First Son	Jonson, Ben	7	Poetic Tone
A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal	Wordsworth, William	7	Poetic Tone
Sonnet 43 ("How do 1 love thee?")	Browning, Elizabeth Barrett	8	The Uses of Sentiment
Song ("When I am dead, my dearest")	Rossetti, Christina	8	The Uses of Sentiment
The Woodspurge	Rossetti, Dante Gabriel	8	The Uses of Sentiment
Richard Cory	Robinson, E.A.	8	The Uses of Sentiment
Acquainted With the Night	Frost, Robert	8	The Uses of Sentiment
The Convergence of the Twain	Hardy, Thomas	8	The Uses of Sentiment
Musee des Beaux Arts	Auden, W. H.	8	The Uses of Sentiment
Unfortunate Coincidence	Parker, Dorothy	9	The Uses of Irony
Resume	Parker, Dorothy	9	The Uses of Irony
Holy Thursday	Blake, William	9	The Uses of Irony
The Little Black Boy	Blake, William	9	The Uses of Irony
The English Are So Nice!	Lawrence, D. H.	9	The Uses of Irony
Naming of Parts	Reed, Henry	9	The Uses of Irony

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
Ode: On the Death of a Favorite Cat	Gray, Thomas	9	The Uses of Irony
My Papa's Waltz	Roethke, Theodore	10	Poetic Forms and Meter
On the Late Massacre in Piedmont	Milton, John	10	Poetic Forms and Meter
Hiawatha	Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth	11	Sound Effects
Evangeline	Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth	11	Sound Effects
A Toccata of Galuppi's	Browning, Robert	11	Sound Effects
"They shut me up in Prose" (poem 613)	Dickinson, Emily	11	Sound Effects
Fern Hill	Thomas, Dylan	11	Sound Effects
God's Grandeur	Hopkins, Gerard Manly	11	Sound Effects
Now Sleeps the Crimson Petal, Now the White	Tennyson, Alfred Lord	11	Sound Effects
Dover Beach	Arnold, Matthew	11	Sound Effects
Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night	Thomas, Dylan	12	Three Twentieth-Century Villanelles
The Waking	Roethke, Theodore	12	Three Twentieth-Century Villanelles
One Art	Bishop, Elizabeth	12	Three Twentieth-Century Villanelles
Jubilate Agno	Smart, Christopher	13	Free Verse
Song of Myself	Whitman, Walt	13	Free Verse
The Dalliance of Eagles	Whitman, Walt	13	Free Verse
To a Locomotive in Winter	Whitman, Walt	13	Free Verse
in Just-	cummings, e. e.	13	Free Verse
Howl	Ginsberg, Alan	13	Free Verse

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
The Sun Underfoot Among the Sundews	Clampitt, Amy	13	Free Verse
A Blessing	Wright, James	13	Free Verse
Ars Poetica	Dove, Rita	13	Free Verse
The Long Love, That in My Thought Doth Harbor	Wyatt, Sir Thomas	14	The English Sonnet I
Love That Doth Reign and Live Within My Thought	Henry, Howard, Earl of Surrey	14	The English Sonnet I
Astrofil and Stella (sonnets 31, 52, 71)	Sidney, Sir Philip	14	The English Sonnet I
Sonnet 12 ("When I do count the clock")	Shakespeare, William	14	The English Sonnet 1
Sonnet 73	Shakespeare, William	14	The English Sonnet I
Holy Sonnets (sonnets 10, 14)	Donne, John	15	The English Sonnet 11
On the Late Massacre in Piedmont	Milton, John	15	The English Sonnet II
When I Consider How My Light Is Spent	Milton, John	15	The English Sonnet II
Composed upon Westminster Bridge	Wordsworth, William	15	The English Sonnet II
Ozymandias	Shelley, Percy Bysshe	15	The English Sonnet II
Leda and the Swan	Yeats, William Butler	16	The Enduring Sonnet
The Oven Bird	Frost, Robert	16	The Enduring Sonnet
Never Again Would Birds' Song Be the Same	Frost, Robert	16	The Enduring Sonnet

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
The Silken Tent	Frost, Robert	16	The Enduring Sonnet
Did You Love Well What Very Soon You Left?	Frost, Robert	16	The Enduring Sonnet
The Canonization	Donne, John	17	Poets Thinking
The Garden	Marvell, Andrew	17	Poets Thinking
An Essay on Criticism	Pope, Alexander	17	Poets Thinking
Tintern Abbey	Wordsworth, William	18	The Greater Romantic Lyric
Frost at Midnight	Coleridge, Samuel Taylor	18	The Greater Romantic Lyric
Shine, Perishing Republic	Jeffers, Robinson	19	Poets Thinking—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
The Snow Man	Stevens, Wallace	19	Poets Thinking—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
Among School Children	Yeats, William Butler	19	Poets Thinking—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
Meditation at Lagunitas	Hass, Robert	19	Poets Thinking—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
Sir Patrick Spens	Anonymous Ballad	20	Portrayals of Heroism
His Golden Locks Time Hath to Silver Turned	Peele, George	20	Portrayals of Heroism
To the Memory of Mr. Oldham	Dryden, John	20	Portrayals of Heroism
Written After Swimming from Sestos to Abydos	Byron, Lord George	20	Portrayals of Heroism
Ulysses	Tennyson, Alfred Lord	20	Portrayals of Heroism
An Irish Airman Foresees His Death	Yeats, William Butler	21	Heroism—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
Easter 1916	Yeats, William Butler	21	Heroism—Some Twentieth-Century Versions

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
For the Union Dead	Lowell, Robert	21	Heroism—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
The Fish	Bishop, Elizabeth	21	Heroism—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
Aunt Jennifer's Tigers	Rich, Adrienne	21	Heroism—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
Diving into the Wreck	Rich, Adrienne	21	Heroism—Some Twentieth-Century Versions
Ode on a Grecian Urn	Keats, John	22	Poets Talking to (and for) Works of Art
The Boy of Winander (from The Prelude, Book V)	Wordsworth, William	23	Echoes in Poems
The Most of It	Frost, Robert	23	Echoes in Poems
The Moose	Bishop, Elizabeth	23	Echoes in Poems
For Elizabeth Bishop	Hollander, John	23	Echoes in Poems
Iliad (Book VI, excerpt)	Homer	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
Aeneid (Book VI, excerpt)	Virgil	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
Inferno (Canto III, excerpt)	Dante	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
Paradise Lost (Book 1,11. 295-313)	Milton, John	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
Ode to the West Wind	Shelley, Percy Bysshe	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
In the Station of the Metro	Pound, Ezra	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
For Robert Frost, in the Autumn, in Vermont	Nemerov, Howard	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves
Beautiful Woman	Ammons, A.R.	24	Farewells and Falling Leaves

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