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How to Read and Understand Poetry
Part II

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 in *your* 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 Thirteen
Free Verse

Scope: This lecture will discuss some of the aspects of the free verse revolution, begun in this country by Walt Whitman, and continued with differing effects by Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams, in an effort "to break the back of the pentameter" and to liberate poetry from the strictures imposed upon it by traditional metric forms.

Outline

I. The origins of "free verse."

A. The King James Bible was the one book in most households in England and America in the nineteenth century (the plays of Shakespeare would have been the other most widely owned book). The Psalms are poetry with meter, but no rhyme, and use other poetic devices as well.

B. Public oratory of this period followed the cadences of the language in the King James Bible.

C. Christopher Smart (1722-1771), *"Jubilate Agno"* (published 1939, written *1762).*

1. Borrowing from the repetitions of the King James Bible, Smart (who spent time in mental institutions, and who indeed went mad) is really the first free verse poet in English.
2. William Butler Yeats considered Smart's *A Song to David* (1763) as the first Romantic poem.
3. The praise of his cat sounds heroic and serious, (cf, Thomas Gray's "Ode on the Death of a Favorite Cat," discussed in Lecture Nine).

D. The long poems of William Blake (1757-1827) provide other early examples. Blake's major prophetic books *(The Four Zoas, Milton, Jersualem}* were never published conventionally until well after his death, but they have come (in this century especially) to have a strong hold over readers' imaginations, as much for their verse line and music as for their dense mythology and symbolism.

II. Walt Whitman (1819-1892) and *Leaves of Grass* mark the true beginning of free verse in America. A. The opening lines of "Song of Myself' are revealing.

1. Epic tropes and dimensions: Whitman is singing and celebrating. The newness of his style in part conceals the traditional nature of his project, which involves epic openings and the genealogical impulse behind all "big" poems.
2. At the same time, he invokes classical notions of "pastoral" poetry, specifically invitation and "lolling" about at leisure.

B. Representative samples of Whitman's art:

1. "The Dalliance of the Eagles" (1880). There is a veritable drama in this short descriptive lyric that is maintained as much by verbal participles, caesuras, line lengths and line endings, and an impulsive rhythm as by the visual description of the birds themselves.
2. "To a Locomotive in Winter" (1881). Here the address to the locomotive is heightened by *anaphora* (beginning successive lines with the same word or sound); apostrophe (the continuing address to, and personification of, the locomotive); the figurative language Whitman uses to compare the train to more conventional "singers"; and the rhythmic effects, especially in the poem's last three lines (which are perfectly regular iambic pentameter!).

III. Some recent examples of free verse.

A. American poet e. e. cummings (1894-1962), "in Just-" (1923).

1. The fun of cummings' poetry (which often, in spite of its irregularities, employs very conventional means—rhymes and sonnet forms, for example) often comes down to his typographic freedom and to the fact that some of his poems are literally un-sayable (e.g., the one depicting the grasshopper making its jump).
2. cummings plays with typography to reflect changes in the boys and girls who are reaching puberty.

B. Alan Ginsberg (1926-1998), the opening of ***Howl*** (1956).

1. This manifesto of the "Beat" generation established its author's fame, not to say notoriety, and it is as important in the history of post-war American poetry as it is in the tradition of social and political protest that it helped to maintain. Ginsberg took seriously the long-lined free
2. verse tradition he inherited from Whitman via William Carlos Williams. His lines might be the longest in American poetry.
3. One other cause for lines of such length was Ginsberg's claim that each line constituted a single unit of breath. Saying one whole line without pausing was a remarkable feat, but Ginsberg, with his own history of Eastern meditative practices, could usually manage it. The music is incantatory.

C. Amy Clampitt (1920-1994), "The Sun Underfoot Among the Sundews" (1983).

1. This delectable poem is officially free, but we notice as well that each line maintains a consistent stress pattern (there are three beats to each line, regardless of location and of number of syllables).
2. We have regularity and freedom going hand-in-hand (free verse with accentual predictability).

D. James Wright (1927-1980), "A Blessing" (1963).

1. When verse is "free," we must often attend to line endings and the drama they can convey. Wright's poem of an encounter with two horses is an example of the use of lines of various lengths.
2. Such a habit produces a drama in the lines and their endings. Enjambment is extremely important, as we sense in the last three lines, the only time in the poem where two lines (instead of one) run on.

E. Rita Dove (1952-), *"Ars **Poetica"*** (1989).
1. An "ars poetica" (the title derives from the poem by the Latin poet Horace in c. 10 BC) is a self-justification, a statement of purpose, or an instruction manual in the "art of poetry."
2. In Dove's case, we notice that the relative freedom of line and meter is balanced by a control of the length of each stanza.
3. Thus, free verse and stanzaic experimentation go together, as the poem moves from greater units (which stand for the dreams of the *male* essayist and novelist) to a smaller one, representing the more modest and pointed aspirations of *the female* lyric poet.

Suggested Reading:

Hartman, Charles. *Free Verse: An Essay on Prosody.*

Steele, Timothy. *Missing Measures: Modern Poetry and the Revolt Against Form.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Robert Frost dismissed free verse with the famous phrase that likened it to "playing tennis with the net down." Do you agree or disagree with Frost? Support your position based on what we have studied of form, meter, language, etc., so far.
2. Can we draw any meaningful conclusions about *why* certain poetic forms have flourished in certain periods of time? To what extent are the forms expressive of the "tenor of the times?" What do you think the next direction in poetry is likely to be?

Lecture Fourteen
The English Sonnet I

Scope: This lecture begins a series of three on the subject of that most enduring of lyric forms, the sonnet, invented in Italy by Petrarch; transported to English by Henry Howard, the Early of Surrey and Sir Thomas Wyatt; popularized in the late decades of the sixteenth century by Sidney, Spenser, Drayton, and (above all) Shakespeare; continued by Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, Hopkins, and most important modern poets, including Yeats and Frost.

Outline

I. History and definitions.

A. Although there are earlier precedents, the first important sonneteers were Dante (1265-1321) and Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374). The Italian "sonnetto" means a little song or sound.
1. From the beginning the sonnet was a vehicle for the expression of love, often with philosophical speculations.
2. The tradition of "courtly" love from which it derived often involves the motif of an inaccessible woman, whom the poet loves but may not have.
3. The Italian sonnet maintains a division between the octave (rhymed *abba abba)* and the sestet (rhymed more casually in any variation of *cde cde).* The break between the two parts, called the *volta* (or turn), often encourages a shift in tone or emotion.

B. The sonnet was brought to England through the translations of Petrarch by Wyatt and Surrey, written in the 1530s and 1540s and published in *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557, one year before Elizabeth I ascended the throne).
1. The "English" sonnet (also known as the Shakespearean sonnet because of Shakespeare's mastery of the form) is composed of three quatrains (rhymed *abab, cdcd, efef)* followed by a terminal couplet *(gg).*
2. The work of Wyatt and Surrey initiated a vogue for sonnet writing that flourished especially in the last quarter of the sixteenth century.
3. The sonnet continued as the vehicle for love poetry. Sonnet sequences, detailing the course of a love affair, were written by Samuel Daniel, Michael Drayton, Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Folke-Greville, and others.

II. An experiment in comparative translation.

A. Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542), "The Long Love, That in My Thought Doth Harbor" (published 1557, *written c. 1540).*

1. We have here a little drama of erotic excitement. The lover is inhabited by "love," here in the figure of a God, who causes him pain and embarrassment.
2. The lady tries to teach him to restrain his passion, but the lover, having been abandoned by his fearful "master" (the metaphors are military), feels that he must end his life.

B. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1517-1547), "Love That Doth Reign and Live Within My Thought" (published 1557, *written c. 1540).*

1. Here we read the same poem (a translation of Petrarch's *Rime #140),* with a different twist.
2. The speaker's breast is already "captive" (line 2).
3. The speaker insists more strongly upon his own guiltlessness.
4. Whereas Wyatt's poem ends with a reminder of a "good" life, Surrey's ends with a "sweet" death.

III. Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586), *Astrofil and Stella* (1582).

A. The greatest of the sonnet sequences, *Astrofil and Stella* ("Star Lover and Star") has relevance to Sidney's own life.

1. He was perhaps in love with Penelope Devereux, who married Lord Robert Rich in 1581. Throughout the sequence Sidney puns on her name.
2. As an aristocrat, Sidney was a model of the perfect courtier and Renaissance man: a poet, statesman, fighter, etc.; he seemed to embody the virtues of the age.
3. Paradoxically, Astrofil, the hero and spokesman of the series, is often a bit bumbling in his efforts to persuade his lady of his love.

B. Sidney's art as a sonneteer.

1. Sonnet #31 ("With How Sad Steps, O Moon"). This poem is a marvelous demonstration of Sidney's mastery of meter and sound. The first line, completely monosyllabic, has a stately, slow pace, which is sped up only as the poem moves along. Notice, as well, the punning wit Astrofil employs in his eight different uses of the word "love" or its variants. And notice, as well, the sharp scorn of the last line.
2. Sonnet #52 ("A Strife Is Grown Between Virtue and Love"). This little courtroom poem, a debate between two personified abstractions, is also a nice balancing act. Astrofil tries to maintain impartiality, ceding to each contestant the Tightness of his claim to possession of Stella. It ends with a gesture worthy of Solomon when confronted with one baby and two mothers.
3. Sonnet #71 ("Who Will in Fairest Book of Nature Know"). Like the preceding sonnet, this one hinges on a rhetorical trick. As often happens in a Sidney sonnet, it is not the couplet that resolves the action or dilemma, but the single last line. In this case, line 14 manages to undo everything that the speaker, in his guise as courtly, neo-Platonic lover, has been spouting previously in praise of the virtues of his lady.

IV. Shakespeare and the perfection of the sonnet.

A. The publication of Shakespeare's sonnets in 1609 came well after the Elizabethan vogue for the sonnet sequence. Most were probably written in the 1590s.

1. The 152 sonnets are divided between the first 126 that address a handsome young aristocrat, whose favor the poet is seeking, and then 26 more (numbers 127-152) about a "dark lady" with whom both the poet and the young man seem, at one time or another, to be having an affair.
2. The last two sonnets (153-154) seem to be of a slightly different order altogether: versions of an older motif concerning Cupid and a nymph.
3. Speculation about the real identities of the persons involved has been rife for centuries. We can safely say that no one knows anything for certain, and that, moreover, it doesn't matter, because the sonnets stand on their own as models of poetic prowess and as the record of a complex (whether fictive or actual) erotic and emotional turbulence.
4. For our purposes, the sonnet does most of what any lyric poem can do, and it is for that reason that we shall look briefly at a few of them.

B. Shakespearean verse: Sonnet 12 ("When I do count the clock that tells the time").

1. This sonnet is a classic example of Shakespearean construction. Notice how each quatrain is self-contained in its rhyme.
2. Notice, also, that Shakespeare honors the convention of the *volta* by adopting (as he often does) a "When... Then..." construction for the action of the poem.
3. Although the theme of the poem is thoroughly conventional, and Shakespeare uses it throughout the first eighteen sonnets, notice how Shakespeare uses the couplet (urging the young man to marry) as a way of repeating, as well as countering, his earlier images.
4. And notice the many variations on the motif of time's inexorable progress throughout the poem: some refer to it as circular, some as linear; some are images involving beauty, some involve tragedy, and so forth.

C. Shakespearean verse: Sonnet 73 ("That time of year thou mayst in me behold").

1. This sonnet provides us with another example of theme and variations. In this case, the theme is the same (i.e., time's passage) but the structure of the poem and the conclusion are both different from those of Sonnet 12.
2. For one thing, each quatrain centers around a specific and separate example of time's passage.
3. But Shakespeare has arranged them to call attention to the differences among them as well as their similarities.
4. For this reason, the poem moves logically, almost inexorably, to its conclusion, but by the time we get to it, we have something of a shock.
5. The couplet doesn't quite say what we would expect it to; Shakespeare—always the master of multiple meanings and suggestions in language—encourages us to hear other possibilities in his concluding address to the young man.

Suggested Reading:

Shakespeare, William. *The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint,* **ed.** John Kerrigan.

Vendler, Helen. *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Compare the Shakespearean sonnets discussed in this lecture with the selection (Sonnet 43) from Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (Lecture Eight). What are the differences? The similarities? In like manner, compare the sonnets in this lecture with Milton's "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont" (Lecture Ten). What techniques does Milton use to seemingly expand the strictures of the sonnet form? (We will look more at Milton as sonneteer in the next lecture.)

2. In your opinion, how well does the sonnet lend itself better to a heavy, tragic, serious topic (like the slaughter of the Waldensians) or to more lyrical (but not always lighthearted) love poetry, such as found in *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, Sidney's*Astrofil and Stella* cycle, or Shakespeare's sonnets? Support your answer.

Lecture Fifteen The English Sonnet II

Scope: This lecture continues our investigation of the growth of the sonnet as a genre, discussing what innovations in form, language, and subject matter are made by Shakespeare's contemporary, John Donne, and then by Milton later in the seventeenth century. The eighteenth century was not a time for sonnet writing, so we jump to the nineteenth century to Wordsworth, who (an interesting fact) wrote *more* sonnets than any other major English poet (including his *Ecclesiastical Sonnets,* a history of the Church of England in sonnet form!), and to Shelley, whose few sonnets are extraordinarily rich and dense expansions of the form's limits.

Outline

I. John Donne (1572-1631).

A. *Holy Sonnets* (Number 10) ("Death, be not proud") (1633).

1. Donne, like other of his contemporaries, uses the sonnet for religious exploration. The structure of this one is typical: it has an Italian beginning, but instead of a sestet it continues with a third quatrain and a concluding couplet.
2. As an experiment in "tone of voice" this is a wonderful poem. Death is addressed, commanded, pitied, and condescended to, in various ways, although we realize that the speaker is—at least in part—making an argument for his *own* benefit.
3. The poem also engages us at the rhetorical level of paradox. Death is personified as a fearsome ruler who then becomes a slave to other tyrants.
4. Donne plays with the traditional associations of death with sleep as a means of assuaging his own fears: notice the quasi-logical force of his idea ("if we derive pleasure from sleep, then surely we shall derive more pleasure from Death").
5. But then he also moves to a Christian sense of death as a temporary state that precedes eternal life. Think of the standard Christian paradox of having to die in order to be reborn, of losing your life in order to find it. It turns out that Christian salvation becomes, at the same time, a means of "killing" Death itself.

B. *Holy Sonnets* (Number 14) ("Batter my heart, three-personed God") (1633).

1. This poem too plays with different ways of approaching its theme, in this case the speaker's wish to be saved by God even though he realizes his own unfaithfulness.

2. Its haughtiness of address—and the commands Donne issues to God—fly in the face of what would be considered normal Christian humility, but the speaker is desperate. He knows that God cannot make him good or make him believe; he knows that his will is free, but evil seems irresistible.
3. We notice how he develops throughout the poem two related, but separate metaphors. He is like a town, enslaved but hopeful of delivery from an enemy to its proper lord, and he is like a bride (traditionally, the Christian soul is the bride of Christ) who wishes to be married to her true husband.
4. Finally, we notice that the poem ends with strong paradoxical language (chastity and ravishment, freedom and enthrallment seem to go together), which is the speaker's way of discovering the right terms to express his wishes to God.

II. John Milton (1608-1674).

A. "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont" (published 1673, *written 1655).*
1. You will want to review Lecture Ten to see how Milton performs a miraculous experiment with this sonnet.
2. Consider the tightness of the poem's rhymes and how it plays with both the Italian and the English forms.

B. "When 1 Consider How My Light Is Spent" (published 1673, *written 1652).*
1. Milton had become totally blind right before he composed this sonnet. The "talent which is death to hide" alludes to the parable of the talents (Matthew 25. 14-30) and, in Milton's case, refers to both his sight and, perhaps, his writing.
2. Again, I call your attention to the way the sonnet overflows its boundaries. Nine lines are enjambed. Sentences tend to end in the middle, rather than the end, of lines. Speed is the essence of Milton's rhythms.
3. The last line stands alone as a single utterance, very much as the speaker himself has come to realize he must. It offers a suitable sense of closure.

III. William Wordsworth (1770-1850), "Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802." (published 1807)

A. This poem is both a description and an experiment in figurative language.
1. We notice the relatively bare simplicity of the title, with its specification of place and time.
2. The poem begins with the calm of simple generalization and evaluation, before proceeding to its first major simile in 11. 4-5.
3. The city is most clothed when most bare.
4. The city is most beautiful when most corpse-like (11. 13-14).

B. The landscape description that occupies the center of the poem uses elements of a list to build a picture of the city merging into the country.
1. The architectural details (11. 6-7) are aggressively vertical, even phallic.
2. But the civic architecture extends laterally out *into* the landscape. Wordsworth's eye is looking at the city from the middle of the bridge: it extends upwards, outwards, and downwards (to observe the way sun is "steeping" the valley, etc.).

C. The city, like the houses in it, is personified. But the one thing absent from this picture, and the one thing that thereby makes the city most attractive, is human beings. No one is awake. The city is most glorious when least urban.

IV. Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), "Ozymandias" (1818).

A. Everything about this sonnet is peculiar except its theme.
1. The decay of empires is a standard trope in literature.
2. But look at the rhyme scheme and try to figure it out!
3. Then look at the sentences and at where they stop and start. The first one, although with pauses for subordinate clauses and independent ones, goes from line 1 to line 11. The second one is the shortest and most striking. The third summarizes the experience.

B. Consider the speakers and the chain of displacement.
1. The poet (presumably but not necessarily the speaker) meets a traveler.
2. The traveler gives his report in twelve lines.
3. At the center of the report are the words of Ozymandias, engraved on the pedestal of his statue. (Earlier, the fragments "tell" us something.)
4. And those words have been inscribed by a sculptor who is able to "read passions" as well as "mock" (imitate and make fun of) them.

C. What is ultimately eternal? What survives, what disappears?
1. Notice the anonymity of all the persons in the poem *except* for Ozymandias.
2. Passion seems to be the one thing that survives (albeit in a depicted form), even though we normally think of passions as transient phenomena.

Questions to Consider:

1. Another set of comparisons, this time between Wordsworth ("Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802") and Shelley ("Ozymandias"): How are they alike in tone, language, tropes? How are they different?

2. Our overarching questions of this course (see Foreword) basically ask why the poet has arranged a poem one way and not some other way. Applying this specifically to Shelley's "Ozymandias," can you cite instances where this sonneteer has "broken the rules" of a supposedly strict poetic form— and gotten away with it? For example, where is the "couplet"? What is the rhyme scheme? What key words come to the rescue of what might be merely a well-intentioned travelogue?

Lecture Sixteen The Enduring Sonnet

Scope: We end this mini-survey with some examples of sonnets from this century. The tradition remains strong and, although we may lack book-length sonnet sequences to rival Shakespeare's, we certainly can boast, at century's end and in America, a number of young poets who feel obliged to experiment with this most elastic of forms.

Outline

I. William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), "Leda and the Swan" (1923).
   A. Although Yeats was not famous for writing sonnets, here he has composed one of the most celebrated, stunning sonnets of the century. He has reinvigorated the oldest tradition by using his sonnet as a vehicle for a "love" poem.
      1. Leda was taken by Zeus disguised as a swan. She gave birth to Helen of Troy (and to her sister Clytemnestra, as well as to the twins Castor and Pollux, although there are various mythic interpretations of exactly which children Zeus fathered), who was one of many causes of the Trojan War.
      2. A brief note on the importance of this myth in Yeats's own religious-mythological system: Christianity was ushered in by an annunciation to, and an impregnation of, a mortal woman (the Virgin Mary) by an angel (Gabriel) speaking on behalf of a three-personed divinity. Renaissance depictions of the Annunciation always involve the presence of a dove, making its way to Mary's ears. She is impregnated by the Holy Spirit at the very moment Gabriel addresses her.
      3. Likewise, the previous 2,000-year cycle began with another annunciation and impregnation, this time by Zeus of Leda.
   B. The matter of point-of-view.
      1. We begin the sonnet from Leda's point of view; she does not know what has happened.
      2. Notice the parts of speech, the compilation of body parts, and the construction of the entire first quatrain. Not until line 4 do we reach the subject and verb of the whole sentence.
      3. The poem modulates between Leda's point-of-view and that of the narrator, who poses important questions about history and knowledge.
   C. The relation of octave to sestet.
      1. Line 9 in some way repeats line 1. And the final question in some way repeats (at least formally) lines 4-8.
      2. The climax—literal and figurative—comes in line 9.

3. And through it, Yeats is able to encapsulate a whole panorama of history: from Leda's impregnation through the Trojan war and the return of the Greek heroes after ten years, as captured in Homer and Aeschylus.

D. The issue of rape and love.
   1. Many female readers take issue with the poem as a glorification of rape.
   2. For his part, Zeus does not come off too well in the poem. He has his way and then abandons the girl.
   3. But it is equally possible to think of the sonnet as a treatment of possession by divinity, and of the feeling of being overwhelmed by a super-human, sexual-religious force that leaves one, literally and figuratively, reeling.

E. History and knowledge.
   1. The poem tests one of Yeats's often-repeated themes: namely, that the agents of history are often (always?) unaware of their effects.
   2. Ending the poem with a question is an important decision. Is the question rhetorical or genuine?
   3. Yeats had a fondness for ending poems with questions; he inherited this mostly from Shelley. It opens up the entire matter of what is appropriate closure for a work of art. Are we satisfied?

II. Robert Frost (1874-1973).

A. "The Oven Bird" (1916).
   1. Observe the relationship (in all of Frost's sonnets) between the sentences and the stanzas or between the stanzas and their rhymes.
   2. This poem begins with a couplet, and the sestet begins with another couplet. For the rest, the rhymes are unpredictable.
   3. The poem tries to distinguish between singing and saying: the oven bird (also known as the "teacher" bird) does not sound like the others, preferring more prosaic forms of utterance.
   4. But the bird—like the poet and the poem—is also a framer (of questions) and he reminds us that from spring to fall there is not too far a gap.

B. "Never Again Would Birds' Song Be the Same" (1942).
   1. We are aware of Frost's fondness for, and use of, birds in his poems. He is in the Romantic tradition in this respect.
   2. Like the previous poem, this one deals with both birds and the motif of the (or, at least, a) Fall.
   3. The poem refers to Adam, without naming him; his love for Eve is clearly a starting point for Frost's deliberations.
   4. By the poem's turn (line 9) Frost himself injects a new tone, slightly more foreboding. We are meant to hear in "probably" a derisive, ironic thrust. We know that much is soon to be lost.
   5. Frost treats the most serious of themes with the simplest and most ordinary language; thus, the poem's last line (also its last sentence) has a deliberately chilling effect. Our point of view is not that of Adam.

C. "The Silken Tent."
   1. This love poem is one-sentence long and, therefore, something of a *tour deforce*.
   2. Like many poems, it is a performance of its own, as well as an homage to the loved woman.
   3. It is an experiment in troping (i.e., the subject is "She" but after the first two words she disappears into the simile of the tent), and in syntax and rhythm, in order to demonstrate and discuss motifs of support and freedom.

III. Marilyn Hacker (1942-), "Did You Love Well What Very Soon You Left?" (1986).

A. This is a fine example of a sonnet by a contemporary woman poet.
   1. It is a love poem and it follows a conventional theme, although its form is somewhat unconventional.
   2. It begins with an Italian octave, but then instead of a *volta*, line 8 enjambs directly into line 9, carrying over the force of the argument.
   3. Notice how lines 13-14 have the rhetorical force of a couplet, although they rhyme with earlier lines. Hacker is going in several directions at once.

B. Although it appears to break the rules, this sonnet is well within the tradition.
   1. The details mentioned above, concerning the relation of rhyme to sentence, show how Hacker has learned from Frost.
   2. The very title of the poem also implies an homage to the Shakespeare of Sonnet 73 ("That time of year"), whose lover will soon leave him, and life, as well.
   3. The sonnet can obviously be understood as a self-contained utterance and as a chapter in an ongoing series, part of a relationship that looks both backward and forward.

Suggested Reading:

Poirier, Richard. *Robert Frost: The Work of Knowing.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Compare Frost's "The Silken Tent" to Herrick's "Upon Julia's Clothes" in terms of imagery. What does the sonnet form allow in the way of additional "depth" as compared to the shorter stanzaic form used by Herrick?
2. We started out by describing the "restrictions" of the strict sonnet form and ending by stating that it is the "most elastic of forms." Review the sonnets we have read and try to track the changes that have occurred as succeeding generations tackled the challenges of the sonnet.

Lecture Seventeen
Poets Thinking

Scope: This lecture is the first of three, all of which will deal with the ways in which poets "think," or introduce abstract thoughts, make logical or figurative arguments, or attempt to reach philosophical conclusions via the medium of a poem. Some poets have been interested in abstract thinking (T. S. Eliot almost completed a doctorate in philosophy at Harvard; Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Shelley both read deeply in Plato and contemporary German metaphysics); others, who may produce works just as deep, do not have such a pronounced academic or metaphysical bent. In any case, we shall examine ways in which poets meditate and make arguments via a variety of means.

A poet can think in terms of images, and allow images to produce something like a sequence of ideas or feelings. In addition, a poet can make statements of either an abstract or specific sort, which resemble what we would call in prose "a thesis statement" for an argument. Poets can think logically, or analogically (using, in other words, figurative speech to develop a series of comparisons), clearly or vaguely. Throughout most of the Renaissance (up until probably the age of the British Romantics, in fact) poetry was closely allied to rhetoric (the art of persuasion), so it is natural to think of a poem in terms of the arguments it makes and its success in doing so.

In this lecture we shall examine three poets from an earlier period, all of whom "make arguments." John Donne and Andrew Marvell, both called "metaphysical" poets for the way in which they could spin elaborate metaphors (or poetic *conceits),* write wittily about serious subjects (the relationship of love to religious worship and the meanings of retreat and retirement) in "The Canonization" and "The Garden." Alexander Pope, in the neo-classical period, was able to use the balanced form of the heroic couplet as a means of not only making arguments but also of demonstrating (i.e., showing as well as telling) his points, in the marvelous *Essay on Criticism.*

Outline

We begin our exploration of how poets think by returning to John Donne (1572-1631) whose fervent, religious sonnets we discussed in Lecture Fifteen.

A. "The Canonization" (1633) is a dramatic, conversational poem that has an autobiographical background.

1. The poem begins as a conversation (an exasperated one) with someone who has apparently just criticized the speaker for his love affair.
2. In fact, we know that Donne was criticized for his own marriage.
3. Its five stanzas move away from a direct address to a meditation on the nature of love.

B. The shape of the poem.
1. The poem rises to a climax at its mid-point, where a single image (the paradoxical phoenix) embodies the mysteries of the speaker's love.
2. Before that, however, he shows how his love is not doing any harm to anyone else, and therefore, begs to be left alone.
3. The sexual nature of the love (in stanza 3) is succeeded by a realization of its religious, mysterious nature.

C. The uses of paradox, wit, and irony to develop thought.
1. Because the speaker wishes to be left alone, it comes as no surprise that the motif of a "hermitage" comes up at the end.
2. On the other hand, a religious retreat is not exactly the place one would expect to find two ardent lovers.
3. The very mystery of the love—its constant sexual energy—is what, paradoxically, assures its usefulness as a model to future lovers.
4. These people in future degenerate times will look back on us, Donne says, as models of constancy and treat us as saints who might intervene on their behalf with God.
5. Far from losing the world, at the end of the poem the two lovers become the "epitome" or microcosm of the entire world.

II. Andrew Marvell (1621-1678), "The Garden" (1681).

A. The garden tradition.
1. This poem belongs to a genre of poems that describe, analyze, and otherwise employ the trope of, the garden, which is, after all, a standard image in Western literature, with both classical and biblical prototypes.
2. In Marvell's case, the garden functions both as a retreat from the world and an epitome or microcosm of the world.

B. Poetic structure.
1. Unlike Donne's poem, "The Garden" does not follow an argument per se; it is not dramatic in the way Donne's poem is, nor does it address a real human being.
2. There seems to be something random in its organization.
3. It begins by looking back on what has been left behind. It then surveys the wonders of the garden and becomes speculative and abstract at its mid-point.
4. Finally, the poet imagines his soul as a bird that is about to take his leave of this world; he then considers the impossible happiness Adam might have had were he in the garden without Eve (an impossibility in part because Adam desired a mate). 5. And the poem ends, perhaps as an afterthought, with the sundial made of flowers; the speaker seems to have returned to his normal condition and has re-entered time itself.

C. Poetic wit.
1. Marvell has a great deal of fun in this poem simply by virtue of verbal playfulness. The poem is full of punning, or at least ambiguous words, right from the start ("amaze," "vainly," "upbraid," "companies").
2. In addition, he plays with syntactic ambiguity (as in stanza 4).
3. And he plays as well with paradoxes: on the one hand, he claims that the garden is possibly a place of sexual purity; on the other, it is the place where Pan and Apollo found sexual satisfaction.
4. The poem is a series of variations on "green thoughts" (stanza 6) and as such is an intellectual game (suggesting that the mind is superior to the natural world), as well as a lyric expression.

III. Alexander Pope (1688-1744), *from An Essay on Criticism*, lines 337-373 (1709).

A. Pope made an important contribution to literary criticism.
1. This poem by the very young Pope is an important document in literary theory and criticism. It follows a tradition extending from Aristotle (the *Poetics)* and Horace through Sir Philip Sidney and other Renaissance poets up to the Augustan or neo-classical writers of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
2. It speaks in favor of the virtues of good sense, wit, judgment, balance, and rationality in poetry.

B. Showing and telling.
1. What Pope so deftly, brilliantly achieves throughout this didactic poem is a synthesis of description, literary theorizing, and literary showmanship.
2. For example, consider the way these lines demonstrate the very phenomena they are describing: 11. 345-47, 350-353, 355-57.
3. The formula that Pope offhandedly tosses off ("True Ease in Writing comes from Art, not Chance,/As those move easiest who have learn'd to dance") is a model for a certain kind of artistic clarity especially with regard to the appropriateness of its simile.
4. There is a kind of art that hides art, thereby proving its own ease.

Suggested Reading:

Eliot, T. S. *Selected Essays* (1950).

Questions to Consider:

1. How do you evaluate "The Canonization" as a love poem? Is there anything new here? Is Donne overdoing it a bit? Since this lecture is on how poets think and put that thought into form, what clues to Donne's thinking about love (his particular love) can you infer from the poem?
2. How do you evaluate the excerpt from *An Essay on Criticism* discussed in this lecture? How do the "heroic" couplets sound to your ears after fifty lines? The classical allusions? Do you agree with Pope's dictum that "True ease in writing comes from art, not chance"?

Lecture Eighteen The Greater Romantic Lyric

Scope: We continue our investigation of "poets thinking" by looking at two similar poems in a new mode. Long ago, the critic M. H. Abrams defined "the greater Romantic lyric" as one that begins in a specific time and place, then proceeds outward through a series of philosophical and meditative maneuvers, and finally ends back in the here-and-now, where it began. Coleridge invented the term "conversation poem" for this mode and, in "Frost at Midnight," he perfected it. Wordsworth, who learned a great deal from his friend, composed perhaps the most famous example of this kind of poem in what we call, simply, "Tintern Abbey," but whose real (and less thrilling title) is "Lines—Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour. July 13, 1789." We shall examine these two poems to see how they work, and to show how two very similar poets can achieve startlingly different effects in their work.

Outline

I. "The Greater Romantic Lyric" is a poem of some length that starts in a specific time or place, makes an address to a present or absent person or object, goes through a series of philosophical speculations, and usually ends back where it began.

II. William Wordsworth (1770-1850), "Tintern Abbey" (1798).
   A. The circumstances of the poem are important to understand before analyzing it.
      1. Wordsworth was making a walking tour of the Wye Valley with his sister, Dorothy; he had visited the spot five years earlier. In the intervening years he had been caught up in political activity (in London and in France), had sired an illegitimate child by a French woman, and suffered something akin to what we would term a nervous breakdown and a vocational crisis. By the time of this poem, he had met Coleridge, become reunited with his sister (from whom he had been separated after the deaths of their parents), and was on his way to settling down.
      2. The location: Tintern Abbey was a ruined abbey and, in 1798, it was inhabited by gypsies, vagrants, and other homeless people. It is significant that the poem never refers to the abbey itself, but merely to the landscape around it.
      3. The poem is concerned with motifs of absence and presence.
   B. The shape of the poem is our first object of study.

1. Written in characteristically Wordsworthian blank verse paragraphs, the poem's several sections start with, and then return to, the landscape. Sameness and difference are its themes.
2. In the middle, Wordsworth rehearses his autobiography, contemplates the importance of this landscape, and deliberates on the relationship of landscape to morality. He considers not only how memory functions but also the very processes that enable a person to move from one stage of life to the next.
3. At the end, he (much to our surprise) addresses himself to his sister, who has been with him.

C. The poet "thinking."
1. Although it is easy to excerpt certain nuggets or truisms from the poem, what is more interesting is Wordsworth's means of developing "thoughts." Thus, the shape and scope of his sentences are as important as their content.
2. We would like to think of the poem as affirmative; in fact, its very dislocations and hesitations suggest that it is equally a poem of great doubt. The affirmations are hard won.
3. Were it not for the poet's interesting use of language—and his reliance on abstract words as well as concrete ones—we probably would not be as moved by the poem's statements.

III. Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), "Frost at Midnight" (1798).

A. The circumstances of the poem: Coleridge was unhappily married, and the poem locates him in his cottage, with his first child (Hartley) sleeping by his side.
1. The poem takes the form of a description of the setting, a reminiscence of the poet's childhood, and then a prayer for the future of his son.
2. The "stranger" he refers to is a film, or piece of soot, that flutters on a fireplace; its presence, according to local folklore, often predicted the arrival of a friend or relative.
3. This little detail helps the poet begin his meditations.

B. The poem's "ideas."
1. The poem is concerned with the way we associate thoughts with one another, and it works by associating images and people as well. "Thought" in the first stanza is both a toy, something the poet is playing with, and the activity in which he is engaged. He tends to glorify and to demean himself simultaneously.
2. The images (or motifs) of echo and mirror (a motif we shall consider in Lectures Twenty-Three and Twenty-Four) allow the poet to associate himself with his son, his present with his past, his childhood self with his sister, and man's self to God's.
3. Repetition, reflection, and echo, in fact, give the poem a coherent shape.

C. The poem's structure.
1. One paragraph to set the mood leads to one of autobiography. The first two stanzas both end with images that promise something but fail to deliver it.
2. The third stanza contrasts the poet's childhood with the present life of his son and takes a hopeful look forward to a time at which a perfect reciprocity will exist between young Hartley and God.
3. The final stanza, a benediction, returns to the motifs of natural beauty and allies them with the motif of human reciprocity that Coleridge dealt with earlier. Coleridge effectively uses *chiasmus* (crossing or reversing images between two lines or clauses); see especially line 62.The poem rounds to its conclusion with the motif of the frost.
4. The trains of thought and feeling, not the ideas, are the essence of this poem.

Suggested Reading:

Abrams, M. H. "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric," in Hilles, Frederick W., and Bloom, Harold (eds.). *From Sensibility to Romanticism,* pp. 527-560.

Fry, Paul. *The Poet's Calling in the English Ode.*

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

Spiegelman, Willard. *Majestic Indolence: English Romantic Poetry and the Work of Art.*

Questions to Consider:

1. "Tintern Abbey" was actually one of Wordsworth's first poems and it basically launched the English Romantic movement. Compare this "greater Romantic lyric" poem to the shorter works "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" and "The Solitary Reaper " (Lecture Two), "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal" (Lecture Seven), and "Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802" (Lecture Fifteen) in the context of the poet thinking. How consistent—and compelling— is Wordsworth in his thinking and his way of presenting his thoughts? Do you think the shorter works "work better" than the longer "Lines" in expressing thought or demonstrating how the poet thinks?

2. We stated in the lecture that Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight" shows thoughts in the process of being thought, that is, a process of association of one thought with another. Lines 20-23 explicitly state the motifs of "echo" and "mirror." Examine the poem carefully to find instances of how the structure reinforces the idea of repetition, reflection, and echo through such devices as anaphora, alliteration, assonance, chiasmus, synaesthesia, and word repetition, as well as direct images of "reflection" (in a physical sense).

Lecture Nineteen Poets
Thinking—Some Twentieth-Century Versions

Scope: This lecture proceeds from the previous ones, in order to show how poets can express "thought" (as well as individual thoughts) through a wide range of means: direct statement, supple syntax, shifting images, and the asking of questions. It moves from the relatively preachy style of Robinson Jeffers, to the elegant conundrum posed by Wallace Stevens in "The Snow Man," and to Yeats's "Among School Children," a poem that resembles in some ways the nineteenth-century nature lyrics of Wordsworth and Coleridge and in some ways the metaphysical speculation inherent in Marvell's "The Garden." The lecture ends with a consideration of Robert Hass's "Meditation at Lagunitas," a poem with an overt philosophical theme.

Outline

I. Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962), "Shine, Perishing Republic" (1924).
   A. Language, form, and style.
      1. The poem has the long lines of Whitman, but it also has the "heft" of a sonnet (i.e., six lines in one key, then four in another).
      2. It is loose and wordy in its reliance on (perhaps excessive) adjectives and examples.
      3. It uses a slightly archaic, almost prophetic, tone to sound authoritative.
   B. Tone and address.
      1. The poem is preachy right from the start, but its imagery (protest as a bubble popping out) enlivens what would otherwise sound like empty complaint.
      2. Although the poem seems conventional in theme (a protest against vulgarity, empire, materialism, human vanity), it makes a surprising turn in the second half, when Jeffers turns resolutely away—and hopes the children will as well—from the "love of man," and a new anti-humanism sweeps across his lines.
      3. The poem oddly mixes politics, history, human feeling, nature and cosmic imagery, and prophetic advice. Jeffers' ideas may be troubling and his methods are equally bizarre.

II. Wallace Stevens (1879-1955), "The Snow Man" (1923).
   A. By comparison to Jeffers, Stevens is cool and bare.
      1. The poem has only a single sentence, although it is fifteen lines long.
      2. The major pronoun is "one."
      3. There are few adjectives.
   B. The poem proceeds from a philosophical proposition toward a paradox.
      1. The initial image (coming from the title) poses implicit questions: what exactly is a "mind of winter?" The genitive case here is somewhat ambiguous.
      2. The concluding image is almost Zen-like in its demand that we distinguish between two kinds of "nothing."
      3. Its main theme (as often in poetry) is a conventional one: the relationship between humanity and nature, the conflict between our desire to place ourselves at the center of a universe and our realization of our own unimportance.
   C. But the syntax of the poem is its true glory.
      1. We notice how the poem takes a new turn in line 6 ("One must have... and not to think").
      2. And then it weaves back upon itself, parading certain repetitions to give us a double sense of fullness and emptiness at the same time.
      3. Ultimately, the poem is self-enclosing and circular.

III. William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), "Among School Children" (1927).
   A. This is an updated "conversation" poem in *ottava rima;* it begins loosely and ends with a concentrated burst of lyrical passion.
      1. Yeats was serving as a school inspector, and the poem at least begins with the realistic circumstances pertaining to a visit to an Irish Montessori school.
      2. The initial details suggest the dialogue between Yeats and the nun, and the opposition between him and the school children.
      3. Rather than leaving the here and now, speculating, and then returning (as Wordsworth and Coleridge might) to a specific place and time, Yeats works ever outwards (or inwards), using the present moment as a springboard to other speculations.
   B. Associations.
      1. We notice how various elements in the poem lead from one "thought" or "idea" to the next: a real child permits the poet to dream of a child in his past, and he speculates on how she has moved from childhood to old age.
      2. The idea of "images" becomes central, as it is the means by which the poet makes his associations and clarifies his ideas. The "1" with which the poem begins has dropped out.
      3. One kind of child, and one kind of image, provoke thoughts of the "images" that mothers dream of and that children represent.
   C. Potentiality and actuality.
      1. Just as an egg contains the genetic material for a whole individual, so a child is (as Wordsworth would say) "the father of the man," but what mother could ever imagine her own child grown into old age?

2. Various philosophers (stanza 6) have proposed different theories about the relationship between the physical universe and the world of ideas, but these hardly matter, because all the thinkers grew old and died.
3. Images can convey the very essence of ideas. For example, the images of an egg or an embryo, a chestnut tree or a dancer, encourage us to contemplate growth and decay, labor and performance, possibility and actuality.

IV. Robert Hass (1941-), "Meditation at Lagunitas" (1979).

A. The importance of a thesis.
1. Hass begins with a philosophical statement, then proceeds (with a degree of wit) to undermine it.
2. Even before he uses the word "elegy" (line 11), he has prepared us with his first sentence.
3. The idea of loss and thinking pervades the poem's tone as well as its meditating.

B. The relationship of the idea to the image.
1. The casual reminiscences and off-handed tone suggest a sad wisdom with regard to the inherent meaning in all human affairs, as well as humans' attempts to make sense of their affairs.
2. Mere words ("blackberry," "justice": the specific and the abstract) are slippery, but they are all we have. What is the relationship between words (general, abstract) and things (particular, concrete)?
3. The motifs are desire, distance, loss. The poem is as much an elegy as a meditation. Words are elegiac (they memorialize a fleeting and illusory world of particular things), but they are also vivifying.
4. Thus, the poem undermines its own initial thesis by suggesting that moments of religious epiphany are possible.

Questions to Consider:

1. Compare Jeffers' vatic poem, "Shine, Perishing Republic" with Hass's more elegiac "Meditations at Lagunitas." What does each poet say about life? What is the main concern or, we might say, locus of existence for each (as reflected in the poems)?

2. Compare "Among School Children" with "Lines" ("Tintern Abbey") by Wordsworth (Lecture Eighteen) as examples of "greater Romantic lyric" or "conversation poem" (to use Coleridge's phrase). Find the similarities and the differences (the lecture gives one major difference, but there are others) in message, structure, language.

Lecture Twenty
Portrayals of Heroism

Scope: From its earliest appearance, poetry has been a vehicle for transmitting ideas of heroism, heroic ideals, and heroic behavior. In the Greek and Latin epics, Achilles, Odysseus, Aeneas, and others conveyed a sense of the values prized by their societies. Likewise, the earliest English epic, *Beowulf*, is a story of a warrior king. Obviously it is not possible in a course like this to discuss in detail very long poems; rather, it is my plan over the next two lectures to say something about poems that treat heroic figures and subjects and to show how human values can be portrayed through lyric means.

Outline

I. We begin our investigation of heroism as portrayed in poetry by considering the medieval ballad, "Sir Patrick Spens" (c. 15th century).

A. We do not know the author of this powerful short balladic poem, first printed in 1765, but probably based on an actual occurrence in the late thirteenth century.
1. Ballads, like folk songs, were anonymous and were handed down, with variations, through centuries.
2. The relative familiarity of the figures and the stories would mean that a singer or poet did not need to supply too much background information.

B. Typical of its genre, this work shows economy of means.
1. Like the hero, the ballad is a vehicle of few words.
2. Details are important: a single metaphoric gesture ("blood-red wine") can make a big effect.
3. In addition, ballads tend to use metonymy as a means of classifying and characterizing. The fans and shoes in this ballad are among its salient details.

II. The Renaissance: George Peele (1557-1596), "His Golden Locks Time Hath to Silver Turned" (1590).

A. As representative of an age, and of a kind of poem, this lyric is hard to beat.
1. It works entirely by metonymy or substitution: individual details are the organizing principle behind each of the three stanzas.
2. It conveys an image of heroic valor based on two models: the active and the contemplative lives.

B. Various aspects of the Renaissance ideal gentleman or courtier.
1. The poem refers or alludes to beauty and strength, warfare and love, and the life of the court.

2. And Sir Henry Lee—in a stage of silver locks, bodily slowness—must exchange the tools of war for those of religion.
3. The knight becomes a beadsman. The poem makes this sequence seem inevitable and natural.

III. Heroism through allusion: John Dryden (1631-1700), "To the Memory of Mr. Oldham"(1684).

A. The strength of heroic couplets.
1. Dryden writes his elegy in heroic couplets for a poet-friend who died young. Almost every line is end-stopped; the rhythm and pacing confer a stately dignity upon the subject.
2. The couplets are varied with a tercet (11. 19-21), and by two alexandrines—lines of twelve syllables—in lines 21 and 25, to lend a tone of gravity and finality to the subject.

B. Allusiveness.
1. Dryden "figures" Oldham in part by comparison to heroic figures from history and literature: Nisus and Euryalus from Virgil's *Aeneid* (Book 5) and Marcellus, the nephew and heir of Augustus Caesar, who died young. The "hail and farewell" in line 22 is also an echo of the Roman poet Catullus (84? BC-54? BC).
2. He thereby implicitly puts his friend in the company of mythic, historical, and literary figures.

C. Metaphor.
1. Allusion is one kind of comparison, but Dryden resorts as well to more conventional figurative language.
2. The motifs of nature and ripening are used to supplement the references to human figures.
3. Thus, Dryden uses two diverse, but complementary means of portraying a tragic, potentially heroic literary confrere.

IV. Mock-heroism: Lord Byron (1788-1824), "Written After Swimming from Sestosto Abydos"(1812).

A. Playing with and reversing history: Leander swam from Abydos to Sestos (from the Greek to the Asian shore of the Hellespont), whereas Byron goes the other way.

B. His tone and his versification suggest that we take his complaint none too seriously.
1. He is a "degenerate modern wretch."
2. The feminine rhymes at the very start ("December/remember") suggest a playful tone, and they are repeated at the end ("plague you/ague").
3. Modern heroism is probably only heroics, but how can we be sure?

V. Lyric heroism: Tennyson (1809-1892), "Ulysses" (1832).

A. This dramatic monologue is ambiguous about heroism.
1. The poem is addressed both inwardly and outwardly.
2. The speaker talks to himself, then to his people, then to his mariners. But his own voice seems steady throughout.

B. The values Ulysses articulates and represents.
1. Based on the figure of Ulysses in Dante's *Divine Comedy* (who is placed in Hell in the circle of the evil counselors), Tennyson's speaker seems to us noble and heroic.
2. He speaks on behalf of knowledge and experience (the values for which Homer had praised him in the *Odyssey).*
3. On the one hand, he seems contemptuous of ordinary politics and of his Ithacan homeland, but on the other, he seems to assert a policy of "separate but equal" spheres ("He works his work, I mine").
4. In the end, he goes out with his mariners in a final assertion of heroic valor.
5. Telemachus, in contrast, is shown as a kind of "civil servant" representing the settled life.

C. Tennyson's ambiguity.
1. Although the closing lines of the poem were taken (by Queen Victoria and by Tennyson himself) as an expression of the need to go onward, there are discordant notes throughout the poem.
2. For one thing, there is the melancholy and the verse music (virtually monotonous) for which Tennyson was justly celebrated (e.g., 11. 54-56 especially).
3. For a second, there is the allusion to Dante: if ***his*** Ulysses was damned for leading his mariners astray, is *this* Ulysses supposed to be more admirable?
4. And finally, it very well may be that the music and the rhythm of the poem point not to an admirable heroic effort to continue "to strive, to seek, to find," etc., but to a willful and desperate escapade on the part of duty-shirking senile coots who are trying (somewhat pathetically) to reassert old strengths.

Questions to Consider:

1. Assess how the poems discussed in this lecture reflect the views of heroism in the time in which they were written. Try to determine what point of view twentieth-century "heroic" poems will take (no fair looking ahead to Lecture Twenty-One!).

2. What is your assessment of Ulysses in Tennyson's poem? Do you think he is still the heroic figure of the Trojan War and his eponymous epic? Or do you agree with the possible interpretation (paragraph V.C.4) that he is off on a last quixotic fling to relive old glories and therefore no hero at all?

Lecture Twenty-One
Heroism—Some Twentieth-Century Versions

Scope: Although we often think of the twentieth century as the age of the anti-hero, or as a time in which old-fashioned heroism and heroics are no longer fashionable or possible, it remains to be noticed that many poets continue to use their work to praise heroes and to define heroic actions. Whether in the form of political commentary or mythic encounters, twentieth-century poets from Yeats to Adrienne Rich have seriously considered types of heroism and harnessed their ideas about human behavior to their poetic craft.

Outline

I. William Butler Yeats: poet as public man.
   A. "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death (1919).
      1. The poem commemorates the death of Major Robert Gregory, whose mother Augusta was a friend and patron of Yeats's and who died in world War I.
      2. The style of the poem (octosyllabic quatrains) is a beautiful way of maintaining poetic poise and grace, appropriate to the character and style of the man who is speaking it.
      3. Yeats creates a sense of aristocratic heroism in his figure, by allowing him barely any passion: he fights for the sheer of joy it, having no connection to either his countrymen or his nominal enemies.
      4. Hero and artist seem inextricably connected as roles. The two most important and revealing words in the poem are "balance" and "delight."
   B. "Easter 1916" (1916).
      1. Commemorating the abortive Irish Nationalist rebellion of Easter Sunday 1916, this poem (with short, three-stressed lines) mingles ease of diction and intensity of effect.
      2. Notice how Yeats's slack rhythms and repeated phrases in the opening stanza help to portray the apparently meaningless and dull existence of the ordinary citizens who are about to become heroes and martyrs.
      3. Notice the effect of the refrain ("A terrible beauty is born") as it appears three times during the poem. It marks a conversion; the poem discusses changes in role.
      4. Notice, as well, the about-face the poem makes at its mid-point: it investigates motifs of change and stability, but it does so with some surprises.
      5. The poem asks us to consider the nature of heroism and its cost to humanity: Does sacrifice ennoble or harden those who become politically committed or obsessed? What is the price of martyrdom?
      6. Finally, consider (as with "An Irish Airman Foresees His Death") the relationship between heroism (life in action) and art (life in creation). The "terrible beauty" at poem's end applies equally to the creation of a heroic spirit and to Yeats's own poem commemorating the sacrifice.

II. Robert Lowell (1917-1977), "For the Union Dead" (1964).
   A. As a first-person lyric poem.
      1. We notice how this poem exists on several temporal levels. It begins with the poet's recollection of a time in his past (when the old Boston Aquarium existed). And it then pushes farther backward to previous geological eras.
      2. The poem returns at the end to Lowell and contemporary Boston.
   B. As a historical record.
      1. The poem recalls the 54th Massachusetts regiment of black soldiers led by Colonel Robert Gould Shaw.
      2. It places the achievement and failure of that regiment into a counterpoint with contemporary efforts of the civil rights movement one hundred years later. Thus, past and present exist in a continuum.
   C. As an experiment in imagery.
      1. As usual, Lowell uses complex and colorful imagery to develop a sense of the present, the past, of himself, and of Colonel Shaw and his regiment.
      2. Animals are everywhere, both literal and metaphorical ones.
   D. As a consideration of heroic behavior.
      1. Shaw's noble effort seems to have been a failure: not only at the time of the Civil War, but also with regard to contemporary events.
      2. What the Union fought to achieve has not yet been accomplished.
      3. The St. Gaudens bas-relief fronting the Massachusetts State House on Beacon Hill may offer the surest definition or portrayal of heroism: only through art and memory does heroism stay alive.
      4. With an ironic, satiric touch, the poem concludes mordantly to remind us (in its last lines) that what was once "service" (see the epigraph from the Order of the Cincinnati) has now become mere "servility."

III. Women and heroism.

A. Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979), "The Fish" (1946).
   1. As versions of heroism, many poems by women play against the cliches of male heroics and swaggering bravado, and none does so more subtly than this easy narrative by Elizabeth Bishop.
   2. It is significant that the fisher is a woman and the fish is a male—a military male at that.
   3. It is equally significant that, instead of detailing a heroic, Hemingway-esque fight, Bishop makes her catch of the fish an easy matter.
   4. Notice the details by which she comes to understand her adversary: the importance of aestheticizing and domesticating him.
   5. And notice, as well, the fact that when she throws the fish back, she achieves a victory for both of them.
   6. So instead of being a fish story of "the one that got away," the poem makes a new kind of statement: "the one I threw away!"
   7. But can we take this too seriously? After all, she took the fish home and ate him.

B. Adrienne Rich (1929-): the politics and forms of feminism.
   1. Our most prominent feminist poet-critic, Adrienne Rich, has had an exemplary career, moving from early precocity (her first book was published in the distinguished *Yale Younger Poets* series when she was twenty-two), through a gradual coming-to-terms with feminism, radical politics, lesbianism, and other political and ideological movements from the 1960s to the present day.
   2. We can examine the relationship of political statement and depictions of human heroism to poetic form by looking at an early poem and a later one.
   3. "Aunt Jennifer's Tiger" (1951) is written in easy rhyming quatrains to demonstrate not only Rich's mastery of her craft but also the confinements that oppress her titular character.
   4. "Diving into the Wreck" (1973), the title poem from a signature volume twenty years later, breaks form to develop a new hero and a new myth for female adventure.
   5. "Free" verse has its own music, however; the hallucinated and repeated phrases, as well as the poem's play with pronouns, suggest a new way of writing and a new way of performing and creating a heroic human self.

Suggested Reading:

Spiegelman, Willard. *The Didactic Muse: Scenes of Instruction in Contemporary American Poetry.*

Questions to Consider:

1. At the end of the last lecture, we asked that you conjecture on the direction that poems on heroism might take in the twentieth century. Now that you have heard this lecture and read these poems, was your conjecture justified? Cite specific poems to back up your answer, discussing how they either show a continuation of the heroic tradition or a turning away from it.

2. To the extent that you believe that we are in the age of the anti-hero or even the non-hero, develop an argument for why this might be so. Assuming that there is still heroism in the world, who (contemporary person—last fifty years) or what (contemporary event—last fifty years) would be your choice for a good "old-fashioned" poem on heroism?

Lecture Twenty-Two Poets
Talking to (and for) Works of Art

Scope: In this lecture, we shall look at a canonical poem (Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn") as an excellent example of "ekphrasis," the use of language to describe, or to speak on behalf of, a silent work of art, such as a painting, a sculpture, or in this case, an urn. This is a genre of poetry extending all the way back to Homer, who in *The Iliad* offers a lengthy description of the shield of Achilles (Book 18,11. 478-608); this motif is picked up by subsequent epic poets and by lyric poets, as well. Another example (which we have already examined in an earlier lecture) is W. H. Auden's "Musee des Beaux Arts." The most important contemporary ekphrastic poem is John Ashbery's "Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror" (1976) about the famous self-portrait of the Italian Renaissance painter Parmigianino.

Outline

I. Ekphrasis as a mode.

A. Literary people have always been interested in the visual arts; the two have long been identified as "sister arts." From the time of Simonides and Horace, it has been commonplace to think of a painting as a silent poem and a poem as a talking picture.

B. Ekphrastic (or descriptive) poems give voice to an object that is otherwise mute (sometimes the actual works of art—or characters in them—speak out to us) or, more generally, produce a verbal representation of a non-verbal representation.

C. Since most art until the twentieth century has been "representational" (i.e., capable of being discussed in terms of its depicted content), it is a natural and easy step for any writer to attempt to describe what he or she sees in a work of art. The attention can be directed at a mimetic level (the things being represented), at the formal level (i.e., what one notices about matters such as technique, color, line, and symmetry), or at the level of significance ("what does this painting mean?").

D. The work of art being described can be either an actual one or an invented one (what the poet-critic John Hollander refers to as a "notional" ekphrasis).

II. John Keats (1795-1821), "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1819).

A. Keats composed the poem in May 1819, his *annus mirabilis;* it was printed in a serial *(Annals of the Fine Arts)* in 1820 and then in Keats's (last) volume of 1820. We shall look at it in several ways, paying attention to Keats's treatment of his subject.

1. To begin, it needs to be said that although Keats saw plenty of Grecian urns and other statuary in the British Museum, there is no known original for this urn. He invented it, imagining details for it that he probably saw on other works.
2. And to get rid of something troubling right at the start: people have long been exercised over the question of who says what to whom at the end of the poem. The difficulty comes from two differing uses of quotation marks in the earliest versions of the poem, but most editors now agree to place the last two lines in quotation marks, awarding them to the urn, which is, therefore, speaking out to us.

B. The overall shape of the poem.

1. Five stanzas (we should take notice of the rhyme scheme): each ten lines long and each a curtailed or partial sonnet (one quatrain, one sestet).
2. An apostrophic poem, addressed first of all to the urn itself, personified in interesting ways; then to the individually rendered figures on the urn; and again, at the end, to the urn itself.

C. The grammar of the poem.

1. We should take notice how each stanza is conditioned by a predominant grammatical mode: the first and fourth, by questions, the second, by statements; the third, by exclamations; the last, by statements again.
2. In this regard, we also notice the way the speaker in the first stanza comes to describe the stilled action of the figures on the vase with nouns, more than verbs.

D. The emotional tonality of the poem.

1. The first stanza begins quietly and then works its way through a series of increasingly shorter questions to a nervous ecstasy.
2. The second statement, identifying the various characters on the urn, makes propositional statements, as if trying to apply those truths to the figures depicted on the urn.
3. In the third stanza, the speaker seeks confidently to address and to reassure the lover and the piper that their efforts are immortal, although he here lays the ground for paradoxical disappointments that are going to appear more boldly in the second half of the poem. The poem seems to reach a climax in the ecstasies of this stanza as the speaker gives advice, while implicitly acknowledging that the superiority of art also contains the seeds of its inferiority status.
4. The fourth stanza resumes questioning, but this time of a second scene on the urn. Has the speaker walked around the urn? Or has he turned it around? Why is it significant that this scene is one of a group of people in a religious procession? Where are they are going? Where are they coming from? Why does he ask? And can he ever know?

5. The fifth stanza works its way up to a paradoxical exclamation right at its mid-point ("Cold pastoral!"), one that is capable of rival interpretations simultaneously. The solace that the speaker offered to figures on the urn in stanza 3 is now offered back to us via the speaking urn in the last lines.

E. The paradoxes in the poem.
   1. The urn as a personified "still unravished bride" is one paradox, made even more ambiguous by the word "still"—is it an adjective or adverb? Notice what Keats does throughout the personifications in this stanza and how he returns to them afresh in the last one.
   2. Motifs of quiet/sound, stasis/movement, happiness/despair, cold/warmth are ways of organizing a response to the poem.

F. Keats's play of language.
   1. Notice the various possibilities in the following words: "still," "foster-child," "slow time," "endear'd," "no tone," "cloy'd" in relation to "parching," "silent," "brede," "overwrought."
   2. Notice as well the more generalized movements among description, proposition, direct address, specific detail, and philosophical speculation.

G. Keats believed that art should be humanizing and consoling, not just an artistic enterprise.

Suggested Reading:

Hollander, John. *The Gazer's Spirit: Poems Speaking to Silent Works of Art.*

Vendler, Helen. *The Odes of John Keats.*

Wasserman, Earl. *The Finer Tone: Keats' Major Poems.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Now that we have looked at ekphrasis in some detail, return to Lecture Seven and closely reread Auden's "Musee de Beaux Arts." What is its tone? Where is its emphasis? How well does it work as an example of ekphrasis?

2. "Musee de Beaux Arts" starts with a strong declarative statement, asks no questions, and ends with what can only be considered an understated observation, while "Ode on a Grecian Urn" starts with a less forceful statement, poses numerous questions, and ends with a strong (and very famous) concluding statement. Return to Lectures Seventeen through Nineteen (on poets "thinking"). How has each poet developed his thought through language, syntax, structure and, of course, the use of ekphrasis? What are the key contrasts and similarities?

Lecture Twenty-Three
Echoes in Poems

Scope: As we move into our last two lectures, we shall begin to look at, and listen to, how poems talk back to one another, and how they often fall into a tradition, to which successive poems add by "alluding" to, repeating, or echoing earlier ones. The matter of allusion is difficult and complex, of course, whereas the matter of a mere "repetition" (as in a refrain) within a single poem is a lot simpler. This lecture will demonstrate what poet-critic John Hollander has called "the figure of echo" and how it works in a series of nineteenth- and twentieth-century poems that have as their central theme, or trope, the motif of echo itself.

Outline

I. William Wordsworth: "The Boy of Winander" (from *The Prelude*, Book V, 11. 364-88) (completed 1805, published posthumously in 1850).

   A. It is important to know the place of this passage in the overall larger work.
      1. In Wordsworth's epic autobiography, the passage known for its hero as "The Boy of Winander" comes in a discussion of "books" and their place in education.
      2. We know from the manuscript that the "boy" was originally Wordsworth himself; in his presentation here, he makes the anecdote a third-person story and has the boy die young.
      3. The whole anecdote is a vignette detailing the processes of education by and in nature.

   B. This passage can be considered as a parable of learning, listening, reading, and responding.
      1. The boy is a natural mimic.
      2. He listens to the owls and answers them.
      3. When he is baffled by silence, another kind of revelation descends upon him.

   C. It can also be viewed as a parable of "echo" and repetition.
      1. The passage confuses our sense of what is "original" and what is "responsive" and, therefore, can be taken as a parable of *all* literary endeavor.
      2. The motif of the entry of the "visible" scene that enters into the boy's mind is another complicated example of repetition, absorption, and doubling.
      3. The sad thing is that the entire episode leads only to death.

II. Robert Frost, "The Most of It" (1942) is an updating, or "echo," of "The Boy of Windander."

A. Frost writes of an unnamed, unspecified man (or boy?) in nature looking for some response.
   1. What is the nature of "original response"? We are reminded of the notion of origin, the place of beginning.
   2. Man and nature exist in an uneasy reciprocal relationship.

B. This is a distinctly Frostian (original) poem.
   1. We notice that instead of owls, Frost's character gets his response in the form of a buck.
   2. We notice, as well, the importance of "it" (line 10).
   3. Not only is the "thing" unspecified for a while, but it also comes as a surprise since it is not "human."
   4. And it comes in the form of a simile ("as a great buck").

C. The notion of identity, like the notion of origin, has been blurred or complicated for us.

III. Elizabeth Bishop, "The Moose" (1976).

A. First, we will consider this as a poem of encounter.
   1. The poem is like those earlier Wordsworthian encounters ("Resolution and Independence," "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," "The Solitary Reaper," etc.).
   2. Significantly, the setting involves a group, instead of a solitary speaker.
   3. Bishop has a keener sense of community than Wordsworth, but is also a lone traveler on the bus, overhearing the conversations of her fellow passengers.

B. We can also consider this poem to be a response to Frost as well as to Wordsworth.
   1. The moose—perhaps a threat—turns out to be harmless and unaggressive.
   2. It is a female (unlike Frost's "great buck").
   3. It produces, as opposed to consternation and confusion, a shared feeling of joy.

IV. John Hollander, "For Elizabeth Bishop" (1977).

A. We can consider this to be a "learned poem" for several reasons.
   1. We notice how the poet begins in the library.
   2. And is involved in an exercise in translation, which uncovers a remarkable (or so he thinks) fact about a certain word that then inspires him to create a "herd of meanings" for a single word and its family.
   3. But learning always involves self-correction, aftershocks, and afterthoughts, so it comes as no surprise that the second part of the poem repeats and revises an earlier misapprehension.

B. This poem is an excellent study of origins, originality, echoing, and lyric self-consciousness.
   1. Mislooking (with an "errant eye") means making mistakes.
   2. And it also involves an unwanted, aggressive first-person pronoun (eye = I!).
   3. Mislooking and mishearing are united.

C. The poem reminds us that lyric consciousness and feeling are not antithetical to allusiveness, wit, and historical learning.
   1. Hollander subtly puts himself into a tradition by referring to it (viz., explicitly to Frost and indirectly to Wordsworth).
   2. But he also tells his readers much of what they need to know about his subject. (He is not merely showing off.)
   3. The poem makes a serious statement—through lighthearted means—about the nature of "ego" or "self and its relationship to originality.
   4. We all come from somewhere, and all literary creation involves, therefore, the necessity of "semantic play." In this sense, there is no real "originality"; it is a myth in poetry, as in life.

Suggested Reading:

Hollander, John. *The Figure of Echo.*

--------. *Harp Lake.*

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

Questions to Consider:

1. Can you find other poems in this lecture series that allude to earlier works? Compare the initial poem with its imitator.

2. Do you agree that originality is not possible in poetry? Is it necessary for a poem to be "original?" Consider the many forms that originality might take. Consider also Hollander's "decree": "In all Originality/Where once God was, let ego be."

Lecture Twenty-Four
Farewells and Falling Leaves

Scope: In this final lecture of the entire course, we shall continue a motif from the previous one, i.e., how poets respond to, imitate, and echo one another. And we shall do so with regard to perhaps the most resonant trope in Western literature, the motif of the "falling leaves," which we shall follow from its source in Homer's *Iliad* through various reappearances up to the present day. Perhaps the enduring nature of elegy as a form has persuaded our poets for more than two millennia to use and reuse this motif of seasonal death and rebirth.

Outline

I. The trope of "falling leaves" starts in Homer *(Iliad,* Book 6).
   A. In battle, the Trojan warrior Glaucus encounters the Greek Diomedes, who inquires of his lineage.
   B. Glaucus responds to the "Great-souled son of Tydeus" by likening the "generations of men" to "generations of leaves" and pictures the scattering of leaves, their decay, and the rebirth of new leaves in the spring. In like manner, Glaucus says, with men, one generation dies out only to give rise to another.
   C. The same sentiment appears as well in *Ecclesiastes* (Old Testament).

II. Virgil in his *Aeneid*^ Book 6 (which was consciously written to imitate the *Iliad* and *Odyssey),* continues the trope; he simultaneously echoes, varies, and amplifies Homer.
   A. Virgil repeats, but with important differences, Homer's original simile.
      1. Aeneas, the founder of the Roman nation, has descended into the underworld to learn from Anchises, his father, the next steps he must take.
      2. At the River Styx, he is greeted by the souls seeking transport by the ferryman Charon to the other side.
   B. Virgil's simile mingles the motif of the leaves with that of migrating birds, thus increasing the relevance of the original in Homer.

III. We jump forward to the Renaissance and to Dante's *Inferno,* Canto III (c. 1314), to pick up the trope again.
   A. Now in the underworld, with Virgil as his guide, Dante encounters Charon at the River Styx.
      1. Notice the symbolic importance of Virgil's position in the poem (an "echo").
      2. And notice as well the fact that—as with Virgil and Homer—homage is being paid to a previous master in a different language.
   B. The Christian underworld is different from the pagan one, and Dante emphasizes the sense of punishment that awaits the souls.
      1. It is Adam's "evil seed" that is compared to the leaves of the tree.
      2. A falcon is now the bird troped in Virgil.
      3. These souls have no hope for rebirth, *unlike* the leaves of trees.

IV. Moving forward several centuries, we see the image of falling leaves reappear in Milton's monumental *Paradise Lost,* Book 1,11. 295-313 (1667).
   A. We find ourselves once again in the underworld, but now it is Satan who is addressing his fallen angelic troops.
      1. Milton alludes to Dante, by referring to Vallombrosa, near Florence, Dante's native city.
      2. The troops are about to be raised and inspired; unlike Virgil's and Dante's souls, they are not yet moving.
   B. Milton extends the simile to include a reference to God's destruction of the Egyptian pharaoh as the Israelites crossed the Red Sea during the exodus.
      1. This doubles, or at least extends, the historical and religious range of the original simile.
      2. It also reminds us that Satan and the fallen angels, like Pharaoh and his soldiers, are on the wrong side of justice in the world Milton is describing.

V. Our next stop is in the Romantic era and Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" (1820).
   A. Composed in Florence, this ode pays homage to both Dante and Milton.
      1. Notice that it is a sonnet, but written in Dante's form, *terza rima.*
      2. The same tempestuous wind that Shelley invokes is the one that Milton would have noticed in Vallombrosa.
      3. There is a sly reminiscence of *Paradise Lost,* Book I, in these lines.
   B. We are back above the earth.
      1. Shelley's setting is naturalistic rather than mythological, and Judeo-Christian notions of damnation and salvation are not his primary concern.
      2. But death and rebirth are of concern, as befits the trope.
      3. The leaves become seeds that will be reborn, when spring—autumn's sister—brings new fruitfulness and life to the earth.
   C. This is a lyric poem, not an epic, and Shelley has changed the nature of his simile.
      1. By alluding to his predecessors, he has lifted his lyric to the level of a greater utterance.
      2. By personalizing the simile ("If I were a deaf leaf thou mightest bear" he exclaims), he includes himself among the fallen and the soon-to-be uplifted leaves.

3. The poet has become an instrument (lyre) and an agent of a greater force.

VI. Ezra Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" (1913) is an early twentieth-century homage to the previous poems we have discussed in terms of "falling leaves."

A. Here we encounter an even shorter lyric poem, more like *haiku* and an imagist experiment—a detail reduced to its smallest components.

B. The simile is significant: faces of people in the subway are like petals.
   1. They stand out like jewels in the foil of a setting (the bough).
   2. Once again, the human and vegetative worlds are brought into balance.

C. But we notice the location.
   1. An "apparition" (rather than, say, a mere "appearance") suggests something ghostly.
   2. The metro station suggests a descent into an underworld.
   3. Pound has placed himself within the epic tradition as delicately as possible.

VII. Howard Nemerov, in his "For Robert Frost, in the Autumn, in Vermont" (1967), gives us a late twentieth-century version of the "falling leaves" trope.

A. This poem acts as a simile with multiple applications.
   1. It serves as an homage to the classic "New England" poet.
   2. It is also a satire directed at leaf-peeping tourists in the fall.

B. On another level, it gives a reminder of death and rebirth in regard to nature, to human beings and to Frost (who died in 1963) himself. Even the word "shade" in the last line conveys multiple suggestions (shade of the leaves, souls of the damned).

C. Finally, this is a parable of looking, seeing, and reading.
   1. It employs the trope of the *liber naturae* (God's "book of nature") and makes us see the natural world as a work of art.
   2. The natural world is used as a trope for the pages of Frost's own poetry.

VIII. A farewell to falling leaves.

A. Let us reconsider our beginnings, by returning to A. R. Ammons' "Beautiful Woman" with its use of the word "fall" and the tropes it brings to mind.

B. Even this delicate lyric adheres to the most enduring truth of all: our sense of our humanity and our relationship (both parallel and adversarial) to the natural world.

Suggested Reading:

Ammons, A. R. *Brink Road.*

Nemerov, Howard. *The Collected Poems of Howard Nemerov.*

Questions to Consider:

1. Can you find other poems in these lectures (or elsewhere) that play on the trope of falling leaves? Develop their relationship to the Homeric original as well as the other subsequent poems, noting each case of direct and indirect reference to any predecessors.

2. Finally, how well has this course helped to give you a new understanding of the poetic art and meet the learning objectives mentioned in the overall course scope statement? Specifically, we set out to equip you with specific knowledge of how to read poetry with a stress on recognizing the figurative language, music and sound, and tone of voice (the element that Frost deemed most important). We also covered structure (poetic forms and meter). Do you feel more able at this point to reading any poem with greater insight into what it says and how it says it? If so, please enjoy the pleasure of poetry in the future, whether seeing old favorites with new eyes or encountering totally new poems.

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 *befaebdc* 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/7m« *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 preserved intervals throughout the poem, and beeome hnes 18 and 19 at the end. Only two rhymes are used throughout.

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 I 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 1
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**
"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 Twentieth-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 1
Sonnet 12 ("When I do count the clock")	Shakespeare, William	**14**	The English Sonnet I
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
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 11
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 I
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**	Heroi sm—Some T wenti eth-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 I
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 I

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 II
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 I 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
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
The Sun Underfoot Among the Sundews	Clampitt, Amy	**13**	Free Verse

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
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 II
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
The Silken Tent	Frost, Robert	**16**	The Enduring Sonnet

Name of Poem	Name of Author	Lecture Number	Lecture Title
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**	Heroi sm—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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