

Poetry and melancholy. Wretchedness in writing. Hamlet and the rise of the miserable git. Malvolio. Count Orsino. Olivia and Viola. The clowns and the fools. There's no end to it, and maybe no beginning. In the summer I was reading Larkin ('home is so sad') and Lowell ('examining, and then examining/ what I really have against myself'), and thinking: why aren't they in. Still, for the moment, they aren't, even if I haven't quite settled on who is. Maybe it'll come to me now. (But maybe we'll read them next semester, in workshop?) The issue, as always, is: how to get the reader to care. How to avoid the Scylla of 'I don't believe you' and the Charybdis of 'so what?'

I was thinking, though, in terms of not that many books, not that many poets, to leave ample scope for in depth discussion – and student-led discussion, at that – and even some room for written contributions, though it remains my belief that these classes are much more for reading than for writing. Perhaps, as with other classes I've taught, you might volunteer in pairs to present poems or poets? Meanwhile, the opportunities for writing, as I presently see them, are these:

1. A 'correct' rhymed translation of one of the shorter Benn poems.
2. A 'motet' of your own. (EM)
3. A 12-line, 'part of speech'-type poem of your own. (JB)
4. A 'Payne-Whitney'-type poem of your own; alternatively, a never-ending 'Hymn to Life' or 'Morning of the Poem' or 'A Few Days'-type of thing, written in numerous daily increments. (Really! I mean it!)
5. Anything biographical, on any of the poets.

It would be ideal to receive such voluntary contributions the week before; it's another reason for us to linger – 3 weeks each, on average – over the poets.

As you see, I've left room for slippage, acceleration, Oxford comma, and change of plan:

22 August preliminaries, how was the eclipse for you, expectations of this class, a very little Benn.
29 August Benn I

5 September Benn II
12 September Benn III
19 September – no class, I'm away in London, on Lowell business
26 September Montale I

3 October Montale II
10 October Montale III
17 October Brodsky I

24 October Brodsky II
31 October Bishop? Or Tonks?

7 November Bishop? Or Tonks? Or someone else? Or Schuyler
14 November Schuyler I
21 November Schuyler II
28 November Schuyler III

5 December Finis

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