

Suddenly I've been here for twenty years. I feel as nervous about this teaching business as ever, maybe more so. Still, as Berryman says via his epigraphs in the *Dream Songs*, nothing good was accomplished without nerves. And it's my birthday, of all things (don't ask).

Hello and welcome. This is the graduate poetry workshop at UF. At the heart of it is something unknown to me, and possibly still to be thought of by you: the poems you will write and bring to class week after week. There will be no assignments from me, or not until further notice anyway. (If you feel too stuck or strike me as too comfortable, we can think about providing you with hoops or prompts.) But basically, I want you to write the poems you want to write, that you perhaps always wanted to write, the poems you have it in you to write, the poems that come to you to be written. These are what we will talk about in class. (To second-timers, an apology for having no new tricks for setting the Thames on fire.)

We will read on the side not two but three Collected Poems: those of Ted Hughes (1930-1998) and James Schuyler (1923-1991) as previously announced (and ordered), but also those of (1928-2014) Rosemary Tonks. (Who?) It's always good karma, I think, to institute things at a late or final stage, and I first got wind of the Tonks book in summer, following her death, in April, if I remember. Probably our three poets don't have anything in common, except that I adore their work, and I hope you will as well. If there is something, then it's a kind of dailiness, the toughness and tough-mindedness you need to become a poet and stay one. Here's something Schuyler wrote in a letter to Kenneth Koch: "Anyway, you must do it right away because while no one cares whether it ever happens it has to happen now if it's going to happen at all." That could serve as a motto for our class, plus something an American photographer (one David LaChapelle) said in the Guardian (his "top tip") on May 29: "turn off your cellphone, I-pad and computer, and cut all the time you spend on social media to an eighth. If you don't, you will never develop your intuitive voice." (And this, interestingly, is from someone working in a 'technical medium'.)

I would like you each over the semester to present one or two pieces by the poets to class. Things that you liked, things that you thought you could learn something from, things that you managed to puzzle out, or perhaps wanted help in puzzling out. I would like them to be your poets as much as mine. I don't want to hear too much of me. Make a time on the calendar with me – formalize dates.

A link (a first!): <http://www.raymondfoye.info/Schuyler-interview.php> - such fun! Also the Paris Review interview with Ted Hughes by Drue Heinz is outstanding:

<http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/1669/the-art-of-poetry-no-71-ted-hughes>

Find out what you can about Tonks. There doesn't seem to be much. This –

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/may/31/rosemary-tonks-lost-poet>

from Neil Astley, her posthumous publisher, is about the size of it.

Here are some rather provisional timings. Schuyler – he’s the summer poet, then Tonks, then Hughes – he’s the November poet. Obviously if the Tonks is late in coming, we’ll be thrown for a heap, or a loop. Shufflehouses.

25 August Overture and beginners.

1 September Labor Day, no class.

8 September Schuyler

15 September Schuyler

22 September – Schuyler

29 September Schuyler

6 October Schuyler

13 October Tonks

20 October Tonks

27 October Tonks

3 November Hughes

10 November Hughes

17 November Hughes

24 November Hughes

1 December

Class will be in the Suite. My office hours are Monday and Wednesday, 2-4 p.m., and other mutually convenient times.

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