

   CRW 6166   

Spring, 2021 / Secrets of Poetic Craft
(sect. 4273)

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Tuesday 9-11 (4:05-7:05 pm)
Zoom

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“The whole frame of the Poem is a beating out of a piece of gold, but the last clause is as the impression of the stamp, and that it is that makes it currant.”
—John Donne

There are matters of poetic craft rarely talked about, aspects of form often unnoticed but not beneath notice. My presumption will be that letting cats out of bags or dragging assassins from shadows will in no way harm our understandings—we may even become more sensitive to the choices in verse that have meaning, or force meaning, or embarrass words into meaning, however often we make such choices unconsciously.

Poetry workshops discuss aesthetics more than craft. This course will devote itself to the nuts and bolts of poetry: titles, enjambment, syntax, metaphor, simile, closure, everything that contributes to the internal architecture of the poem. Many of these are covered superficially during workshop, but we will look more deeply at what in each case causes the effect as well as the affect. Critics rarely write about these things, perhaps because such things are felt to *be* only craft—though there are times when the internal-combustion engine is more relevant to discussion than Detroit’s latest shades of paint. We will concentrate on matters often mentioned only in passing or given a paragraph or two in the front matter of a textbook.

We will start, unsurprisingly, with titles, and end with a section on poetic closure. Few critics deal overtly or at length with such mean labors of craft—they are used to teasing out every ambiguity a line holds, or to plotting a poem along the axis of history, geography, sociology, theology, psychology, or philosophy; yet they rarely consider the choices in craft that led to the structures of meaning. To get at these poetic decisions, I have ransacked my library. I will not pretend to have exhausted the subject. I regret that I’ve found little worth examining on matters of no little importance: verb tense, for example, or first vs. third person. Supplemental readings may be dragged in belatedly.

In our weekly seminar, we’ll first discuss the readings with a selection of poems that bear upon them. Over the course of the semester, each student will give a presentation (fifteen minutes or shorter) on one of the topics, using these readings and expanding upon them. We’ll divide up topics at our initial meeting; presentations will begin in week three. Presenters are responsible for emailing .pdf files of supplemental readings, if any, one week in advance, along with any exemplary poems not available in the

anthology adopted for the course. The second half of each class will be a poetry workshop, concentrating more than is usual on the craft matters raised in the course. Ten poems will be assigned, one every week, due one week later. These will be discussed the week following, usually four or five an evening.

We will not touch on all matters of craft. Meter, for example, lies outside the concentration of topics here; but I will probably offer an independent study on meter next fall or spring. Our goal is to become conscious of what is often ignored or overlooked, and to leave our sensibilities engaged, and in control of, these quiet matters of poetic composition—when we wrestle with the angels of sensibility and the devils of our language.

⇒ *Logistics*

Every week I'll make a writing assignment. Assignments vary from the straightforward to the perverse. I'll ask you to write a poem to a form of my devising, with three or four additional requirements meant to obstruct your conscious mind and give you access to your imagination, in each case demanding attention to topics of craft recently covered. I hope to entangle your censoring conscious so completely that you'll concentrate on fulfilling the form and not worry overmuch (apart from the necessities of sense) about what is being said. The poem is due the following week at the end of class (bring copies for all). Poems must be printed in black ink on regular white paper. I am immune to excuses for late assignments, however ingenious. You may obtain grace until noon the next day (no longer) by bringing lashings of cake or cookies to class the following week. Late assignments will be marked down 10% per day.

Over the course of the semester, each poet's work will be workshopped about the same number of times. *Assignments sent by email should be sent as .rtf or .pdf attachments with your name, number of assignment, class—don't make someone else your secretary.* It's a prerequisite of the course that you buy the books. Failure to complete the readings or to engage in discussion is a sign of lack of interest in your grade. You can buy the books at the campus book store or on the web.

Many younger poets have no concern for the richness of words, the complication of expression, and rarely use what might be called the subsidies of sense (as opposed to plain bread-and-butter prose meanings). These subsidies include ambiguity, nuance, the right wrong word, music of various sorts (alliterative, consonantal), patterns of adherence (meter, set form), thematic tangles, sensitivity to verb tense, timing, and delay—in short, the ways that poets have traditionally put English on English.

⇒ *Discussions*

You're responsible for reading the prose assignments and the worksheet *in advance*

of class, making notes upon them, and bringing them with you. Copious notes. The quick wit, intelligence, and charm of your analysis will be appreciated by all. ~~Use of laptops during class is forbidden.~~ Hats are forbidden (except religious hats). ~~If your cell phone rings, you owe everyone cake or cookies.~~

⇒ *Notebooks*

The week after I receive your assignment, I'll hand it back with suggestions. These annotated assignments should be collected in a file folder, due on April 16 (the Friday before the last week of class), accompanied by new revisions of all poems. There are no exams.

⇒ *Grades*

(1) After reading your brilliantly revised portfolios, I'll give each poem a mark of 1-10 (these are chili-pepper grades, from ultra mild to red hot). The mark will reflect the courage and imagination shown in the assignment, as well as the technical dexterity or ingenuity, and, in addition, the quality of the revision. (2) Class participation, awarded 0-10 additional points, will be worth the same as one poem. (3) Your class presentation will also be worth 0-10 additional points. I'm not able to reward mere chatter, but I'm sure that you'll always respond to the poems and the opinions of others in a deft and polite and witty manner.

⇒ *Absences*

You may have two absences for any reason, no matter how whimsical; but you must notify me *in advance*. Email me to do so. Each uncleared absence (or lateness over ten minutes) and each additional absence will result in loss of half a letter grade for the term. *If you miss a class, your assignment is due by email, sent to me, by 12 noon the following day (.rtf or .pdf format, please). Otherwise it will be treated as late. (Poems late because of absence do not have to be rescued by sweets.)* ~~When you're absent, you may pick up your packet of poems from my mailbox in 4301 Turlington, across from the double elevators. I'm available for conferences Tuesday afternoons or by appointment if that time is impossible due to a scheduled class (but not due to a job or a hot date).~~

Rules of presentation

- 1) Title your poems.
- 2) Single space with at least a 12-point font (13 if Times Roman) and don't use a clever font.
- 3) Don't center justify. (It makes the poor poems look like embroidery.)
- 4) Put your name, class, my name, and the assignment number in the upper-left corner of the page.
- 5) No sentence fragments. You must use correct grammar and punctuation.

Ozymandias

I met a traveller from an antique land,
 Who said —“Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
 Stand in the desert . . . near them, on the sand,
 Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
 And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command, 5
 Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
 Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
 The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
 And on the pedestal these words appear:
 My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings, 10
 Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!
 No thing beside remains. Round the decay
 Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
 The lone and level sands stretch far away.”

—Percy Bysshe Shelley

On a Stupendous Leg of Granite, Discovered Standing by Itself in the Deserts of Egypt, with the Inscription Inserted Below

In Egypt's sandy silence, all alone,
 Stands a gigantic leg, which far off throws
 The only shadow that the desert knows.
 “I am great Ozymandias,” saith the stone,
 The king of kings: this mighty city shows 5
 The wonders of my hand.” The city's gone!
 Nought but the leg remaining to disclose
 The site of that forgotten Babylon.

We wonder, and some hunter may express
 Wonder like ours, when thro' the wilderness, 10
 Where London *stood*, holding the wolf in chace,
 He meets some fragment huge, and stops to guess
 What powerful, but unrecorded, race,
 Once dwelt in that annihilated place.

—Horace Smith

TEXTS:

R. S. Gwynn, *Contemporary American Poetry*
 A. F. Scott, *The Poet's Craft*

B. J. Pendlebury, *The Art of the Rhyme*
 Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Poetic Closure*

week

1 (January 12)	Introduction and Baptism by Fire
2 (January 19)	Titles Hollander, "Haddocks' Eyes"
3 (January 26)	Beginnings Hecht, "The Music of Forms"
4 (February 2)	Voice and Tense Booth, "Types of Narration"; Ransom, "The Tense of Poetry"; Vendler, "Sonnet 30"
5 (February 9)	Particles, articles, prepositions Berry, "Preposition in Poetry"; Hollander, "Of of"
6 (February 16)	Enjambment Hollander, "Sense Variously Drawn Out"
7 (February 23)	Punctuation Ricks, "Geoffrey Hill 1"
8 (March 2)	MOVIE NIGHT
9 (March 9)	Metaphor 1 Empson, "On 'And' and 'Of'"; Leech, three chapters
10 (March 16)	Metaphor 2 Brooke-Rose, "The Verb," "Auxiliary Words and Phrases"
11 (March 23)	Rhyme 1 Pendlebury, <i>The Art of the Rhyme</i>
12 (March 30)	Rhyme 2 Hecht, "On Rhyme," Wimsatt, "One Relation of Rhyme to Reason"
13 (April 6)	Endings Smith, <i>Poetic Closure</i> ; Ricks, "Philip Larkin"
14 (April 13)	Revisions Scott, <i>The Poet's Craft</i> (NOTEBOOKS DUE Friday, April 16)
15 (April 20)	Final pronouncements

It may be necessary for the instructor to be absent one evening. Warning shall be given!

Bibliography

- Francis Berry, *Poets' Grammar* (1958)
 "Preposition in Poetry and Translation" (167-177)
- Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961)
 "Types of Narration"
- Christine Brooke-Rose, *A Grammar of Metaphor* (1958)
 "The Verb" (206-238)
 "Auxiliary Words and Phrases" (238-264)
- William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (2nd ed., 1947)
 "On 'And' and 'Of'" (88-101)
- Anthony Hecht, *Melodies Unheard* (2003)
 "On Rhyme" (252-274)
 "The Music of Forms" (275-299)
- John Hollander, *Vision and Resonance* (1975)
 "Sense Variously Drawn Out': On English Enjambment" (91-116)
 "Haddocks' Eyes: A Note on the Theory of Titles" (212-226)
- John Hollander, *The Work of Poetry* (1997)
 "Of of: The Poetics of a Preposition" (96-110)
- Geoffrey Leech, *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (1969)
 "Types of Deviation" (36-55)
 "The Irrational in Poetry" (131-146)
 "Figurative Language" (147-165)
- B. J. Pendlebury, *The Art of the Rhyme* (1971)
 various passages
- John Crowe Ransom, *The World's Body* (1938)
 "The Tense of Poetry"
- Christopher Ricks, *The Force of Poetry* (1984)
 "Philip Larkin" (274-284)
 "Geoffrey Hill 1" (285-318)
- A. F. Scott, *The Poet's Craft* (1957)
 various passages
- Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Poetic Closure* (1968)
 various passages
- Helen Vendler, *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (1997)
 "Sonnet 30"
- William Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon* (1954)
 "One Relation of Rhyme to Reason"
- anthology
 R. S Gwynn, *Modern American Poetry* (2004)

UF Policies

Classroom Behavior:

Every student in this class is expected to participate in a responsible and mature manner that enhances education. Any conduct that disrupts the learning process may lead to disciplinary action. Because this course requires much contact, collaboration, and dialogue among students, it is essential that each student work to create an environment of respect and tolerance. Please keep in mind that students come from diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some of the readings we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Diversified student backgrounds combined with provocative texts require that you demonstrate respect for ideas that may differ from your own. Disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal, and accordingly absence, from the class. See <http://www.afl.edu/aa/affact/harass/>
Turn off your cell phone before class.

Academic Dishonesty:

All work should be individual. Evidence of collusion (working with someone not connected to the class or assignment), plagiarism (use of someone else's published or unpublished words or design without acknowledgment) or multiple submissions (submitting the same paper in different courses) will lead to the Department's and the University's procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty. All students are expected to honor their commitment to the university's Honor Code [available online at <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/students.html>].

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the student academic honor code. You commit plagiarism when you present the ideas or words of someone else as your own. If a student "plagiarizes" all or any part of any assignment, I will award him or her a failing grade on the assignment. Additionally, University policy suggests that, *as a MINIMUM*, instructors should impose a course grade penalty and report *any* incident of academic dishonesty to the Office of the Dean of Students. You should know that your work might be tested for its "originality" against a wide variety of databases by anti-plagiarism guardian sites to which the University subscribes, and negative reports from such sites constitute PROOF of plagiarism. Other forms of academic dishonesty will also result in a failing grade on the assignment as a minimum penalty. Examples include cheating on a quiz or citing phony sources or quotations to include in your assignments. Remember, *you are responsible* for understanding the University's definitions of plagiarism and academic dishonesty, which include the following:

Submitting all or part of someone else's work as if it is your own.

"Borrowing," without crediting the source, any of the following:

- o Any part of song lyrics, poetry, or movie scripts
- o Any part of another person's essay, speech or ideas
- o Any part of an article in a magazine, journal, newspaper
- o Any part of a book, encyclopedia, CD-ROM, online "www" page, etc.
- o Any idea from another person or writer, even if you express that idea in your own words.

Borrowing" verbatim text without enclosing in quotation marks and citing the source.

Making "duplicate submissions" of assignments – that is, submitting work in one class that you also submit in another class.

"Collaborating" or receiving substantive help in writing your assignment unless such collaboration is part of the given assignment. (However, you may receive general advice from tutors, writing lab instructors, or OWL staff.)

Failing to cite sources, or citing them improperly.

Important Tip: *You should never copy and paste something from the Internet without providing the exact location from which it came.*

Students with Disabilities:

The University of Florida complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students requesting accommodation should contact the Students with Disabilities Office, Peabody 202. That office will provide documentation to the student whom must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.