

ENGLISH 9132B
Hysterical Poetics: English Poetry 1855-90

Provisional Course outline; the final version of this document will be distributed at the first session of the seminar.

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Office number AHB 2G02D. Hours: Thurs. 10-12 and by appt.

This course will provide a selective overview of British poetry between 1855 and 1890, taking Tennyson's monodrama *Maud* as its point of departure. That poem's protagonist diagnoses himself and his society as suffering from hysteria, and we will take this idea as a basis for focusing our discussion of late Victorian poetry on the topics of simulation, embodiment, and gender crossing, three motifs central to the period's understanding of hysteria. We will consider major texts and writers, attending to generic and formal traits that characterize late Victorian poetry and to diverse ways in which it is implicated in the broader culture of its era. The seminar's overarching theoretical project, however, will be to develop a practice of reading that renders visible and helps explicate Victorian poetry's representations of the body and its techniques for inscribing bodily performance. We will discuss Victorian poetry's preoccupations with skin, hair, and blood; we will also consider allegorical representations of the body and its parts, for instance in landscapes, plants, and buildings. To the spectacularization of the body that will appear as one of the main projects of Victorian poetry, we will link the period's experiments in the transcription of colloquial language and dialect as well as its rich tradition of experimentation with metre as a technology for the inscription of accent and intonation.

Outside the field of poetry and poetics, the seminar will discuss other Victorian discourses of the body such as those of psychiatry and physiology. We may consider the texts of Darwin on the expression of the emotions, Ellis on sexuality, and Charcot and Freud on hysteria.

Among the poets to be studied may be Tennyson, Robert Browning, William Morris, Swinburne, D G Rossetti, Christina Rossetti, George Meredith, Augusta Webster, Michael Field, G. M Hopkins, and Thomas Hardy.

Required Book:

Collins and Rundle, eds: *The Broadview Anthology of Victorian Poetry and Poetic Theory*, Broadview 1999, (ISBN 978-1551111001). Be sure to get the full length one, not the abridged edition. Used copies are available online—try bookfinder.com.

Assignments:

-- A 5000 word paper on a topic of your choice will be due two weeks after our last meeting, on April 20; please choose your topic as early as possible in consultation with me. You may if you wish submit a formal description of your paper topic any time up to March 30 and I will return it with comments. The finished paper is to be submitted as if for publication, with full scholarly apparatus in accordance with either the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* or the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

--Once during the term each of you will give a 15-minute presentation in which you will introduce a topic to be discussed in that day's seminar. Presentation topics must be chosen in consultation with me.

--A 1500-word paper to be submitted on February 3. I will offer you a choice of topics for this paper; if you wish to write on a topic of your own, please consult with me.

--Throughout the term, and above all, read the material assigned on the syllabus and come to class prepared to discuss it, and to ask and answer questions about it.

Evaluation:--45% of your overall grade will be determined by the final paper.

--20% of your grade will be determined by the first paper.

--20 % of your grade will be determined by your presentation. In determining your presentation grade, I will consider how well you have explicated the work under discussion; the clarity, concision and organization of your presentation; and how well you answer questions and facilitate discussion in the group.

--15% of your grade will be determined by my evaluation of your participation in and contribution to the seminar. In determining this portion of your grade, I will consider the quality of your attention to and interventions in class discussion, and of your preparations for class. Further, this portion of the grade **will be forfeited by any student with more than two unexcused absences from class**. If medical or other circumstances affect your participation in the seminar, please discuss them with me. As circumstances warrant, I will excuse you from class and make whatever arrangements are possible to help you keep up with our work, without penalty to your grade.

Schedule: Please complete all readings before the dates listed. The poetry on this list is to be found in Collins and Rundle, with 3 exceptions:

Christina Rossetti's "The Convent Threshold" and D.G. Rossetti's sequence *The House of Life* are both available online—links are included in the course outline. The poems by Michael Field are all to be found in *Michael Field, The Poet*, eds. Marion Thain and Ana Parejo Vadillo. I will circulate them as .pdf's, but anyone with an interest in Michael Field would do well to purchase this edition.

Week 1: Jan 6. Alfred Tennyson, "Ulysses." Recommended, Isobel Armstrong *Victorian Poetry, Poetry, Poetics, and Politics* pp. 1-21.

Week 2: Jan 13. Felicia Hemans, "Properzia Rossi." Tennyson, *Maud*

Week 3: Jan 20. Tennyson, *Maud*, contd. Recommended: *Victorian Poetry, Poetry, Poetics, Politics* pp. 270-83; Herbert Tucker, "Maud and the Doom of Culture", rptd in Tucker, *Critical Essays on Alfred Lord Tennyson* (reserve), Joseph Bristow, "Nation, Class and Gender: Tennyson's *Maud* and War", rptd in R. Stott, *Alfred Tennyson*, Matthew Rowlinson, "The Thing in the Poem: *Maud's* Hymen," *differences* 12.3 (Fall 2001) 128-65.

Week 4: Jan 27. Readings on hysteria. From Mark Micale, *Approaching Hysteria:*

Disease and its Interpretations 19-29; Roy Porter "The Body and the Mind, The

Doctor and the Patient: Negotiating Hysteria”, from *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, Sander Gilman et. al, eds. 225-85; from Charles Darwin, *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*, Paul Ekman ed., pp. 310-44; from Freud and Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria (Standard Edition of Freud) 2*. 3-17; from *Embodied Selves: An Anthology Of Psychological Texts, 1830-1890*, Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth, eds., selections by John Connolly (pp. 184-87), Robert Brudenell Carter (pp. 190-93), and F. C. Skey (pp. 193-96). All .pdf.

Recommended: Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture 1830-1980*, esp pp. 145-64.

Week 5: Feb 3. D.G. Rossetti "The Blessed Damozel", "My Sister's Sleep", "Jenny", "The Woodspurge." William Morris, "The Defense of Guinevere", "The Haystack in the Floods".

Week 6: Feb. 10. C. Rossetti, "Goblin Market," "A Birthday", "After Death", "An Apple Gathering", "Echo", "No, thank you, John", "Song", "Uphill", "A Better Resurrection", "The Iniquity of the Fathers Upon the Children" "The Convent Threshold" < <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/crossetti/threshold.html>>

Week 7: Feb 17. Conference week—no class.

Week 8: Feb 24. Meredith *Modern Love*. C. Rossetti, *Monna Innominata*

Week 9: Mar 2. Swinburne, "Laus Veneris," "The Triumph of Time," "Itylus," Hymn to Proserpine, "The Garden of Proserpine, "Ave Atque Vale," "The Lake of Gaube."

Week 10: Mar 9. Swinburne "Anactoria"; Coventry Patmore "Essay on English Metrical Law" pp. 7-17 < http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Patmore_Essay.pdf> ; from Yopie Prins, *Victorian Sappho* pp. 112-56, (.pdf), "Voice Inverse", *Victorian Poetry* 42.1: 43-60.

Week 11: Mar 16. D.G. Rossetti, "The House of Life" < <http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/1-1870.1stedn.rad.html#A.R.HOUSE>>; Buchanan, "The Fleshly School of Poetry," D.G. Rossetti, "The Stealthy School of Criticism" (both in Collins and Rundle.)

Week 12: Mar 23. Hardy, "Hap," "Neutral Tones," "The Self-Unseeing," "The Minute Before Meeting," "Night in the Old Home." Hopkins, "God's Grandeur," "The

Windhover," Pied Beauty," "Hurrahing in Harvest," "Felix Randal," "As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame," "Spelt from Sybil's Leaves," "Carrion Comfort," "No worst, there is none."

Week 13: Mar 30. Augusta Webster "Circe," "A Castaway," Sonnets 6, 7, 9, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17 from *Mother and Daughter*. Amy Levy, "Xantippe," "Felo de Se," "Magdalen"; Mary Coleridge, "The Other Side of the Mirror."

Week 14: April 6. Michael Field, From *Long Ago*, "The moon rose full: the women stood," "Come, Gorgo, put the rug in place," "Yea, gold is son of Zeus: no rust," "Climbing the hill a coil of snakes," "There is laughter soft and free," "O free me, for I take the leap." From *Sight and Song*, "La Gioconda," "The Birth of Venus," "Spring," "Venus and Mars," "A fete champetre," "Marriage of Bacchus and Ariadne," "The Sleeping Venus," "L'Embarquement pour Cythère."

As required by the University, I remind you that students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.

In my own voice, let me observe that we become scholars and critics by modeling ourselves on others. I urge you to read widely this term and to use your reading to find your own style and mode of theoretical argument. If when preparing an essay or presentation for this class you become in any way concerned about the question of plagiarism, please come and discuss the matter with me.