



**VICTORIAN POETRY,  
VICTORIAN BODIES**

ENGLISH 379W

PROFESSOR JASON R RUDY

FALL 2016  
MWF 1:00-1:50PM  
TAWES ROOM 1106

OFFICE HOURS: M 2-3:00PM,  
W 12-12:50PM, AND  
BY ARRANGEMENT

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The nineteenth century is often framed as a period of conservative thinking, especially with respect to sex, sexuality, and the human body. But poetry of the period tells a different story. Keatsian sensuality, the “Fleshly School” of poetry, flagellation and sadomasochistic poems, the “Spasmodic” school of poets, and late-century homoerotic verse: a surprising amount of poetry in the nineteenth century destabilizes conservative cultural norms, specifically in its evocations of the human body. This class will study Victorian history and culture to explore how and why ideas of the body evolved alongside ideas of British poetry.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

E = ELMS / Canvas site  
H = Handout

L = Electronic link  
A = Artwork (via Canvas)

### Week 1 (8/29, 8/31, and 9/2): History, Sexuality, Poetry

Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (Volume I first published 1976) was a landmark in thinking about sex and sexuality. His argument about "The Repressive Hypothesis" has been especially influential for scholars of the nineteenth century. We will read Foucault alongside poems by John Keats, one of the best-known poets of the Romantic era, and also one of the most maligned.

- I. Introduction and course overview  
John Keats, "Ode to Psyche" (H)
- II. Michel Foucault, "The Repressive Hypothesis" (E)  
John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn"
- III. John Keats, "The Eve of St. Agnes"  
William Hazlitt, "On Effeminacy of Character" (H)  
A: John Everett Millais, "The Eve of Saint Agnes"

### Week 2 (9/5, 9/7, and 9/9): Effeminacy and Class

We will continue discussing Keats, looking in particular at the ways he was framed as a lower-class, "effeminate," and uneducated ("cockney") poet.

- I. No class: Labor Day holiday
- II. John Keats, "Isabella; or, the Pot of Basil"  
John Gibson Lockhart ("Z."), "On the Cockney School of Poetry" I-III (H)  
A: William Holman Hunt, "Isabella and the Pot of Basil"
- III. Canvas group assignment #1

### Week 3 (9/12, 9/14, and 9/16): Sentimental Traditions

Felicia Hemans was the most beloved British poet of the 1820s and 30s. Her poems were memorized and recited, and hugely influential in the turn from Romantic to Victorian aesthetics. The American poet Lydia Sigourney and the Irish/Australian poet Eliza Hamilton Dunlop are both understood to have imitated Hemans' sentimental style. We will discuss how Keats' version of sensibility developed into a tradition of Victorian sentimentality, and the role of Native American and Indigenous Australian figures within that tradition.

- I. View on ELMS: Lecture on Prosody  
Felicia Hemans, "Properzia Rossi," "Indian Woman's Death Song"  
William Wordsworth, from the "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*  
Mary T. Bissell, "Emotions *Versus* Health In Women"  
Lauren Berlant, from *The Female Complaint* (E)
- II. Lydia Sigourney, "The Cherokee Mother"  
Eliza Hamilton Dunlop, "The Aboriginal Mother"  
Kate Flint, from *The Transatlantic Indian* (E)  
A: Emily Mary Osborn, "Presentiments"
- III. Canvas group assignment #2

#### **Week 4 (9/19, 9/21, and 9/23): Feeling Political (I)**

Elizabeth Barrett Browning follows in the spirit of late-Romantic sentimentality, but she turns up the dial on poetry's political potential, taking at least some inspiration from Shelley. John Stuart Mill's essay "What is Poetry?" carves out a space for poetry that is by definition *not* political. But the African American poet Frances Harper and the working-class poet Ebenezer Eliot very much disagreed with his view. The place of politics in poetry of the early Victorian period was, to put it mildly, contentious.

- I. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point"  
A: J. M. W. Turner, "The Slave Ship"
- II. Percy Bysshe Shelley, from "A Defense of Poetry" (H)  
John Stuart Mill, "What is Poetry?"  
Frances Harper, "The Slave Mother," "The Martyr of Alabama" (H)
- III. Ebenezer Elliott, "Preface" and "The Splendid Village"  
Janet Hamilton, "The Mother at Home," "The Uses and Pleasures of Poetry for Working Classes"  
Ayşe Çelikkol, "On the Repeal of the Corn Laws, 1846" (L)

#### **Week 5 (9/26, 9/28, and 9/30): Feeling Political (II)**

We will continue the discussion of last week by reading works by the Indian poet Toru Dutt (who visited England and published a volume of poems in English) and the Native American poet E. Pauline Johnson, who traveled around North America and Britain performing her works to large audiences.

- I. Toru Dutt, "Introductory Memoir" and "Savitri"  
Aamir R. Mufti, from *Forget English! Orientalisms and World Literatures* (E)  
A: Thomas Jones Barker, "The Secret of England's Greatness"
- II. E. Pauline Johnson, "Author's Forward," "Ojistoh," "A Cry from an Indian Wife," and "Joe"  
A: Photograph of E. Pauline Johnson
- III. Canvas group assignment #3

*Essay #1 due by midnight on Saturday, October 1st*

#### **Week 6 (10/3, 10/5, and 10/7): Feeling Rhythm**

Poetry in the nineteenth century often took on highly physiological forms: readers were meant to *feel* a poem's rhythm, and to connect the feeling of the poem with its intended meaning. We will read some accounts of rhythm alongside two highly rhythmic poems: one by Robert Browning, the other by Algernon Charles Swinburne. On Friday we'll meet with a percussion specialist to experiment with rhythmic patterning, to see how *feeling* rhythms effects our interpretation of the poems we've been studying.

- I. Sydney Dobell, "The Nature of Poetry"  
Anonymous, "Accent and Rhythm" (from the *Examiner* in 1877)  
Robert Browning, "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix"  
A: Sir Frederick Leighton, "The Fisherman and the Siren"
- II. Alice Meynell, "The Rhythm of Life"  
Oliver Wendell Holmes, "The Physiology of Versification"  
Algernon Charles Swinburne, "A Forsaken Garden"  
A: Evelyn de Morgan, "Deianera"
- III. Special drumming lesson with Scott Tiemann, percussion specialist from UMBC

### Week 7 (10/10, 10/12, and 10/14): Passions Pathologized

Wordsworth balances his idea of poetry as “spontaneous overflow” with the crucial “recollection in tranquility”: a reasoned distance from excessive feeling. Alfred Tennyson, Poet Laureate of Britain from 1850 until his death in 1892, carefully negotiated strong feeling throughout his career. His poems from the 1830s, some of which we’ll be reading for this week, consider the negative effects of passion.

- I. Alfred Tennyson, “Mariana,” “Locksley Hall”  
Arthur Henry Hallam, “On Some Characteristics of Modern Poetry”  
Ferdinand Papillon, “The Pathology of the Passions”  
A: John Everett Millais, “Mariana”
- II. Tennyson, “The Lady of Shalott”  
Amy Levy, “Xantippe”  
A: John William Waterhouse, “The Lady of Shalott”
- III. Michael Cohen (UCLA) lecture at 4:30pm

**Saturday, October 15th: 10:00am to 12:30pm, the Historical Poetics working group will discuss poems by Frances Harpur and Toru Dutt. Participation in this event is strongly encouraged.**

### Week 8 (10/17, 10/19, and 10/21): In Memoriam

We continue with Tennyson by reading his masterpiece elegy from 1850, *In Memoriam*. Written over the span of seventeen years following the death of his closest friend, Arthur Henry Hallam, the poem captured the hearts and minds of Tennyson’s contemporaries, including Queen Victoria. Central to the work is the question of how to negotiate the strong feelings associated with grief.

- I. Tennyson, *In Memoriam* I-XXXIII  
Hallam Tennyson, from *Alfred Tennyson: A Memoir*  
A: J. M. W. Turner, “Rain, Steam, and Speed”
- II. Tennyson, *In Memoriam* XXXIV-XCVI
- III. Tennyson, *In Memoriam* XCVII-Epilogue  
A: Marie Spartali Stillman, “A Wreath of Roses (A Crown of Roses)”

### Week 9 (10/24, 10/26, and 10/28): The Fleshly School

In the midcentury a group of university students together formed the PreRaphaelite Brotherhood: a cohort of poets, painters, and art theorists who shared a set of principles about art. We will study some of the paintings associated with the movement, and then examine the poetry and critiques launched against it.

- I. View on ELMS: Lecture on PreRaphaelite Painting  
Dante Gabriel Rossetti, sonnets from *The House of Life*, “The Blessed Damozel”  
Robert Buchanan, “The Fleshly School of Poetry”  
W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, “If you’re anxious for to shine” (from *Patience*) (E)  
A: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, “The Blessed Damozel”
- II. Christina Rossetti, “Goblin Market”  
Algernon Charles Swinburne, “Hertha”  
A: Edward Burne Jones, “The Beguiling of Merlin”
- III. Canvas group assignment #4 (Peer-Reviewing Essay #2)

### Week 10 (10/31, 11/2, and 11/4): Sprung Rhythm

Gerard Manley Hopkins, a Jesuit priest and part of the Oxford Movement, published very little during his lifetime. His poems are now considered among the most extraordinary of the century. Writing for the most part in isolation, he developed his own metrical theory, called “sprung rhythm.”

- I. Listen on ELMS: “The Oxford Movement” (In Our Time)  
Gerard Manley Hopkins, “Author’s Preface,” “Pied Beauty,” “Harry Ploughman,” “Felix Randal,” “Spring and Fall” (H)  
Meredith Martin, “Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Stigma of Meter” (E)  
A: Hamo Thornycroft, “The Mower”
- II. Class canceled for individual appointments
- III. Canvas group assignment #5

*Essay #2 due by midnight on Saturday, November 5th*

### Week 11 (11/7, 11/9, and 11/11): Voice and Song

Dramatic monologues are poems in which the speaker, who is not the poet, addresses an audience understood to be internal to the poem. The form is an invention of the nineteenth century, and is often taken as representative of the period. The question of “voice” was important to Victorian poets, who in various ways thought through the relationship between spoken, embodied voice and the “voice” we imagine in a poem. These questions took on more literal form in musical songs of the period.

- I. View on ELMS: Lecture on the Dramatic Monologue  
Robert Browning, “Caliban on Setebos”  
Tennyson, “St Simeon Stylites”  
Augusta Webster, “Circe”  
A: John William Waterhouse, “Miranda – The Tempest”
- II. Tennyson, “Break, Break, Break”  
Yopie Prins, “‘Break, Break, Break’ into Song” (E)
- III. Tennyson, “Come into the Garden, Maud”  
Adelaide Ann Procter, “The Lost Chord”  
Musical settings of Tennyson and Procter via [Songs of the Victorians: An Archive](#) (L)

### Week 12 (11/14, 11/16, and 11/18): Existential Crises

The Victorian period is famously a time of great religious skepticism, fueled in part by scientific works like Darwin’s *Origin of Species* (1859) and in part by philosophers such as David Strauss, whose *Life of Jesus* (translated into English in 1846) called for a “rationalist” interpretation of the Bible, describing Christianity’s “miracles” as equivalent to “mythology.” We will focus this week on just three poets and their grappling with questions of religious doubt. Arnold and Clough were close friends in college but had a falling out in the early 1850s. FitzGerald’s translation of the *Rubáiyát* introduced the Persian poem – and its philosophy – to English readers: it was among the most popular poems of the century.

- I. Matthew Arnold, “Dover Beach,” “The Buried Life,” “Resignation – To Fausta”  
Arnold, “Preface” to *Poems* (1853)  
Charles LaPorte, from *Victorian Poets and the Changing Bible* (E)
- II. Edward FitzGerald, from *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*  
Saree Makdisi, from *Making England Western: Occidentalism, Race, and Imperial Culture* (E)  
A: Adelaide Hanscom, “Did the Hand then of the Potter Shake”
- III. Arthur Hugh Clough, “Epi-Strauss-ism,” “Natura Naturans,” “Resignation – to Faustus”  
Clough, from “Review of Some Poems by Alexander Smith and Matthew Arnold”

### Week 13 (11/21 and 11/23): Thanksgiving

- I. Canvas group assignment #6
- II. No class: Thanksgiving holiday

### Week 14 (11/28, 11/30, and 12/2): Forbidden Desires I

The end of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of sexology: a branch of science dedicated to the study of sex and sexuality. A number of the terms related to sex that we now take for granted – homosexual, heterosexual, sadism, masochism – were invented in this period. We will read poems by John Addington Symonds and Oscar Wilde, both of whom had relationships with other men and who suffered from their culture’s inability to accept non-normative sexual acts. We will also read from the work of Richard von Krafft-Ebing, the foremost sexologist of the day.

- I. View on ELMS: Lecture on British Aestheticism  
Oscar Wilde, “Symphony in Yellow,” “The Grave of Keats,” “The Harlot’s House”  
Transcript from the trial of Oscar Wilde (E)  
Joseph Bristow, from *Effeminate England*: “Wilde’s fatal effeminacy” (E)  
A: Simeon Solomon, “Dawn”
- II. John Addington Symonds, “Eudiades,” “L’amour de l’impossible,” “The Sleeper,” Case XVIII  
W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, “Love, unrequited, robs me of my rest” (from *Iolanthe*) (E)  
Richard von Krafft-Ebing, from *Psychopathia Sexualis*  
A: Simeon Solomon, “Bacchus”
- III. Canvas group assignment #7 (Peer-Reviewing Essay #3)

### Week 15 (12/5, 12/7, and 12/9): Forbidden Desires II

We will continue with Oscar Wilde, then turn to Amy Levy, a Jewish woman with romantic attachments to other women, and Michael Field, the pseudonym for an aunt and niece who together wrote poetry while sharing in a romantic (and incestuous) relationship.

- I. Wilde, “Charmides”  
A: Sir Frederick Leighton, “Daedalus and Icarus”
- II. Amy Levy, “At a Dinner Party,” “On the Steps of the British Museum”  
Martha Vicinus, from *Intimate Friends* (E)  
A: Sir Frederick Leighton, “Greek Girls Playing at Ball”
- III. Michael Field, “La Gioconda,” “The Birth of Venus,” “The Sleeping Venus”

*Essay #3 due by midnight on Saturday, December 10th*

### Week 16 (12/12) Conclusions

On our final day of class, we will review the ideas we’ve traced throughout the semester and discuss strategies for doing well on the final exam. Please take some time in advance of this discuss to review your notes from the semester, so we can have a robust and meaningful conversation!

#### Final Exam

Tuesday, December 20th, 1:30pm-3:30pm

## ◆Course Requirements◆

### Required Books

Course packet (not for sale at the University book store; details TBA)  
John Keats, *Lyric Poems* (Dover Press; ISBN 978-0486268712)  
Alfred Tennyson, *The Major Works* (Oxford; ISBN 978-0199572762)

### Grading (out of 500 possible points)

Essays: 180 points (36%)  
Quizzes: 50 points (10%)  
Artwork Presentation: 25 points (5%)  
Group Work: 70 points (14%)  
Participation: 100 points (20%)  
Final Exam: 75 points (15%)

A	472-500 points	B-	397-416 points	D+	334-348 points
A-	449-471 points	C+	384-396 points	D	319-333 points
B+	434-448 points	C	369-383 points	D-	299-318 points
B	417-433 points	C-	349-368 points	F	0-298 points

### Writing Assignments

You will write three essays for this class, each between 1000 and 1200 words in length. Specific assignments for each essay will be posted to Canvas well in advance of the deadlines. I will always be happy to meet with you to discuss your work; you may even bring drafts of your essays to my office.

After your first essay has been graded, you will each meet with me one-on-one to discuss your writing and strategies you might pursue to improve it.

#### *Submitting Your Work*

Unless otherwise noted, papers are to be submitted via ELMS. On the assignment page, look for the place to upload your Word doc or docx file. Late papers will be downgraded by 25% for each 24-hour period following the deadline. All papers are due by 11:59pm on the due date.

For students unable to turn in papers because of illness or dire emergency, a written note is required, and essays must be turned in as soon as possible.

- Extensions will be granted in extreme situations, but they must be requested *in advance* of the deadline. That is, you cannot fail to turn in your paper and then retroactively ask for an extension.

All written work for this class will be graded by the following criteria:

- Strength of argument (have you articulated a clear and forceful position?)
- Clarity of writing (grammar, syntax, eloquence, directness)
- Persuasive use of materials to support argument (quotes from text, etc.)
- Relevance of topic to this course

- Focused attention to argument (avoidance of tangential space-filling)
- Appropriate use of citations for both quotes and materials consulted

### **Presentation**

You will each sign up for a three-minute presentation on a work of art. The aim of the presentation will be to introduce the work of art to the class: who created it, how we might understand the composition, and how we might begin to understand its meanings. You may use notes for your presentation, but you should not read from a script. Practice your presentation to make sure you stay within the three-minute window.

- Wikipedia should not be the primary source for your knowledge and thoughts. I expect you to explore other sources, even if the painting and/or artist is not well known. If you need help with this research, please come ask for it!
- Important: on the day of your presentation, *you will submit on ELMS* (on the assignment page for the Artwork Presentation) *a bibliography of works consulted*. This bibliography must include at least one scholarly source found through Research Port. Please remember to upload your bibliography by the end of the day on which you give your presentation.

### **Group Work**

You will participate in 7 group work projects, to be completed online via Google Docs by specific deadlines. The group work assignments will involve answering prompts and then engaging with your classmates' responses. The group work exercises are opportunities for you to engage with one another in more complex ways than are generally available in the classroom.

### **Quizzes**

There will be weekly online quizzes, to be completed via Canvas before the start of Monday's class. The quiz will include questions on the reading for that Monday *and also* questions on the previous week's readings and class discussion. Each quiz is designed to be easy for those students who are keeping up with the reading and attending all class discussions.

### **Excused Absences**

Students will on *rare* occasion miss class for good reasons. It is your responsibility to inform me of any intended excused absences, including religious observations, in advance of those absences. Prior notification (at least two weeks in advance, and preferably at the start of the term) is especially important with respect to the final exam.

University policy (from Undergraduate Catalogue): "It is the policy of the university to excuse the absences of students that result from the following causes: illness of the student, or illness of a dependent as defined by Board of Regents policy on family and medical leave; religious observance (where the nature of the observance prevents the student from being present during the class period); participation in university activities at the request of university authorities; and compelling circumstance beyond the student's control. *Students claiming excused absence must apply in writing and furnish documentary support for their assertion that absence resulted from one of these causes.*"



- If you miss class for one of the above reasons, please provide a written account of your absence *on the day you return*. A one-paragraph signed letter will generally be sufficient.
- It is your responsibility to obtain discussion notes from a classmate for any class period missed.
- I will not accept emails in lieu of a written explanation of an excused absence.

### **Final Exam**

The final exam will be a combination of multiple choice questions and essays. You will be asked to identify passages from texts on the syllabus, and to put different texts in conversation with each other. We will discuss the exam, and strategies for doing well on it, on our last day of class.

### **Special needs**

If you have a registered disability that will require accommodation, please talk to me immediately. If you have a disability and have not yet registered it with Disability Support Services in the Shoemaker Building (4-7682 or 5-7683 TTY/TDD), you should do so immediately.

### **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this class, students will be able to:

- understand the key developments in British poetry of the Victorian era;
- think critically about the intersection of British poetry with historical and cultural phenomena of the nineteenth century;
- interpret poems using the skills of close reading and basic scansion;
- communicate these ideas both orally and in writing.

### **Etiquette and Expectations**

- Readings for each class must be brought with you. Most of the course materials are in the course packet, so that will be especially important to have in class on most days.
- Laptop computers, iPhones, and other digital devices are not permitted in class unless you provide me with written documentation showing that they are necessary (for medical reasons, for example).
- Cellphones must be turned off for class. Use of cellphones during class will result in immediate downgrading for your participation grade.
- You are expected to be *active listeners* in this class. Show your engagement with the course material by *looking interested, taking notes, and, when appropriate, asking questions*. Even if you are not completely interested in the material, it is never acceptable to show your disinterest.
- If you are ill, please stay home. If you cannot keep your eyes open due to exhaustion, please stay home.
- Please use the restroom before class to minimize disruptions to our discussion.
- Please use our ELMS/Canvas messaging to contact me (rather than email). Consider all communication directed to me – or any professor – as a *professional correspondence*. Compose them accordingly:

- ▶▶ They should not look like text messages or informal emails to friends (substitute “Hey!” for a more professional greeting, and avoid abbreviations like “ttyl”).
- ▶▶ Write in full sentences.
- ▶▶ Proofread, checking both spelling and punctuation.
- ▶▶ Remember that tone can be a real problem with emails. They almost always come across as more brusque than the writer intended. Adjust your writing to allow for this.

### **Participation**

Your participation grade (20% of total course grade) will be determined according to the following table, wherein A = almost always; U = usually; S = sometimes; I = infrequently; and N = never:

	A	U	S	I	N
Participated actively in class discussion	5	4	3	2	0
Came to class prepared (with books, notebook, pen, etc.)	5	4	3	2	0
Arrived on time for class	5	4	3	2	0
Was present for all class activities	5	4	3	2	0
Respected fellow students, instructor, and others involved with our class	5	4	3	2	0
Actively showed interest and paid attention during class activities	5	4	3	2	0

Total / 30

### **Plagiarism**

I will adhere strictly to University policy with respect to plagiarism. Students who plagiarize will fail this class. Follow MLA guidelines for citation when quoting passages and when paraphrasing ideas. Do not hesitate to speak with me if you have any questions regarding this matter. Please keep in mind:

- Any source consulted must be included in a “works consulted” list at the end of your written work. This includes Wikipedia or any other online site, even if you have not quoted it directly.
- Paraphrased ideas must be cited, even if you have not quoted directly from the source.
- Most of what can be found easily online will not qualify as a reputable source for an academic essay. If you have questions about the validity of a source, please ask me directly.

**The University Code of Academic Integrity may be found here:**

<http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/docs/III-100A.pdf>