

Three Contemporary Women Poets: C. D. Wright, Anne Carson, Alice Oswald

LIT 430
TR 2:10 - 3:30
Jeannette Rankin 203

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Office Hours: TR 12:30 - 2:00
and by appointment (LA 219)

This course is a study of three contemporary poets: an American poet, C. D. Wright (1949-2016), a Canadian poet, Anne Carson (born in 1950), and an English poet, Alice Oswald (born in 1966). Both Wright and Carson belong to the generation that came of age with the second-wave feminist movement of the sixties and seventies, while Oswald, a generation younger, has lived and written in the space opened by this movement. Wright's work is earthy, erotic, collagist, capacious. Carson's is melancholic, ironic, at times riddling, and often narrative. Oswald's is generous, romantic, ecological, and, if initially exuberant, recently more subdued. All three of these poets are drawn to the long poem, or the book-length poem, the kind of poem that seeks something of the range of concerns and voices we find in the modern novel. All three, in different ways, are at once worldly and speculative. Each has a distinctive sense of humor. Each is formally restless and inventive. Each helps us to see what it might mean to live a wakeful life. "Some of us do not read particularly for pleasure or instruction," C. D. Wright says in *Cooling Time*, "but to be changed, healed, charged."

There is not an overarching aesthetic, thematic, or ideological frame for the course. We will be reading three widely praised contemporary poets who are very different from one another. Our primary task will be to understand what is disclosed in their particular adventures. Along the way, though, we will try to trace connections among these poets, to address larger questions raised by their work, and to clarify the ways in which they engage the social world of our time.

Requirements

- Reading of all assigned texts
- Regular attendance
- Two short papers (5-7 pages)
- One long final paper (10-15 pages for undergraduate students, 15-20 pages for graduate students)

Texts

C. D. Wright

- *Tremble (in Steal Away)*
- *Deepstep Come Shining*
- *Rising, Falling, Hovering*
- *One With Others [a little book of her days]*
- *Cooling Time*

Anne Carson

- *Eros the Bittersweet*

- *Glass, Irony and God*
- *Autobiography of Red*
- *Red Doc*>

Alice Oswald

- *The Thing in the Gap-Stone Stile* (in *Spacecraft Voyager I*)
- *Woods etc.* (in *Spacecraft Voyager I*)
- *Dart* (in *Spacecraft Voyager I*)
- *Memorial*
- *Falling Awake*

Course packet (poems, essays, and interviews on moodle)

Map of Course

R Aug 31 Introduction

Elizabeth Bishop, “The Man-Moth,” “The Monument,” “At the Fishhouses,” “The End of March”

T Sept 5 Adrienne Rich, “Origins and History of Consciousness,” “Splittings,” “Transcendental Etude”

R Sept 7 John Ashbery, “Soonest Mended,” “Definition of Blue,” “Grand Galop”

Altieri, chapter from *Enlarging the Temple*

Perloff, chapter from *The Poetics of Indeterminacy*

T Sept 12 Wright, *Tremble*

R Sept 14 Wright, *Tremble*

Wright, *Cooling Time* (try to read this over the next few weeks)

T Sept 19 Wright, *Deepstep Come Shining*

Interview with C. D. Wright in *Jubilat*

R Sept 21 Wright, *Deepstep Come Shining*

Stephen Burt, “Lightsource, Aperture, Face”

T Sept 26 Wright, *Rising, Falling, Hovering*

Lyn Hejinian, “The Rejection of Closure”

Fredric Jameson, “Postmodernism, or, The Logic of Late Capitalism”

R Sept 28 Wright, *Rising, Falling, Hovering*

T Oct 3 Wright, *One With Others*

R Oct 5 Wright, *One With Others*

*** Paper I Due ***

T Oct 10 Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet*

R Oct 12 Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet*

T Oct 17 Carson, *Glass, Irony, and God*

Paris Review Interview with Carson

R Oct 19 Carson, *Glass, Irony, and God*

Carson, "The Anthropology of Water" (if you have time)

T Oct 24 Carson, *Autobiography of Red*

Adam Kirsch, "All Mere Complexities"

R Oct 26 Carson, *Autobiography of Red*

Carson, "Essay on What I Think About Most"

T Oct 31 Carson, *Red Doc*>

Carson, "Ordinary Time: Virginia Woolf and Thucydides on War," "Thucydides in Conversation with Virginia Woolf on the Set of the Peloponnesian War," "Appendix to Ordinary Time"

R Nov 2 Carson, *Red Doc*>

Roy Scranton, "Estranged Pain: Anne Carson's *Red Doc*>"

*** Paper II Due ***

T Nov 7 Oswald, *The Thing in the Gap-Stone Stile and Woods etc.* (in *Spacecraft*)

Oswald, "Introduction" to *The Thunder Mutters*

R Nov 9 Oswald, *The Thing in the Gap-Stone Stile and Woods etc.* (in *Spacecraft*)

Oswald, "The Universe in time of rain makes the world alive with noise"

Mary Pinard, "Voice(s) of the Poet-Gardener: Alice Oswald and the Poetry of Acoustic Encounter"

T Nov 14 Oswald, *Dart* (in *Spacecraft*)

R Nov 16 Oswald, *Dart* (in *Spacecraft*)

Interview with Oswald

Jane Bennett, "Vegetal Life and OntoSympathy"

T Nov 21 Oswald, *Memorial*

Robert Pogue Harrison, "The Earth and its Dead"

R Nov 23 Thanksgiving

T Nov 28 Oswald, *Memorial*

R Nov 30 Oswald, *Falling Awake*

Tennyson, "Tithonus"

T Dec 5 Oswald, *Falling Awake*

R Dec 7 poems falling out of the blue

T Dec 12 Review

*** Final Paper Due on Thursday December 14 by 10:00 a.m. ***