Inhabiting Poems

CRWR 516
The University of Montana
Joanna Klink
Thursdays 3-6 pm
LA 210

...genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood.

T.S. Eliot

Only
There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock)

T.S. Eliot

What would it mean to inhabit a poem? We may read poems all the time and never really enter into their luminous musics, their deeply-patterned burning worlds.

To dwell in, occupy as an abode; to live permanently or habitually in (a region, an element); to reside in (a country, town, a dwelling). Said of men and animals.

In this course we will step into one poem each week and stay there as long as we can. We will practice reading it aloud. We will puzzle together over a close, loosely New Critical, line-by-line, word-by-next-strange-word interpretation of it. We will memorize it—we will recite it—we will do imitations of it. We will write poems in response to it and we will meander in it, in the weeks that follow—we’ll dream on it and sleep on it and listen to its murmur, in our heads, as we walk over streets and under bridges toward our homes.

This course is not historical. Most of the poems will be distinctly Modern: Dickinson, Hopkins, Frost, Ashbery. We’ll push toward longer poems—Keats’ Nightingale Ode, Eliot’s Prufrock—to see how poets come to dwell, sometimes painfully, in their own creations. We’ll end the course by writing a long poem and reading it aloud. Whose voices, by then, will range through the glowing regions of your own? My hope is that we will locate in ourselves new habits of attention and devotion. That we will find places to live. And that we will never entirely exit those worlds.

Required Texts
Xeroxes

Office Hours
Wednesdays 1:30-2:30 pm
some Friday afternoons
& always moreso by appointment
LA 231
joanna.klink@umontana.edu

Poems
Follow instructions on the assignment sheets handed out weekly in class. Writing assignments will always be due on **Tuesday, by 5 pm**, in my box. If you miss the Tuesday deadline, hold on to your work until the following week (please don’t xerox copies and bring them to class, or email poems to the class).

Do not hand in double-sided copies.
Do not staple anything.

Other Assignments
If you are slated to recite a poem in class on any given Thursday, and you haven’t been able to finish memorizing it, come to class anyway.

At some point in the semester you’ll present biographical information about an author. This should run about 5 minutes, and you should bring to class (xeroxed for everyone) one page of essential facts about the author.

Some weeks in class I’ll hand you a worksheet of student poems. Read through all the poems.

Read and prepare any other assignments (there will be some critical essays to read in advance).

Be, in class, present.

Discussion
The quality of our classes depends on your care in reading as well as your willingness to memorize poems thoroughly, to write down comments in advance, to take each other seriously, to approach radically different styles with an open mind, to contribute thoughtfully to discussions, and to sustain a generous manner with one another throughout. I promise to bring the same kind of attention to the class.

Grading
Your grade will reflect your weekly participation: participation in class is essential. Recitations are required. Your final portfolio will include assignments from the semester, in addition to one long poem. For every two classes you miss, your grade will be lowered by one letter grade. Collaboration on assignments is not allowed.
You are responsible for all work whether or not you come to class.

**Schedule of Classes, Subject to Great Change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading/Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, September 3</td>
<td>Introduction&lt;br&gt;Duncan, “Often I am Permitted to Return to a Meadow”</td>
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<td>Thursday, September 10</td>
<td>Stevens, “The Idea of Order at Key West”</td>
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<td>Thursday, September 17</td>
<td>NO CLASS&lt;br&gt;Reschedule</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, September 24</td>
<td>Finish Stevens&lt;br&gt;Frost, “Directive”</td>
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<td>Thursday, October 1</td>
<td>Frost, “Directive”</td>
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<td>Thursday, October 8</td>
<td>Keats, “To Autumn”</td>
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<td>Thursday, October 15</td>
<td>Finish Keats&lt;br&gt;Hopkins, “The Windhover”</td>
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<td>Thursday, October 22</td>
<td>Finish Hopkins&lt;br&gt;Dickinson&lt;br&gt;258 (“There’s a certain Slant of light”)&lt;br&gt;341 (“After great pain, a formal feeling comes”)&lt;br&gt;510 (“It was not Death, for I stood up”)&lt;br&gt;712 (“Because I could not stop for Death”)</td>
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<td>Thursday, October 29</td>
<td>Finish Hopkins</td>
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<td>Thursday, November 5</td>
<td>Ashbery, “As One Put Drunk into the Packet-Boat”</td>
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<td>Friday, November 5</td>
<td>Timothy Donnelley lectures&lt;br&gt;Dell Brown, 7 pm</td>
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<td>Thursday, November 12</td>
<td>NO CLASS&lt;br&gt;Reschedule&lt;br&gt;Recitations: poem of your choice</td>
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<td>Thursday, November 19</td>
<td>Eliot, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”</td>
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<td>Thursday, November 26</td>
<td>NO CLASS&lt;br&gt;Thanksgiving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, December 3</td>
<td>Finish Eliot&lt;br&gt;Portfolios due</td>
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Thursday, December 10

Last class
Students read from their work