The University of Newcastle  
Faculty of Education and Arts  
School of Humanities and Social Science  

ENGL3202 - Advanced Creative Writing 2  
Course Outline (Poetry)

Course Coordinator: Dr Keri Glastonbury  
Room: MC139, McMullin Building  
Ph: 02-4921 1560  
Fax: 02-4921 6933  
Email: Keri.Glastonbury@newcastle.edu.au  
Semester: Semester 2 - 2006  
Unit Weighting: 10  
Teaching Methods: Lecture  
                     Seminar  
                     Workshop

Brief Course Description
This course takes students on further explorations in their genre of specialization. Contemporary and postmodern formations will be examined to apprise students of new creative possibilities. Students will also learn to revise their portfolios as a collection and work on making them publishable.

Contact Hours
Workshop for 2 Hours per Week for 13 Weeks  
workshop/lecture/seminar

Learning Materials/Texts
The Making of the Poem edited by Mark Strand and Eavan Boland

Course Objectives
Upon successful completion of this course, students will have
1. furthered their understanding of the art of creative reading - the ability to identify a good text and use it as a creative model;
2. furthered their ability to analyse literary texts in a coherent way;
3. acquired a deeper knowledge of the different genres, literary tradition and forms;
4. learned more about the mechanics of a good poem, a compelling narrative and creative nonfiction;
5. been exposed to an array of voices from the local to the global and start to develop their own voice;
6. have been acquainted with contemporary developments in their area of specialization.

Course Outline Issued and Correct as at: Week 1 Semester 2 2006  
CTS Download Date: 30 Jun. 06
Course Content
This course takes students on further explorations in their genre of specialization. Contemporary and postmodern formations will be examined to apprise students of new creative possibilities. Students will revisit the traditions and forms encountered in earlier courses and learn how contemporary movements dismantle and reassemble them into new structures. Students will also learn to revise their portfolios as a collection and work on making them publishable. Particular attention will be paid to
* contemporary developments in poetry, fiction and creative nonfiction;
* comparing local and foreign voices;
* deepening knowledge of forms and traditions of each genre;
* developing a coherent collection of poetry or prose;
* rewriting and editing;
* the skills and techniques of major writers;
* discovering literary exemplars to inspire students.

Assessment Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essays / Written Assignments</th>
<th>* Creative Work: 3000 words or equivalent (50%) due October 30</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essays / Written Assignments</td>
<td>* Short Creative Writing Exercise: 500 words or equivalent (15%) due September 4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>* Critical Essay: 1000 words (20%) due September 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group/tutorial participation and contribution</td>
<td>* Class participation (5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>* Journal and book review: 500 words (10%) due October 30</td>
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Assumed Knowledge
ENGL3201 or equivalent.

Callaghan Campus Timetable
ENGL2202
INTERMEDIATE CREATIVE WRITING II
Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science
Semester 2 - 2006
Seminar
Wednesday 9:00 - 11:00 [MC110]
or Thursday 11:00 - 13:00 [MCG28C]
or Thursday 17:00 - 19:00 [MCG28C]

Plagiarism
University policy prohibits students plagiarising any material under any circumstances. A student plagiarises if he or she presents the thoughts or works of another as one's own. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it may include:
* copying or paraphrasing material from any source without due acknowledgment;
* using another's ideas without due acknowledgment;
* working with others without permission and presenting the resulting work as though it was completed independently.

Plagiarism is not only related to written works, but also to material such as data, images, music, formulae, websites and computer programs.

Aiding another student to plagiarise is also a violation of the Plagiarism Policy and may invoke a penalty.

For further information on the University policy on plagiarism, please refer to the Policy on Student Academic Integrity at the following link -
The University has established a software plagiarism detection system called Turnitin. When you submit assessment items please be aware that for the purpose of assessing any assessment item the University may -

- Reproduce this assessment item and provide a copy to another member of the University; and/or
- Communicate a copy of this assessment item to a plagiarism checking service (which may then retain a copy of the item on its database for the purpose of future plagiarism checking).
- Submit the assessment item to other forms of plagiarism checking

Written Assessment Items
Students may be required to provide written assessment items in electronic form as well as hard copy.

Extension of Time for Assessment Items, Deferred Assessment and Special Consideration for Assessment Items or Formal Written Examinations
Students are required to submit assessment items by the due date, as advised in the Course Outline, unless the Course Coordinator approves an extension of time for submission of the item. University policy is that an assessment item submitted after the due date, without an approved extension, will be penalised.

Any student:
1. who is applying for an extension of time for submission of an assessment item on the basis of medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment; or
2. whose attendance at or performance in an assessment item or formal written examination has been or will be affected by medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment;

must report the circumstances, with supporting documentation, to the appropriate officer on the prescribed form.

Please go to the Policy and the on-line form for further information, particularly for information on the options available to you, at:


Students should be aware of the following important deadlines:

- Requests for Special Consideration must be lodged no later than 3 working days after the date of submission or examination.
- Requests for Extensions of Time on Assessment Items must be lodged no later than the due date of the item.
- Requests for Rescheduling Exams must be lodged no later than 5 working days before the date of the examination.

Your application may not be accepted if it is received after the deadline. Students who are unable to meet the above deadlines due to extenuating circumstances should speak to their Program Officer in the first instance.

Changing your Enrolment
The last dates to withdraw without financial or academic penalty (called the HECS Census Dates) are:

For semester 1 courses: 31 March 2006
For semester 2 courses: 31 August 2006
For Trimester 1 courses: 17 February 2006
For Trimester 2 courses: 9 June 2006

Students may withdraw from a course without academic penalty on or before the last day of semester and prior to the commencement of the formal exam period. Any withdrawal from a course after the last day of semester will result in a fail grade.

Students cannot enrol in a new course after the second week of semester/trimester, except under exceptional circumstances. Any application to add a course after the second week of semester/trimester must be on the appropriate form, and should be discussed with the Student Enquiry Centre.

To change your enrolment online, please refer to
http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/enrolment/changingenrolment.html

Contact Details
Faculty Student Service Offices

The Faculty of Education and Arts
Room: GP1-22 (General Purpose Building)
Phone: 02 4921 5314

Ourimbah Focus
Room: AB1.01 (Administration Building)
Phone: 02 4348 4030

The Dean of Students
Dr Jennifer Archer
Phone: 02 4921 5806
Fax: 02 4921 7151
resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au

Deputy Dean of Students (Ourimbah)
Dr Bill Gladstone
Phone: 02 4348 4123
Fax: 02 4348 4145

Various services are offered by the University Student Support Unit:

Alteration of this Course Outline

No change to this course outline will be permitted after the end of the second week of the term except in exceptional circumstances and with Head of School approval. Students will be notified in advance of any approved changes to this outline.

Web Address for Rules Governing Undergraduate Academic Awards

Web Address for Rules Governing Postgraduate Academic Awards

Web Address for Rules Governing Professional Doctorate Awards
STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR CHRONIC ILLNESS

The University is committed to providing a range of support services for students with a disability or chronic illness.

If you have a disability or chronic illness which you feel may impact on your studies, please feel free to discuss your support needs with your lecturer or course coordinator.

Disability Support may also be provided by the Student Support Service (Disability). Students must be registered to receive this type of support. To register please contact the Disability Liaison Officer on 02 4921 5766, or via email at: student-disability@newcastle.edu.au

As some forms of support can take a few weeks to implement it is extremely important that you discuss your needs with your lecturer, course coordinator or Student Support Service staff at the beginning of each semester.

For more information related to confidentiality and documentation please visit the Student Support Service (Disability) website at: www.newcastle.edu.au/services/disability

Online Tutorial Registration:

Students are required to enrol in the Lecture and a specific Tutorial time for this course via the Online Registration system:


Registrations close at the end of week 2 of semester.

Studentmail and Blackboard: www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/

This course uses Blackboard and studentmail to contact students, so you are advised to keep your email accounts within the quota to ensure you receive essential messages. To receive an expedited response to queries, post questions on the Blackboard discussion forum if there is one, or if emailing staff directly use the course code in the subject line of your email. Students are advised to check their studentmail and the course Blackboard site on a weekly basis.

Written Assignment Presentation and Submission Details

Students are required to submit assessment items by the due date. Late assignments will be subject to the penalties described below.

Hard copy submission:

® Type your assignments: All work must be typewritten in 11 or 12 point black font. Leave a wide margin for marker’s comments, use 1.5 or double spacing, and include page numbers.

® Word length: The word limit of all assessment items should be strictly followed – 10% above or below is acceptable, otherwise penalties may apply.

® Proof read your work because spelling, grammatical and referencing mistakes will be penalised.

® Staple the pages of your assignment together (do not use pins or paper clips).

® University coversheet: All assignments must be submitted with the University coversheet: www.newcastle.edu.au/policy/academic/general/assess_coversheet.pdf

® Assignments are to be deposited at any Student Focus. Focus are located at:

- Level 3, Shortland Union, Callaghan
- Level 2, Student Services Centre, Callaghan
- Ground Floor, University House, City
- Ground Floor, Administration Building, Ourimbah

Any changes to this procedure will be announced during the semester.

® Do not fax or email assignments: Only hard copies of assignments will be considered for assessment. Inability to physically submit a hard copy of an assignment by the deadline due to other commitments or distance from campus is an unacceptable excuse. Assignments mailed to Schools are accepted from the date posted.

® Keep a copy of all assignments: All assignments are date-stamped upon receipt. However, it is the student’s responsibility to produce a copy of their work if the assignment goes astray after submission. Students are advised to keep updated back-ups in hard copy and on disk.
Online copy submission to Turnitin
In addition to hard copy submission, students are required to submit an electronic version of the following assignments to Turnitin via the course Blackboard website:

- Creative Work: 2500 words or equivalent (50%) – due October 30
- Journal and review: 500 words (10%) – due October 30
- Short Creative Writing Exercise: 500 words or equivalent (15%) – due September 4
- Critical Essay: 1000 words (20%) – due September 25

Prior to final submission, all students have the opportunity to submit one draft of their assignment to Turnitin to self-check their referencing.

Assignments will not be marked until both hard copy and online versions have been submitted. Marks may be deducted for late submission of either version.

Penalties for Late Assignments
Assignments submitted after the due date, without an approved extension of time will be penalised by the reduction of 5% of the possible maximum mark for the assessment item for each day or part day that the item is late. Weekends count as one day in determining the penalty. Assessment items submitted more than ten days after the due date will be awarded zero marks.

Special Consideration/Extension of Time Applications
Students wishing to apply for Special Consideration or Extension of Time should obtain the appropriate form from the Student HUBS.

No Assignment Re-submission
Students who have failed an assignment are not permitted to revise and resubmit it in this course. However, students are always welcome to contact their Tutor, Lecturer or Course Coordinator to make a consultation time to receive individual feedback on their assignments.

Remarks
Students can request to have their work re-marked by the Course Coordinator or Discipline Convenor (or their delegate); three outcomes are possible: the same grade, a lower grade, or a higher grade being awarded. Students may also appeal against their final result for a course. Please consult the University policy at:


Return of Assignments
Where possible, assignments will be marked within 3 weeks and returned to students in class. At the end of semester, students can collect assignments from the Student HUBS during office hours.

Preferred Referencing Style
In this course, it is recommended that you use the MLA referencing system for referencing sources of information used in assignments. Inadequate or incorrect reference to the work of others may be viewed as plagiarism and result in reduced marks or failure.

An in-text citation names the author of the source and the page number in parentheses. At the end of the paper, a list of references provides publication information about the source; the list is alphabetised by authors' last names (or by titles for works without authors). Further information on referencing and general study skills can be obtained from:


Student Representatives
We are very interested in your feedback and suggestions for improvement. Student Representatives are the channel of communication between students and the School Board. Contact details of Student Representatives can be found on the School website.

Student Communication
Students should discuss any course related matters with their Tutor, Lecturer, or Course Coordinator in the first instance and then the relevant Discipline or Program Convenor. If this proves unsatisfactory, they should then contact the Head of School if required. Contact details can be found on the School website.
Essential Online Information for Students
Information on Class and Exam Timetables, Tutorial Online Registration, Learning Support,
Campus Maps, Careers information, Counselling, the Health Service and a range of free Student
Support Services can be found at:


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<tr>
<th>Grading guide</th>
<th>Fail (FF)</th>
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<tr>
<td>49% or less</td>
<td>An unacceptable effort, including non-completion. The student has not understood the basic principles of the subject matter and/or has been unable to express their understanding in a comprehensible way. Deficient in terms of answering the question, research, referencing and correct presentation (spelling, grammar etc). May include extensive plagiarism.</td>
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<tr>
<td>50% to 64%</td>
<td>Pass (P)</td>
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<tr>
<td>65% to 74%</td>
<td>Credit (C)</td>
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<tr>
<td>75% to 84%</td>
<td>Distinction (D)</td>
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<tr>
<td>85% upwards</td>
<td>High Distinction (HD)</td>
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The work demonstrates a reasonable attempt to answer the question, shows some grasp of the basic principles of the subject matter and a basic knowledge of the required readings, is comprehensible, accurate and adequately referenced.

The work demonstrates a clear understanding of the question, a capacity to integrate research into the discussion, and a critical appreciation of a range of different theoretical perspectives. A deficiency in any of the above may be compensated by evidence of independent thought. The work is coherent and accurate.

Evidence of substantial additional reading and/or research, and evidence of the ability to generalise from the theoretical content to develop an argument in an informed and original manner. The work is well organised, clearly expressed and shows a capacity for critical analysis.

All of the above, plus a thorough understanding of the subject matter based on substantial additional reading and/or research. The work shows a high level of independent thought, presents informed and insightful discussion of the topic, particularly the theoretical issues involved, and demonstrates a well-developed capacity for critical analysis.
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<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Workshop Focus</th>
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<td>July 17</td>
<td>Paying Attention</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>July 24</td>
<td>Ballad/ Narrative</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>July 31</td>
<td>The Poetry of Place</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Aug 7</td>
<td>The Stanza</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Aug 14</td>
<td>Prosody/ Rhythm</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Aug 21</td>
<td>Family Portraits</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Aug 28</td>
<td>Letting the Image Speak</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sep 4</td>
<td>The Poem Sequence <strong>Short Writing Assignment due</strong></td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Sep 11</td>
<td>The Prose Poem</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Sep 18</td>
<td>Voice</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sep 25</td>
<td>Memory <strong>Critical Essay due</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Oct 16</td>
<td>Poetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Oct 23</td>
<td>Revisioning the Poem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Oct 30</td>
<td><strong>Submission of portfolio - Portfolios and journals are to be handed in at the School of Language and Media Office by 5pm on Oct 30</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Note:**

* The session structure is as follows: 45 minutes of lecture and discussion on the readings of the week. This is followed by a 10-minute writing exercise and then a 5-minute break. The second hour is devoted to workshop critique, in which students' writings are discussed and creative recommendations made.

* Works to be critiqued should be submitted and distributed at least a week before being workshopped. They should be read at home and a brief critique prepared for the workshop. This allows us more precious discussion time. You should also do the weekly readings at home and makes notes for discussion in class.

* The golden rule to be observed in the sessions is respect, for the tutor and for your fellow writing students. We are all beginners, and respect and humility are essential in the writing life. Criticism should be constructive and be directed at the text, not the author.

* You are required to submit a portfolio of original poems, a short creative writing assignment, a critical essay and a journal. You may use the weekly writing exercises in the course or develop your work independently. The number of poems can range from 8 to 20 for the portfolio and 1-3 for the short writing assignment, depending on the length and quality. For the 1000-word critical essay, you must choose one of the critical questions relating to the topics from the course. The third assessment item is the 500-word journal. This should include observations on writing and writers, sketches for projects, and two reviews of contemporary works. You should be working on your journal through the semester, making it a place where you deposit images, ideas, and thoughts about writers and writing.

* All work must be typed, double-spaced for prose, and single-spaced for poetry. All pieces should bear a title, your name and date.

The discussion/ essay topics are divided into critical and creative sections. The critical section focuses on literary analysis and appreciation of the stories and poems. You will acquire critical tools and concepts such as genre, form, literary devices etc and apply them to the texts being read. The creative section consists of writing exercise related to the themes and writing skills and techniques covered in the readings.

**Week 1 - Paying Attention**

Poetry is about paying attention, listening, being ready for the images and sounds as they reveal themselves. Oscar Wilde declares: “The mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible.” In a way, the poetry renews the world, performing the sacraments of making new, alerting us to the colours, to the sounds, smells, sensations around and in us. The German poet Rainer Maria Rilke proclaims: “Praising is what matters!” He sees poetry as a continual act of
praise, of celebrating the mysteries of the visible and invisible worlds. When a poem records a moment of seeing, registering the way a leaf travels to the ground, the way the sunlight behaves in a particular place, the way the mountains come and go in the blue haze, it is uttering things into existence, bringing forth what would otherwise pass unnoticed. The Zen poets, after years of arduous practice, master the art of seeing, of capturing what is happening in the present moment. By perceiving the unique quality of the present moment, the poets experience a moment of enlightenment, when the transitory and the eternal, the earthly and the spiritual are reconciled.

A single petal
Of the cherry blossom fell:
Mountain silence.

Kenneth Tanemura

Just by being,
I'm here –
In snowfall.

Kobayashi Issa

Such a moon –
Even the thief
pauses to sing.

Buson

On a withered bough
A crow alone is perching,
Autumn evening now.

Basho

These are haikus, a seventeen syllable form which demands strict discipline – the moment of perception is spontaneous and original, and has to be compressed into three lines of five, seven, and five syllables, an approximation of the length of a human breath. It is an instant, an experience rendered without commentary, so that the reader feels it as if he were experiencing it himself.

When asked by his disciple about the way to enlightenment, a Zen Master says: “The Way is your daily life.” There are art objects, poems to be found all around us. There is poetry in the things we do daily: waking, washing, eating, walking, sleeping etc. Richard Jones’ “White Towels” turns laundry into a poem:

I have been studying the difference
Between solitude and loneliness,
Telling the story of my life
To the clean white towels taken warm from the dryer.
I carry them through the house
As though they were my children
Asleep in my arms.

And here is Raymond Carver celebrating the wonder of an everyday event in “Happiness”:

So early it’s still almost dark out.
I’m near the window with coffee,
and the usual early morning stuff
that passes for thought.
When I see the boy and his friend
walking up the road
to deliver the newspaper.
They wear caps and sweaters,
and one boy has a bag over his shoulder.
They are so happy
they aren’t saying anything, these boys.
I think if they could, they would take
each other’s arm.
It’s early in the morning,
and they are doing this thing together.  
They come on, slowly.  
The sky is taking on light,  
though the moon still hangs pale over the water.  
Such beauty that for a minute  
death and ambition, even love,  
doesn’t enter into this.  
Happiness. It comes on  
unexpectedly. And goes beyond, really,  
any early morning talk about it.

Carver has taken something very routine, a scene that he has probably seen day after day, and turned it into a significant moment of peace and happiness. The language is simple, plain, and intimate. There are no colourful metaphors, just a quiet description reflecting the beauty of the moment. The poem then dismisses its own effort to approximate the sense of happiness in an everyday event.

**Critical**

1. The American poet Archibald Macleish declares famously in his poem “Ars Poetica” that “A poem should not mean/ But be.” Comment using two or more poems.

2. Gerard Manley Hopkins says that poetry is “speech framed . . . to be heard for its own sake and interest even over and above its interest of meaning.” Comment using Wallace Stevens’ “The Idea of Order at Key West.”

**Creative**

1. Try a haiku sequence. Focus on a single image, an event, a natural happening, like the career of a leaf as it falls, something like that.

2. Make a list poem of images of what you think a poem is. You could begin the lines with “Because the poem . . .” or a phrase “This poem . . .”

**Week 2 - Ballad/ Narrative**

The ballad is a song that tells a story reflecting the life of the community or society. It is rooted in the oral tradition, originally sung or recited without being written down. Look at the notes on the ballad in The Making of the Poem. The contemporary ballad may not provide such as clear narrative as the early ballads but the elements are still there, the rhythm, the stanzaic patterning, the storytelling voice, the audience etc.

**Critical**

1. Read Gwendolyn Brooks’ “We Real Cool” and Sterling A. Brown’s “Riverbank Blues.” Do these poems conform to the conventional ideas we have of the ballad? In what ways are they different? Can you hear the blues and jazz rhythms in them? The blues can be considered a sort of ballad tradition of the black Americans. Explore the connections between the English ballad tradition and the blues and jazz influences in the two poems.

2. Choose one of the ballads from The Making of the Poem and examine how the rhythm, the stanza, the voice weave together the ballad story.

3. What is Louis MacNeice’s “Bagpipe Music” about? What makes it a ballad? How does the rhythm and the voice convey the story or the theme?

**Creative**

1. Are there local stories in your community, something you read in the local paper which amuses you, something like a folk tale you could turn into a ballad? Try using the quatrain for your ballad.
2. Read some of the bush ballads by Banjo Paterson or Henry Lawson. Now try writing a contemporary bush ballad.

3. Revisit some of the legends and folktales you read as a child, or stories from the Bible and myths from around the world, and select one for a ballad.

**Week 3 - The Place Poem**

A poem does not appear out of nowhere. It emerges from a particular time and place. It is always situated, taking place in a place, even if the final poem is erased of spatial references. The poem is always located, anchored to a specific place.

There have always been poems about places. The Irish have a poetic tradition called the dinnseanchas, poems which commemorate the meanings of places. Writers like Seamus Heaney believe in the genius loci, the spirit of place. Many of his poems are tied to places, his birthplace in County Derry and the places which have yielded insights on his quest to understand the nature of poetic creation and the violence in Northern Ireland. While some of Heaney’s early work speaks of rootedness, of being bound to the place of origins, there are other poems that refer to displacement, not being at home. Indeed, many contemporary Irish poets reveal a troubled sense of belonging, questioning their relationship to place and home.

The poetry of place is as much about mapping the landscape as it is about charting the self. Les Murray’s “Evening Alone at Bunyah” is a moving meditation on the past and the dead father. Charles Wright’s “Looking West from Laguan Beach at Night” is a pastoral meditation on place and self.

Place can provide a trigger for a meditation, an epiphany, a inner journey into the hidden reaches of the self. The poet Richard Hugo has written a book called The Triggering Town, which looks at the ways a place, especially a town, can be a trigger for poetry. It is about looking at the town imaginatively from every possible angle, the dwellers’ point of view, those passing through etc.

**Critical**

1. What kind of place is being described in John Koethe’s “From the Porch”? What is the poet’s attitude towards it? How does he convey it? Compare it to Babette Deutsch’s “Urban Pastoral.” How do the poems envisage the relationship between place and self?

2. What is the attitude towards the landscape and place in Judith Wright’s “Australia 1970.”? What is the view of the relationship between nature and man in the poem? What do the tone, voice and imagery convey these?

**Creative**

1. Write a poem about a place where you had an intense experience, something like a spiritual revelation or epiphany. Use vivid imagery, metaphors and similes, to evoke the place. Pay attention to how the rhythm affects the tone, the mood of your poem.

2. Write a poem about the suburb. Pay attention to the movement on the street, the light, the sounds, the neighbours etc.

3. Write about the places in the childhood where you played and spent time dreaming and scheming. You may want to revisit Robert Frost’s “Directive” or the excerpt from William Wordsworth’s “The Prelude.”

**Week 4 - The Stanza**

The word “stanza,” as your notes in The Making of the Poem tells us, is Italian for room. The stanza is a way to shape the poem, focus the thoughts and emotions, forge the experience the poem is trying to translate into a coherent body.

**Critical**
1. George Herbert’s “Easter Wings” is an early example of concrete poetry, poetry whose typographical shape duplicates the shape of the subject or object it is describing.

2. Examine how the stanza shapes the meaning of the poem in Carol Ann Duffy’s “Warming Her Pearls” and Carol Muske’s “Epith.”

Creative

1. Write a concrete poem imitating the shape of your subject.

2. Write a poem using one of the poetic forms we have studied: the sestina, the pantoum or the villanelle.

Week 5 – Prosody

“All art aspires to the condition of music,” observes the Victorian critic Walter Pater. Poetry resides in a region between speech and music. Last semester we discussed the music of the line, what makes it sing. The words are carried as if on a tune, the meanings transmitted to us through the way the words breathe. Thomas Hardy defines poetry as “emotion put into measure.” Because of its music, it has a power to penetrate beneath our consciousness into the deepest places within.

Where does the music come from? It can be traced to the rhythm, cadence, the meter and measure and pattern of pauses, stresses, enjambment. Read the notes on meter in pg 159 and the glossary in The Making of the Poem. Read up on prosody and scansion. It can be mechanical and takes the fun out of reading poetry, but it is necessary to understand the breath units, the building blocks, the compositional options in composing the poem.

Critical

1. Last semester, you looked at John Keats’s “To Autumn” to appreciate how the music of the poem is wrought. Now turn to “Ode on a Grecian Urn.” It is a deep and sensuous meditation, a melodious merging of thought and feeling. What is the view of art and life that is embodied in the poem? How is it conveyed in the poem? Focus on the sounds, the metrical patterns that make up the voice and meaning of the poem.

2. Does a scansion of one of these poems and relate the meter to the meaning of the poem: Jorie Graham’s “Reading Plato,” excerpt from Hart Crane’s “The Bridge” and Gerard Manley Hopkins’ “Carrion Comfort.”

Creative

1. Try writing a poem of accentual meter, that is, a meter using a consistent number of stresses per line.


3. Write a poem following the meter and line-break pattern in Jorie Graham’s “Reading Plato.”

Week 6 – Family Portraits

Last semester we came across the father poem, and saw how it seems to be an obligatory poem for the poet write. There are also mother poems, and poems about the wider reaches of the family. Robert Lowell has dealt extensively and intensively with his parents, relatives and forbears. “The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket” is one of the many family history poems. It is about Lowell’s ancestry but goes beyond that to embrace the reflections on history, myth, religion etc.

Critical

1. Compare the mother-portraits in George Barker’s “To My Mother” and David St. John’s “Iris.”
How do they convey the relationship between mother and son?

2. Read the extract from Robert Lowell’s “The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket” or better still, the entire poem. What fascinates Lowell about the subject of the poem? How does the death of the cousin relate to the bigger themes in the poem? Analyse the imagery and pay close attention to the symbols.

Creative

1. Is there somebody in your family who is dead and who has always fascinated you? Are there stories and myths about this person? Do a portrait, using images you recall and the fragments of stories you have heard or seem to remember about the family member or relative.

2. Do a mother poem. Avoid sentimental clichés. And perhaps don’t mention the word mother in the poem.

Week 7 – Letting the Image Speak

By now you are all aware of the power of the image, how the image can express and embody in a few words all that we feel and mean. The Zen poets showed us how a single image can

I have seen the moon and blossoms; now I go To view the last and loveliest: the snow. - Rippo

There sat the great bronze Buddha. From his hollow Nostril suddenly darted out – a swallow! - Issa

While willow-leaves continually fell, My lord and I stood listening to the bell. - Basho

The apparition of these faces in the crowd; Petals on a wet, black bough. – Ezra Pound

The last image from Pound is the most famous Imagist poem. Pound revealed that the poem was originally thirty lines long, a record of an epiphanic moment when he emerged from the Paris subway. After severe rewriting, what survives is a solitary image, a single snapshot which condenses and summarises all that complex of emotions that he wanted to express.

An image can be visual, or auditory and even tactile. It can combine all the senses, evoking the mood and moment in all its entirety. Trust the image to do its job.

Critical

1. The poet Robert Hass writes: “Images are not quite ideas, they are stiller than that, with less implications outside themselves. And they are not myth, they do not have that explanatory power; they are nearer to pure story. Nor are they always metaphors; they do not say this is that, they say that this is.” Discuss this statement using two or more poems you have read. You may go to the library and look at some haikus for this.

2. Examine the imagery in John Keats’ “Ode to a Nightingale” (at the back of the guide). How do the visual, auditory and tactile images convey the feelings and thoughts?

Creative

1. Write three haikus on the following: the migration of birds, rain, one of the seasons, cooking, writing. Let the image convey your thoughts.

2. Do a list poem of images centred on one of the themes: flight, birth, the colour blue or yellow, the sea, or a theme of your choice.

Week 8 – The Poem Sequence
It can be hard to get everything into a single poem. Sometimes we need to plumb the meaning a bit more, and carry on the exploration and meditation from different angles. The poem sequence is like a musical suite, with different movements and variations on the same theme. Robert Lowell’s “The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket” can be considered as a poem sequence, the pieces form a coherent whole. The sequence lets the poem embrace the different resonances, different cadences and moods.

**Critical**

1. Read Frederico Garcia Lorca’s “Lament for Ignacio Sanchez Majias.” How does the sequencing of the poem express the profound grief and loss? Is there a movement beyond the tragedy?

2. Examine T.S. Eliot’s “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” or Robert Lowell’s “The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket” as a poem sequence. How does the mood shift, the theme develop from lyric to lyric?

**Creative**

1. Write a haiku sequence on a theme or subject. It could be variations of a theme, like the migration of geese.

2. Seamus Heaney and Tony Harrison have written sonnet-sequences about their parents. Attempt a sonnet-sequence about you parents, seeing them at different stages of their lives. Use snapshots.

**Week 9 - The Prose Poem**

Ezra Pound observes that the poet who wishes to write free verse should beware of writing bad prose hacked into arbitrary line lengths. In a sense, free verse is a misnomer, as poetry can never be free of the cadence, the measures that makes poetry poetry. Even if the form of the poem does not conform to any traditional form, it still has to find a shape, a form to contain and express it, and this is governed by a sense of rhythm and cadence, of what we pump into a line or how far we can stretch it. The line break is the place where the poem gets an idea of where it is going or what it is going to look like.

There are poems that ignore the line break, and runs on like prose. Typographically, it reads like prose. However it is so informed by the presence of poetic rhythms, the figures of speech, imagery, rhyme, alliteration, assonance and other poetic devices that it reads like poetry. There may be narrative hints or an implied story lurking, but the dominant mode is the lyrical, the poetic mood or tone. It is marked by what Pound calls the musical phrase.

The prose poem first appeared in French poetry in the early 19th century, and became an experimental mode used a great deal by Baudelaire, Rimbaud, the Symbolists and then the surrealists. In the prose poems of Rimbaud, the boundary between prose and poetry blurs, as the distinction between dream and reality, art and life dissolve. In “A Season In Hell,” Rimbaud practises a phrase he has made famous, a deliberate disorientation of the senses:

I dreamed of crusades, voyages of discovery never reported, unrecorded republics, suppressed religious wars, revolutions in manners, movements of races and continents: I believed in all enchantments.

I invented the colours of the vowels! – A black, E white, I red, O blue, U green – I made rules for the form and movement of each consonant, and, with instinctive rhythms, I flattered myself that I had created a poetic language accessible, some day, to all the senses. I reserved translation rights.

At first this was an academic study. I wrote of silences and of rights, I expressed the inexpressible. I defined vertigos.

The poem celebrates a moment of visionary power, discovering a new vocabulary for a new way of looking at life and writing.
The prose poem is spontaneous, giving the impression that it is an instantaneous record, a moment when the unconscious is tapped, and the writing has a feel of immediacy. In “Log,” Alice Jones captures a moment between sleep and waking

Afternoon of slumber, logging dreams on the mind's dusty screen. Where did it come from, that cartoon sleep of sawing timber? We lumber up from depths, wrestling with sunlight, uncrusting our eyes. An unrecognized timbre of voice loudly shouting something new, limber of tongue, loose of syllogism. Don't rest, write it down. We're up to no good, barking up the wrong tree. That story where Wynken, Blynken and Nod sail forth cloudy-headedly, navigating the sky in a wooden clog, star-lit. The recording angel's lost her book and deeply sleeps the day away in dreams of woods, those papery trees, everything rustling.

The pun on log creates shifting layers of meaning: log as journal, log as timber, and logging on. It recreates that unstable ground between consciousness and sleep, language and the unconscious, dream and reality.

**Critical**

1. What makes Carolyn Forche’s “The Colonel” a prose poem rather than a short lyrical prose narrative?

2. Read Edward Thomas’ “Rain.” Thomas often started with prose sketches, which he cut and arranged into poems. Write out “Rain” without the line-breaks? How does it read? What determines the format of the poem, whether it should remain a prose-poem or be shaped more like a poem? You may want to read Denise Levertov's essay on the use of the line-break which can be found at http://www.ualr.edu/~rmburns/RB/levlinet.html.

3. Go to the library or search for Arthur Rimbaud's “The Illuminations” or “A Season in Hell” on the internet. Why has Rimbaud chosen the prose-poem to convey his vision?

**Creative**

1. Try sitting down at your desk and let your drift into a spell of automatic or free writing. This is the act of writing anything that comes, letting yourself into a trance where you become a conduit for the images, the words.

2. Write a prose-poem in the form of a letter, like Richard Hugo’s letter poems. Pay attention to the music of the lines, the imagery, and the tone. What makes it a poem rather than a prose sketch?

**Week 10 - Voice**

A writer's voice is the distinct way in which his works sound. It is his signature, his stamp of originality. It is related to style, which is the way the writer puts his words and sentences together on the page. The factors influencing style are the theme, the preoccupations of the writer, the diction or word choice, the syntax or sentence structure, the imagery, the point of view, the poetic forms the poet inclines towards. But voice can also refer to the immediate context of the poem. If the poem is a dramatic monologue spoken from the point of view of a child, then it may have a child's innocent and naïve voice. If the persona is a disillusioned politician, then it may be cynical, bitter, ironic, cold.

**Critical**

1. How would you describe the voice in Allen Ginsberg’s “Howl” (attached to the guide)? How does this relate to the theme? How does Ginsberg achieve this voice?

2. Describe the voice in Tennyson’s “Ulysses” or Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind.” How does it reinforce the meaning of the poem?
Creative

1. Reread a poet you like. It could be any poet from the anthology or elsewhere. Imitate the style, the voice, by taking one of the poems you like and writing something similar.

2. Adopt the persona of one of these: a farmer, a man who comes home from work to find his wife has left with his child and the furniture, a woman waiting for her lover to return, a disillusioned soldier, a conceited politician, a rock star, a lonely child. Take time to find the voice and speak imaginatively from the person’s perspective.

Week 11 - In My Beginning

T.S Eliot’s much-quoted lines from “The Four Quartets” run: “We shall not cease from exploration/ And the end of all our exploration / Will be to arrive at the beginning/ And know the place for the first time.” We all go back to the beginnings to find out who we are. There are poems still wanting to be unearthed in our childhood, the toils of growing up, all the stumbling and fumbling. Let you poetry make the journey back to these hidden and hiding places, where we may find a clue to where we are going and who we have become.

Critical

1. Read Elizabeth Bishop’s “In the Waiting Room.” What is the poem about? How does Bishop convey the feelings of the child and her awakening consciousness?

2. Read Les Murray’s “Evening Alone At Bunyah.” The journey is a homecoming. What is Murray’s attitude towards his father and the place of origin? How does the poem convey this?

Creative

1. Write about a memory from childhood, a moment with a friend, your parents, a moment which has been so deeply etched in your mind.

2. Write a poem about the place’s of childhood. Recreate a few scenes and images. Avoid sentimental clichés.

3. Now let’s try some free or automatic writing. Let all random images of the past surface. Record them as they arrive. Arrange them in a list. Can you see a poem there, a certain shape and meaning perhaps?

Week 12 - Poetics

At the beginning of the course last semester, we began with a discussion of what poetry is or means. As we close, we might examine our poetic tenets again. Poets are always reflecting on what the poem is or means, what the craft does and what it is that drives them to labour at the words and devote their lives to this thing called poetry.

Critical

1. Write an essay about what you think poetry is. Think about the role of the poet and the function of poetry. Use at least three poems.

2. W.H. Auden says that poetry is “the clear expression of mixed feelings.” Discuss using at least three poems.

Creative

1. Write an ars poetics poem, like Archibald Macleish’s “Ars Poetica.”
Week 13 - Revisioning the Poem

Revision is an intense and often painful process. It involves letting go, discarding lines and images you laboured to achieve, dismantling the entire edifice and rebuilding it from a few salvaged lines. In the attempt to find the focus of the poem, to get to the heart of the matter, you have to dig past the layers, get rid of the obscure and superfluous images. You may have to go through twenty or more drafts, shaping, recasting, chiselling and hammering. It is about revisioning, learning to see the real shape and meaning of the poem. Robert Lowell was always revising, even the published poems. Elizabeth Bishop was also a furious revisionist, churning out draft after draft on the way to the real poem.

Checklist

Is the shape of the poem right? Is the form, the way it looks on the page right to you?

- Is it in the right voice?
- Is there too much telling?
- Is there too little imagery? Too many images?
- Is there a sustained metaphor that becomes boring, makes the poem too predictable?
- Does the imagery relate to the theme?
- Are the rhythms right? What about the music?
- Are the lines too long, too short? Are the line breaks in the right place?
- Look for clichés, stale verbs and adjectives?
- Are there adverbs you can replace with vivid verbs?
- Is it too predictable, too sentimental, too clichéd?
- Is there a sense of movement towards knowledge, sense of quest?
- Have you allowed for a sense of mystery, the unknown or have you explained it all away?
- Is there more to be explored?
- Do the lines flow, the stanzas connect, the images link?
- You may have to leave the poem for a while. Read around, read more poetry. Take notes in your journal. You may stumble for an image, the solving line or shape. When you come back to it with renewed vision, you may discover the real poem revealed.