

ENGLISH 9057 A

Victorian Types: Temporality and Taxonomy 1850-1870

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

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The focus for this course will come from changes in the sense of the term "type" in English between 1830 and 1850. Before 1830, the term's primary meaning—the principal sense in Johnson's *Dictionary*—was theological. In typological exegesis, the type-concept made possible a strategy of historical interpretation that found in the text of history, especially Jewish history, prefigurations of Christian revelation. This way of reading was an important part of Victorian understandings of history, especially among Evangelicals and writers like Ruskin who were influenced by evangelicism. During the years after 1830, however, under the influence of German *Naturphilosophie* and of French naturalists, the term acquired its current familiar taxonomical sense. This sense of the term originated in the life sciences and quickly extended to geology and beyond. It played a crucial function in the racist pseudo-science of the second half of the century as in the development in sexology and psychology of the notion of character-types.

The course's project will be to understand what might be called an interference-effect between the theological and the scientific ideas of type in mid-century. There is evidence that Darwin avoided the term "type," perhaps because of the term's theological associations. The philosopher of science Ernst Mayr argued that Darwin's theory of natural selection transformed species from ideal types into contingent effects of history. Nonetheless, Darwin does use the term "type" and in this course we will read *The Origin of Species* to examine the problematic relation between the ideal and the historical that the term locates in his work. We will also read Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, a work where the natural historical and the theological senses of "type" are systematically juxtaposed and where the relation of different and incompatible forms of temporality is a major theme. From the same decade of the 1850's, we will read Dickens' *Bleak House*, a work in which typology provides one principle of narrative organization, but in which the type as a figure is contrasted with allegory. *Bleak House* will provide a further occasion for study of the type as the location of a problem in Victorian representations of temporality and of history. The final field of our investigation will be the intersection of theology, sexuality, and the aesthetic in the uses of typology in poetry and painting by D. G. and Christina Rossetti from the 1850's and 60's.

Required Books:

Tennyson, *In Memoriam*. Ed. Rowlinson. Broadview, 978155481143

Dickens, *Bleak House*. Ed. Bradbury. Penguin. 0141439726

Darwin, *The Origin of Species*. Ed Beer. Oxford. 0199219222

Recommended:

D. G. Rossetti, *Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Jerome McGann (Yale UP)

Christina Rossetti *Poems and Prose* ed. Humphries. (Penguin)

Assignments:

-- A 5000 word paper on a topic of your choice will be due one week after our last meeting, on December 9; 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 November 19 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 October 21. 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. Copies of readings not included in the required books for the class will be available as in.pdf versions.

Week 1: Sept 9. Introduction. *In Memoriam* 121

Week 2: Sept 16. Charles Lyell *Principles of Geology* I. 55-166; II. 123-75; William Whewell from *Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences* 479-512; Robert Chambers *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* 145-276.

Week 3: Sept. 23. John Ruskin, from *Modern Painters* II "The Imagination Penetrative"; from *Fors Clavigera: Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain*; D. G. Rossetti, "The Blessed Damozel"; C. Rossetti, "Goblin Market"; "The Convent Threshold." Paintings by D.G. Rossetti and William Holman Hunt.

Week 4: Sept. 30. Frye, *The Great Code* 78-101; Erich Auerbach, "Figura"; Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* pp. 28-33, 68-74, 281-99.

Week 5: Oct. 7. *In Memoriam*

Week 6: Oct. 14. *In Memoriam*

Week 7: Oct. 21. *In Memoriam*

Week 8: Oct. 28. *Bleak House*

Week 9: Nov. 4. *Bleak House*

Week 10: Nov. 11. *Bleak House*

Week 11: Nov. 18. Darwin, *The Origin of Species* pp. 1-181(ch. 1-7).

Week 12: Nov. 25.. *The Origin of Species* pp. 182-360 (ch. 8-14).

Week 13: Dec. 2. Robert Browning, “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came” (1855)
“Caliban Upon Setebos” (1864).

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.

Of Interest: Please mark your calendars for the 2014 conference of the North American Victorian Studies Association, sponsored by Western and to be held in London November 13-15. Let me know if you are interested in volunteering at the conference; if you possibly can, you should try to attend some sessions, as many of the major scholars in contemporary Victorian Studies will be presenting.

In Memoriam A. H. H.: 121

Sad Hesper o'er the buried sun
 And ready, thou, to die with him,
 Thou watchest all things ever dim
And dimmer, and a glory done:

The team is loosen'd from the wain,
 The boat is drawn upon the shore;
 Thou listenest to the closing door,
And life is darken'd in the brain.

Bright Phosphor, fresher for the night,
 By thee the world's great work is heard
 Beginning, and the wakeful bird;
Behind thee comes the greater light:

The market boat is on the stream,
 And voices hail it from the brink;
 Thou hear'st the village hammer clink,
And see'st the moving of the team.

Sweet Hesper-Phosphor, double name
 For what is one, the first, the last,
 Thou, like my present and my past,
Thy place is changed; thou art the same.