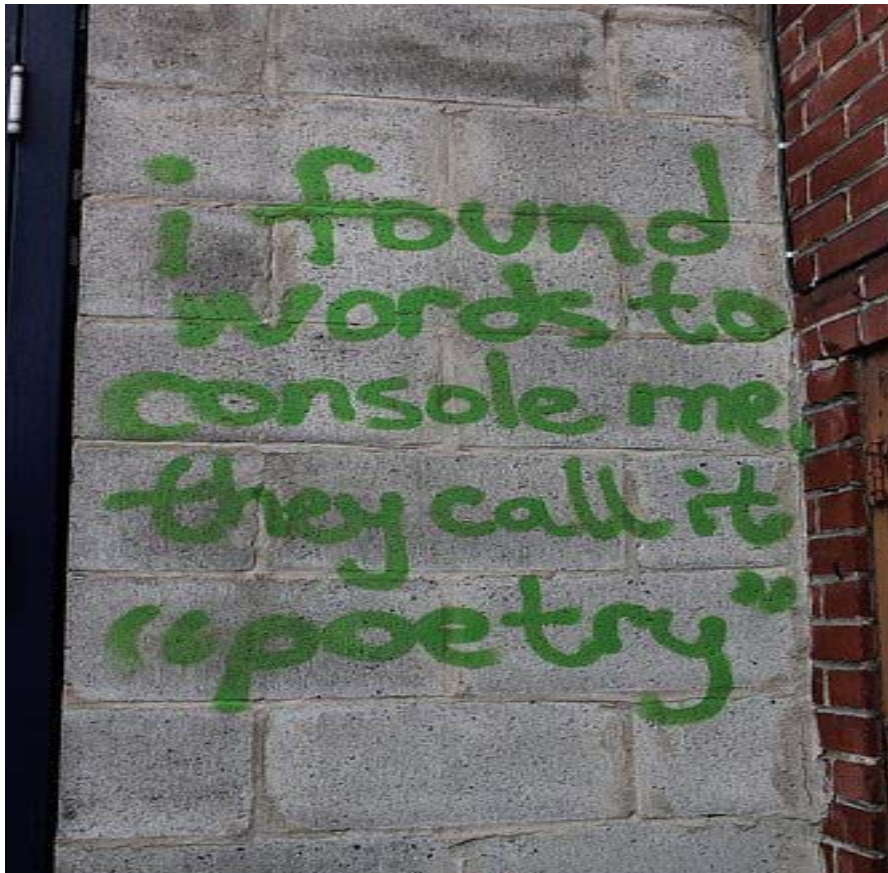


M.A. in American Literature and Culture

ALit7-518 American Poetry: Experimental and Paratextual Poetics 1950s-1990s



Instructor: Dr. Tatiani Rapatzikou
Winter 2011

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Dr. Tatiani Rapatzikou

Winter 2011

Office: 308E

Office Hours: Mondays 13:00-15:00 & Thursdays 10:00-11:00 (in addition 14:00-16:00 for MA students only)

Course Objectives

This course will familiarize students with the poetic experimentations of Charles Olson, Jack Spicer, Susan Howe, Lorenzo Thomas, and Johanna Drucker covering the period between 1950s-1990s. Attention will be paid to their textual-paratextual compositions through the study of various poems and poetic essays. Most of these texts resort to visual, typographical, palimpsestic or digital experimentations in their attempt to bridge poetic avant-gardist work with the broader community as well as reveal the subversive narrative strategies poetic writings generate in order to respond to various socio-cultural and political crises in addition to technological innovations as these emerged in the U.S. between 1950s-1990s. Students will be invited to comment on, during class discussions, supplementary material by Walter Benjamin, Peter Burger, Marjorie Perloff and others.

Assessment

- a. **In-class presentations:** Each graduate student is required to prepare and deliver two 20' minute (approx.) presentations (score: 10% per presentation – total 20%) on one of the literary and/or theoretical texts to be discussed in class. Each presentation should be followed by a written report (score: 10% per report – total 20%).
- b. **In-class activities** (score 10%).
- c. **Essay:** Each graduate student is required to write a 5,000 words essay (score: 50%) on a topic which will be decided after consultation with the tutor. The essay should be handed in before the commencement of next semester (Feb. 13th, 2012). There will be a penalty for late submissions.

Syllabus

Thurs. 6 Oct. Introduction

Thurs. 13&20 Oct. Charles Olson

Student Presentations

Readings:

Poems: Olson, Charles, “From *The Collected Poems of Charles Olson*” (1987) and *Mayan Letters* (1953). Essays: Olson, Charles, “Projective Verse” (1950) and “Human Universe” (1966).

Wed. 26 Oct. – Fri. 28 Oct. 2011 NO CLASSES

Thurs. 3&10 Nov.

Jack Spicer

Student Presentations

Readings:

Poems: Spicer, Jack "From *my vocabulary did this to me*" (2008). Lecture: Spicer, Jack, "Dictation and 'A Textbook of Poetry'" (1965).

Thurs. 17 Nov. 2011 NO CLASSES

Thurs. 24 Nov&1 Dec.

Lorenzo Thomas

Student Presentations

Readings:

Poems: Thomas, Lorenzo, "From *Chances are Few*" (1972) and "From *The Bathers*" (1981). Lecture: Thomas, Lorenzo, "I CUDDA HAD A V-8: Poetry and the Vernacular" (1988). Essay: Thomas, Lorenzo, "Neon Griot: The Functional Role of Poetry Readings in the Black Arts Movement" (1998).

Thurs. 8&15 Dec.

Susan Howe

Student Presentations

Readings:

Poems: Howe, Susan, "From *My Emily Dickinson*" (1985) and "From *Singularities*" (1990). Essay: Howe, Susan, "These Flames and Generosities of the Heart: Emily Dickinson and the Illogic of Sumptuary Values" ("From *The Birth-Mark*) (1993). Also available at:

<http://www.writing.upenn.edu/library/Howe/index.html>

Thurs. 22&12 Jan.

Johanna Drucker

Student Presentations

Readings:

Poem: Drucker, Johanna, *Simulant Portrait* (1990) [this book can be accessed at:

<http://www.artistsbooksonline.org/works/simp/imageindex/1.1.1.0.xml>] and *The History of the/my Worldi* (1990). Essay:

Drucker, Johanna, "Visual Performance of the Poetic Text" (1998).

Frid. 23 Dec. 2011 – Sun. 8 Jan. 2012 CHRISTMAS BREAK

Thurs. 19 Jan.

Revision and Comments

Extra Events

A visit to the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art will also be organized. Details to be announced. For a virtual museum tour click at: http://www.mmca.org.gr/museumst/ie2/virtual_museum.php

Bibliography (on Reserve)

- Back, Rachel Tzvia. *Led by Language: The Poetry and Poetics of Susan Howe*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002.
- Beach, Christopher, ed. *Artifice & Indeterminacy: An Anthology of New Poetics*. Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1998.
- Bernstein, Charles, ed. *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Drucker, Johanna. *The Alphabetic Labyrinth: The Letters in History and the Imagination*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999.
- Frost, Elisabeth A. *The Feminist Avant-Garde in American Poetry*. Iowa: Iowa University Press, 2003.
- Howe, Susan. *My Emily Dickinson*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1985.
- McCorkle, James. *Conversant Essays: Contemporary Poets on Poetry*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990.
- Kaufman, Will. *American Culture in the 1970s*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.
- Merrill, Thomas F. *The Poetry of Charles Olson: A Primer*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1982.
- Murphy, Richard. *Theorizing the Avant-Garde: Modernism, Expressionism, and the Problem of Postmodernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Nielsen, Aldon Lynn. *Black Chant: Languages of African-American Postmodernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Olson, Charles. *The Collected Poems of Charles Olson: Excluding the Maximus Poems*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
- Perloff, Marjorie. *The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- . *Postmodern Genres*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989.
- Thomas, Lorenzo. *Extraordinary Measures: Afrocentric Modernism and Twentieth-century American Poetry*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000.

Useful Online Poetry Links

- <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/> (Electronic Poetry Center)
- <http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/> (Penn Sound project)
- <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/> (Poetry Foundation)
- <http://www.artistsbooksonline.org/> (for Johanna Drucker's artwork)

Discussion Prompts

Please bring to class at least one question in relation to the primary texts you have studied. The question should also be emailed to the tutor and the student organizing the presentation for the text to be discussed in class.

****Wishing you all a creative semester****