**ENG1121C Literature and Composition II: Drama and Poetry** N. von Maltzahn

March 12 Second take-home midterm due. 900 words 20%

**A. Topics:** Choose ONE of the following topics on which to write a short, well-crafted essay:

1. How does Andrew Marvell exploit the resources of pentameter vs tetrameter in “The Mower Against Gardens”? How else does repetition with or without change contribute to the poem?
2. Discuss the use of repetition with change as a vital part of Lin Manuel Miranda’s poetics in “The Room Where It Happens” (from *Hamilton*, 2015).
3. Compare and contrast the use of repetition with change in Stephen Sondheim’s “Send in the Clowns” (from *A Little Night Music*, 1973) and “I’m Still Here” (from *Follies*, 1971).
4. Discuss the use of repetition with change in **either** Bob Dylan’s “Blind Willie McTell”, **or** Joni Mitchell’s “Both Sides Now”, **or** Bruce Springsteen’s “Man’s Job”. (I.e. choose **one** of these songs to work on.)
5. How does Ben Jonson exploit the resources of pentameter vs tetrameter in “On My First Son” and “On My First Daughter”? How else does repetition with or without change contribute to the poems?

In class we’ve considered such uses of “repetition and change” as rhyme, stanza, refrain, alliteration, and versification in regular meter (notably iambic pentameter and tetrameter). In preparing to write, investigate your chosen poem(s) or lyric(s) with reference to such considerations. How far do such formal features speak to the thematic concerns of the work(s) you have in view? Be sure that your formal analysis comes to address questions of meaning in the poem(s) or song(s) you’re discussing. Then shape your key discoveries into an effective thesis arguing your case about the use of repetition with change in the work(s) in question.

**B. Style-sheet:** You may be used to following one or another of the established style-sheets (the main ones in literary studies are the MLA and “Chicago” styles). Strongly recommended for present purposes is the departmental style-sheet:

<https://arts.uottawa.ca/english/sites/arts.uottawa.ca.english/files/style_guide_2011.pdf>

. Note the requirement to present your essay in hard copy in double-spaced type (word-processing), in an 11- or 12-point font, justifying the left but not the right-hand margin. Include at the end your “Work Cited” (or Works, as the case may be), which can appear in the following form if you are indeed using the Norton anthology as ordered for this course: Ferguson, Margaret, et al. (eds.) *The Norton Anthology of Poetry. Shorter Fifth Edition*. New York: Norton, 2005.

**C. Rules / penalties:** Deadlines for this test must be respected. Should you foresee any difficulty in meeting the deadline, consult with me *at least a week* *before* the essay is due. **Work is due in hard copy at class on the day specified (7th March 2018).** (The departmental secretariat does **not** accept submissions.) Penalties will accrue to late work (-2% per working day late).

A medical certificate validated by the University of Ottawa Health Services is required for medical deferral of coursework. Submit doctor’s notes or related documents to Health Services or SASS. University of Ottawa Health Services Clinic (613-564-3950): 100 Marie Curie (https://www.uottawa.ca/health); SASS Counseling Service (613-562-5200): ): 100 Marie Curie (http://sass.uottawa.ca/en/personal).

**D. Shaping your essay:**

**1. Introduction:** Remember your introduction should introduce your present argument. (Do not introduce poetry more generally, etc.) Provide a thesis statement that summarizes your overall argument and then develop its terms by way of preparing for that argument more fully. Explain the issue(s) you have in view and which texts you mean to analyze as you develop your argument.

**2. Body of the essay:** Each of these paragraphs needs a topic sentence (or more) to state the issue. Avoid compounding topic sentences unnecessarily. Then supply some further sentence developing that issue and thus move to the more specific analysis that supports your claim. If your paragraph has fewer than six or seven sentences, it may well be too fragmentary and your analysis too little developed. Generally, if your paragraph is longer than 240 words it is likely too descriptive or spreads over two or more issues. In either case, emphasize the topic(s). If you find there are two or three topics, divide the paragraph into two or three paragraphs accordingly with stronger topic claims. Note: In a short essay like this first one, shorter paragraphs will be appropriate.

**3. Conclusion:** Your conclusion should present a more general final development of your argument, that is a last or crowning take on your subject. (Do not just restate points you’ve made already, especially in such a short essay.) Yes, it needs to expand beyond the narrow particulars of the preceding analyses, which it should now further synthesize in some way—it’s usually best to avoid fresh detail at this point. No, it should not give way to general philosophizing about the meaning of poetry or the human condition, unless those have been the specific subject(s) of your essay as a whole (unlikely).

**Hints on essay-writing**

**Some rules of thumb:**

**1) Know exactly what you’re talking about** by the time you’re revising your final draft.

**2) Write in the active voice.** Avoid excessive use of the verb “to be” and passive constructions.

**3) Keep your sentences short** and your longer ones, when you do need to use them, will be more effective.

**4) Paragraphs have topic sentences.**

**5) Essays have arguments.**

**Further tips:**

**Generally**: There is no one right way to write an essay! Different people work in different ways. But most writers of college essays find the work breaks down into three phases, more or less: 1) **preparation**; 2) **writing**; and 3) **rewriting**.

Writers depend on **preparation**, which typically involves at least marking up a copy of the text(s) under consideration with notes pertaining to the topic(s) you have in view. It can be helpful to type these texts out double-spaced (if feasible) so you have paper copies you can mark up more fully. Some writers go much further where it comes to outlining an essay in terms of the main points to be made and what issues arise from those as well as what quotations may help prove their claims. Others prepare in a more preliminary way, trusting the writing process to reveal more about their subject than might first have been proposed.

The **writing** of the essay is plainly the main and pressing task before you! Do not defer this work too long: you are likely to make some of your main discoveries while working through your essay paragraph by paragraph and need to make the most of what you’ve thus arrived at.

Experienced writers know to allow enough time for significant **rewriting**. Some of this is for style, to make sure your prose is coherent, to the point, and properly copy-edited (full sentences, correct punctuation, no typos, etc.). Note that it is often only when you’ve written a draft or two of your essay that you understand more fully what it is about. (This is normal!) Then it’s doubly important to go back over the whole to make sure your best insights govern your argument and are as well developed as possible, paragraph by paragraph. Note that a conclusion of a first draft of an essay often makes an excellent introduction for a final draft (may not even require much tweaking).

**Title**: Come up with a brief topical title that indicates the direction of your argument. The title should give some idea of your theme and help your reader toward the thesis you state as you introduce your essay.

**Quotations**: In quoting from sources for proof of a point, make sure you state your claim first before turning to the (brief) quotation, so that your reader is already aware of what is at stake in your adducing that text for present purposes. When we’re reading, it’s normal to go from what we read to what we think about what we’ve read. **But when we’re writing** – and this is important in formal prose – we turn this around and **emphasize the issue or claim first** before giving the reader the descriptive analysis or (brief) passage in question for confirmation of our statement. In this way your reader works through your essay claim by claim by claim, with further illustration as needed, and is always aware of what the governing issue is in any supporting quotation or passage of descriptive analysis.

**References:** To keep the issues in the foreground, subordinate references parenthetically (or in footnote form). In referring to texts within your essay, you can use economical parenthetic references that just cite the poem title and narrower reference in question. If line numbers are hard to come by (e.g. with Lin Manuel Miranda), decide on a simple form of reference, or frame the quotation in a way that gives a clear enough indication of whence it is derived. Otherwise, the convention results in such parenthetic references as: (“Diving into the Wreck,” 22-33) or (*Amoretti* 67, 11), referring to lines 22-33 in the former, and line 11 in the latter. Note that the title of *Amoretti* is italicised because a book-length work in its own right (even if you meet with but an excerpt from it in your anthology). At the end of your essay include a bibliography or “Works Cited” as usual.