Orphaned Girls and White Herons: American Literature from Sentimentalism to Regionalism

Fall semester, 2006/2007

Drawing mainly on the less canonical works of 19th-century American literature before, during, and after the Civil War, this course focuses on the use of the sentimental, sensational, realist, and regionalist modes in fiction and poetry in their broad cultural context and their status in the literary culture of the era. The themes addressed include sexuality and embodiment, gender roles and family dynamics, death and the Civil War, nature and individuality, the literary market, and the self-image of the nineteenth-century author. In broader terms, we will examine the notion of “separate spheres” (men’s sphere vs women’s sphere), the relationship between gender and genre, and the alleged disjunct between high and popular literature. The course makes extensive use of internet resources. Credit requirements include an essay of 2,000–2,500 words.

The SYLLABUS is available at the IFA website. Please note that there is a reading assignment for Week 1.

Notes:
- Take the time to carefully read the syllabus and the credit requirements and to understand what is assigned and where to find it. Excuses like, “I didn’t notice it on the syllabus because it’s so long,” “We couldn’t find the xerox in the course folder,” etc. (believe me, both are real-life examples!) will not be accepted.
- It is essential that you have a copy of the literary work in front of you during class. Many of the assignments are available online, in which case you can print them out.
- Don’t wait until the last minute to access the text online; computers are fallible, so are internet connections and, finally, websites. It is best to locate and print texts well in advance. Use the student computer room at IFA if you don’t have the internet/a printer at home.
- If a website won’t load, try typing in only the first part of the URL to get to the home page of a given site, and work your way from there, locating the relevant material through links or local searches.
- Excuses like, “The website wasn’t working,” “I had no internet connection,” “my computer died,” or “I couldn’t find it on the internet” will not be accepted.

SYLLABUS
(may be subject to minor changes)

Week 1
Where are we going?
- read the syllabus
- Lydia Huntley Sigourney, “Death of an Infant”; available online at http://www.geocities.com/classicpoetry/lydiasigournypoems.html (or elsewhere on WWW)

Visual material:
- Post Mortem Photography, at http://users.sa.chariot.net.au/~rjnoye/Misc/Postmort.htm (esp. images 2 and 4);
- optional: postmortem photographs at http://ame2.asu.edu/projects/haunted/ISA%20index/book%20of%20the%20dead/book%20of
How are the postmortem photographs of children related to Sigourney’s poem? Do they help explain the poem’s extraordinary popularity in its time?

- Longfellow’s house, http://lnhstest.brinkster.net/, especially:
  - Library http://lnhstest.brinkster.net/Level2/house/Floor1/Library/Library.htm
  - http://lnhstest.brinkster.net/Level2/house/Floor1/Library/libr-furn.htm
  - Study http://lnhstest.brinkster.net/Level2/house/Floor1/Study/Study.htm
  - http://lnhstest.brinkster.net/Level2/house/Floor1/Study/Study.htm
  - Exterior http://lnhstest.brinkster.net/Level2/house/Ext-Garden/Exter-grounds.htm
AND read the descriptions accompanying the photographs.

What do you learn about Longfellow’s social status and his cultural status as public figure from viewing his living and working space?

Week 2
What ails the nightingale?

- Elizabeth Oakes-Smith, “The Poet” (xerox copy)
- Emily Dickinson, “Split the Lark - and you’ll find the Music -”; “Sang from the Heart, Sire”

Note: The Dickinson poems to be found online or in cheap paperback are NOT allowed; they are based on the out-of-copyright editions published in the 1890s, which substantially changed the original text of the poems. For this and other Dickinson assignments, please use one of the following editions, both available in the reference section of IFA Library:

Visual material:

- Portraits of S. Margaret Fuller, Julia Ward Howe, Frances Osgood, and Elizabeth Oakes Smith at http://www.librarycompany.org/women/portraits/gallery.htm (click on the thumbnail images to see the full portrait).
These are portraits published before 1861. How is each author represented, or constructed, in the portrait? What attitude, emotion, social role does each portrait convey? Do they include any indication of the women’s literary profession?
- litograph of singing nightingale http://www.antiquemapgallery.com/jani18hapaan.html (click on the image to enlarge)

Wanted: a 19th-century image (American or British) of a songbird with pierced or bleeding breast - award to the student who finds one online!!

- photograph of Sarah Orne Jewett in her home in South Berwick, Maine, late 19th century, at http://www.womenwriters.net/domesticgoddess/jewettbiblio.htm

Compare the above portraits of antebellum women authors with that of Jewett. What is different, and what is the significance of those differences?

Week 3
Where are the Natives?


Visual material:
• Title page of The Song of Hiawatha, 1856
  http://events.mnhs.org/Timepieces/SourceDetail.cfm?SourceID=402
• Pertinent Texts and Images in the 19th century,
  http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/railton/projects/rissetto/pertinent.html (click on images to enlarge)

How are American Indians represented in those images? What message do these images convey to the white audience? How are those representations related to our texts?
• If you’re interested in 19th-century photographs of Native Americans, see e.g. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/f?hawp:0:./temp/~ammem_UDQu: (the Cheyenne); http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/f?hawp:0:./temp/~ammem_33y0: (the Sioux)

Week 4
Is the damsel in distress?

Visual material
• Selected images from Godey’s Lady’s Book for 1850-1852,
  http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/sentimnt/gallgodyf.html
What ideology of womanhood do these illustrations convey?

Week 5
What befalls the orphaned girl?

Visual material:
• selected images from Godey’s (same as above)
• Illustrations to The Wide, Wide World, http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/warner-susan/wide/wide.html (list of illustrations on page 5, click on selected titles to see the images)

The illustrations come from a late-19th c. edition and are by Frederick Dielman. Do you think the illustrator’s attitude to the subject is influenced by his gender?
Is the notion of girlhood and womanhood conveyed by Warner’s novel similar to that conveyed by the Godey’s images?

Week 6
Is every slave a woman?
• Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom’s Cabin (read chapters 1-20); available: IFA library; cheap paperback in bookstores (recommended); online via Project Gutenberg: www.gutenberg.org

Visual material:
• First edition illustrations, http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/uncletom/illustra/52illf.html (click on thumbnail images on the left to see full-size illustrations)
How are slaves represented in those illustrations? How is Tom represented? Are those representations consistent with the novel?

- representations of slavery before *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Go to: [http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/index2f.html](http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/index2f.html), click on Interpret Mode, then click on Interpretive Exhibits, then on *Uncle Tom’s Cabin and Slavery*, scroll down to “Representations of Slavery before *Uncle Tom*” and click on Figure 1 and Figure 2 thumbnails on the left.

How are Figure 1 and Figure 2 different? What message does each of them convey?

**Week 7**

**Why is Tom beaten to death, and who haunts the attic?**

- Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (finish reading the novel)

**Visual material:** same as above

**Week 8**

**Can I feel your wounds?**

- Julia Ward Howe, “Battle Hymn of the Republic”

**Visual material:**

- Photography and the Civil War, at [http://faculty.berea.edu/browers/ww.wounds/photography.html](http://faculty.berea.edu/browers/ww.wounds/photography.html) (selected images, click on the URL under each photo to see a larger image)
- Photographs of the Gettysburg campaign, June-July 1863 [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/f?cwar:0:/temp/~ammem_Hzgc](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/f?cwar:0:/temp/~ammem_Hzgc) (selected images, especially dead soldiers; click on thumbnail images to enlarge)
- Civil War as Photographed by Matthew Brady, [http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/brady-photos/](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/brady-photos/) (scroll down to list of photograph titles, click on selected titles to view the images)

How are the dead Confederate soldiers represented? What is the purpose of the photographs? Are they only documentary or do they convey some kind of ideology? Are they triumphant? emphatic? frightened?

**Week 9**

**How did the blood flow to Amherst?**

- Emily Dickinson, “They dropped like flakes”; “The name of it is autumn”; “It feels a shame to be alive”; “He fought like those who’ve nought to lose”; “When I was small, a Woman died”; “Whole Gulfs – of Red, and Fleets – of Red -”; “Soft as the massacre of Suns”
- “Funeral of Adjutant Stearns,” *Springfield Republican* 24 March 1862 (xerox copy)
  - read the brief essay on “The Springfield Republican”
  - under Table of Contents on the left-hand side of the page, click on March 20, 1862 – pg. 1 and March 20, 1862 – pg. 2 to read the respective excerpts from the *Republican*

**Visual material:**

- The battle of Newbern as reported in *Harper’s Weekly*, [http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/civil-war/1862/april/battle-newbern.htm](http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/civil-war/1862/april/battle-newbern.htm) (optional)

How could those illustrations influence Emily Dickinson’s idea of the war? Again, do they convey any ideology or do they merely document the war?

Week 10
Who reads an American journal?*

Work individually. Everyone examines one of the following journals for 1869 or 1870:
• Harper’s New Monthly at ditto (July 1870 issue recommended)
• Galaxy at ditto (May 1870 issue recommended)
• Ladies Repository at U of Michigan Making of America Journal Collection, http://www.hti.umich.edu/m/moajrnl/browse.journals/

Choose 2 issues from the 1869 or the 1870 volumes of their journal and discuss their arrangement, content, subject matter of the articles, contributors (whenever names are given). What kind of audience is the journal addressed to? Try to make informed guesses about the audience’s class, education, possible occupation, political views, religion, and gender. Are all these categories relevant to your journal? Are particular articles/poems/stories addressed to more specific readers than the journal as a whole?

Since this is probably the first time you have been exposed to 19th-century press, you may feel overwhelmed when you see your material; it’s a natural reaction, don’t get discouraged and do as good a job as you can. There is no need to read everything but it’s important to skim the journal thoroughly and read some selections.

* paraphrase of the famous statement by English critic Sydney Smith, “In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book?” (Edinburgh Review, 1820)

Week 12
Who is the conjurer?

• Charles Chesnutt, “The Goophered Grapevine,” “Po’ Sandy.” Available online at Project Gutenberg www.gutenberg.org
• Mark Twain, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, chapters 2, 4, 8-10, 35-43
• Constance Fenimore Woolson, “King David,” available at http://www.lehigh.edu/%7Edek7/SSAWW/writWoolsonKing.htm

Visual material:
• photographs of lynching, http://www.americanlynching.com/main.html - on the left, scroll down to click on “Photographs and Illustrations,” then click on titles on the right to see the images. See esp. “Perpetrator and Victims,” “Jesse Washington,” “Young Southern Gentlemen,” “Fear of Negro Rule,” “Gus Goodman,” “I’ll Kill the First Nigger,” “Night Rider.”
• optional: the gallery of souvenir postcards and photographs at http://www.withoutsanctuary.org/main.html

What do the photographs tell us about racial relations after the Civil War?
Harper’s Weekly images of the Reconstruction era, [http://blackhistory.harpweek.com/4Reconstruction/ReconLevelOne.htm](http://blackhistory.harpweek.com/4Reconstruction/ReconLevelOne.htm) (click on titles to view images, note the information underneath each image)

Harper’s Weekly images of everyday black culture, [http://blackhistory.harpweek.com/5CultureAndSociety/CultureLevelOne.htm](http://blackhistory.harpweek.com/5CultureAndSociety/CultureLevelOne.htm) (click on titles to view images, note the information underneath each image) – esp. the Work and Home section, and esp. “A Spring Scene Near Richmond”

The Harper’s Weekly aims to be sympathetic to African Americans; is it, and if so, in what way and from what position? does it perpetuate any racial stereotypes?


What view of the Reconstruction South do Walker’s paintings convey? Is it realistic or idealized? How do they portray the situation of blacks? Is it similar to what Chesnutt depicts? For what kind of audience do you think were those paintings done?

**Week 13**

Is it worth climbing a tree?


**Visual material:**

- photograph of Jewett and Annie Fields in Fields’s library at 148 Charles St., Boston [http://www.public.coe.edu/~theller/soj/let/let-cont.html](http://www.public.coe.edu/~theller/soj/let/let-cont.html) (scroll down to see the photo)

What do the photographs tell you about Jewett’s social status and cultural environment? Do they suggest anything about the kind of audience she was writing for?


How important is the “Shepherdess” painting to the story? What is the significance of the Millet reference in the story? What does it tell us about the narrator? Her point of view? Her attitude to what she sees?

- late 19th- and early 20th-century paintings of the Maine coast by Winslow Homer and John Marin:
  - Winslow Homer, *High Cliff, Coast of Maine* (1894), at [http://americanart.si.edu/search/search_artworks1.cfm?StartRow=1&format=long&db=all&LastName=&FirstName=&Title=&Accession=1909.7.29&Keyword=](http://americanart.si.edu/search/search_artworks1.cfm?StartRow=1&format=long&db=all&LastName=&FirstName=&Title=&Accession=1909.7.29&Keyword=)
Choose one Homer and one Marin to examine closely. What view of the Maine coast does each work convey? Do you see any parallels between their representations of Maine and Jewett’s view of that region?

Week 14
What can you do with a man of few words?
- Mary Wilkins Freeman, “The Revolt of ‘Mother,’” in anthologies of American literature or online at http://www.geocities.com/short_stories_page/freemanrevolt.html or http://home.comcast.net/~mewf_short_stories/RevoltOfMother.htm

Visual material
- Edward Hopper, American Landscape, 1920 http://www.nga.gov/cgi-bin/pimage?57192+0+0

Credit requirements

1. Attendance. Attendance is mandatory; missing more than one class without a substantial excuse may affect your final grade. Missing three and more classes can cause you to fail the course. It is best to let me know by email about an upcoming absence.

2. Assigned readings. You will be expected to come to class with all the readings completed and bring copies of the assigned texts with you. It is essential that you can refer to the text at all times and locate relevant passages.

3. Written responses. You will be expected to come to each class with a one-page typewritten response (single- or double-spaced, as you wish) to the reading assignment OR the visual material. The writing can be less formal and more personal than in research papers but must be critical and thoughtful. The response is your boarding pass to the classroom and a starting point for your contribution to class discussion. Writing the responses helps you prepare for class as well as practice your critical thinking and writing skills. The quality of your responses contributes to your final grade; failing to bring three or more can cause you to fail the course. I will only accept the responses on the day of the class. If you can’t come to class, you may send me your response by email.

4. Class participation. It is essential that you participate in class discussions; everyone is responsible for making the class a stimulating and congenial intellectual environment.

5. Final paper. You will be required to write a paper of 2,000-2,500 words on a topic related to the course. Topics must be approved by me before the Christmas break.

For environmental reasons, please don't use plastic sleeves or plastic folders when submitting written work. I strongly encourage you to use scrap paper (the reverse of old xerox copies, old printouts, etc.) to print the online texts and all your work, including your final paper.

How to contact me

1. Please feel free to come and talk to me during my office hours (posted on the IFA website) or the Friday duty hour. I may not have time to talk to you directly after class.
2. Other than that, the best way to contact me is by email. I check my email at least once a day unless I'm out of town. I'll use email to contact you, too.
3. The following information and email etiquette will hopefully keep both sides happy and well-oriented:
   - I'll sometimes send you group emails with course-related information (I like to write them in English
just for the pleasure of it). You don't have to answer them unless the email specifically asks you to.
- use email to make or cancel appointments, remind me to bring you materials, tell me you'll be absent
  from class, arrange to make up for a missed class, etc.
- if your full name does not appear in the “sender” line, put your name and surname in the “subject”
  line and clearly identify your subject; I’ve received emails from “Ladybird” or “Batman” (these are
  invented examples, but you'd be surprised to see the real ones) with an empty space or “question” in
  the subject line, and I’m likely to treat them as spam and delete them without reading – not to mention
  that they don’t look polite.
- I won't be able to write long answers to your emails; if you have a question or problem that needs to
  be discussed at length, please come and talk to me in person.
- the polite way to begin an email is "Szanowna Pani Doktor."
- if I write to you individually in response to your email, it's courtesy to write back and say thank you.
- it doesn't look polite if your message is marked as "urgent"; please set the priority of your outgoing
  messages to "normal."