Spring 8-15-2013

ENG 5005-001: Graduate Seminar

C Wharram
Eastern Illinois University

Follow this and additional works at: http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2013

Part of the English Language and Literature Commons

Recommended Citation
http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_fall2013/110

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 2013 at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Fall 2013 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.
In recent years, scholarly focus on translation—not only in literary and cultural studies, but also in the fields of sociology, philosophy, linguistics, and anthropology—has transformed the humanities. The Romantic period, in Great Britain and beyond—provides us with fertile ground for investigating some of the most pressing questions about “objects of translation,” by which I mean to indicate the instruments and goals of translation, as well as those objects—texts, voices, ideas, things—that get translated. How do objects (in the widest sense) undergo translation? What are the tools and instruments that make translation happen? What is the status of the agent who makes translation happen? Is it reasonable or appropriate to consider nonhumans—animals and objects—as translators? Why and how should we incorporate translated texts into our teaching? How does focusing on translation enhance our learning, our teaching, and our communication?

Friedrich Schlegel coined the term “romantisch” in opposition to Classical forms of writing, drawing on an etymology connecting it to the medieval enromancier, romancar, the translation or rendering of predominantly Latin texts into the vernacular. To be “romantic”, at its root, means to be translated, to be infected through exposure to something from the outside, to be, as Goethe famously put it, “sick”: “The Classical I call the healthy and the Romantic the sick.”

Many Romantics were indeed fascinated by illness, even to the point of desiring to be mutated by some sort of “higher synthesis,” as Novalis called such a transformation through an infusion of the Other: “Could sickness not be a medium of higher synthesis—the more frightening the pain, the higher the desire hidden within.” And many Romantics wrote about the deterioration of land tracts, of buildings, of characters, and of social structures, as though ruined cottages and deserted villages were objects of profound “beauty,” but perhaps the phrase “aesthetic enjoyment” would be more appropriate.

One could, indeed, make an intimate connection between illness on the one hand and translation on the other. Both involve the internalization of a foreign “thing.” Though thinking of sickness as “a medium of higher synthesis” in the way Novalis suggests presents its difficulties, we have less trouble imagining the possible benefits of “taking in the foreign” through the act of translation.
When William Gilpin first published his famous description of the remains of Tintern Abbey in 1782, he was reflecting an already-established interest in ruins that had developed over the latter half of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, Gilpin, more than any other eighteenth-century writer, was able to articulate why this fascination with figures of ruin arose during the period. The epigraph for this course—"one always remains to tell the story"—refers to Gilpin’s delineation of the architecture of Tintern Abbey: even though many of the features of the abbey had been laid to waste, an enduring "corresponding part" lingered, revealing the building’s original state, even though the symmetrical partner was absent.

This play on presence/absence becomes something of a talisman for writers of the Romantic Age that followed. “One always remains to tell the story” might be considered an apt formulation for many of the canonical—and lesser-known—texts of the period: Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner, Mary Shelley’s The Last Man (not to mention Frankenstein), P.B. Shelley’s Alastor, and the many solitary figures of Wordsworth, to name but a few. These figures—broken, yet enduring—tell the stories of absent things, events, and people in a world where everything appears to have fallen apart.

I would like us to focus on the fascination of Romantic writers with images and narratives of ruination and decay, with gradual processes of deterioration. There is, of course, something profoundly melancholic—and perhaps neurotic—in the minute observation of decomposition and rot. And yet we find late-eighteenth-, and early-nineteenth-century anthologies replete with crumbling and festering, corrosion and decline. We will engage with these sorts of aesthetic subjects—or are they aesthetic objects?—in order to reflect on what makes Romantic aesthetics Romantic.

An object of the course will be to provide an historical understanding of the nuanced role that translations and translators played during the Romantic period in order to familiarize students the theoretical and practical rewards afforded by “objects of translation.” The course will address concepts such as “resonance,” “afterlife,” “translatability,” and “untranslatability” with the object of assisting students’ entrance into contemporary discussions in literary and cultural studies not limited to British Romanticism, discussions that transect historical and national boundaries.
Texts
Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*
Damrosch/Wolfson/Manning. *Longman Anthology of British Literature: The Romantics*
Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*
Kahn, Abu Talib. *The Travels of Mirza*
Kleist, Heinrich von. *The Marquise of O— & Other Stories*
Laclos, Pierre Choderlos de. *Dangerous Liaisons*
Morton, Timothy. *The Ecological Thought*
Poe, E.A. *Complete Stories*
Venuti, Lawrence. *Translation Studies Reader*

Requirements
Participation 10%
Weekly Response Papers or Questions 20%
Close Reading Assignment 20%
Project Abstracts (two) 10%
Presentation of Project (informal, required) 0%
Writing Project 40%

**ALL ASSIGNMENTS AND EXAMS MUST BE COMPLETED TO PASS THE COURSE**

Writing Project (40%)
In the first half of the semester, I would like you to select a text that you consider to be informed by some of the questions surrounding translation and aesthetics that we address in this course. There are a number of texts included on the course list that we will not be using for our class discussions, but that I suggest would be prime candidates for the analysis that follows. These texts may—but do not have to be—taken from the British nineteenth century.

You will thoughtfully select a brief section of the larger work in order to analyze closely the significance of your chosen passage as it aids in understanding the larger text from which it is taken in relation to some of the theoretical concerns about aesthetics that we have reflected upon in this course. You will, therefore, despite the implications above, be required to engage with concepts and trends of the Romantic period, even if your primary text is, for example, a twentieth-century text from New Zealand. You should also complete a substantial annotated bibliography of criticism on the text of your choice.

Project Abstracts (10%)
In anticipation of the project outlined above, I will ask you to submit two abstracts, one of 250 words, and one of 400 words, framing your proposed project. These will be due early in the semester, and around mid-term, respectively.

Presentation of Final Project (0%)
I will ask you to present in the final weeks of the course a brief (five-to-ten minute), informal presentation of the work you have done in preparing your final project. The presentation is required, but ungraded.
Weekly Response Paper or Series of Questions, and Werther Presentation (20%)
Every week for nine weeks of the semester, I would like for you to write a short (approximately 300-word) response to one (or more) of our readings for that week. You should find something about a text that you find intriguing, confusing, or simply incomprehensible and address this problem critically. Alternatively, you may write out a few (minimum 3) questions on sections of the readings that you would like to explore in more depth during our class meeting. Each week, you will electronically submit your response or your series of questions by Sunday midnight at the latest. You are encouraged, of course, to submit them earlier. Aim for an even number of questions and responses. You will also be responsible for a brief presentation on a “translation” (of sorts) of Goethe’s Werther into English.

Close Reading Assignment (20%)
One week during the first half of the semester, you will submit a close reading (approximately four pages) of a passage from that week’s reading, instead of submitting a weekly response or series of questions. This close reading must be submitted before October 15.

Class Participation (20%)
This is a graduate course, and I will therefore expect you to come to class not only having read the material, but also with specific questions about and comments on the readings. While reading the course material, you should pinpoint specific moments of difficulty, and come to class with questions about them. Some of the course material is particularly challenging, and I encourage you to find and articulate examples of texts to help elucidate the theoretical discussions for yourself and for the rest of us. If you attend class without reading the texts carefully, you will find it extremely difficult to keep up with the discussions of the participating members of the course. I consider all productive communications with me about the course material and/or your writing for the course to be “class participation.” I will expect you to meet with me at least once to discuss, in detail, your writing project, but I encourage you to meet with me more often.

Academic honesty: Students are responsible for knowing Eastern Illinois University regulations and policies regarding academic honesty. Plagiarism will likely result in your failing the course and in further action by the university. Here is the English Department’s statement on plagiarism:

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism – “The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s own original work” (Random House Dictionary of the English Language) – has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments, of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.

Paper Policies
Papers—and all other assignments—are due at the beginning of class, unless otherwise indicated. Late papers will not be commented upon, and be marked a half grade lower for every class period late. Assignments turned in a week past the deadline will be given a “zero,” but must nevertheless be submitted in order to pass the course. Papers should be stapled and include page numbers. Format: 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins.
Absence Policy

When you are absent—especially when you are frequently absent—two things happen. First, your participation grade drops substantially. Second, you naturally fall behind in understanding course material and neither the class nor the Professor can catch you up on everything missed in a day’s class. YOU need to decide when it is absolutely necessary to miss class.

Emailing Policy

I want to get to know you and your work this semester. Thus I ask that you call me or stop by my office during office hours (or scheduled times) so that we can talk. DO NOT EMAIL ME TO ASK FOR AN “UPDATE” ON MISSED ASSIGNMENTS, OR TO EXPLAIN AN ABSENCE. You should exchange telephone numbers and email addresses with other students in the class so that you can contact someone for notes, handouts, and/or other missed messages.

Wharram / English 5005-001: Schedule of Classes—subject to revision

LA = Longman Anthology of British Literature: The Romantics and their Contemporaries
D2L = Desire2Learn. These readings are available for downloading at the course webpage.

WEEK ONE

M Aug 19 Wordsworth, “Lines Written on the Seat of a Yew-Tree”

WEEK TWO

M Aug 26 Kleist, “The Betrothal in Santa Domingo”

WEEK THREE

M Sept 9 TRANSLATIONS WEEK!
Goethe, “Translations” (Venuti 64)
Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator” (Venuti 75; D2L)
Charlotte Smith, “Written in the Churchyard…” (LA 86); “The Dead Beggar” (LA 88)
John Keats, “This Living Hand…” (LA 991)
Novalis, “Monologue” and “Translations” (D2L)
Staël, “The Spirit of Translation(s)” (D2L)

WEEK FOUR

M Sept 16 WERTHER WEEK!
Goethe, The Sorrows of Young Werther
Jakobson, “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation” (Venuti 138)

WEEK FIVE

M Sept 23 A WEEK of WERTHERIAN RESONANCES! (Presentations)
(all texts will be available on D2L)

For this week, you will each choose a text that “translates” Goethe’s novel into English, and prepare a brief presentation (10-15 minutes) on it.
Abu Talib Kahn, excerpts from The Travels of Mirza
Jacques Derrida, “What is a ‘Relevant’ Translation?” (Venuti 423)

WEEK ELEVEN

M Nov 4  FREUD and FRIENDS WEEK!
Sigmund Freud, excerpts incl. “Drives and their Fates” (D2L)
Suzanne Jill Levine, “Prefaces” to The Subversive Scribe (D2L)
Adam Philips, “On Translating a Person” and “Looking at Obstacles” (D2L)

WEEK TWELVE

M Nov 11  Individual conferences

WEEK THIRTEEN

M Nov 18  HYPEROBJECTS WEEK!
Coleridge, “The Ancient Mariner”
Tim Morton, excerpts from The Ecological Thought

WEEK FOURTEEN  M Nov 25 – F Nov 29  Thanksgiving Recess—NO CLASS

WEEK FIFTEEN

M Dec 2  Presentations of Final Projects

MONDAY, DECEMBER 9: FINAL PAPERS DUE