

TEXTUAL *TRANSFORMATION 1*

‘wintering’



Autumn term 2023/24

E. Sainsbury

jMasters course

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Introduction

The initial aim of this course is to discuss ways in which texts of all types can be presented in the form of dramatic readings. We will therefore begin by reading a series of very short texts chosen in order to practise the clear enunciation of sounds, achieve a good projection of the voice and develop an awareness of ways to hold the attention of an audience. Some work will be done with phonemic transcription in order to correct pronunciation and analyse the musicality of a text. In later lessons we will discuss the possible use of movement, visual images and music to underline expressivity.

10

During the first lessons, after reading and discussing a text together as a class we will split up into groups. Each groups will prepare a group reading of the same text and present it to the rest of the class, who will give constructive criticism. Students will then work again on the same text, trying to act on suggestions made by classmates.

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In analysing texts, emphasis is given to the form and subject of the individual text and *not* to the author, their biographical details or texts of literary criticism.

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Another of the main focuses of this course is teamwork, essential in most work environments. Students will develop the ability to be flexible in taking on varying roles within the group and in coordination and discussion skills.

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At the beginning of the course, after each lesson, students will prepare a short report on what has taken place in class, including what they found most interesting in the readings presented by their classmates and how they could develop their own reading projects. This report will be handed in as a written text (approximately 200 words in formal language organised in paragraphs). This will be handed in to the teacher by the following lesson and returned with corrections. On other weeks students may be asked to hand in the same report in oral form, as an

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audio file or a video. In this way, students can build up an archive of corrected material to use for the final paper, written at the end of the first semester.

- 5 Students may also be asked to analyse texts or prepare detailed reading plans at home and present them orally to the class at the following lesson.

10 Readings prepared in the first semester will be presented at a recital to which other students and teachers will be invited. This may take place outside lesson time and require some extra rehearsal time.

15 Each student will receive a final mark based on their participation in class discussion and reading experiments, their written work or audio/video files handed in during the course, their final paper and their participation in the final performance.

20 In this course attendance is obviously absolutely essential, also as a question of respect towards the other members of the groups formed to work on readings. Students are required to attend at least 80% of the lessons. If you cannot attend regularly due to work commitments it would be advisable to agree on an alternative programme or wait to follow the course when you are able to attend.

25

The trick

In a wasted time, it's only when I sleep
that all my senses come awake. In the wake
of you, let day not break. Let me keep
the scent, the weight, the bright of you, take
5 the countless hours and count them all night through
till that time comes when you come to the door
of dreams, carrying oranges that cast a glow
up into your face. Greedy for more
than the gift of seeing you, I lean in to taste
10 the colour, kiss it off your offered mouth.
For this, for this, I fall asleep in haste,
willing to fall for the trick that tells the truth
that even your shade makes darkest absence bright,
that shadows live wherever there is light

15

/ðə 'trɪk/

/baɪ 'ɪmɪtɪæz 'da:kə/

/ɪn ə 'weɪstɪd 'taɪm / ɪts 'ʊnli wen aɪ 'sli:p/

/ðæt 'bɪl maɪ 'sensɪz 'kʌm ə'weɪk/ ɪn ðə 'weɪk
əv 'ju: / let deɪ nɒt 'breɪk / let mi 'ki:p

ðə 'sent / ðə 'weɪt / ðə braɪt əv 'ju: / teɪk

5 ðə 'kaʊntləs 'aʊəz ənd 'kaʊnt ðəm 'bɪl haɪt 'θru:/

tɪl ðæt 'taɪm 'kʌmz wen ju kʌm tə ðə dɔ:r

əv 'dri:mz / 'kæriɪŋ 'brɪndzɪz ðæt 'ka:st ə 'glɔʊ

ʌp ɪntə 'jo: feɪs / 'gri:di fə 'mo:

ðæn ðə 'gɪft əv si:ɪŋ 'ju: / aɪ 'li:n'ɪn tə 'teɪst

6 ðə 'kʌlə / 'kɪs ɪt 'ɒf 'jo:r 'ɒfəd 'maʊθ/

fə ðɪs / fə ðɪs / aɪ fɔ:l əsli:p ɪn 'heɪst/

'wɪlɪŋ tə 'fɔ:l fə ðə 'trɪk ðæt 'telz ðə 'tru:θ/

ðæt i:vŋ 'jo: 'seɪd 'meɪks 'da:kɪst əbsəns 'braɪt/

ðæt 'fædʒʊz 'lɪv weə'revə ðeə ɪz 'laɪt/

Vowels

/i:/	see	/aɪ/	sky
/ɪ/	hit	/eɪ/	day
/e/	bed	/ɔɪ/	voice
/æ/	cat	/ɔʊ/	home
/ʌ/	cut	/aʊ/	house
/ə/	alive	/ɪə/	dear
/ɜ:/	girl	/eə/	air
/ɑ:/	car	/ʊə/	sure
/ɒ/	hot		
/ɔ:/	horse		
/ʊ/	put		
/u:/	pool		

Consonants

/p/	Paul	/f/	feel
/b/	ball	/v/	veal
/t/	tall	/θ/	think
/d/	dumb	/ð/	this
/k/	come	/s/	this
/g/	gum	/z/	these
/m/	make	/ʃ/	shut
/n/	not	/ʒ/	vision
/ŋ/	song	/h/	hate
/l/	like	/tʃ/	church
/r/	ring	/dʒ/	judge
/w/	wet	/j/	young

5 He invited about ten students on to the platform to do some vocal improvisation. They sat in a half circle around him and he asked them to breathe quietly, then increase the noise of the expiration of each breath. He conducted with his hands, *dimuendo* and *crescendo*. It was astonishing the way the audience were on the edge of their seats listening to the expulsion of breath by ten people as if it was a new sound.

Then he asked them to interfere with the expelling of the breath, chopping it up into gasps with his hand. He asked the students if they could draw the sounds they had heard, put a shape to them. Catherine suggested that if she were to represent the chopping -breath sound it was, 'Out there. The rhythm of the cloisters.' Huang Xiao Gang nodded.

He then talked about *pre-hearing* and asked the students to think about the shape of sounds they were going to improvise. Silence could be any part of the sound. There were four stages – first they had to, in silence, think about what sound or sounds they were going to make and find a mental image to represent the sound. Then they had to perform it. Having performed it they had to remember it. Lastly they had to do it again.

Everything is rhythmical

by Lemn Sissay

Rhythm Rhythm

Can you Hear the

Rhythms

5

Quick rhythm

Slow rhythm

God given

Life giving

Rhythm rhythm

Can you

Hear the

Rhythms rhythms

10

If you listen close

Ears to the ground

15 The basis of noise

Is rhythm sound

From spoken words to ways of walk

From rappin' to reggae and funk we talk in

20

Rhythm rhythm

Can you

Hear the

Rhythm rhythm

Way back in the heart of Africa
They took our drums away
But rhythm proved its own power
By being here today

5

All four corners these sweet-sounding rhythms reach
With treble in the speaker even bass in the speech
To the freezing cold and heat in heights
Muhammad Ali did do it in his fights

10

Rhythm rhythm
Can you
Rhythms

Quick rhythms
Slick rhythms
Bold rhythms
Gold rhythms

15

God given
Life giving

20 Rhythms

Rhythms

Can you

Hear the

25

The Traveler

Byways and bygone
And lone nights long
Sun rays and sea waves
And star and stone


5

Manless and friendless
No cave my home
This is my torture
My long nights, lone

10

Maya Angelou

15




Now i lay (with everywhere around)
me (the great dim deep sound
of rain; and of always and of nowhere) and
what a gently welcoming darkestness—

now i lay me down (in a most steep
more than music) feeling that sunlight is
(life and day are) only loaned: whereas
night is given (night and death and the rain

are given; and given is how beautifully snow)

now i lay me down to dream of (nothing
i or any somebody or you
can begin to begin to imagine)

something which nobody may keep.
now i lay me down to dream of Spring



Sonnet (1928)

I am in need of music that would flow
Over my fretful, feeling finger-tips,
Over my bitter-tainted, trembling lips,
With melody, deep, clear, and liquid-slow.

5 Oh, for the healing swaying, old and low,
Of some song sung to rest the tired dead,
A song to fall like water on my head,
And over quivering limbs, dream flushed to glow!

10 There is a magic made by melody:
A spell of rest, and quiet breath, and cool
Heart, that sinks through fading colors deep
To the subaqueous stillness of the sea,
And floats forever in a moon-green pool,
15 Held in the arms of rhythm and of sleep.

Elizabeth Bishop

Come l'abete con la neve

La testa ha un peso
di neve bagnata.

E dentro c'è inabissato
un vuoto.

5 Un sonno lento
mi annega. Cedo. Cado
dentro il non fare della neve.

È la miglior
preghiera. A chi – chiedi.

10 lo mai me lo chiedo.
Pregare è ascolto immoto.
Fa bene al prato. Fa bene al globo
intero. Fa bene a me
e a te. Credo. Genera

15 una parola senza peso. Sempre
nuova lacuna
gonfia di vuoto
voce che non si consuma.

Mariangela Gualtieri, *Quando non morivo*

extracts from *Wintering*, by Katherine May

pp 94-98 Night Waking, The Watch

Downstairs at 4am, I set to work. It felt like an act of mania to get up in the middle of the night, but with a hot cup of tea in my hand, it seems more like an urge towards sanity. Now that I'm upright, my thoughts settle like a snow globe. Everything falls back into perspective.

I clear the surface of my desk and make a pool of light with my lamp. I go off to fetch matches and light a candle. One light is steady and sure, the other uncertain and flickering. I open my notebook and work between these two poles. On balance, it's where I prefer to be: somewhere in the middle. Certainty is a dead space, in which there's no more room to grow. Wavering is painful. I'm glad to be travelling between the two.

I've come to love this part of the night, the almost-morning, which feels exclusively mine. Being the only one awake makes it a luxurious space in which I can drink in the silence. It's an undemanding moment in the 24-hour cycle, in which nobody can reasonably expect you to be checking texts or emails, and the scrolling feeds of social media have fallen quiet. In a world where it's hard to feel alone, this, finally, is solitude. Even the cats know it's too early to demand to be fed. They raise an ear as I pass, and retreat back into their curled balls.

This is a time in which only a few activities seem right. Mostly, I read at this hour, roaming through the

SLUMBER

pile of books that live by my favourite chair, waiting to offer up fragments of learning, rather than inviting cover-to-cover pursuits. I will browse a chapter here, a segment there, or hunt through an index for a matter that's on my mind. I love the loose, exploratory reading that happens in the night, free of the day's obligations. For once, I am not reading to seek escape; instead, having already made my getaway, I am able to roam through the free, extra space I've found, being as restless and impatient as I like, reveling in the play of my own absorption. They say that we should dance like no one is watching. I think that applies to reading, too.

The inky hours are also for writing: the scratch and flow of pen on good paper, the stuttering chains of words that expand to fill pages and pages. Sometimes writing is a race against your own mind, as your hand labours to keep up with the flood tide of your thoughts, and I feel that most acutely at night, when there are no competing demands on my attention. That slightly sleepy, dazed state erodes the barriers of my waking brain. My dreams are still present, like an extra dimension to my perception. But crucially, my sensible daytime self, bossy and overbearing, still slumbers. Without its overseeing eye, I can see different futures and make imaginative leaps. I can confess all my sins to a piece of paper, with no one to censor it.

I write on screen, too, in the night, with the brightness turned down to a muted glow. I find that I can churn out thousands of words like this, falling deep into concentration and letting my hands talk without the interference of my consciousness.

If my night-waking feels elemental to me, then perhaps that is because it was once a normal component of human sleep, only recently forgotten. In *At Day's Close*, the historian A. Roger Ekirch argues that, before the industrial revolution, it was normal to divide the night into two periods of sleep: the 'first', or 'dead', sleep, lasting from the evening until the early hours of the morning; and the 'second', or 'morning', sleep, which took the slumberer safely to daybreak. In between, there was an hour or more of wakefulness known as the 'watch', in which 'Families rose to urinate, smoke tobacco, and even visit close neighbours. Many made love, prayed, and ... reflected on their dreams, a significant source of solace and self-awareness.' In the intimacy of the darkness, families and lovers could hold deep, rich, roaming conversations that had no place in the busy daytime.

This was a function of the times in which the night really was dark, when the poor would go to sleep early to save the price of candles, and even the rich would have the choice of struggling on with their occupations in limited light, or surrendering to sleep. Outside

the house, the streets were usually unlit, so the only navigable space was home.

However, this was so ordinary (and perhaps also so private a moment in the day), that little is written about it. Ekirch picks up a range of passing references to the first and second sleeps in diaries, letters and literature, but this ancient practice is nearly invisible to the contemporary eye. A 1996 study by Thomas Wehr and colleagues attempted to replicate the conditions of winter sleep in prehistoric times, depriving subjects of artificial light for fourteen hours each night, and observing what happened to their sleep patterns. After several weeks, the participants fell into a pattern of lying awake in bed for two hours before falling asleep for around four hours. They would then wake up and enjoy two or three hours of time that was characterised as contemplative and restful, and then take another four hours of sleep until morning. Most interesting of all, Wehr observed that the mid-night watch was far from an anxious time for his subjects. They felt calm and reflective in these moments, and blood tests revealed elevated levels of prolactin, the hormone that stimulates the production of breast milk in nursing mothers. In most men and women, prolactin levels tend to be low, but the watch seemed to have 'an endocrinology all of its own', which

Wehr compared to an altered state of consciousness similar to meditation.

In this borderland between wake and sleep, it's tempting to believe that our ancestors experienced a different state of being to any we know, or any we *can* know unless we refuse the intrusion of artificial light. Maybe my sleeplessness isn't only caused by anxiety about the future. In the twenty-first century, we are awash with light, not just from the pendants and lamps that deliberately light up our homes in the evening, but also the ever-growing legions of electronic devices that flicker and pulse and glow to tell us that they're doing something. Light, nowadays, can feel like an intruder, always seeming to carry with it a unit of information, or an obligation.

In the winter of 1987, we had such deep snow that the drifts at the side of my school's lane towered above the car. Those of us who made it in were given soup at break-time to keep us warm – a choice of oxtail or tomato, served in an orange plastic beaker. I was allowed to wear a white roll-neck sweater underneath my shirt and tie, and my mother let me wear my moon boots, saying that she would back me up if the teachers complained. At home, our house grew icicles so long and thick that we took to documenting them, measuring them with the sewing tape (one, I think, was four feet), and snapping them off to photograph them in the bath. Our house had no central heating, so all my snow-wet clothes had to be dried in front of the gas fire in the back room, and we worried that the Calor Gas heater would sputter out before the thaw. I can't say I minded. I was enthralled by the severity of our winter, its astonishing powers of change. I wanted it never to end.

I still retain a little of that attitude towards the snow. Try as I might, I can't effect the adult hardness towards a snowfall, full of resentment at the inconvenience. I

love the inconvenience the same way that I can sneakily love a bad cold: the irresistible disruption to mundane life, forcing you to stop for a while and step outside of your normal habits. I love the visual transformation that it brings about, that recolouring of the world into sparkling white, and the way that the rules change so that everybody says hello as they pass. I love what it does to the light, the purplish clouds that loom before it descends, and the way that it announces itself from behind your curtains in the morning, glowing with a diffuse whiteness that can only mean snow. I love the feeling of it fresh underfoot, and heading out in a snowstorm to catch it on my gloves. I am rarely childlike and playful, except in snow. It swings me into reverse gear.

Snow has that quality of awe in the sense of a power greater than we are; it epitomises the aesthetic notion of the sublime, in which greatness and beauty come coupled with the power to overcome you entirely, as a small, frail human.

But *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* is not alone in making the link between snow and the onset of adult knowingness. Susan's Cooper's *The Dark Is Rising* begins with a heavy fall of snow, enveloping Will Stanton's family cottage as he marks his eleventh birthday. Soon, he has time-slipped into a place where there is magic and prophecy and the looming threat of evil, and he is the only one who can save the world. Will comes of age in that snow. The same snowy segue takes us into John Masefield's *The Box of Delights*, where, during a Christmas break, the young hero Kay Harker witnesses a similar seepage in time. The snow brings not just a magical box that allows its holder to go swift or go small; it also brings about a muddling of an ancient pagan world and the bright certainties of Christianity. In the snow, time has lost its linearity, and deep history is present. Most of all, a young lad is forced to step into the role of an adult, with his parents absent and his guardian mysteriously vanished.

In children's literature, snowfall is the trigger for tables to turn. It creates a moment in which the usual adult protectors are easily incapacitated, and introduces a world in which children are agile and wild enough to survive. In the monumental battles these children face, the great are brought low and the weak rise up in power. This can only happen in the depths

of midwinter, when the ordinary features of the world are erased. Snow vanquishes the mundane. It brings the everyday to a grinding halt, and delays our ability to address our dreary responsibilities. Snow opens up the reign of the children, high on their unexpected liberty, daredevil and impervious to the cold.

In this glistening white space, they get to feel the burgeoning of their own power.