MASTERS: READING FOR LIFE
THERAPIES THROUGH LITERATURE

PROGRAMME AND READING LIST

ALL CLASSES ARE ON WENESDAYS 3-5 pm (those continuing from previous modules, please note change of time)

Venue: University of Liverpool in London, 33 Finsbury Square, London EC2A 1AG

In order that we are all quickly and easily on the same page, it is important to obtain the recommended edition wherever stated below. With poems always make sure that your copy has line numbers, again for ease of reference. Whatever you read in advance, do so using a pencil to mark those places (registered as important through sheer instinct, please) that move or trouble you. These are the places to which to go back. Have ready, say, three of these examples, of no more than half a page each or, say, 8 lines of verse, in preparation for each meeting where we will read some passages out loud and analyze them carefully. Always bring the text to seminars with you.

Three areas will be explored:
1. The predicament of ‘twice-born souls’ – those who have to readjust to experience, learn to live.
2. Crucial versions of life-reappraisal: prose narratives of breakdown and a second chance from Mrs Gaskell to Oliver Sacks
3. The expressive power of poetry as a form of second life, including some Elizabethan sonnet writers; Wordsworth; Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

28 September: Philip Davis
Introductory meeting for new participants

5 October: Philip Davis & Josie Billington
William James, Varieties of Religious Experience, Penguin (Lectures 4,5,6,7: ‘The Religion of Healthy Mindedness’, ‘The Sick Soul’)
12 October: Josie Billington, Studies in Trouble and Second Chances (1)
George Eliot, ‘Janet’s Repentance’ a long short story in GE’s Scenes of Clerical Life
(Oxford World’s Classics edition)

19 October: Josie Billington, Trouble and Second chances (2): Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 'Sonnets from the Portuguese' (photocopies will be available)

26 October Josie Billington, Trouble and Second chances (3): Thomas Hardy, Poems of 1912-13: sequence of 21 poems after the death of his first wife with whom increasingly he had lived unhappily

2 November: Josie Billington, Trouble and Second chances (4): Mrs Gaskell, Ruth
(Oxford World’s Classics)

9 November: Philip Davis, Introduction to Poetry and the Therapeutic through
Elizabethan lyrics. A selection will be photocopied for you, but you might want to obtain
Elizabethan Lyrics ed. Norma Ault (Faber, available from Amazon etc) or The Penguin
Book of English Verse ed. Paul Keegan

16 November: Philip Davis, Reading after Breakdown (1):
The Philosopher John Stuart Mill: chapter 5 in particular of Mill's Autobiography and then
read Wordsworth’s poem 'Michael’

23 November: Philip Davis Reading after Breakdown (2)
Mill felt closer to Byron than to Wordsworth, yet did not feel Byron did him such good:
read Byron’s poem/play Cain

30 November: Philip Davis, Open Discussion week: to consider issues arising and
further reading from previous three weeks on poetry

7 December: Philip Davis, Studies in Trouble and Second Chances (5)
from Amazon or Abebooks)

14 December: Philip Davis, Studies in Trouble and Second Chances (6)
Oliver Sacks, A Leg to Stand On (Picador)