

## Sophister Module Description 2026-27

**Full Name:** Nineteenth-Century Art Writing

**Short Name:** Art Writing

**Lecturer Name and Email Address:** Dr Tom Walker (walkerto@tcd.ie)

**ECTS Weighting:** 10

**Semester Taught:** HT

**Year:** SS

### Module Content:

This option will focus on the relationship between literature and the visual arts during the nineteenth century. It will set this relationship against the backdrop of the broader cultures and ideologies of art and the aesthetic at large during this period. A range of texts and contexts will be examined. Also considered will be the body of critical and historical writing that has since responded to these texts and contexts, as well as more conceptual and theoretical considerations of the relationship between the verbal and visual. Topics will include writing inspired by works of visual art; works of visual art inspired by writing; the figure of the artist in literature; the poet-painter; the critic as artist; the relationship between aesthetic culture and the novel; questions of gender, class, and politics; the reception of the visual past and the rise of museum culture.

Week 1. Introduction

Week 2. Keats and the Greeks

Week 3. Paintings after Poems: Alfred Tennyson

Week 4. Critics as Artists: John Ruskin and Walter Pater

Week 5. Poems after Painters: Robert Browning and Augusta Webster

Week 6. Painter and Poet: Dante Gabriel Rossetti

Week 7. Reading Week

Week 8. Talking Back: Christina Rossetti

Week 9. The Art Novel: Henry James

Week 10. A Poetic Catalogue: Michael Field

Week 11. The New Woman: Amy Levy

Week 12. Conclusion

### Learning Outcomes:

- To have developed high-level transferable skills in critical analysis and writing
- To have worked across different disciplines and media
- To have engaged with relevant theoretical and critical arguments
- To have engaged with relevant historical and cultural contexts.

### Learning Aims:

- To examine the relationship between writing and the visual arts during the nineteenth century
- To enhance awareness of the broader cultures and ideologies of the aesthetic during the nineteenth century
- To explore such issues as verbal-visual relations, aesthetics, art historical reception, and museum culture.

**Assessment Details:**

- Type of Assessment (Continuous and/or Exam): Continuous
- Number of Components: 2
- Word Count of Component(s): 2,000 and 4,000
- Percentage Value of Component(s): 30% and 70%

**Preliminary Reading List:**

John Keats, 'On Seeing the Elgin Marbles', 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' – available in the *Major Works*, ed. Cook (Oxford World's Classics)\*

Alfred Tennyson, 'The Lady of Shalott', 'The Palace of Art' – available in *Selected Poems*, ed. Ricks (Longman)\*

John Ruskin, *Selected Writings*, ed. Birch (Oxford World's Classics) +

Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, ed. Beaumont (Oxford World's Classics)+

Robert Browning, 'Pictor Ignotus', 'Fra Lippo Lippi', 'Andrea del Sarto' – available in *The Major Works*, ed. Karlin (Oxford World's Classics)\*

Augusta Webster, 'Faded', 'A Painter' – available in *Portraits and Other Poems*, ed. Sutphin (Broadview)\*

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 'The Blessed Damozel', 'Jenny', 'The Portrait', *Sonnets for Pictures*, 'Hand and Soul' – available in *Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. McGann (Yale)\*

Christina Rossetti, 'Goblin Market', 'The P.R.B.', 'In an Artist's Studio' – available in *Selected Poems*, ed. Roe (Penguin Classics)\*

Henry James, *Roderick Hudson*, ed. Moore (Penguin Classics)+

Michael Field, *Sight and Song* – available in *Michael Field: The Poet*, ed. Thain and Parejo Vadillo (Broadview)\*

Amy Levy, *The Romance of a Shop*, ed. Bernstein (Broadview)+

Texts marked with an \* will be provided via Blackboard. Texts marked with a + will need to be purchased: do be sure to obtain the specific editions listed.