

Without Contraries

(there is no progression)

by Mike Barrett

Worksheets

You must be able to answer these questions from reading the texts and my commentary. You may want to print these questions and answer them as you read. They will guide your reading and organize your notes. Your weekly quiz will be 10 of these questions.

1. How is reading a literary text like driving a car?
2. What happened near the end of the eighteenth century that shook Europe?
3. What happened after such promise of liberty?
4. Who emerged as leader and what did he attempt?
5. How did Britain respond?
6. What is laissez-faire capitalism?
7. What happened in England as a result?
8. What does "without contraries there is no progression" mean?
9. What are the different names used for Great Britain?
10. What is a literary period?
11. What is a genre?

Discourse on the Logic of Language

12. Where is the author from?
13. Why is the author in a Brit Lit book?
14. What is discourse?
15. What are the discourses in the poem?
16. Why are there discourses around the idea of the "tongue"?
17. How does "language" become "anguish" in the poem?
18. Why does language become anguish?
19. How is language used to oppress?

Without Contraries There Is No Progression

I. Introduction

Welcome to British Literature from 1750-present. Think of this text as a bridge between *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* and your online course. This book will contain lectures which give you an idea of the cultural milieu of the authors and their time periods (much of the information will be derived from the introductory chapters of *The Norton*). It will include readings of the major works under consideration (unless otherwise noted, the italicized text will be my commentary) as well as a series of worksheets meant to accompany your reading. The worksheets break down the texts into a series of questions. All questions on your weekly quizzes will be verbatim from these worksheets. In addition, your two assignments per week will be detailed at the end of each chapter. (Information on assignments will be duplicated in the online unit.)

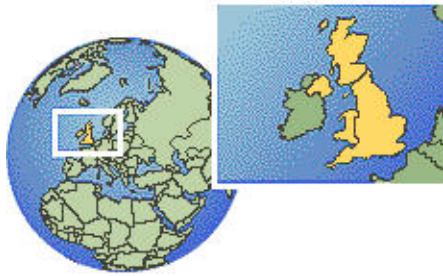
The title of the book *Without Contraries There Is No Progression* is taken from William Blake's prophetic text, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. The statement indicates the essential nature of dialectic in organic and cultural matter, that is, movement occurs through resistance. The ancient Chinese text (translated by Stephen Mitchell) Tao Te Ching has it:

When people see some things as beautiful,
other things become ugly.
When people see some things as good,
other things become bad.

Being and non-being create each other.
Difficult and easy support each other.
Long and short define each other.
High and low depend on each other.
Before and after follow each other.

In logic the principle is contained in the idea of the null-hypothesis. If you make a proposition, you are setting it at the fork between two roads, true and false. It is the same way with athletic training—you get stronger by contending with resistance. Blake saw cosmic history as unfolding from the dialectic of contraries, and many thinkers in the time period we discuss take up this theme. In addition, the title is a call to action in your own life. Hopefully, this course will challenge you in numerous ways and through those challenges you will grow academically and as a person.

England, Briefly



“England” is often used synonymously with “The United Kingdom” or “Great Britain.” In reality, “England” is the main “kingdom.” The other “kingdoms” of the United Kingdom (U.K.) are Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. We will use “England” interchangeably with U.K. and Great Britain.

The U.K. is to the west of continental Europe and its history is a fascinating mix of major actors after the fall of the Roman Empire. It has been inhabited for 30,000 years by peoples who eventually became identified as Celts. The Romans conquered England in 40 C.E. and ruled the main part of the country until Rome recalled its soldiers to shore up its crumbling empire and the Celts re-established control.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, wave upon wave of Germanic tribes spread across Europe. The tribes of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes invaded England and eventually secured control over a great part of the country by the 6th century. The legendary King Arthur was a Celtic king who successfully resisted the Anglo-Saxons during his reign. Augustine of Canterbury brought Christianity to England and it spread throughout the Anglo-Saxon strongholds. Many monasteries were built.

From the 9th Century through the 11th Century, England experienced numerous invasions by Vikings who established a number of towns and controlled England itself under King Canute. In 1066, the Normans invaded from France and defeated King Harold at the Battle of Hastings. Led by William the Conqueror, the Normans ruled.

Today the U.K. is a developed country with a population of 63,400,000 (CIA World Factbook). Besides the ethnic Celts, Anglo-Saxons, Scandinavian Vikings, and Normans (whose history is described above), 8% of its population are people of color, mostly immigrants from countries England colonized during its imperialist period.

By 1750

By 1750, England had a state church, The Church of England (Anglican), and a developing representational democracy. Suffrage was highly restricted, but the House of Lords (representatives

by birthright) was less powerful than the House of Commons (elected). Although technically a monarchy, the monarch reigned, but did not rule, being, essentially, a figurehead.

The centuries old conflict with France continued through a proxy war, The French and Indian Wars, in America, its newly established colony. The British navy was a global powerhouse and helped to ensure the stability of English power. Britain's colonial ventures also helped speed the Industrial Revolution by opening new markets and gaining cheap resources.

We will start our course by discussing two events that shape the history in the time period under our consideration: The French Revolution and the laissez-faire capitalism.

French Revolution

Perhaps we are not surprised that the French revolted and threw off monarchy in 1789 for the colonists had done so in America in 1776. Perhaps owing to its proximity to England, the Revolution signified a seismic shift in English consciousness. At first, many writers and artists welcomed the revolution and saw it as a continuation of the movement towards universal rights for all people. Indeed, modern feminism can be traced to Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* which rationally argues the necessity of equality for women.

The French Revolution devolved into internecine warfare among various interest groups which brought on the Reign of Terror in which a dictatorial state apparatus executed thousands of perceived enemies. The tumult of the period, and the wars that came with it, ended with the ascension of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1799. Napoleon began expansionist wars which England helped to settle.

At first, the revolution was thought to be a natural consequence of the Enlightenment, a philosophical idea that humans are rational creatures and are able to be self-determined when led by reason. Arguments for the unequal status quo depended on an assumption of hierarchical orders of people where some "deserve" more freedom than others. The arguments of Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, and certainly, Mary Wollstonecraft are built on principles of the Enlightenment.

England's reaction to the French Revolution is predictable—artists and freethinkers supported it, conservatives were against and were particularly shocked at its regicide. When Napoleon took helm and began his campaigns of conquest, England clamped down on dissent in its own ranks for fear that the revolutionary spirit would serve France's goals of European hegemony.

Laissez-Faire Capitalism

In 1776 the Scottish philosopher published *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* which is the foundational text of the economic ideology of capitalism. Smith argues for the importance of the freedom of markets, division of labor, and free flow of information to establish accurate prices and wages.

The Wealth of Nations is a handbook on laissez-faire capitalism where “laissez-faire” means “hands off!” If markets are left alone and their rational agents seek their interests, the economy will be most efficient and productive. Smith believed that an “invisible hand” guided people’s self-interest to benefit the whole. Therefore, the best economic activity for the state is to ensure open markets for goods and labor, then get the heck out of the way.

The consequences of the *Wealth of Nations* are, of course, still being worked out today. In England the movement of capitalism led to the Industrial Revolution and the mass exodus from small farmers in rural areas to factories located in urban environs. It led to social unrest, union organizing, and a fundamental reshaping of the English way of life.

And while England was becoming the economic powerhouse of the world, not all were pleased with the results. William Blake’s preface to his *Milton, a Poem* sees capitalism as energy debased:

And did those feet in ancient time,
Walk upon England’s mountains green:
And was the holy Lamb of God,
On England’s pleasant pastures seen!

And did the Countenance Divine,
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here,
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my Bow of burning gold;
Bring me my Arrows of desire:
Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold!
Bring me my Chariot of fire!

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In England’s green & pleasant Land

As we will discover, the attempt to right the wrongs of capitalism were a primary concern of many writers we discuss. All the while, though, England was consolidating its global power through the heavy machinery of capitalism.

Our Approach

When I teach my ground class in Brit Lit (the rhyming abbreviated name), I begin the semester by talking a bit about semiotics, or the study of sign systems. I ask students: What are the different sign systems you read when driving a car? Within a few minutes we generate a number of these systems:

all the gauges on the dashboard: fuel, odometer, engine temperature, RPMs

the road signs

lines painted on the road

the weather

the behavior of other drivers

the car radio

the kinesthetic awareness of the body.

Because most of us are experienced drivers, we negotiate these multiple systems with hardly a thought. The point is that we are capable of reading and reacting to multiple sign systems.

Now let's consider reading a text. Let's treat it as a sign in multiple sign systems. What are those sign systems?

The literal meaning of the text

what it tells us about the author

what it tells us about the literary tradition it is part of

what it tells us about the culture that helped produce it

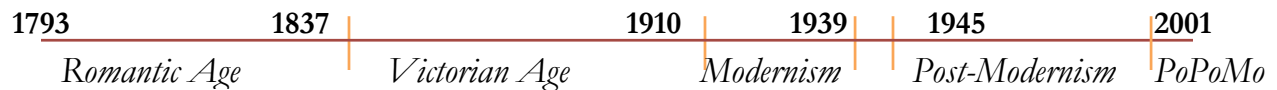
what it tells us about the economy

what it tells us about the language it is written in.

One of the goals in this class is to have you become fairly competent at reading a text in terms of these multiple sign systems. Consider the class Driver's Ed for literature.

Period & Genre

We will treat the first author, William Blake, as *sui generis*, that is, in his own class. After that, we will discuss these texts according to periods which we will sketch out thusly:



We will develop key terms for each of these periods and use these key terms to organize our discussions. These periods are organized into convenient historical sets, but that does not mean that these periods have any other “existence” outside our discussion of them. In other words, they are categories we impose on continuous and contingent historical circumstances because it is more convenient to discuss literature this way. As we learned above, there are many, many ways to approach a text; via historical period is just one.

In addition to organizing the class in terms of periods, we will also be reminding ourselves what *genre* any text may be. *Genre* indicates the kind of text it is, like poetry, fiction, essay, drama, etc. All we read are *texts* (though we may look at some pictures); these texts are going to be from a number of different genres.

Why Brit Lit?

It’s the 21st century, why study Brit Lit? That’s a good question. One way we will answer that question in class this semester is to each week draw a lesson, or apply the knowledge we’ve learned, to our own lives. That is one of your discussion thread assignments. Hopefully, you’ll begin to see that these writers attempted to answer the questions humans have asked since the beginning of time: “Why are we here?” “What is my purpose?” “What is the good life?” “What is beauty?” “What is justice?” Their responses these questions are through timeless literature. By participating in class, you will be engaging in a discussion that has been ongoing, perhaps even before the advent of language.

In addition, and excuse the tautology, the Brits invented Brit Lit! Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton are part of our cultural heritage and helped to shape the language we inherited and use. It is essential to learn about the foundations of our own culture, and those roots are in England. That being said, after World War II I’m pretty jingoistic and look to American poets and fiction writers as models!

Now put on your seatbelts and get ready for what promises to be a challenging and fulfilling drive through British Literature from 1750.

Start in the Present

For the purposes of this class, to warm up and learn how we approach each unit, we'll start with a late 20th century poem that is very different from the rest of the work we'll read this semester. I would classify it as "post-Modern" and we'll learn what that means the last week of the semester.

Discourse on the Logic of Language

In many ways, though, the poem "Discourse on the Logic of Language," by M. Nourbese Philip, is the result of the historical movements that precede it. The poet, was born on the island of Tobago, and settled in Canada. Trinidad and Tobago were colonies of many European powers, including England and much of its population was brought from Africa as slaves. So the first "British" poet we read, is not even from Britain—that shows the colonial, and imperial reach, of Great Britain.

Like many countries that were colonized, the inhabitants were required to speak English. What is it like to speak the language of the people who oppress you and keep you enslaved? The poem, "Discourse on the Logic of Language," explores that issue.

One of the first things to note about the poem is how many different "discourses" it uses. "Discourse" is a manner of speech, a way of approaching communication. Scientific discourse is different from sociological discourse is different from psychological discourse is different from the discourse you use when speaking with your friends.

In the poem there is the discourse of ethnography (the description of how a mother licks a baby), the discourse of linguistics (in the multiple choice questions), the discourse of colonization (in the directions on how to suppress the speech, by cutting out tongues and hanging them), and the discourse of physiology (in the discussions of the physical attributes of the tongue). These discourses are arranged around the central discourse—the discourse of poetry—that is able to cut apart, and play with the language that the poet inherits.

The central issue—how to reconcile the language of the oppressor with the language of communication—is kept in play by mixing these multiple discourses, "English is a foreign anguish."

The poem is a way to interrogate its own language, critique it, and attempt to reappropriate it so that it is no longer the vehicle of oppression, but the vehicle of liberation.

In a way, we will trace this kind of experimental poetry backward—notice how it is spread all over the page—starting with William Blake and the Romantics.

Writing Assignments

This is the first of your weekly four paragraph essays. Each paragraph must include a quotation from one of the texts under consideration. Use MLA style citation. Consult the “How to Cite Literature” directions in the home page. No need for a Works Cited as all texts come from the Norton Anthology. Do not use outside sources. I will grade these liberally and use them to assess how well you understand the material. No plagiarism.

For this assignment, we’ll make it pretty simple. Use at least three lines in each passage you quote (you can use more). The word “tongue” is used often in the poem and it is used in a variety of ways. Quote four passages that use the word “tongue” and discuss how Philip is using the word. Focus on the context of the word’s use as well the different discourses that Philip uses in discussing the word and what it stands for.

Paragraph1

Summarize the poem and present a passage that uses the word “tongue.” Discuss the word’s context and the discourse that contextualizes it.

Paragraph2

Present a passage that uses the word “tongue.” Discuss the word’s context and the discourse that contextualizes it.

Paragraph3

Present a passage that uses the word “tongue.” Discuss the word’s context and the discourse that contextualizes it.

Paragraph 4

Present a passage that uses the word “tongue.” Discuss the word’s context and the discourse that contextualizes it. Summarize your findings.

A Good Essay:

1. Properly cites the texts;
2. Cites four passages that use the word “tongue”;
3. Explains the contexts for the use of the word, as well as the discourses;
4. Introduces and summarizes your findings.

Assignment #2 Application

Write a paragraph of at least five sentences in which you discuss how language can be used to oppress or direct. Consider the way that you use speech to get something that you want, or how someone may use it to get what they want from you. Consider these questions: How does language direct our minds? What is the easiest way using speech to persuade someone? How is language used to help us conform or act in socially acceptable ways? Think about calling someone a “fag” or a “pussy”? What is this saying about gays or women? What modes of thinking does it reinforce? Give examples of the speech use.

Tell how language is used to direct action or oppress;
Give examples;
Discuss why it is effective.

You can write more if you want. Here's my contribution:

I'm always amazed how ads and politicians use circular reasoning to try to get us to "buy" whatever position they are presenting. Circular reasoning is when you offer as evidence the very thing you're trying to prove. For example, your watching an ad for soap. The voiceover says, "This is the best soap ever." Then there is a testimonial from a harried mother and she says, "I just love this soap; it's the best soap ever." Have they proved it's the best soap ever? No, but they certainly are attempting to make you think it is! Why is this effective? Because people are so used to blather, they neglect to analyze arguments—which is the best way to cut through the persuasive language people use.

A Good Application

1. Discusses a speech use;
2. Gives an example;
3. Tells how it functions.

Worksheets

You must be able to answer these questions from reading the texts and my commentary. You may want to print these questions and answer them as you read. They will guide your reading and organize your notes. Your weekly quiz will be 10 of these questions.

1. Who was William Blake?
2. What does "without contraries there is no progression" mean?
3. What is the marriage of heaven and hell and what does it represent?
4. What is the major error Blake believes conventional religion makes?
5. How is this a radical notion?
6. What happens when our desire is restrained?
7. What is John Milton's poem, "Paradise Lost" about?
8. What does Blake believe about Milton?
9. What is Gnosticism?
10. What is the gnostic story of the fall?

Proverbs

11. What happens to desire we repress?
12. What is Blake's notion of eternity?
13. How are prisons built with the bricks of law?
14. How are brothels built with the bricks of religion?

Visions of the Daughters of Albion

15. What is a multivalent text?
16. What is the historical interpretation of Visions?
17. What is the mythic interpretation?
18. What is the psychological interpretation?

Plate 1

19. Why does Oothoon refuse to pick the flower?
20. Why does she pick the flower?
21. What does Bromion do to Oothoon?
22. What does Bromion think about Oothoon and her child? How does this relate to the historical view of the poem?

Plate 2

23. What is Theotormon's reaction?
24. How is Oothoon like Prometheus?
25. Why does Oothoon argue that it's time to raise up?

Plate 3

26. What does Oothoon argue about natural forms and desires?

Plate 4

27. Why can't Theotormon change his view point?
28. What is the principle that Bromion represents?

Plate 5

29. Who is Urizen?
30. What is Oothoon's critique of Urizen?
31. How do priests and preachers collect money from their congregation?

Plate 6

32. What is so positive about infancy?
33. What is Oothoon's critique of Theotormon?

Plate 7

34. What is the key moment for Oothoon?
35. What happens in a desireless marriage?

36. What are the results of the repressions of longings?

37. What will Oothoon do for Theotormon?

Plate 8

38. What is the final realization for Oothoon?

II. I Must Create My Own System



We are starting the semester with the most radical, most visionary writer we will read this semester, William Blake (1757-1827). Blake was a painter, printer and draughtsman who lived in relative poverty during his life. He engraved, printed, and painted books which contained his prophecies. His poetry with his long declamatory lines recalls the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah.

An event in his middle age stands out symbolically for the forces that Blake saw at work in eternity and his own history. An English soldier was drunk and in Blake's garden. Blake dragged the soldier back to his barracks while arguing with him. The soldier claimed Blake had made threats against the king, a crime for which the punishment was death. Blake was acquitted but the experience served to remind him of the forces at work in every time period.

Blake's work is collected in illuminated books. The process for making those books came to him in a vision described in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. There is a comprehensive website which has digitized, with pretty amazing resolution, Blake's books: www.blakearchive.org. *The relation between the image and text is an essential part of the Blake experience and you should explore that site a bit.*

The title of this chapter is a quotation from Blake's Jerusalem, "I must create a system or be enslaved by another mans; I will not reason and /compare: my business is to create." Keeping track of Blake's systems could keep a number of scholars employed. Figuring out what every character means symbolically can be frustrating, and I'll help you out. What's important to keep in mind is that it is the system building that is important; it's all about creation. Blake's work is energetic, intense, and transformative. Suspend your judgment because these are radical ideas and willingly enter his visionary world.

I will copy and discuss three texts in this chapter. The worksheets will follow and then information about the assignment.

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

You will definitely need your seatbelts for this text. Its ideas are radical, contrarian and definitely alien to conventional religious belief. Remember, "Without contraries there is no progression." Is a single pursuit of heaven what our life should be about or is there something from hell we need to take as well in order to move forward and

become the holy of holies we are capable of being? Blake of course believes there must be a wedding of heaven and hell if we are to proceed in growth and creativity. This poem is about that movement—it provides prophecies from hell that emphasize energy and fulfilling desire. For that, according to Blake, is one grave sin. Conventional religion tells us to say “no” to desire. Blake tells us in this poem that the repression of desire in ourselves leads us to oppress others, especially those who act out their desires, like Satan.

There are echoes of the Gnostic tradition in this poem. There were a number of gospels written in the first four centuries after Christ’s death. Some were adopted into the official canon, some were not. A group of gospels which presented an alternative narrative of divine cosmology are called the Gnostic Gospels, and Blake, in a way, represents this tradition.

Here’s a version of the gnostic cosmology in a nutshell. God of all has two sons. One of them gets greedy for power and leaves heaven. This son creates material reality and is called Jehovah. We know Jehovah as the Old Testament god, the god of jealousy, vengeance, and violence. Blake calls this version of god, Nobodaddy. Nobodaddy doesn’t want us acting out our desires. Nobodaddy wants us to worship him rather than find the God-within-us. For Blake, jealousy is one of the greatest sins for jealousy would have us treat others as our own, rather than as beings in their own right. God of all sends down Christ to redeem the world from Jehovah, who, in his self-centeredness, created humans in his own image. Christ is a version of the redeemed man who unites the contraries of heaven and hell in his creative love. By the way, Nobodaddy doesn’t like Satan because Satan represents the kind of energy that Nobodaddy wants to repress.

Read all of the text until after the Memorable Fancy about the printing press. You can read ahead if you like, though my comments will end. Look for the italicized commentary (my own) as you read through the text.

Rintrah roars & shakes his fires in the burden'd air;
Hungry clouds swag on the deep
Once meek, and in a perilous path,
The just man kept his course along
The vale of death.
Roses are planted where thorns grow.
And on the barren heath
Sing the honey bees.
Then the perilous path was planted:
And a river, and a spring
On every cliff and tomb;
And on the bleached bones
Red clay brought forth.

Till the villain left the paths of ease,
 To walk in perilous paths, and drive
 The just man into barren climes.
 Now the sneaking serpent walks
 In mild humility.
 And the just man rages in the wilds
 Where lions roam.
 Rintrah roars & shakes his fires in the burden'd air;
 Hungry clouds swag on the deep.



As a new heaven is begun, and it is now thirty-three years since its advent: the Eternal Hell revives. And lo! Swedenborg is the Angel sitting at the tomb; his writings are the linen clothes folded up. Now is the dominion of Edom, & the return of Adam into Paradise; see Isaiah XXXIV & XXXV Chap:

Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence.

From these contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy.

Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell.

The voice of the Devil.

All Bibles or sacred codes have been the causes of the following Errors.

1. That Man has two real existing principles Viz: a Body & a Soul.
2. That Energy, call'd Evil, is alone from the Body, & that Reason, call'd Good, is alone from the Soul.
3. That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies.

But the following Contraries to these are True

1. Man has no Body distinct from his Soul for that call'd Body is a portion of Soul discern'd by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age
2. Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.
- 3 Energy is Eternal Delight



Here is where Blake explains the major errors of organized religion. First off, and this is a Platonic notion, that the body is fallen and seeks appetites and the soul is good and seeks heaven. Blake revises this (marrying hell with heaven) by saying that the body is the soul! Yes. The second error is that we will be punished eternally for following our desires. No way, Blake says. Energy is eternal delight—part of divine creativity.

Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place & governs the unwilling.

And being restrain'd it by degrees becomes passive till it is only the shadow of desire.

Blake explains why repressing desires is an error. They are natural and part of being human. People who tell you not to act out desires are usually afraid of their own desires! The repressed always return.

The history of this is written in Paradise Lost, & the Governor or Reason is call'd Messiah.

And the original Archangel or possessor of the command of the heavenly host, is call'd the Devil or Satan and his children are call'd Sin & Death.

But in the Book of Job Miltons Messiah is call'd Satan.

For this history has been adopted by both parties.

It indeed appear'd to Reason as if Desire was cast out, but the Devil's account is, that the Messiah fell, & formed a heaven of what he stole from the Abyss.



This is shewn in the Gospel, where he prays to the Father to send the comforter or Desire that Reason may have Ideas to build on, the Jehovah of the Bible being no other than he who dwells in flaming fire.

Know that after Christs death, he became Jehovah.

But in Milton; the Father is Destiny, the Son, a Ratio of the five senses, & the Holy-ghost, Vacuum!

Note: The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devils party without knowing it.

John Milton's monumental work, Paradise Lost, chronicles the fall of humans in the Garden of Eden as well as narrates the fall of Satan and the epic battle between the devils and God and Christ that ensued. One of the general observations about Milton's great poem (and you can't get outside the shadow of Milton throughout the period we cover) is that although Milton obviously represents the view of a conventional Protestant God, he draws Satan as an active, energetic character. That is why Blake claims that Milton is of the devil's party without knowing it—he understood, unconsciously, Blake assumed the true nature of energy which is manifest in desire and creativity.

A Memorable Fancy.

As I was walking among the fires of hell, delighted with the enjoyments of Genius; which to Angels look like torment and insanity. I collected some of their Proverbs: thinking that as the sayings used in a nation, mark its character, so the Proverbs of Hell, shew the nature of Infernal wisdom better than any description of buildings or garments.

When I came home; on the abyss of the five senses, where a flat sided steep frowns over the present world. I saw a mighty Devil folded in black clouds, hovering on the sides of the rock, with corroding fires he wrote the following sentence now perceived by the minds of men, & read by them on earth.

How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way,
Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?

Proverbs of Hell.

Blake here is providing a contrary to the Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament. They provide a counter-argument to conventional religious and moral belief.

In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy.
Drive your cart and your plow over the bones of the dead.
The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.
Here we go!

Prudence is a rich ugly old maid courted by Incapacity.
He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence.
If you desire but don't act it out, you will cause dissension, oppression, and jealousy.
The cut worm forgives the plow.
Dip him in the river who loves water.
A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees.
He whose face gives no light, shall never become a star.
Eternity is in love with the productions of time.

Eternity is now! We are in it. It loves the material reality that grows in time.

The busy bee has no time for sorrow.

The hours of folly are measur'd by the clock, but of wisdom: no clock can measure.

All wholsom food is caught without a net or a trap.

Bring out number weight & measure in a year of dearth.

No bird soars too high, if he soars with his own wings.

A dead body revenges not injuries.

The most sublime act is to set another before you.

Prefiguration of Christ as opposed to setting yourself in someone else like Nobodaddy does.

If the fool would persist in his folly he would become wise.

Folly is the cloke of knavery.

Shame is Prides cloke.

Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion.

Why is this so? No laws, no need to incarcerate. A brothel is a house of prostitution. Why are they built with the bricks of religion. Because sex is a natural desire and if you make it sinful, then people will hide their practice instead of celebrating it.

The pride of the peacock is the glory of God.

The lust of the goat is the bounty of God.

The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God.

The nakedness of woman is the work of God.

Excess of sorrow laughs. Excess of joy weeps.

The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword,
are portions of eternity too great for the eye of man.

The fox condemns the trap, not himself.

Joys impregnate. Sorrows bring forth.

Let man wear the fell of the lion. woman the fleece of the sheep.

The bird a nest, the spider a web, man friendship.

The selfish smiling fool, & the sullen frowning fool shall be both thought wise, that they may be a rod.

What is now proved was once only imagin'd.

The rat, the mouse, the fox, the rabbit; watch the roots; the lion, the tyger, the horse, the elephant,
watch the fruits.

The cistern contains: the fountain overflows.

One thought fills immensity.

Always be ready to speak your mind, and a base man will avoid you.

This is great advice. If you always speak the truth, fools who do not want to hear it will avoid you!

Every thing possible to be believ'd is an image of truth.

The eagle never lost so much time, as when he submitted to learn of the crow.

The fox provides for himself. but God provides for the lion.

Think in the morning. Act in the noon. Eat in the evening. Sleep in the night.

He who has suffer'd you to impose on him knows you.

As the plow follows words, so God rewards prayers.

The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction.

Expect poison from the standing water.

This is true in nature. Standing water breeds all kinds of nasty amoebas. The purest water is always moving, circulating.

You never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough.

Listen to the fools reproach! it is a kingly title!

The eyes of fire, the nostrils of air, the mouth of water, the beard of earth.

The weak in courage is strong in cunning.

The apple tree never asks the beech how he shall grow; nor the lion, the horse, how he shall take his prey.

The thankful reciever bears a plentiful harvest.

If others bad not been foolish, we should be so.

The soul of sweet delight can never be defil'd.

When thou seest an Eagle, thou seest a portion of Genius. lift up thy head!

As the catterpillar chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys.

To create a little flower is the labour of ages.

Damn braces: Bless relaxes.

The best wine is the oldest, the best water the newest.

Prayers plow not! Praises reap not!

Joys laugh not! Sorrows weep not!

The head Sublime, the heart Pathos, the genitals Beauty, the hands & feet Proportion.

As the air to a bird or the sea to a fish, so is contempt to the contemptible.

The crow wish'd every thing was black, the owl, that every thing was white.

Exuberance is Beauty.

If the lion was advised by the fox. he would be cunning.

Improvement makes strait roads, but the crooked roads without Improvement, are roads of Genius.

Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires.

Students are always shocked by this one. Blake is saying that a child seeks its desires (to nurse) and by denying fulfillment, you are destroying life.

Where man is not, nature is barren.

Truth can never be told so as to be understood, and not be believ'd.

Enough! or Too much.



The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could percieve.

And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country, placing it under its mental deity;

Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects: thus began Priesthood;

Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales.
And at length they pronounc'd that the Gods had order'd such things.
Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast.

A Memorable Fancy.

When we call Blake a "visionary" poet it is exactly for sections like this. Blake converses with the Old Testament prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel. Blake had an absolute trust in these visions and who are we to say to Blake, "No you didn't"?

The Prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel dined with me, and I asked them how they dared so roundly to assert that God spake to them; and whether they did not think at the time, that they would be misunderstood, & so be the cause of imposition.

Isaiah answer'd. 'I saw no God, nor heard any, in a finite organical perception; but my senses discover'd the infinite in every thing, and as I was then perswaded, & remain confirm'd, that the voice of honest indignation is the voice of God, I cared not for consequences but wrote.'

Then I asked: 'does a firm perswasion that a thing is so, make it so?'

He replied: 'All poets believe that it does, & in ages of imagination this firm perswasion removed mountains; but many are not capable of a firm perswasion of any thing.'

Then Ezekiel said. 'The philosophy of the east taught the first principles of human perception: some nations held one principle for the origin & some another; we of Israel taught that the Poetic Genius (as you now call it) was the first principle and all the others merely derivative, which was the cause of our despising the Priests & Philosophers of other countries, and prophecying that all Gods would at last be proved to originate in ours & to be the tributaries of the Poetic Genius; it was this that our great poet King David desired so fervently & invokes so pathetic'ly, saying by this he conquers enemies & governs kingdoms; and we so loved our God. that we cursed in his name all the deities of surrounding nations, and asserted that they had rebelled; from these opinions the vulgar came to think that all nations would at last be subject to the jews.'

'This' said he, 'like all firm perswasions, is come to pass; for all nations believe the jews' code and worship the jews' god, and what greater subjection can be?'

I heard this with some wonder, & must confess my own conviction. After dinner I ask'd Isaiah to favour the world with his lost works; he said none of equal value was lost. Ezekiel said the same of his.

I also asked Isaiah what made him go naked and barefoot three years? he answer'd, 'the same that made our friend Diogenes the Grecian.'

I then asked Ezekiel why he eat dung, & lay so long on his right & left side? he answer'd, 'the desire of raising other men into a perception of the infinite; this the North American tribes practise, & is he honest who resists his genius or conscience. only for the sake of present ease or gratification?'



The ancient tradition that the world will be consumed in fire at the end of six thousand years is true, as I have heard from Hell.

For the cherub with his flaming sword is hereby commanded to leave his guard at the tree of

life, and when he does, the whole creation will be consumed and appear infinite and holy whereas it now appears finite & corrupt.

This will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment.

But first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul is to be expunged; this I shall do, by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid.

If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite.

For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.

A Memorable Fancy.

This is the vision where Blake describes his method of engraving, acid washing, and printing.

I was in a Printing house in Hell & saw the method in which knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation.

In the first chamber was a Dragon-Man, clearing away the rubbish from a cave's mouth; within, a number of Dragons were hollowing the cave.

In the second chamber was a Viper folding round the rock & the cave, and others adorning it with gold silver and precious stones.

In the third chamber was an Eagle with wings and feathers of air: he caused the inside of the cave to be infinite, around were numbers of Eagle like men, who built palaces in the immense cliffs.

In the fourth chamber were Lions of flaming fire raging around & melting the metals into living fluids.

In the fifth chamber were Unnam'd forms, which cast the metals into the expanse.

There they were reciev'd by Men who occupied the sixth chamber, and took the forms of books & were arranged in libraries.



The Giants who formed this world into its sensual existence and now seem to live in it in chains, are in truth the causes of its life & the sources of all activity, but the chains are the cunning of weak and tame minds which have power to resist energy, according to the proverb, the weak in courage is strong in cunning.

Thus one portion of being is the Prolific, the other the Devouring; to the devourer it seems as if the producer was in his chains, but it is not so, he only takes portions of existence and fancies that the whole.

But the Prolific would cease to be Prolific unless the Devourer, as a sea, recieved the excess of his delights.

Some will say: 'Is not God alone the Prolific?' I answer: 'God only Acts & Is, in existing beings or Men.'

These two classes of men are always upon earth, & they should be enemies; whoever tries to reconcile them seeks to destroy existence.

Religion is an endeavour to reconcile the two.

Note: Jesus Christ did not wish to unite but to separate them, as in the Parable of sheep and goats! & he says I came not to send Peace but a Sword. Messiah or Satan or Tempter was formerly thought to be one of the Antediluvians who are our Energies.

A Memorable Fancy.

An Angel came to me and said: 'O pitiable foolish young man! O horrible! O dreadful state! consider the hot burning dungeon thou art preparing for thyself to all eternity, to which thou art going in such career.'

I said: 'perhaps you will be willing to shew me my eternal lot & we will contemplate together upon it and see whether your lot or mine is most desirable.'

So he took me thro' a stable & thro' a church & down into the church vault at the end of which was a mill: thro' the mill we went, and came to a cave: down the winding cavern we groped our tedious way till a void boundless as a nether sky appear'd beneath us & we held by the roots of trees and hung over this immensity; but I said, 'if you please we will commit ourselves to this void, and see whether providence is here also, if you will not, I will?' but he answer'd: 'do not presume, O young-man, but as we here remain, behold thy lot which will soon appear when the darkness passes away.'

So I remain'd with him, sitting in the twisted root of an oak; he was suspended in a fungus, which hung with the head downward into the deep.

By degrees we beheld the infinite Abyss, fiery as the smoke of a burning city; beneath us at an immense distance, was the sun, black but shining; round it were fiery tracks on which revolv'd vast spiders, crawling after their prey; which flew, or rather swum, in the infinite deep, in the most terrific shapes of animals sprung from corruption; & the air was full of them, & seem'd composed of them: these are Devils, and are called Powers of the air. I now asked my companion which was my eternal lot? he said, 'between the black & white spiders.'

But now, from between the black & white spiders, a cloud and fire burst and rolled thro' the deep black'ning all beneath, so that the nether deep grew black as a sea, & rolled with a terrible noise; beneath us was nothing now to be seen but a black tempest, till looking east between the clouds & the waves, we saw a cataract of blood mixed with fire, and not many stones' throw from us appear'd and sunk again the scaly fold of a monstrous serpent; at last, to the east, distant about three degrees appear'd a fiery crest above the waves; slowly it reared like a ridge of golden rocks, till we discover'd two globes of crimson fire, from which the sea fled away in clouds of smoke; and now we saw, it was the head of Leviathan; his forehead was divided into streaks of green & purple like those on a tyger's forehead: soon we saw his mouth & red gills hang just above the raging foam tinging the black deep with beams of blood, advancing toward us with all the fury of a spiritual existence.

My friend the Angel climb'd up from his station into the mill; I remain'd alone, & then this appearance was no more, but I found myself sitting on a pleasant bank beside a river by moonlight, hearing a harper who sung to the harp; & his theme was: 'The man who never alters his opinion is like standing water, & breeds reptiles of the mind.'

But I arose, and sought for the mill, & there I found my Angel, who surprised, asked me how I escaped?

I answer'd: 'All that we saw was owing to your metaphysics; for when you ran away, I found myself on a bank by moonlight hearing a harper, But now we have seen my eternal lot, shall I shew you yours?' he laugh'd at my proposal; but I by force suddenly caught him in my arms, & flew westerly thro' the night, till we were elevated above the earth's shadow; then I flung myself with him

directly into the body of the sun; here I clothed myself in white, & taking in my hand Swedenborg's, volumes sunk from the glorious clime, and passed all the planets till we came to saturn: here I staid to rest & then leap'd into the void, between saturn & the fixed stars.

'Here,' said I, 'is your lot, in this space, if space it may be call'd.' Soon we saw the stable and the church, & I took him to the altar and open'd the Bible, and lo! it was a deep pit, into which I descended driving the Angel before me, soon we saw seven houses of brick; one we enter'd; in it were a number of monkeys, baboons, & all of that species, chain'd by the middle, grinning and snatching at one another, but withheld by the shortness of their chains: however, I saw that they sometimes grew numerous, and then the weak were caught by the strong, and with a grinning aspect, first coupled with, & then devour'd, by plucking off first one limb and then another till the body was left a helpless trunk; this after grinning & kissing it with seeming fondness they devour'd too; and here & there I saw one savourily picking the flesh off of his own tail; as the stench terribly annoy'd us both, we went into the mill, & I in my hand brought the skeleton of a body, which in the mill was Aristotle's Analytics.

So the Angel said: 'thy phantasy has imposed upon me, & thou oughtest to be ashamed.' I answer'd: 'we impose on one another, & it is but lost time to converse with you whose works are only Analytics.'

Opposition is true Friendship.



I have always found that Angels have the vanity to speak of themselves as the only wise; this they do with a confident insolence sprouting from systematic reasoning.

Thus Swedenborg boasts that what he writes is new; tho' it is only the Contents or Index of already publish'd books.

A man carried a monkey about for a shew, & because he was a little wiser than the monkey, grew vain, and conceiv'd himself as much wiser than seven men. It is so with Swedenborg: he shews the folly of churches & exposes hypocrites, till he imagines that all are religious, & himself the single one on earth that ever broke a net.

Now hear a plain fact: Swedenborg has not written one new truth. Now hear another: he has written all the old falshoods.

And now hear the reason. He conversed with Angels who are all religious, & conversed not with Devils who all hate religion, for he was incapable thro' his conceited notions.

Thus Swedenborgs writings are a recapitulation of all superficial opinions, and an analysis of the more sublime, but no further.

Have now another plain fact. Any man of mechanical talents may, from the writings of

Paracelsus or Jacob Behmen, produce ten thousand volumes of equal value with Swedenborg's, and from those of Dante or Shakespear an infinite number.

But when he has done this, let him not say that he knows better than his master, for he only holds a candle in sunshine.

A Memorable Fancy.

Once I saw a Devil in a flame of fire, who arose before an Angel that sat on a cloud, and the Devil utter'd these words:

"The worship of God is: Honouring his gifts in other men, each according to his genius, and loving the greatest men best: those who envy or calumniate great men hate God; for there is no other God."

The Angel hearing this became almost blue but mastering himself he grew yellow, & at last white, pink, & smiling, and then replied:

"Thou Idolater, is not God One? & is not he visible in Jesus Christ? and has not Jesus Christ given his sanction to the law of ten commandments, and are not all other men fools, sinners, & nothings?"

The Devil answer'd: 'bray a fool in a mortar with wheat, yet shall not his folly be beaten out of him; if Jesus Christ is the greatest man, you ought to love him in the greatest degree; now hear how he has given his sanction to the law of ten commandments: did he not mock at the sabbath, and so mock the sabbaths God? murder those who were murder'd because of him? turn away the law from the woman taken in adultery? steal the labor of others to support him? bear false witness when he omitted making a defence before Pilate? covet when he pray'd for his disciples, and when he bid them shake off the dust of their feet against such as refused to lodge them? I tell you, no virtue can exist without breaking these ten commandments. Jesus was all virtue, and acted from impulse, not from rules.'

When he had so spoken, I beheld the Angel, who stretched out his arms, embracing the flame of fire, & he was consumed and arose as Elijah.

Note: This Angel, who is now become a Devil, is my particular friend; we often read the Bible together in its infernal or diabolical sense which the world shall have if they behave well.

I have also The Bible of Hell, which the world shall have whether they will or no.



One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression.

A Song of Liberty.

1. The Eternal Female groan'd! it was heard over all the Earth:2. Albion's coast is sick silent; the American meadows faint!

3 Shadows of Prophecy shiver along by the lakes and the rivers and mutter across the ocean: France,
rend down thy dungeon;
4. Golden Spain, burst the barriers of old Rome;
5. Cast thy keys, O Rome, into the deep down falling, even to eternity down falling,
6. And weep!
7. In her trembling hands she took the new born terror howling;
8. On those infinite mountains of light, now barr'd out by the atlantic sea, the new born fire stood
before the starry king!
9. Flag'd with grey brow'd snows and thunderous visages, the jealous wings wav'd over the deep.
10. The speary hand burned aloft, unbuckled was the shield; forth went the hand of jealousy among
the flaming hair, and hurl'd the new born wonder thro' the starry night.
11. The fire, the fire, is falling!
12. Look up! look up! O citizen of London, enlarge thy countenance: O Jew, leave counting gold!
return to thy oil and wine. O African! black African! (go, winged thought widen his forehead.)
13. The fiery limbs, the flaming hair, shot like the sinking sun into the western sea.
14. Wak'd from his eternal sleep, the hoary element roaring fled away:
15. Down rush'd, beating his wings in vain, the jealous king; his grey brow'd councillors, thunderous
warriors, curl'd veterans, among helms, and shields, and chariots horses, elephants: banners, castles,
slings and rocks,
16. Falling, rushing, ruining! buried in the ruins, on Urthona's dens;
17. All night beneath the ruins, then, their sullen flames faded, emerge round the gloomy King.
18. With thunder and fire: leading his starry hosts thro' the waste wilderness, he promulgates his ten
commands, glancing his beamy eyelids over the deep in dark dismay,
19. Where the son of fire in his eastern cloud, while the morning plumes her golden breast,
20. Spurning the clouds written with curses, stamps the stony law to dust, loosing the eternal horses
from the dens of night, crying:
Empire is no more! and now the lion & wolf shall cease.

Chorus.

Let the Priests of the Raven of dawn, no longer in deadly black, with hoarse note curse the sons of
joy. Nor his accepted brethren, whom, tyrant, he calls free: lay the bound or build the roof. Nor pale
religious lechery call that virginity, that wishes but acts not!
For every thing that lives is Holy.

Songs of Innocence and Experience

*Your weekly four paragraph essay will be about these poems so I will give a reading of one set and the rest
you will have to figure out. If you think that "Innocence" is good and "Experience" is bad, then you have
stepped into the trap of fallen thinking. Remember, without contraries there is no progression. These are two
states you must move forward from, toward a synthesis of creation. These are simple poems with fairly
obvious meanings. Note that each poem in Innocence has a companion poem in Experience and neither is a
place you want to stay. You must progress. Let me demonstrate with the "Chimney Sweeper." First from
Innocence.*

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue

Could scarcely cry 'weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep!
So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,
That curled like a lamb's back, was shaved: so I said,
"Hush, Tom! never mind it, for when your head's bare,
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair."

And so he was quiet; and that very night,
As Tom was a-sleeping, he had such a sight, -
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, and Jack,
Were all of them locked up in coffins of black.

And by came an angel who had a bright key,
And he opened the coffins and set them all free;
Then down a green plain leaping, laughing, they run,
And wash in a river, and shine in the sun.

Then naked and white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds and sport in the wind;
And the angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father, and never want joy.

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark,
And got with our bags and our brushes to work.
Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm;
So if all do their duty they need not fear harm.

At the first reading, we may be tempted to say to ourselves, "Oh yes, isn't it nice that these boys will die young and go to heaven." Children are in many of the innocence poems as are lambs, songs, and green hills. But on second thought, if we dig a little deeper we discover something nefarious, "If he'd be a good boy,/ He'd have God for his father and never want joy." Is it just or right that these boys should be worked to death even if they are promised the reward of heaven? Of course not. The promise of heaven serves to let stand a very unjust situation here on earth. How about making life closer to the celestial Jerusalem for these boys on earth rather than letting them die young to profit others? Justice requires that we change the way things are now. So maybe this is not the feel-good poem we might think it is.

Here is "The Chimney Sweeper" from Experience:

A little black thing among the snow,
Crying "'weep! 'weep!" in notes of woe!
"Where are thy father and mother, say?"
"They are both gone up to the church to pray.

"Because I was happy upon the heath,

And smiled among the winter's snow,
 They clothed me in the clothes of death,
 And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

"And because I am happy and dance and sing,
 They think they have done me no injury,
 And are gone to praise God and his Priest and King,
 Who make up a heaven of our misery."

We delve more deeply into the nature of society and organized religion in this poem. The sweeper's parents (who are regular church-attenders) gave him to labor because he, by playing (following his desires) was not being productive or profitable. In what way do "God and his Priest and King" make a heaven of our misery? Let's remember the poem from Innocence. We are promised heaven to endure this hell on earth. And who profits? Priest and King. Make Heaven happen now, Blake says. We're in eternity and heaven can only be manifest through justice, creativity, and energy.

Visions of the Daughters of Albion

*Now we are ready to attack a very complicated prophecy of Blake, 'The Visions of the Daughters of Albion. It is a good opportunity to also highlight one of the essential notions of literature—it can accommodate multiple readings. This is especially true of a text like Visions which is an example of a **multivalent** text. If you remember your physics, you'll know that an atom that is multivalent has more than one shells of electrons in orbit around the nucleus. Each shell has its own energy level. A multivalent text is a text that can accommodate a number of readings. Let me illustrate with Visions. There are three main characters, Oothoon, Theotormon and Bromion.*

<u>Interpretation</u>	<u>Oothoon</u>	<u>Theotormon</u>	<u>Bromion</u>
Historical	Slaves in America, oppressed women in England.	Those southerners who went to church and used religion as an excuse to enslave.	Slave-owners who treat people as property.
Mythic	The force of Innocence and, eventually, sacrifice.	The force of inertia, inactivity, fear.	The force of oppression and violence.
Psychological	The Id—the part of the self that seeks pleasure.	The SuperEgo, the part of the self that restricts.	The Will to Power the part of the self that seeks power.

We can see from the table that Blake is, explicitly, talking about slavery in America as well as the historical forces that lead to such oppression. The psychological interpretation is also compelling—each of these characters represents a part of ourselves.

The Argument
 I lovèd Theotormon,
 And I was not ashamed;
 I trembled in my virgin fears
 And I hid in Leutha's vale!

I pluckèd Leutha's flower,
And I rose up from the vale;
But the terrible thunders tore
My virgin mantle in twain.

Plate 1

Visions

Enslav'd, the Daughters of Albion weep; a trembling lamentation
Upon their mountains; in their valleys, sighs toward America.
For the soft soul of America, Oothoon, wander'd in woe
Along the vales of Leutha, seeking flowers to comfort her;
And thus she spoke to the bright Marigold of Leutha's vale:-
Art thou a flower? art thou a nymph? I see thee now a flower,
Now a nymph! I dare not pluck thee from thy dewy bed!
The Golden nymph replied: 'Pluck thou my flower, Oothoon the mild!
Another flower shall spring, because the soul of sweet delight
Can never pass away.' She ceas'd, and clos'd her golden shrine.
Then Oothoon pluck'd the flower, saying: 'I pluck thee from thy bed,
Sweet flower, and put thee here to glow between my breasts;
And thus I turn my face to where my whole soul seeks.'
Over the waves she went in wing'd exulting swift delight,
And over Theotormon's reign took her impetuous course.
Bromion rent her with his thunders; on his stormy bed
Lay the faint maid, and soon her woes appall'd his thunders hoarse.
Bromion spoke: 'Behold this harlot here on Bromion's bed,
And let the jealous dolphins sport around the lovely maid!
Thy soft American plains are mine, and mine thy north and south:
Stamp'd with my signet are the swarthy children of the sun;
They are obedient, they resist not, they obey the scourge;
Their daughters worship terrors and obey the violent.
Oothoon, who is called, "the soft soul of America," chooses to accept the energy of her sexuality and personhood by choosing, "the soul of sweet delight." Notice the innocence, youth, and energy of Oothoon. Also note her connection to America. At first she won't pluck the flower because she thinks by plucking it she will kill it—she has split thinking "are you a flower or spirit?" Marigold tells her, "Go ahead and pluck. Creative energy never goes away." As a result, she is now ready to act out her desires for Theotormon.

Bromion enslaves Oothoon, rapes her, makes her pregnant. He views her as an economic possession (note this in relation to the subjugation of women and slaves), "thy soft American plains are mine..." He rejoices in slavery, force, and the way the slaves internalize that oppression.

Plate 2

Now thou may'st marry Bromion's harlot, and protect the child
Of Bromion's rage, that Oothoon shall put forth in nine moons' time.'

Then storms rent Theotormon's limbs: he roll'd his waves around,
 And folded his black jealous waters round the adulterate pair.
 Bound back to back in Bromion's caves, terror and meekness dwell:
 At entrance Theotormon sits, wearing the threshold hard
 With secret tears; beneath him sound like waves on a desert shore
 The voice of slaves beneath the sun, and children bought with money,
 That shiver in religious caves beneath the burning fires
 Of lust, that belch incessant from the summits of the earth.
 Oothoon weeps not; she cannot weep, her tears are lockèd up;
 But she can howl incessant, writhing her soft snowy limbs,
 And calling Theotormon's Eagles to prey upon her flesh.
 'I call with holy voice! Kings of the sounding air,
 Rend away this defilèd bosom that I may reflect
 The image of Theotormon on my pure transparent breast.'
 The Eagles at her call descend and rend their bleeding prey:
 Theotormon severely smiles; her soul reflects the smile,
 As the clear spring, muddied with feet of beasts, grows pure and smiles.
 The Daughters of Albion hear her woes, and echo back her sighs.
 'Why does my Theotormon sit weeping upon the threshold,
 And Oothoon hovers by his side, per 1000 suading him in vain?
 I cry: Arise, O Theotormon! for the village dog
 Barks at the breaking day; the nightingale has done lamenting;
 The lark does rustle in the ripe corn, and the eagle returns
 From nightly prey, and lifts his golden beak to the pure east,
 Shaking the dust from his immortal pinions to awake
 The sun that sleeps too long. Arise, my Theotormon! I am pure,
 Because the night is gone that clos'd me in its deadly black.
 They told me that the night and day were all that I could see;
 They told me that I had five senses to enclose me up;
 And they enclos'd my infinite brain into a narrow circle,
 And sunk my heart into the Abyss, a red, round globe, hot burning,
 Till all from life I was obliterated and erasèd.
 Instead of morn arises a bright shadow, like an eye
 In the eastern cloud; instead of night a sickly charnel-house,
 That Theotormon hears me not. To him the night and morn
 Are both alike; a night of sighs, a morning of fresh tears;

Theotormon is jealous (another form of possessiveness); he sits and weeps while life goes on around him--but he is too grief-stricken to do anything about it.

In imitation of Prometheus, Oothoon calls upon eagles to rend her breast so it will reflect Theotormon's image. Theotormon smiles when they are tearing her bloodily. When the sun comes up Oothoon cries, "it's done; I'm purified, come out into the light my depressed friend Theotormon."

Theotormon is too woe-struck to notice the light.

Plate 3

And none but Bromion can hear my lamentations.
With what sense is it that the chicken shuns the ravenous hawk?
With what sense does the tame pigeon measure out the expanse?
With what sense does the bee form cells? Have not the mouse and frog
Eyes and ears and sense of touch? Yet are their habitations
And their pursuits as different as their forms and as their joys.
Ask the wild ass why he refuses burdens, and the meek camel
Why he loves man. Is it because of eye, ear, mouth, or skin,
Or breathing nostrils? No! for these the wolf and tiger have.
Ask the blind worm the secrets of the grave, and why her spires
Love to curl round the bones of death; and ask the rav'nous snake
Where she gets poison, and the wing'd eagle why he loves the sun;
And then tell me the thoughts of man, that have been hid of old.
'Silent I hover all the night, and all day could be silent,
If Theotormon once would turn his lovèd eyes upon me.
How can I be defil'd when I reflect thy image pure?
Sweetest the fruit that the worm feeds on, and the soul prey'd on by woe,
The new-wash'd lamb ting'd with the village smoke, and the bright swan
By the red earth of our immortal river. I bathe my wings,
And I am white and pure to hover round Theotormon's breast.'
Then Theotormon broke his silence, and he answerèd:--
'Tell me what is the night or day to one o'erflow'd with woe?
Tell me what is a thought, and of what substance is it made?
Tell me what is a joy, and in what gardens do joys grow?
And in what rivers swim the sorrows? And upon what mountains

Oothoon discusses the nature of various growing things on earth. She believes that, to human beings, thoughts, the work of the imagination, is natural, so are desires.

Because thoughts have no substance (corporeal existence) Theotormon cannot accept their importance--to him they have no reality. Indeed, the only reality that Theotormon conceives is his own woe.

Plate 4

Wave shadows of discontent? And in what houses dwell the wretched,
Drunken with woe, forgotten, and shut up from cold despair?
'Tell me where dwell the thoughts, forgotten till thou call them forth?
Tell me where dwell the joys of old, and where the ancient loves,
And when will they renew again, and the night of oblivion past,
That I might traverse times and spaces far remote, and bring
Comforts into a present sorrow and a night of pain?

Where goest thou, O thought? to what remote land is thy flight?
 If thou returnest to the present moment of affliction,
 Wilt thou bring comforts on thy wings, and dews and honey and balm,
 Or poison from the desert wilds, from the eyes of the envier?'

Then Bromion said, and shook the cavern with his lamentation:--
 'Thou knowest that the ancient trees seen by thine eyes have fruit;
 But knowest thou that trees and fruits flourish upon the earth
 To gratify senses unknown -- trees, beasts, and birds unknown;
 Unknown, not unperceiv'd, spread in the infinite microscope,
 In places yet unvisited by the voyager, and in worlds
 Over another kind of seas, a 1000 nd in atmospheres unknown?
 Ah! are there other wars, beside the wars of sword and fire?
 And are there other sorrows beside the sorrows of poverty?
 And are there other joys beside the joys of riches and ease?
 And is there not one law for both the lion and the ox?
 And is there not eternal fire, and eternal chains
 To bind the phantoms of existence from eternal life?'

Then Oothoon waited silent all the day and all the night;

Theotormon continue the argument: if thoughts were real, where do they go when they're not in our head? Where does joy go? Theotormon is looking outside himself for a solution therefore he cannot change.

Bromion responds by noting the ordered and iron-clad laws of the microscopic and visible world. He notes that religion functions with the same rigor, "Eternal fire & eternal chains?/To bind phantoms of existence from eternal life." Note that these false religious laws keep people from eternal life, not lead them towards it. Bromion understands only force, law, and oppression. The kind of freedom Oothoon represents must be chained.

Plate 5

But when the morn arose, her lamentation renew'd;
 The Daughters of Albion hear her woes, and echo back her sighs.
 'O Urizen! Creator of men! mistaken Demon of heaven!
 Thy joys are tears, thy labour vain to form men to thine image.
 How can one joy absorb another? Are not different joys
 Holy, eternal, infinite? and each joy is a Love.
 'Does not the great mouth laugh at a gift, and the narrow eyelids mock
 At the labour that is above payment? And wilt thou take the ape
 For thy counsellor, or the dog for a schoolmaster to thy children?
 Does he who contemns poverty, and he who turns with abhorrence
 From usury feel the same passion, or are they movèd alike?
 How can the giver of gifts experience the delights of the merchant?
 How the industrious citizen the pains of the husbandman?
 How different far the fat fed hireling with hollow drum,

Who buys whole corn-fields into wastes, and sings upon the heath!
 How different their eye and ear! How different the world to them!
 With what sense does the parson claim the labour of the farmer?
 What are his nets and gins and traps; and how does he surround him
 With cold floods of abstraction, and with forests of solitude,
 To build him castles and high spires, where kings and priests may dwell;
 Till she who burns with youth, and knows no fixed lot, is bound
 In spells of law to one she loathes? And must she drag the chain
 Of life in weary lust? Must chilling, murderous thoughts obscure
 The clear heaven of her eternal spring; to bear the wintry rage
 Of a harsh terror, driv'n to madness, bound to hold a rod
 Over her shrinking shoulders all the day, and all the night
 To turn the wheel of false desire, and longings that wake her womb
 To the abhorred birth of cherubs in the human form,
 That live a pestilence and die a meteor, and are no more;
 Till the child dwell with one he hates, and do the deed he loathes,
 And the impure scourge force his seed into its unripe birth,
 Ere yet his eyelids can behold the arrows of the day?
 Does the whale worship at thy footsteps as the hungry dog;
 Or does he scent the mountain prey because his nostrils wide
 Draw in the ocean? Does his eye discern the flying cloud
 As the raven's eye; or does he measure the expanse like the vulture?
 Does the still spider view the cliffs where eagles hide their young;
 Or does the fly rejoice because the harvest is brought in?
 Does not the eagle scorn the earth, and despise the treasures beneath?
 But the mole knoweth what is there, and the worm shall tell it thee.
 Does not the worm erect a pillar in the mouldering churchyard

Oothoon blames the "heaven demon" Urizen for these events. Urizen, opposed to the active, natural imagination of Oothoon, controls "cold floods of abstraction." Urizen ensures she is "bound in chains of law to one she loathes; and must...drag the chain/ of life in weary lust." Urizen is a manifestation of old Nobodaddy and you can find "your reason" in Urizen. Also, Urizen, like Jehova, makes humans in his own image and demands worship—Oothoon asks, how can one joy absorb another? Also note, the preacher collects his toll by scaring people about hell.

Plate 6

And a palace of eternity in the jaws of the hungry grave?
 Over his porch these words are written: "Take thy bliss, O Man!
 And sweet shall be thy taste, and sweet thy infant joys renew!"
 Infancy! fearless, lustful, happy, nestling for delight
 In laps of pleasure: Innocence! honest, open, seeking
 The vigorous joys of morning light, open to virgin bliss,
 Who taught thee modesty, subtil modesty, child of night and sleep?
 When thou awakest wilt thou dissemble all thy secret joys,

Or wert thou not awake when all this mystery was disclos'd?
 Then com'st thou forth a modest virgin knowing to dissemble,
 With nets found under thy night pillow, to catch virgin joy
 And brand it wit 1000 h the name of whore, and sell it in the night
 In silence, ev'n without a whisper, and in seeming sleep.
 Religious dreams and holy vespers light thy smoky fires:
 Once were thy fires lighted by the eyes of honest morn.
 And does my Theotormon seek this hypocrite modesty,
 This knowing, artful, secret, fearful, cautious, trembling hypocrite?
 Then is Oothoon a whore indeed! and all the virgin joys
 Of life are harlots; and Theotormon is a sick man's dream;
 And Oothoon is the crafty slave of selfish holiness.
 'But Oothoon is not so, a virgin fill'd with virgin fancies,
 Open to joy and to delight wherever beauty appears:
 If in the morning sun I find it, there my eyes are fix'd

Oothoon argues that one should "take bliss" as an infant takes bliss, "Infancy, faultless, lustful, happy! Honest, open, seeking/The vigorous joys of morning light..."

Oothoon represent a kind of youth, a faith in living, that the others, bound by "subtle modesty," have lost. Theotormon is a "sick man's dream," he is "this knowing, artful, secret, fearful, cautious, hypocrite."

Oothoon remains, "open to joy and to delight where ever beauty appears/ In the morning sun I find it, there my eyes are fixed..."

Plate 7

In happy copulation; if in evening mild, wearied with work,
 Sit on a bank and draw the pleasures of this free-born joy.
 'The moment of desire! the moment of desire! The virgin
 That pines for man shall awaken her womb to enormous joys
 In the secret shadows of her chamber: the youth shut up from
 The lustful joy shall forget to generate, and create an amorous image
 In the shadows of his curtains and in the folds of his silent pillow
 Are not these the places of religion, the rewards of continence,
 The self-enjoyings of self-denial? Why dost thou seek religion?
 Is it because acts are not lovely that thou seekest solitude,
 Where the horrible darkness is impressèd with reflections of desire?
 'Father of Jealousy, be thou accursèd from the earth!
 Why hast thou taught my Theotormon this accursèd thing,
 Till beauty fades from off my shoulders, darken'd and cast out,
 A solitary shadow wailing on the margin of nonentity?
 'I cry: Love! Love! Love! happy happy Love! free as the mountain wind!

Can that be Love, that drinks another as a sponge drinks water,
 That clouds with jealousy his nights, with weepings all the day,
 To spin a web of age around him, grey and hoary, dark;
 Till his eyes sicken at the fruit that hangs before his sight?
 Such is self-love that envies all, a creeping skeleton,
 With lamplike eyes watching around the frozen marriage bed!
 'But silken nets and traps of adamant will Oothoon spread,
 And catch for thee girls of mild silver, or of furious gold.
 I'll lie beside thee on a bank, and view their wanton play
 In lovely copulation, bliss on bliss, with Theotormon:
 Red as the rosy morning, lustful as the first-born beam,
 Oothoon shall view his dear delight; nor e'er with jealous cloud
 Come in the heaven of generous love, nor selfish blightings bring.
 'Does the sun walk, in glorious raiment, on the secret floor

"In happy copulation." The sexual energy Blake writes about is not only sex as sex; it is an acknowledgement of the erotic tension that holds the world together, that the very act of perception includes. She even offers to watch while Theotormon plays with nymphs so that he can see that she is not jealous and possessive. Also note how Blake portrays selfish love, as masturbation (no procreation), and jealous love (as a skeleton guarding a cold (sexless) bed).

Plate 8

Where the cold miser spreads his gold; or does the bright cloud drop
 On his stone threshold? Does his eye behold the beam that brings
 Expansion to the eye of pity; or will he bind himself
 Beside the ox to thy hard furrow? Does not that mild beam blot
 The bat, the owl, the glowing tiger, and the king of night?
 The sea-fowl takes the wintry blast for a cov'ring to her limbs,
 And the wild snake the pestilence to adorn him with gems and gold;
 And trees, and birds, and beasts, and men behold their eternal joy.
 Arise, you little glancing wings, and sing your infant joy!
 Arise, and drink your bliss, for everything that lives is holy!
 Thus every morning wails Oothoon; but Theotormon sits
 Upon the margin'd ocean conversing with shadows dire.
 The Daughters of Albion hear her woes, and echo back her sighs.
 "Arise you little glancing wings, and sing your infant joy!
 Arise and drink your bliss, for every thing that lives is holy!"

This Oothoon's message--hope from the one who was oppressed, raped, chained, humiliated and attacked by birds. Christlike, perhaps? She sees all things as holy. She has moved from innocence through experience to a new position of seeing eternity in the present and heaven on earth.

Assignment #1

This is the second of your weekly four paragraph essays. Each paragraph must include a quotation from one of the texts under consideration. Use MLA style citation. Consult the "How to Cite Literature" directions in the home page. No need for a Works Cited as all texts come from the Norton Anthology. Do not use outside sources. I will grade these liberally and use them to assess how well you understand the material. No plagiarism.

Innocence and Experience are not as clear cut categories as we might believe. Innocence is not clearly good and Experience not clearly bad. For this essay you are to write four paragraphs in which you discuss what characterizes each state. Look for qualities and images for Innocence and for experience. Use a pair of companion poems from Innocence and Experience like, The Divine Image/The Human Abstract, The Lamb/The Tyger, Holy Thursday/Holy Thursday, Nurse's Song/Nurse's Song, Introduction/Introduction, The Echoing Green/Earth's Answer. Quote two passages from each poem. In the first paragraph summarize your findings. At the end of the chapter I'll append a worksheet my ground class does to give you an idea on how to gather your quotes.

Paragraph1

Tell what characterizes Innocence and Experience for Blake and provide the first example using a passage from an Innocence poem.

Paragraph2

Provide a second example using a passage from that same Innocence poem.

Paragraph3

Provide an example of what characterizes Experience by citing a passage from the companion Experience poem.

Paragraph 4

Provide a second example of the characteristics of Experience by citing a second passage from the Experience poem. This last paragraph also ought to include a sentence or two about how we progress beyond these two states.

A Good Essay:

1. Properly cites the texts;
2. Illustrates Innocence accurately;
3. Illustrates Experience accurately;
4. Provides a way to move beyond these contrary states.

Assignment #2 Application

Find a proverb that you find useful or insightful and explain how it has been shown to be true in your own life or in your observation of culture. Quote the proverb and discuss how it applies in the world as you know it. One paragraph of at least five sentences:

Quote the proverb.

Tell why you think it's true.

Give an example.

You can write more if you want. Here's my contribution:

Blake's Proverbs of Hell are thought provoking and many of them seem true to me. For backpackers, water is the first concern, especially in the desert. When I'm in the desert and I see standing water, I always think of Blake's, "expect poison from standing water." Chemicals and amoebas and other nasty creatures in water that doesn't move. People who are afraid to change restrict energy, and sometimes try to restrict it in others. But I also remember Bromion; he's energetic and oppresses those who are afraid to change. I find it helpful to keep moving like water. Old wine, Blake says, new water. Water flows in currents.

A Good Application

1. Quotes a proverb;
2. Tell why it seems to be true;
3. Provides an example from living.

Blake

1.2

Write the characteristics of each stage based on the paired poems.

Innocence

Experience

**The Divine Image/The
Human Abstract**

The Chimney Sweeper

The Lamb/The Tyger

Holy Thursday

Nurse's Song

What generalizations can you make about what, for Blake, characterizes each of these stages? Is one better than the other? What is the point of occupying either stage?

Worksheets

You must be able to answer these questions from reading the texts and my commentary. You may want to print these questions and answer them as you read. They will guide your reading and organize your notes. Your weekly quiz will be 10 of these questions.

1. What are the five foundational principles of Romanticism?
2. Draw the epistemological scheme we develop.
3. What happens the more nature we perceive?
4. What is imagination's relationship to ethos and compassion?

Preface to Lyrical Ballads

5. What is the purpose of Wordsworth's experiment?
6. What is the principle object of the poems Wordsworth writes?
7. Why does Wordsworth choose subjects from rural life?
8. What is all good poetry?
9. What habit should the poet practice before the spontaneous overflow?
10. What is Wordsworth's critique of his society?
11. In what way is that critique still (maybe even more) appropriate?
12. Why should the poet not use personification?
13. What kind of language should the poet use?
14. What is a poet?
15. What is one of the ultimate goals of the poet?
16. What moral feeling is related to pleasure?
17. What kind of "man" is a poet?
18. What is the origin of poetry?
19. What does this really mean?

Tintern Abbey

lines 1-8

20. Where is the poet? What does he sense? Where do his train of thoughts lead to?

9-22

21. What is the season? What does he see? What does the scene look like?

23-35

22. How do these forms function when he's away from nature? What part of the self do they function on?

35-46

23. What else do these forms do to the self? What happens to the body?

46-57

24. How do these forms relate? What do they lead to? When are these memories most useful?

58-65

25. What happens to the speaker's train of thought? What does he realize about the landscape?

65-75

26. What was he like as a child? How did he act in nature?

75-85

27. What part of the self was most engaged in nature during that time?

85-93

28. What does he learn to experience in nature?

94-103

29. What does he now detect in nature?

103-11

30. List the attributes of nature for the poet.

112-34

31. What is the view of nature for the poet's friend? What can he count on in the future?

Intimations of Immortality

32. In the space below, summarize the essential points of Platonic philosophy.

33. In what way is "The Child the Father of the Man"? Hint: Think Plato.

Be able to explicate all the stanzas of the poem.

The Prelude

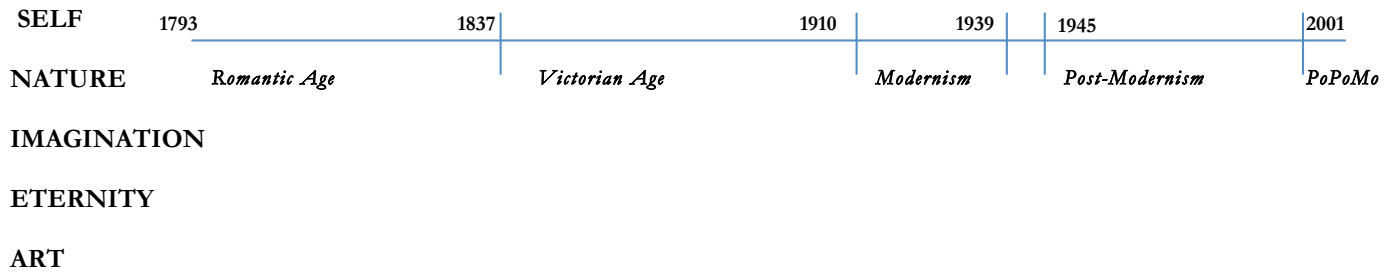
34. What is the unbridgeable gap in the Romantic project?

35. How is Wordsworth's story symptomatic of that gap?
36. What does "the evermore about to be" mean?

III. The Romantic Age: Evermore about to Be

We are going to discuss writers, specifically poets, who are categorized as “Romantic” poets. “Romantic” doesn’t mean “romance” in the sense of tender and sentimental feelings towards significant others. Its name was given to these writers because of its relation to lyrical and narrative poetry in the Medieval Period that had as its subject knights and their gallant adventures. Some of the early Romantic writers used gothic (early Medieval) imagery. But as we’ll discuss, the name comes to mean a set of assumptions about the world, beauty, nature and the self.

Before we discuss the writers of the Romantic Age, let’s recall our graphic for the division of time periods and fill in some of the key concepts for Romanticism.



We’ll take a general look at the origins of Romanticism and then address each of these key terms in turn. Please note, these key terms will provide contexts in which to analyze the periods we will discuss in the future. To understand Romanticism, it’s essential to understand what The Enlightenment is. The Enlightenment stands for a set of philosophical principles that began in the 17th century (and continues in some ways today) that privileges reason and rationality over faith and tradition and uses science to explain physical reality. It is a belief that reason, the human rational faculty, can solve problems and “light” the way towards a progressive future. The founders of the United States were products of, and believers in, The Enlightenment.

Taking their cue from German idealists from the late eighteenth century, English Romanticists adopted positions that can be seen as critiques of The Enlightenment.

SELF

It is the individual's "self" that has priority for the Romantic period. The goal is to enlarge the self through an active relationship with nature and beauty. The self grows as the imagination grows. The artist is a person whose self is sensitive to beauty and give expression to the dramatic, eternal forms of beauty.

NATURE

In laissez-faire capitalism, nature is seen as a resource on to be exploited on the way toward economic growth. For the Romantics, nature is a repository for the eternal forms of beauty. Nature is dramatic and can trigger the sublime. Furthermore, nature helps the self expand its imagination and, in doing so, helps a person become more moral and just. We can also see this concentration on the gifts of nature as being in dialectic with the Industrial Revolution which led not only to pollution, but the consolidation of farms. When small holdings were consolidated to take advantage of the economies of scale, small tenant farmers lost their lands and moved to industrial centers, cities, where they found work in factories. Population moved from the rural to the urban.

IMAGINATION

Instead of reason being the most important cognitive function, for the Romantics, the imagination was supreme. The imagination was the means by which we experienced nature and grew our moral sensibility. In addition, the Romantics believed that the imagination was the aspect of the mind that experienced the world (rather than analyzed it). The Romantics valued experience more than cogitation and the imagination is the screen whereupon experience played.

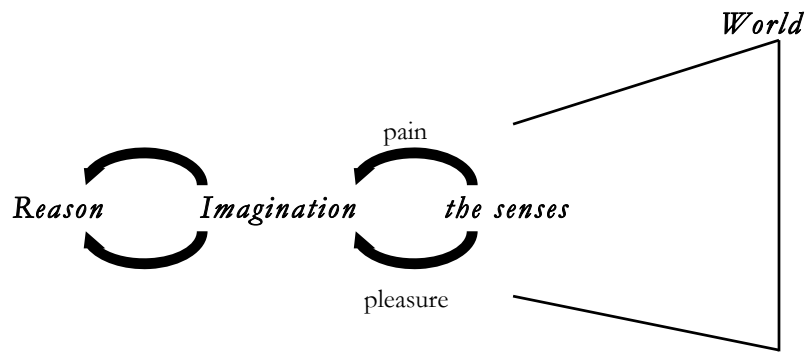
ETERNITY

The Romantics were interested in the eternal forms of beauty that shone through nature and were detected by the self. They valorized immortality and timelessness as opposed to history and contingency.

ART

For the Romantics, art is what engaged all these other principles. It was an expression of the self, fired through the imagination and inspired by nature, that reflected the timelessness of beauty.

In order to organize these principles, I find it helpful to develop an epistemological scheme. Epistemology is the study of knowledge, how we come to know. This graphical scheme is partly from years of brainstorming in class as well as the basic Lockean epistemology. I'll draw it and then provide an explanation.



This is a simple and effective scheme for understanding how we come to knowledge. First off, we take in the external world through our senses. Consider the senses as the gateways through which the world comes into our mind. When we experience something, we gather in sensory data. Data are often stamped with an impression relative to our experience. That stamp usually relates to the pleasure or pain that the sensory impressions leave on us.

These sensory impressions then get projected onto the imagination where they are, essentially, modeled. The imagination then passes the data onto the understanding, or reason, where they are analyzed.

We can use this scheme to illustrate two important aspects of Romanticism. The first is the importance of nature. The romantics saw our interaction with the world as essentially a feedback loop between nature and the imagination. The more nature we perceive, the more our imagination has to take in. Therefore, more nature grows our imagination. The more imagination grows, the more nature it can take in. So in our relationship to nature, the more it deepens, the more we deepen. That is the reason the romantics gravitated toward dramatic mountain and sea

landscapes—the vista, viewing range, is so whole huge. The imagination must grow dramatically to take in the drama!

The second aspect of Romanticism this scheme illustrates is the moral, or ethical, dimension. The more our imagination grows the better we are able to imagine the state of others. This active empathic mode leads to compassion and ethical action.

Now that we have learned of the basic principles of Romanticism, let's look at the poetry and prose of one of its founders and practitioners, William Wordsworth.



William Wordsworth (1770-1850) is the prototypical romantic poet. He was inspired by rambles through the mountains and country, the French Revolution, and the possibility of innovative and consciousness raising poetry.

Although he soured on the aftermath of revolution, for it led to the dissolution of his marriage to a French woman, he sought in his early career to change the way poetry was read and written. His friendship with Samuel Taylor Coleridge gave an important philosophical foundation to their work, and his devotion to his sister Dorothy lasted her lifetime. Near the end of his career, he turned rather conventional and conservative (which certainly annoyed Robert Browning as we shall see), but his poetic legacy has remained influential to this day.

We shall read together an essay of his “Preface to Lyrical Ballads,” and his poem “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey.” I’ll give you some directions for reading “Intimations of Immortality,” and discuss a brief passage from his epic *The Prelude*.

Preface to Lyrical Ballads

For the third edition of his book of poetry Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth had expanded his introduction in which he lays out some key principles for his poetry. Many of his formulations here have become poetic commonplaces. In addition, his diagnosis for the ailments of the Industrial Revolution remains relevant today.

The first Volume of these Poems has already been submitted to general perusal. It was published, as an experiment, which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain, how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted, which a Poet may rationally endeavour to impart.

This sets out the purpose of poetry for Wordsworth—it's an experiment in verse using real language that recalls the experiences people have in the state of excitement.

I had formed no very inaccurate estimate of the probable effect of those Poems: I flattered myself that they who should be pleased with them would read them with more than common pleasure: and, on the other band, I was well aware, that by those who should dislike them they would

be read with more than common dislike. The result has differed from my expectation in this only, that I have pleased a greater number, than I ventured to hope I should please.

For the sake of variety, and from a consciousness of my own weakness, I was induced to request the assistance of a Friend, who furnished me with the Poems of the ANCIENT MARINER, the FOSTER-MOTHER'S TALE; the NIGHTINGALE, and the Poem entitled LOVE. I should not, however, have requested this assistance, had I not believed that the Poems of my Friend would in a great measure have the same tendency as my own, and that, though there would be found a difference, there would be found no discordance in the colours of our style; as our opinions on the subject of poetry do almost entirely coincide.

Several of my Friends are anxious for the success of these Poems from a belief, that, if the views with which they were composed were indeed realized, a class of Poetry would be produced, well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and not unimportant in the multiplicity, and in the quality of its moral relations: and on this account they have advised me to prefix a systematic defence of the theory, upon which the poems were written. But I was unwilling to undertake the task, because I knew that on this occasion the Reader would look coldly upon my arguments, since I might be suspected of having been principally influenced by the selfish and foolish hope of *reasoning* him into an approbation of these particular Poems: and I was still more unwilling to undertake the task, because, adequately to display my opinions, and fully to enforce my arguments, would require a space wholly disproportionate to the nature of a preface. For to treat the subject with the clearness and coherence, of which I believe it susceptible, it would be necessary to give a full account of the present state of the public taste in this country, and to determine how far this taste is healthy or depraved; which, again, could not be determined, without pointing out, in what manner language and the human mind act and re-act on each other and without retracing the revolutions, not of literature alone, but likewise of society itself. I have therefore altogether declined to enter regularly upon this defence; yet I am sensible, that there would be some impropriety in abruptly obtruding upon the Public, without a few words of introduction, Poems so materially different from those, upon which general approbation is at present bestowed.

It is supposed, that by the act of writing in verse an Author makes a formal engagement that he will gratify certain known habits of association; that he not only thus apprizes the Reader that certain classes of ideas and expressions will be found in his book, but that others will be carefully excluded. This exponent or symbol held forth by metrical language must in different eras of literature have excited very different expectations: for example, in the age of Catullus, Terence, and Lucretius and that of Statius or Claudian; and in our own country, in the age of Shakespeare and Beaumont and Fletcher, and that of Donne and Cowley, or Dryden, or Pope. I will not take upon me to determine the exact import of the promise which by the act of writing in verse an Author, in the present day, makes to his Reader; but I am certain, it will appear to many persons that I have not fulfilled the terms of an engagement thus voluntarily contracted. They who have been accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will, no doubt, frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness: they will look round for poetry, and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title. I hope therefore the Reader will not censure me, if I attempt to state what I have proposed to myself to perform; and also, (as far as the limits of a preface will permit) to explain some of the chief reasons which have determined me in the choice of my purpose: that at least he may be spared any unpleasant feeling of disappointment, and that I myself may be protected from the most dishonorable accusation which can be brought against an Author,

namely, that of an indolence which prevents him from endeavouring to ascertain what is his duty, or, when his duty is ascertained, prevents him from performing it.

The principal object, then, which I proposed to myself in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men; and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement.

Once again, Wordsworth is emphasizing the idea of plain language, as opposed to the sense of heightened language that most people associate with poetry. Here Wordsworth also notes that the natural events will be colored by the imagination, given them a heightened emotional impact.

Low and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings; and, from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. The language, too, of these men is adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust) because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions. Accordingly, such a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language, than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets, who think that they are conferring honour upon themselves and their art, in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression, in order to furnish food for fickle tastes, and fickle appetites, of their own creation

This is a critical notion. Wordsworth believed that if you used events from rural life, and the language of rural workers, you would be getting more energy into the language because these people worked in and with nature. In addition, their language is more philosophical because they lived their lives according to the patterns of nature. Note how this kind of lifestyle is dying, because of the Industrial Revolution, during the time that Wordsworth writes. Having worked a night shift in a factory, I have experienced the feeling that day and night are no longer meaningful distinctions. Compare this to the farmer whose whole schedule is dictated by the rhythms of nature.

I cannot, however, be insensible of the present outcry against the triviality and meanness both of thought and language, which some of my contemporaries have occasionally introduced into their metrical compositions; and I acknowledge, that this defect, where it exists, is more dishonorable to the Writer's own character than false refinement or arbitrary innovation, though I should contend at the same time that it is far less pernicious in the sum of its consequences. From such verses the Poems in these volumes will be found distinguished at least by one mark of difference, that each of them has a worthy *purpose*. Not that I mean to say, that I always began to write with a distinct purpose formally conceived; but I believe that my habits of meditation have so formed my feelings, as that my descriptions of such objects as strongly excite those feelings, will be found to carry along

with them a *purpose*. If in this opinion I am mistaken, I can have little right to the name of a Poet. For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: but though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached, were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man, who being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. *This previous sentence is one of the most famous from the essay. He argues that poetry is the spontaneous (inspired) overflow of powerful feelings (emotions). This is generally what most people think poetry is—intense emotions that come rushing forth in a poem. Ignore at your peril the next sentence—this only works for someone who has already thought long and deeply.* For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and, as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other we discover what is really important to men, so, by the repetition and continuance of this act, our feelings will be connected with important subjects, till at length, if we be originally possessed of much sensibility, such habits of mind will be produced, that, by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits, we shall describe objects, and utter sentiments, of such a nature and in such connection with each other, that the understanding of the being to whom we address ourselves, if he be in a healthful state of association, must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, and his affections ameliorated.

I have said that each of these poems has a purpose. I have also informed my Reader what this purpose will be found principally to be: namely to illustrate the manner in which our feelings and ideas are associated in a state of excitement. But, speaking in language somewhat more appropriate, it is to follow the fluxes and refluxes of the mind when agitated by the great and simple affections of our nature. This object I have endeavoured in these short essays to attain by various means; by tracing the maternal passion through many of its more subtle windings, as in the poems of the IDIOT BOY and the MAD MOTHER; by accompanying the last struggles of a human being, at the approach of death, cleaving in solitude to life and society, as in the Poem of the FORSAKEN INDIAN; by shewing, as in the Stanzas entitled WE ARE SEVEN, the perplexity and obscurity which in childhood attend our notion of death, or rather our utter inability to admit that notion; or by displaying the strength of fraternal, or to speak more philosophically, of moral attachment when early associated with the great and beautiful objects of nature, as in THE BROTHERS; or, as in the Incident of SIMON LEE, by placing my Reader in the way of receiving from ordinary moral sensations another and more salutary impression than we are accustomed to receive from them. It has also been part of my general purpose to attempt to sketch characters under the influence of less impassioned feelings, as in the TWO APRIL MORNINGS, THE FOUNTAIN, THE OLD MAN TRAVELLING, THE TWO THIEVES, &c. characters of which the elements are simple, belonging rather to nature than to manners, such as exist now, and will probably always exist, and which from their constitution may be distinctly and profitably contemplated. I will not abuse the indulgence of my Reader by dwelling longer upon this subject; but it is proper that I should mention one other circumstance which distinguishes these Poems from the popular Poetry of the day; it is this, that the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling. My meaning will be rendered perfectly intelligible by referring my Reader to the Poems entitled POOR SUSAN and the CHILDLESS FATHER, particularly to the last Stanza of the latter Poem.

I will not suffer a sense of false modesty to prevent me from asserting, that I point my Reader's attention to this mark of distinction, far less for the sake of these particular Poems than from the general importance of the subject. The subject is indeed important! For the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants; and he must have a

very faint perception of its beauty and dignity who does not know this, and who does not further know, that one being is elevated above another, in proportion as he possesses this capability. It has therefore appeared to me, that to endeavour to produce or enlarge this capability is one of the best services in which, at any period, a Writer can be engaged; but this service, excellent at all times, is especially so at the present day. For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and unfitting it for all voluntary exertion to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies.

This is Wordsworth's critique of the Industrial Revolution and its consequences for the imagination. He notes that the deadened lives of city dwellers crave more and more fantastic entertainment (he is thinking about newspapers and cheap novels). Because of these artificial modes of entertainment, the imagination of the majority of people becomes weaker and weaker. Has this become more and less true in our day? Think of all the people you see walking anywhere staring at a screen of their smartphone while the national world and all its wonders pass unrecognized before their eyes!

To this tendency of life and manners the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves. The invaluable works of our elder writers, I had almost said the works of Shakespeare and Milton, are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse. When I think upon this degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation, I am almost ashamed to have spoken of the feeble effort with which I have endeavoured to counteract it; and, reflecting upon the magnitude of the general evil, I should be oppressed with no dishonorable melancholy, had I not a deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind, and likewise of certain powers in the great and permanent objects that act upon it which are equally inherent and indestructible; and did I not further add to this impression a belief, that the time is approaching when the evil will be systematically opposed, by men of greater powers, and with far more distinguished success.

Having dwelt thus long on the subjects and aim of these Poems, I shall request the Reader's permission to apprise him of a few circumstances relating to their style, in order, among other reasons, that I may not be censured for not having performed what I never attempted. The Reader will find that personifications of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes; and, I hope, are utterly rejected as an ordinary device to elevate the style, and raise it above prose. I have proposed to myself to imitate, and, as far as is possible, to adopt the very language of men; and assuredly such personifications do not make any natural or regular part of that language. They are, indeed, a figure of speech occasionally prompted by passion, and I have made use of them as such; but I have endeavoured utterly to reject them as a mechanical device of style, or as a family language which Writers in metre seem to lay claim to by prescription. I have wished to keep my Reader in the company of flesh and blood, persuaded that by so doing I shall interest him. I am, however, well aware that others who pursue a different track may interest him likewise; I do not interfere with their claim, I only wish to prefer a different claim of my own. There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction; I have taken as much pains to avoid it as others ordinarily take to produce it; this I have done for the reason already alleged, to bring my language near to the language of men, and further, because the pleasure which I have proposed to myself to impart is of a kind very different from that which is supposed by many persons to be the proper object of poetry. I do not know how without being culpably particular I can give my Reader a more exact notion of the style in which I wished these poems to be written than by informing him that I

have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject, consequently, I hope that there is in these Poems little falsehood of description, and that my ideas are expressed in language fitted to their respective importance. Something I must have gained by this practice, as it is friendly to one property of all good poetry, namely, good sense; but it has necessarily cut me off from a large portion of phrases and figures of speech which from father to son have long been regarded as the common inheritance of Poets. I have also thought it expedient to restrict myself still further, having abstained from the use of many expressions, in themselves proper and beautiful, but which have been foolishly repeated by bad Poets, till such feelings of disgust are connected with them as it is scarcely possible by any art of association to overpower.

The poet should avoid personification because personification (giving human characteristics to natural phenomenon) is an example of poetic diction and Wordsworth insists on using language that people use in their everyday life.

If in a Poem there should be found a series of lines, or even a single line, in which the language, though naturally arranged and according to the strict laws of metre, does not differ from that of prose, there is a numerous class of critics, who, when they stumble upon these prosaisms as they call them, imagine that they have made a notable discovery, and exult over the Poet as over a man ignorant of his own profession. Now these men would establish a canon of criticism which the Reader will conclude he must utterly reject, if he wishes to be pleased with these volumes. And it would be a most easy task to prove to him, that not only the language of a large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the metre, in no respect differ from that of good prose, but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose, when prose is well written. *Wordsworth argues that poetry ought to be no different in its expression than prose because it is a plain and spoken language instead of the highfalutin language that most people associate with poetry.*

The truth of this assertion might be demonstrated by innumerable passages from almost all the poetical writings, even of Milton himself. I have not space for much quotation; but, to illustrate the subject in a general manner, I will here adduce a short composition of Gray, who was at the head of those who by their reasonings have attempted to widen the space of separation betwixt Prose and Metrical composition, and was more than any other man curiously elaborate in the structure of his own poetic diction.

In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
And reddening Phoebus lifts his golden fire:
The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
Or chearful fields resume their green attire:
These ears alas! for other notes repine;
A different object do these eyes require;
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire;
Yet Morning smiles the busy race to cheer,

And new-born pleasure brings to happier men;
The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;
To warm their little loves the birds complain.
I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear

And weep the more because I weep in vain.

[Thomas Gray, "Sonnet on the Death of Mr. Richard West" (1742)]

It will easily be perceived that the only part of this Sonnet which is of any value is the lines printed in Italics: it is equally obvious, that, except in the rhyme, and in the use of the single word "fruitless" for fruitlessly, which is so far a defect, the language of these lines does in no respect differ from that of prose.

By the foregoing quotation I have shown that the language of Prose may yet be well adapted to Poetry; and I have previously asserted that a large portion of the language of every good poem can in no respect differ from that of good Prose. I will go further. I do not doubt that it may be safely affirmed, that there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. We are fond of tracing the resemblance between Poetry and Painting, and, accordingly, we call them Sisters: but where shall we find bonds of connection sufficiently strict to typify the affinity betwixt metrical and prose composition? They both speak by and to the same organs; the bodies in which both of them are clothed may be said to be of the same substance, their affections are kindred and almost identical, not necessarily differing even in degree; Poetry sheds no tears "such as Angels weep," but natural and human tears; she can boast of no celestial Ichor that distinguishes her vital juices from those of prose; the same human blood circulates through the veins of them both.

Taking up the subject, then, upon general grounds, I ask what is meant by the word Poet? What is a Poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him? He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them. To these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions, which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events, yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events, than any thing which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves; whence, and from practice, he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, and especially those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement. *A poet is a human speaking to other humans. Simple as that. of course he adds that the poet's soul must be enlarged through experience and sympathy, but he is trying to keep his formulation of poetry as simple as possible.*

But, whatever portion of this faculty we may suppose even the greatest Poet to possess, there cannot be a doubt but that the language which it will suggest to him, must, in liveliness and truth, fall far short of that which is uttered by men in real life, under the actual pressure of those passions, certain shadows of which the Poet thus produces, or feels to be produced, in himself. However exalted a notion we would wish to cherish of the character of a Poet, it is obvious, that, while he describes and imitates passions, his situation is altogether slavish and mechanical, compared with the freedom and power of real and substantial action and suffering. So that it will be the wish of the Poet to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes, nay, for short

spaces of time perhaps, to let himself slip into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs; modifying only the language which is thus suggested to him, by a consideration that he describes for a particular purpose, that of giving pleasure.

The heightened compassion of a poet allows her to reach the feelings of her subjects and take them on when writing—which has as its purpose to give pleasure to the reader who is similarly brought into a state of excitement.

Here, then, he will apply the principle on which I have so much insisted, namely, that of selection; on this he will depend for removing what would otherwise be painful or disgusting in the passion; he will feel that there is no necessity to trick out or to elevate nature: and, the more industriously he applies this principle, the deeper will be his faith that no words, which his fancy or imagination can suggest, will be to be compared with those which are the emanations of reality and truth.

But it may be said by those who do not object to the general spirit of these remarks, that, as it is impossible for the Poet to produce upon all occasions language as exquisitely fitted for the passion as that which the real passion itself suggests, it is proper that he should consider himself as in the situation of a translator, who deems himself justified when he substitutes excellences of another kind for those which are unattainable by him; and endeavours occasionally to surpass his original, in order to make some amends for the general inferiority to which he feels that he must submit. But this would be to encourage idleness and unmanly despair. Further, it is the language of men who speak of what they do not understand; who talk of Poetry as of a matter of amusement and idle pleasure; who will converse with us as gravely about a *taste* for Poetry, as they express it, as if it were a thing as indifferent as a taste for Rope-dancing, or Frontiniac or Sherry. Aristotle, I have been told, hath said, that Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing: it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which gives strength and divinity to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature. The obstacles which stand in the way of the fidelity of the Biographer and Historian, and of their consequent utility, are incalculably greater than those which are to be encountered by the Poet, who has an adequate notion of the dignity of his art. The Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, that of the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human Being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer or a natural philosopher, but as a Man. Except this one restriction, there is no object standing between the Poet and the image of things; between this, and the Biographer and Historian there are a thousand.

Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure be considered as a degradation of the Poet's art. It is far otherwise. It is an acknowledgment of the beauty of the universe, an acknowledgment the more sincere because it is not formal, but indirect; it is a task light and easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love: further, it is a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves. We have no sympathy but what is propagated by pleasure: I would not be misunderstood; but wherever we sympathize with pain it will be found that the sympathy is produced and carried on by subtle combinations with pleasure. We have no knowledge, that is, no general principles drawn from the contemplation of particular facts, but what has been built up by pleasure, and exists in us by pleasure alone. The Man of Science, the Chemist and Mathematician, whatever difficulties and disgusts they may have had to struggle with, know and feel this. However painful may be the objects with which the Anatomist's knowledge is connected, he feels that his knowledge is pleasure; and where he has no pleasure he has no knowledge. What then does the Poet? He considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and re-acting upon each other, so as to produce an

infinite complexity of pain and pleasure; he considers man in his own nature and in his ordinary life as contemplating this with a certain quantity of immediate knowledge, with certain convictions, intuitions, and deductions which by habit become of the nature of intuitions; he considers him as looking upon this complex scene of ideas and sensations, and finding every where objects that immediately excite in him sympathies which, from the necessities of his nature, are accompanied by an overbalance of enjoyment.

To this knowledge which all men carry about with them, and to these sympathies in which without any other discipline than that of our daily life we are fitted to take delight, the Poet principally directs his attention. He considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting qualities of nature. And thus the Poet, prompted by this feeling of pleasure which accompanies him through the whole course of his studies, converses with general nature with affections akin to those, which, through labour and length of time, the Man of Science has raised up in himself, by conversing with those particular parts of nature which are the objects of his studies. The knowledge both of the Poet and the Man of Science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings. The Man of Science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, "that he looks before and after." He is the rock of defence of human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying every where with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. The objects of the Poet's thoughts are every where; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favorite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge--it is as immortal as the heart of man. If the labours of men of Science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the Poet will sleep then no more than at present, but he will be ready to follow the steps of the man of Science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the Science itself. The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist, or Mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the Poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us, and the relations under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective Sciences shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings. If the time should ever come when what is now called Science, thus familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man. It is not, then, to be supposed that any one, who holds that sublime notion of Poetry which I have attempted to convey, will break in upon the sanctity and truth of his pictures by transitory and accidental ornaments, and endeavour to excite admiration of himself by arts, the necessity of which must manifestly depend upon the assumed meanness of his subject.

What I have thus far said applies to Poetry in general; but especially to those parts of composition where the Poet speaks through the mouths of his characters; and upon this point it appears to have such weight that I will conclude, there are few persons, of good sense, who would not allow that the dramatic parts of composition are defective, in proportion as they deviate from the real language of nature, and are coloured by a diction of the Poet's own, either peculiar to him as an individual Poet, or belonging simply to Poets in general, to a body of men who, from the circumstance of their compositions being in metre, it is expected will employ a particular language.

It is not, then, in the dramatic parts of composition that we look for this distinction of language; but still it may be proper and necessary where the Poet speaks to us in his own person and character. To this I answer: by referring my Reader to the description which I have before given of a Poet. Among the qualities which I have enumerated as principally conducting to form a Poet, is implied nothing differing in kind from other men, but only in degree. The sum of what I have there said is, that the Poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced in him in that manner. But these passions and thoughts and feelings are the general passions and thoughts and feelings of men. And with what are they connected? Undoubtedly with our moral sentiments and animal sensations, and with the causes which excite these; with the operations of the elements and the appearances of the visible universe; with storm and sun-shine, with the revolutions of the seasons, with cold and heat, with loss of friends and kindred, with injuries and resentments, gratitude and hope, with fear and sorrow. These, and the like, are the sensations and objects which the Poet describes, as they are the sensations of other men, and the objects which interest them. The Poet thinks and feels in the spirit of the passions of men. How, then, can his language differ in any material degree from that of all other men who feel vividly and see clearly? It might be *proved* that it is impossible. But supposing that this were not the case, the Poet might then be allowed to use a peculiar language, when expressing his feelings for his own gratification, or that of men like himself. But Poets do not write for Poets alone, but for men. Unless therefore we are advocates for that admiration which depends upon ignorance, and that pleasure which arises from hearing what we do not understand, the Poet must descend from this supposed height, and, in order to excite rational sympathy, he must express himself as other men express themselves.

I have said that Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on; but the emotion, of whatever kind and in whatever degree, from various causes is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will upon the whole be in a state of enjoyment.

This is his other immortal phrasing for poetry, "emotions recollected in tranquility." The poet contemplates the emotion until the tranquillity disappears and the imagination is once again excited. This really means that the poem ought to be a transfer point of pleasure between writer and reader.

Now, if Nature be thus cautious in preserving in a state of enjoyment a being thus employed, the Poet ought to profit by the lesson thus held forth to him, and ought especially to take care, that whatever passions he communicates to his Reader, those passions, if his Reader's mind be sound and vigorous, should always be accompanied with an overbalance of pleasure. Now the music of

harmonious metrical language, the sense of difficulty overcome, and the blind association of pleasure which has been previously received from works of rhyme or metre of the same or similar construction, an indistinct perception perpetually renewed of language closely resembling that of real life, and yet, in the circumstance of metre, differing from it so widely, all these imperceptibly make up a complex feeling of delight, which is of the most important use in tempering the painful feeling, which will always be found intermingled with powerful descriptions of the deeper passions. This effect is always produced in pathetic and impassioned poetry; while, in lighter compositions, the ease and gracefulness with which the Poet manages his numbers are themselves confessedly a principal source of the gratification of the Reader. I might perhaps include all which it is *necessary* to say upon this subject by affirming, what few persons will deny, that, of two descriptions, either of passions, manners, or characters, each of them equally well executed, the one in prose and the other in verse, the verse will be read a hundred times where the prose is read once.

I know that nothing would have so effectually contributed to further the end which I have in view as to have shewn of what kind the pleasure is, and how that pleasure is produced, which is confessedly produced by metrical composition essentially different from that which I have here endeavoured to recommend: for the Reader will say that he has been pleased by such composition; and what can I do more for him? The power of any art is limited; and he will suspect, that, if I propose to furnish him with new friends, it is only upon condition of his abandoning his old friends. Besides, as I have said, the Reader is himself conscious of the pleasure which he has received from such composition, composition to which he has peculiarly attached the endearing name of Poetry; and all men feel an habitual gratitude, and something of an honorable bigotry for the objects which have long continued to please them: we not only wish to be pleased, but to be pleased in that particular way in which we have been accustomed to be pleased. There is a host of arguments in these feelings; and I should be the less able to combat them successfully, as I am willing to allow, that, in order entirely to enjoy the Poetry which I am recommending, it would be necessary to give up much of what is ordinarily enjoyed. But, would my limits have permitted me to point out how this pleasure is produced, I might have removed many obstacles, and assisted my Reader in perceiving that the powers of language are not so limited as he may suppose; and that it is possible that poetry may give other enjoyments, of a purer, more lasting, and more exquisite nature. This part of my subject I have not altogether neglected; but it has been less my present aim to prove, that the interest excited by some other kinds of poetry is less vivid, and less worthy of the nobler powers of the mind, than to offer reasons for presuming, that, if the object which I have proposed to myself were adequately attained, a species of poetry would be produced, which is genuine poetry; in its nature well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and likewise important in the multiplicity and quality of its moral relations.

From what has been said, and from a perusal of the Poems, the Reader will be able clearly to perceive the object which I have proposed to myself: he will determine how far I have attained this object; and, what is a much more important question, whether it be worth attaining; and upon the decision of these two questions will rest my claim to the approbation of the public.

Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey

One of my favorite poems, this poem describes the essential role that memory plays in the development of the self and imagination, as well as how the specificity of a place in nature can lead to the ethical growth of the soul.

Five years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear

These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur.—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.

The poem begins with a composition of place in time. Wordsworth senses these particulars which put him in a meditative mood:

The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
‘Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit’s cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone.

Wordsworth lists what he sees, what he hears, and considers the power of the moment’s solitude.

These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man’s eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and ‘mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind
With tranquil restoration:—feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man’s life,
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
Of kindness and of love.

The narrator recalls how the sensory details he experienced never left him in the weary and hurried world. Indeed, he claims that this natural scene has affected him in a moral way--they have made him a better person.

Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

And even greater than the moral lift this experience provides, we enter the philosophical dimension. These moments in nature, most particularly, this place, has brought him a divine mood. His body becomes soul and the mysteries of the cosmos are revealed.

If this

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

His memory of this landscape is an inexhaustible fund of spiritual and moral strength.

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years.

Wordsworth recognizes as well that this moment will provide a fund for inspiration in the future--that spot he stands on. He adds another time dimension, from the future he moves to his far past.

And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, not any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—

In his youth the narrator had a passionate relation to nature. It was animalistic and just engaged his appetite. Its power came from the sensual and nothing else. Compare this to the moral and philosophical dimensions his present relation entails. In the next line he looks nostalgically back but does not resent the passing of time.

That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue.—And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:

A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

Though he has lost his youthful exuberance he has gained a deep philosophical insight, a sublime sense of the spirit that moves actively through all living things and includes the mortality that is the cost of being alive.

Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense

Here we have a summation for the multidimensional way that nature functions for the narrator.

The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

As the poem begins its closing movement, we discover the audience for this ode--there is someone with the narrator. We assume it is Wordsworth's sister Dorothy.

Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:
For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her;

(I think of this line often as I hike--yet another voice in my mind says, "yes until nature hands you your death warrant.")

'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform

The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings.

Again, to the natural world of blessings Wordsworth opposes the human social world which is dreary and deadening. Then follows the peroration in which the narrator looks into his and his sister's future and prophesizes how the imagination will be a repository continually filled by his relation to the natural world.

Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee: and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance—
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence—wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service: rather say
With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

Intimations of Immortality

Wordsworth walks back some of the beliefs he holds in "Lines..." in this poem. The poem can certainly be read through a Platonic lens. Here's a brief lesson on Plato. Plato postulated that our souls exist in heaven before we are born. Heaven is the realm of eternal ideals, organized under What Is Good, What Is True, and What is Beautiful. When we're born our souls migrate to earth and inhabit a body. While in heaven we knew the Good, the True and the Beautiful, we forget once we're in our bodies. Our bodies want to satisfy our appetites and seek pleasure. Our souls want to return to heaven and its knowledge. The teacher helps students recall what they already know by asking questions. Plato believed it is through philosophy that we are able to recall eternal knowledge. Blake was very critical of Plato's ideas because they are anti-body—fulfilling bodily desire is bad (and you know what Blake thought about that). In Wordsworth's poem, nature reminds us of the shortfalls of our humanity because we see that things are not immortal...all living things die. So we question: what is really our purpose? Is it really to live in our body then die forever? The children in the poem represent a closeness to heaven—because they have recently come from there. Wordsworth also critiques our social roles, "conning parts" because those roles don't get us any closer to the ultimate truth of being.

I will not read this poem along with you. Given this preliminary information, see if you can give a decent interpretation of each stanza.

The Prelude

The Prelude was Wordsworth's epic poem and, coincident with the principles of Romanticism, it chronicled "The Growth of the Poet's Mind." Though it was finished long before, Wordsworth stipulated that it not be published until after his death. It narrates his youth, education, travels, experience with the French Revolution, and his dawning awareness of what the demands of poetry are. Even though he was well-removed from his best poetry when he died, The Prelude is his last, best move. It is a monumental work.

I want to highlight one passage for it hints at the title of this chapter, "The Evermore about To Be," as well as gives an idea of the impossibility of the romantic project. Essentially, the union of the imagination, nature, and eternity is ultimately impossible because of the limits of the body and mind. Consciousness alienates us from the natural world as much as it allows us to perceive it. This does not mean we should stop striving; it just means that the way the romantics configured the universe and our role in it leads to what seems to be an unbreachable gulf. Wordsworth's description of crossing the Simplon Pass in the Alps symbolizing this "evermore about to be" cogently.

'Tis not my present purpose to retrace
 That variegated journey step by step;
 A march it was of military speed,
 And earth did change her images and forms 430
 Before us fast as clouds are changed in heaven.
 Day after day, up early and down late,
 From vale to vale, from hill to hill we went,

From province on to province did we pass,
Keen hunters in a chace of fourteen weeks— 435
Eager as birds of prey, or as a ship
Upon the stretch when winds are blowing fair.
Sweet coverts did we cross of pastoral life,
Enticing vallies—greeted them, and left
Too soon, while yet the very flash and gleam 440
Of salutation were not passed away.
Oh, sorrow for the youth who could have seen
Unchastened, unsubdued, unawed, unraised
To patriarchal dignity of mind
And pure simplicity of wish and will, 445
Those sanctified abodes of peaceful man.
My heart leaped up when first I did look down
On that which was first seen of those deep haunts,
A green recess, an aboriginal vale,
Quiet, and lorded over and possessed 450
By naked huts, wood-built, and sown like tents
Or Indian cabins over the fresh lawns
And by the river-side.

That day we first
Beheld the summit of Mount Blanc, and grieved 455
To have a soulless image on the eye
Which had usurped upon a living thought
That never more could be. The wondrous Vale
Of Chamouny did, on the following dawn,
With its dumb cataracts and streams of ice— 460
A motionless array of mighty waves,
Five rivers broad and vast—make rich amends,
And reconciled us to realities.
There small birds warble from the leafy trees,
The eagle soareth in the element, 465
There doth the reaper bind the yellow sheaf,
The maiden spread the haycock in the sun,
While Winter like a tam`ed lion walks,
Descending from the mountain to make sport
Among the cottages by beds of flowers. 470

Whate'er in this wide circuit we beheld
Or heard was fitted to our unripe state
Of intellect and heart. By simple strains
Of feeling, the pure breath of real life, 475
We were not left untouched. With such a book
Before our eyes we could not chuse but read

A frequent lesson of sound tenderness,
The universal reason of mankind,
The truth of young and old. Nor, side by side 480
Pacing, two brother pilgrims, or alone
Each with his humour, could we fail to abound—
Craft this which hath been hinted at before—
In dreams and fictions pensively composed:
Dejection taken up for pleasure's sake, 485
And gilded sympathies, the willow wreath,
Even among those solitudes sublime,
And sober posies of funereal flowers,
Culled from the gardens of the Lady Sorrow,
Did sweeten many a meditative hour. 490

Yet still in me, mingling with these delights,
Was something of stern mood, an under-thirst
Of vigor, never utterly asleep.
Far different dejection once was mine—
A deep and genuine sadness then I felt— 495
The circumstances I will here relate
Even as they were. Upturning with a band
Of travellers, from the Valais we had clomb
Along the road that leads to Italy;
A length of hours, making of these our guides, 500
Did we advance, and, having reached an inn
Among the mountains, we together ate
Our noon's repast, from which the travellers rose
Leaving us at the board. Erelong we followed,
Descending by the beaten road that led 505
Right to a rivulet's edge, and there broke off;
The only track now visible was one
Upon the further side, right opposite,
And up a lofty mountain. This we took,
After a little scruple and short pause, 510
And climbed with eagerness—though not, at length,
Without surprize and some anxiety
On finding that we did not overtake
Our comrades gone before. By fortunate chance,
While every moment now encreased our doubts, 515
A peasant met us, and from him we learned
That to the place which had perplexed us first
We must descend, and there should find the road
Which in the stony channel of the stream
Lay a few steps, and then along its banks— 520
And further, that thenceforward all our course

Was downwards with the current of that stream.
Hard of belief, we questioned him again,
And all the answers which the man returned
To our inquiries, in their sense and substance 525
Translated by the feelings which we had,
Ended in this—that we had crossed the Alps.

In this description, Wordsworth is looking forward to this great sublime moment of crossing the Alps (a mountain pass is a saddle where you can pass over from one side of a mountain range into the other). After separating from his climbing companions, Wordsworth wanders on only to find out later that HE HAD ALREADY CROSSED! The great seismic event that he had prepared for all day had passed unnoticed. That is an allegory of the limit of the romantic endeavor.

Imagination!—lifting up itself
Before the eye and progress of my song
Like an unfathered vapour, here that power, 530
In all the might of its endowments, came
Athwart me. I was lost as in a cloud,
Halted without a struggle to break through,
And now, recovering, to my soul I say
'I recognise thy glory'. In such strength 535
Of usurpation, in such visitings
Of awful promise, when the light of sense
Goes out in flashes that have shewn to us
The invisible world, doth greatness make abode,
There harbours whether we be young or old. 540
Our destiny, our nature, and our home,
Is with infinitude—and only there;
With hope it is, hope that can never die,
Effort, and expectation, and desire,

And something evermore about to be. 545

The mind beneath such banners militant
Thinks not of spoils or trophies, nor of aught
That may attest its prowess, blest in thoughts
That are their own perfection and reward—
Strong in itself, and in the access of joy 550
Which hides in like the overflowing Nile.

Assignment #1

Each paragraph must include a quotation from one of the texts under consideration. Use MLA style citation. Consult the “How to Cite Literature” directions in the home page. No need for a Works Cited as all texts come from the Norton Anthology. Do not use outside sources. I will grade these liberally and use them to assess how well you understand the material. No plagiarism.

Wordsworth has a very explicit program for poetry as he sets out in his Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. For this brief essay you are to analyze his own poetry and show that he does or does not follow his own prescription for poetry. In other words, apply the rules for poetic composition he sets up in the Preface to his own work.

Paragraph1

Briefly introduce the Preface and give, and explain what it means, a quote that describes what Wordsworth expects for poetry.

Paragraph2

Provide a passage from one of Wordsworth’s poems and explains how it follows (or doesn’t) the prescription from the Preface described above.

Paragraph3

Provide a passage from the Preface that describes another “rule” for poetry.

Paragraph 4

Provide a second example of Wordsworth’s poetry that follows (or doesn’t) the prescription for poetry provided in paragraph three. This last paragraph ought to summarize your findings.

A Good Essay:

1. Properly cites the texts;
2. Quotes two passages from The Preface that set out the rules for poetry according to Wordsworth;
3. Quotes two passages from Wordsworth’s poetry that reflect his own prescription (or doesn’t). Illustrates Experience accurately;
4. Provides a summary of your findings.

Assignment #2 Application

Describe a place in nature that provides you some relief, guidance, contemplative space, etc. One paragraph of at least five sentences apiece:

Tell where the place is.

Describe some of its features (give us a picture of it).

Tell us how the place helps you.

You can write more if you want. Here’s my contribution:

The Deer Run Trail at Rock Bridge State Park is long enough and rugged enough that it lets my body overtake my mind so that the rush of physical energy is all I feel. Most of the trail is in the forest up and down ridges until it drops next to Bonne Femme Creek. There are at least seven rugged hills I scramble up. While doing so all the concerns of the day, the weary weight of the world drops away. I find myself full of energy and happy.

A Good Application

1. Tells where the place is;
2. Describes the place;
3. Tells the effect it has on you.

Worksheets

You must be able to answer these questions from reading the texts and my commentary. You may want to print these questions and answer them as you read. They will guide your reading and organize your notes. Your weekly quiz will be 10 of these questions.

1. What are three characteristics of the Primary Imagination?
2. What are three qualities of the Secondary Imagination?
3. Find a passage from "Tintern Abbey" that could refer to the primary imagination.
4. What is one of the main differences between Wordsworth and Coleridge?
5. Define the "willing suspension of disbelief."
6. Describe a situation when you engage in the willing suspension of disbelief.
7. What is an aeolian harp?
8. How is the aeolian harp a model of the primary imagination and us?
9. What is synesthesia?
10. What is the example of synesthesia in the poem?
11. How are we like aeolian harps?
12. How is all of nature like aeolian harps?
13. What does Sara think about Coleridge's musings?
14. Why does she think that way?

Kubla Khan

15. Where is the location of the poem?
16. What aspect of Romanticism is engaged in this first stanza?
17. What makes the chasm Romantic?
18. What makes the chasm supernatural?
19. How does the description reinforce this supernatural aura?
20. The poem switches focus. Where is the focus now?

21. What does the narrator see in his dream?
22. What would happen if he could revive that song?
23. What sign of romantic reverie is included in the description?
24. How would others respond to the poet?
25. How is this an example, an illustration, of the primary imagination?

Rime of the Ancient Mariner

26. What is notable about the grammatical construction of the first line?
27. What sign of romantic reverie is present?

line 15

28. How does the mariner keep the guest's attention?

29. What does the wedding symbolize?

line 25

30. Where is the ship going?

line 50

31. What happens to the weather?

line 60

32. Compare this passage to a similar one in "Kubla Khan." What is Coleridge's larger point?

line 65

33. How is the albatross hailed?

line 80

34. What plagues the mariner?

35. Why did he do it?

line 90

36. At first how did the crew feel about his action?

line 100

37. What happens to the weather?

line 125

38. How does the mariner perceive the sea creatures?

IV. The Willing Suspension of Disbelief



Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) was an early supporter, collaborator, and close friend of William Wordsworth with whom he collaborated on *Lyrical Ballads*. Coleridge suffered greatly in his life. He had a variety of ailments and was prescribed laudanum to treat those ailments. Laudanum is opium dissolved in alcohol and is highly addictive. Whether due to the laudanum or his own inertia, Coleridge was haunted by the guilt of his own torpor, yet still managed to write romantic classics and interpret German idealist philosophy for English audiences. The last part of his life, though, was comfortable. He had gotten his addiction under control and lived in northern London where he held court with the intellectuals of the day.

Primary and Secondary Imagination

Before we look at Coleridge's poetry, we will discuss his theory of imagination, which informs his work and gives us a convenient lens through which to analyze it. Coleridge's theory of poetry can be found in *Biographia Literaria*, which is a hybrid autobiography and book of critical theory. Chapter 13 explains his theory of the imagination:

The IMAGINATION then, I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealise and unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.

FANCY, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; while it is blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE. But equally with the ordinary memory the Fancy must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.

(491)

The primary imagination has three traits: 1. It engages the life of all living things. 2. It is the agent of all human perception. 3. It is a repetition of originary act of creation by God in the human mind. This passage has puzzled many through the years but can be deciphered if we first look at his phrase, “the Infinite ‘I Am’.” The name is an allusion to the name the Israelites identification of their God as Yahweh which can be loosely, and conjecturally defined as “I who is” or “I who causes being to be.” For Coleridge’s definition, the creative power of God continues always through all natural beings and when we are born we have been stirred to life by this creative force which continues to animate us as we live. I liken Coleridge’s idea to Telsa’s invention of delivering energy wirelessly. Consider all living things to be powered by the electricity delivered to us wirelessly by the primary imagination! Another way to visualize the primary imagination is to imagine we are all diversely tuned radios and the primary imagination is the broadcasting radio waves.

The secondary imagination has three traits as well: 1. It echoes the primary in that it sounds like it, but does not have its animating force. 2. It coincides with our will. 3. It dissolves and dissipates in order to synthesize—it attempts to make whole. The second of these traits is perhaps the most important. The primary IS and as long as we live, it animates us. We do not control it. The secondary is under our control (our conscious will). The activity of dissolving (analyzing) in order to synthesize is essentially a creative act, an artistic act. For Coleridge, art was essentially transforming disparate elements into an organic whole.

Coleridge’s vision of the imagination is quintessentially romantic and echoes of it can be found in many of the period’s poems. Can you find a passage in Tintern Abbey that could be a description of the primary imagination?

Differences with Wordsworth

Wordsworth and Coleridge had a falling out of their friendship in 1810. One of the central disagreements with each other concerns poetic language. As you recall, Wordsworth believed that the language of poetry should be that used by people in their normal discourse and it should not differ from prose. Coleridge believed that the language is a means to an end—of pleasure in a harmonious whole. Poetic language ought to be the best part of all human discourse in service of the end Coleridge adduced. The language of Milton, Coleridge argued is better than the language of the cottager.

Another way in which Coleridge and Wordsworth differed is how they achieved their goal of transmitting poetic pleasure. For Wordsworth it was emotion recollected in tranquility and the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. In other words, the writer imparts his or her emotional vitality to the reader through the energy exchange of the poem. Coleridge's belief is that the poem allows this transfer through the author's use of the supernatural. In chapter 14 of *Biographia Literaria* he writes:

During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination. The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moon-light or sun-set diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of nature. The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such, as will be found in every village and its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them, when they present themselves.

In this idea originated the plan of the 'Lyrical Ballads'; in which it was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic, yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that **willing suspension of disbelief** for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth on the other hand was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.

(489)

Coleridge is saying that the supernatural provides the "coloring" of the imagination in his poems and engages the audience in such a way that they do not constantly question the supernatural elements of the poem by saying to themselves, "that can't happen." The suspension of disbelief (or verisimilitude) happens because the audience wills it in service of the art that the creator has arranged. Think of the popularity of any fantasy, from *Stars Wars* to *The Game of Thrones*. You have to accept the existence of a conjectural, imagined world, in order to enjoy the narrative experience.

When the work is effective and you gladly let go of rational analysis, that means the artist has effectively employed her secondary imagination!

We will discuss three of Coleridge's poems to explicate them and point out, as well, how the supernatural and imagination function in them.

The Aeolian Harp

composed at clevedon, somersetshire

My pensive Sara! thy soft cheek reclined
Thus on mine arm, most soothing sweet it is
To sit beside our Cot, our Cot o'ergrown
With white-flowered Jasmin, and the broad-leaved Myrtle,
(Meet emblems they of Innocence and Love!)
And watch the clouds, that late were rich with light,
Slow saddening round, and mark the star of eve
Serenely brilliant (such would Wisdom be)
Shine opposite! How exquisite the scents
Snatched from yon bean-field! and the world *so* hushed!
The stilly murmur of the distant Sea
Tells us of silence.

The poem begins with imagery of the location and the sense impressions—sight, sounds, smells—that are engaged.

And that simplest Lute,
Placed length-ways in the clasping casement, hark!
How by the desultory breeze caressed,
Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover,
It pours such sweet upbraiding, as must needs
Tempt to repeat the wrong! And now, its strings
Boldlier swept, the long sequacious notes
Over delicious surges sink and rise,
Such a soft floating witchery of sound
As twilight Elfin's make, when they at eve
Voyage on gentle gales from Fairy-Land,
Where Melodies round honey-dropping flowers,
Footless and wild, like birds of Paradise,
Nor pause, nor perch, hovering on untamed wing!

A few things of import in this passage. The first, and most important, is the harp itself. The Aeolian Harp is a kind of wind chime where the wind blow across the box and strings move and make melody. Note the sound the harp makes is compared to "witchery" and little elves make an appearance. This is coincident with Coleridge's practice of using the supernatural.

O! the one Life within us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,

A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance everywhere—
Methinks, it should have been impossible
Not to love all things in a world so filled;
Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air
Is Music slumbering on her instrument.

*Here it is! The primary imagination. The wind is like the primary imagination animating all living things in the universe. This is an example of the theological principle of **immanence**. Immanence is an assumption that God is in all living things at all times. God inheres in the natural world in all things. Compare this to **transcendence** in which God is beyond, transcending the natural world. Which do you think is closer to Christian belief? In addition, take note of one of the figures in this passage. A poetic figure is a construction meant to intensify linguistic energy. Metaphors and similes are poetic figure. In this passage there is an example of synesthesia. Synesthesia is when you describe the object of one sense in terms of another sense. To call music “ear candy” is to use the sense of taste to describe something you hear. When Coleridge is describing the power of the primary imagination, he calls it “a light in sound, a sound like power in light.” Sight and sound are mixed together because they share a common source.*

And thus, my Love! as on the midway slope
Of yonder hill I stretch my limbs at noon,
Whilst through my half-closed eyelids I behold
The sunbeams dance, like diamonds, on the main,
And tranquil muse upon tranquility:
Full many a thought uncalled and undetained,
And many idle flitting phantasies,
Traverse my indolent and passive brain,
As wild and various as the random gales
That swell and flutter on this subject Lute!

Coleridge then speculates that we are just like the harps and it is the primary imagination as the breeze that is the power behind our thoughts and fantasies. We are the subject lute.

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic Harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought, as o’er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of each, and God of all?

This is as poetic a definition of immanence that can be given. Beautiful and moving, but not necessarily Christian.

But thy more serious eye a mild reproof
Darts, O beloved Woman! nor such thoughts
Dim and unhallowed dost thou not reject,
And biddest me walk humbly with my God.
Meek Daughter in the family of Christ!

Well hast thou said and holily dispraised
 These shapings of the unregenerate mind;
 Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break
 On vain Philosophy's aye-babbling spring.
 For never guiltless may I speak of him,
 The Incomprehensible! save when with awe
 I praise him, and with Faith that inly *feels*;
 Who with his saving mercies healèd me,
 A sinful and most miserable man,
 Wildered and dark, and gave me to possess
 Peace, and this Cot, and thee, heart-honored Maid!

Uh-oh. His fiancée apparently doesn't like to think of the God as an immanent one. So Coleridge takes the whole poem back. Is it any surprise the marriage didn't last long?

The next poem we'll look at, "Kubla Khan" has an interesting backstory. Coleridge had taken some laudanum and fell asleep. He had a dream that, upon awakening, had given him a poem of two to three hundred lines. He started transcribing the poem when there came visitors to his door. When he finished business with his interlopers, he had forgotten the rest of his inspired lines.

Kubla Khan

Or, a vision in a dream. A Fragment.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
 A stately pleasure-dome decree:
 Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
 Through caverns measureless to man
 Down to a sunless sea.
 So twice five miles of fertile ground
 With walls and towers were girdled round;
 And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
 Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
 And here were forests ancient as the hills,
 Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

Just as in "The Aeolian Harp," we begin with a series of sensory images in which the reader's mind is engaged in forming the imaginative scene the writer conjures.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
 Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
 A savage place! as holy and enchanted
 As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
 By woman wailing for her demon-lover!

When we talk about Byron, we'll discuss the demon lover—the supernatural creature who make females swoon (Twilight anyone?)—the demon lover is at the bottom of a romantic chasm. The chasm is a cleft in the earth that exposes the viewer to dramatic scale of rocks and dizzying heights.

And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.

Why would the earth be panting and breathing? Because everything is alive with the primary imagination.

Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean;
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.

It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

The poem switches focus here in this fascinating juxtaposition of dream vision within a dream vision.

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Can you detect the difference between the primary and secondary imagination as shown in this passage?

Here's how I see it: He has this vision of a maid who sings a song. If he could re-sing that song, he could build the very thing he's singing about in the air, "I would build that dome in air." And the people who were there would know that he were a magic man. One sign of romantic reverie is a pair of eyes that are flashing. He has such eyes. People would be scared of him because he has access to the primary imagination—which is

not supposed to be controllable by his will. So when he says “dome,” a dome appears. Of course, it is only a conditional “Could I...” and as a conditional, being about rather than just plain being, the passage reverts to secondary imagination status. This is an important realization. A poet can only describe, render (with the audience’s suspension of disbelief) a moment of primary imagination. The artist cannot make it happen. The work of art is always a work of the secondary imagination.

The *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is one of Coleridge’s most accessible poem and a fairly entertaining narrative that describes a version of “the wandering Jew, a mariner who inexplicably commits a grave sin against the hidden order of the universe and is condemned to suffer forever because of it. The version in the *Norton* includes marginalia—a technique Coleridge uses to give it a medieval texture, as well as clarify its imagery and themes. The version I reproduce below, for the sake of formatting, will not include the marginalia. The *Norton* also includes line numbers.

Argument

How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancient Marinere came back to his own Country.

PART I

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.

'By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

Note the present tense of the beginning, “it is,” as if the mariner were appearing before our eyes because the poet has access to the primary imagination and the mariner appears as he speaks the poem.

The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din.'

He holds him with his skinny hand,
'There was a ship,' quoth he.
'Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!'
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.

We have the glittering eyes of romantic reverie here—it captures the will of the wedding guest—he cannot help but listen to the mariner’s story.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:

He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

"The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

The Sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
'Till over the mast at noon—'
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

*The ship is traveling south and while in the mariner's story, we constantly hear the noise from the wedding—
which stands as a symbol for the world outside the created one of the mariner.*

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,

As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!
Just like "Kubla Khan," the entire earth seems to be occupied by spirits and souls.

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.
Then hail the albatross in God's name—in a way, dedicating it to God, making it a sacred bird.
Throughout the poem we perceive imagery that connects the bird to Christ.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steered us through!

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariner's hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white Moon-shine.'

'God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
Why look'st thou so?'—With my cross-bow
I shot the ALBATROSS.

Two things of note in this passage. First, the albatross is always mentioned in a stanza with the word "cross" and, second, we do not know why the mariner killed the bird. If you continue to make the connection to Christ, then his motivation may reflect original sin or man's fallen nature.

PART II

The Sun now rose upon the right:

Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariner's hollo!

And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!

His fellow mariners connect the albatross to the weather—a superstition which they reverse in the next stanza.

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

By interpreting the albatross in this way, they seem to be sharing the mariner's guilt.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

No movement, no action, as if the wind of the primary imagination has ceased to blow.

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

One way to perceive the fallen state of mind of the mariner is to notice that he sees the sea creatures as "slimy" beings..

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white.

And some in dreams assurèd were
Of the Spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Ah! well a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.
He wears the albatross, like a cross, as a sign of his bad luck, guilt and shame.

PART III

There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye,

When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

At first it seemed a little speck,

And then it seemed a mist;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.
A spectral ship is making an appearance.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!
For a second, he's a vampire in order to speak.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in.
As they were drinking all.

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

The western wave was all a-flame.
The day was well nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those *her* sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres?

Are those her *ribs* through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a DEATH? and are there two?
Is DEATH that woman's mate?

Her lips were red, *her* looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare LIFE-IN-DEATH was she,
Who thickens man's blood with cold.

The two occupants of the spectral ship are Death and Life-In-Death and they are gambling for the souls of the mariner and the crew. Of course, this being Coleridge, we expect multiple appearances of the supernatural.

The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
"The game is done! I've won! I've won!"
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out;
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

We listened and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip!
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;
From the sails the dew did drip—
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The hornèd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

Life-In-Death wins the mariner and death gets all the crew. They curse him with their eyes before they expire, then in the next stanzas, their immortal souls whizz like arrows shot to their ultimate destination.
The souls did from their bodies fly,—
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my cross-bow!

PART IV

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown.'—
Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

The many men, so beautiful
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

He still sees himself and all living things as slimy, as fallen, reflecting his degraded state and conscience.

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

He tries to pray but cannot—his state is not just physical degradation but spiritual decay.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay dead like a load on my weary eye,

And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.
Why do you think he can't die? t is because Life-In-Death now owns him.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And no where did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—

Her beams bemoaned the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmed water burnt alway
A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

Here is a major change in the poem. He sees the sea creatures as beautiful and is able to pray, spontaneously. When he blesses them unaware, he is freed from his isolation from the divine, but is nowhere near completing his penance.

The self-same moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

PART V

Oh sleep! it is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained.

Mary is his special saint and takes pity on him. Also, note the work of the primary imagination, when he dreams it rains, it does rain and his personal drought is over.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light—almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about!
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge,
And the rain poured down from one black cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side:
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

The loud wind never reached the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
The dead men gave a groan.

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
Yet never a breeze up-blew;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me.

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!"
Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest:

For when it dawned—they dropped their arms,
And clustered round the mast;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,

'Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

Spirits take over the bodies of the crew and they work the boat, including his relatives. They sing and are associated with colors. One of the hallmarks of this poem is its continuous emphasis on spirits inhabiting all aspects of the phenomenal world.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the sky-lark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid: and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

'Then like a pawing horse let go,

She made a sudden bound:

It flung the blood into my head,

And I fell down in a swoond.

The ship moves so fast the mariner passes out. While he's out, we get an explanation of how the ship moves as well as why he has to do penance—the spirit that plagues the ship loved the albatross—who loved the man that killed him. Just like Christ.

How long in that same fit I lay,

I have not to declare;

But ere my living life returned,

I heard and in my soul discerned

Two voices in the air.

'Is it he?' quoth one, 'Is this the man?

By him who died on cross,

With his cruel bow he laid full low

The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself

In the land of mist and snow,

He loved the bird that loved the man

Who shot him with his bow.'

The other was a softer voice,

As soft as honey-dew:

Quoth he, 'The man hath penance done,

And penance more will do.'

PART VI

First Voice

'But tell me, tell me! speak again,

Thy soft response renewing—

What makes that ship drive on so fast?

What is the ocean doing?'

Second Voice

Still as a slave before his lord,

The ocean hath no blast;

His great bright eye most silently

Up to the Moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go;

For she guides him smooth or grim.

See, brother, see! how graciously

She looketh down on him.'

First Voice

'But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind?'

Second Voice

"The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.'

I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather:
'Twas night, calm night, the moon was high;
The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

And now this spell was snapt: once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea,

In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The light-house top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,
And I with sobs did pray—
O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep alway.
When he awakes, he's near his home country.

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon.

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

And the bay was white with silent light,
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.

A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were:
I turned my eyes upon the deck—
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!

A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light;

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart—
No voice; but oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.
Once again, the angelic troupe

.

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer;
My head was turned perforce away
And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast:
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third—I heard his voice:
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.
It is significant that a holy man is there to receive the mariner.

PART VII

This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with mariners
That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
He hath a cushion plump:
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat neared: I heard them talk,
'Why, this is strange, I trow!
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now?'

'Strange, by my faith!' the Hermit said—
'And they answered not our cheer!
The planks looked warped! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along;
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf's young.'

'Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—
(The Pilot made reply)
I am a-feared'—'Push on, push on!'
Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.

Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread:
It reached the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead.

Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
'Ha! ha!' quoth he, 'full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row.'
A comic interlude when the pilot boy freaks out..

And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land!
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

'O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!'
The Hermit crossed his brow.
'Say quick,' quoth he, 'I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou?'

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.

His penance is to walk the earth until the urge to tell his story becomes too great and he finds a person who needs to hear the story, and it works in this case as we learn that the wedding guest is now a wiser man.

What loud uproar bursts from that door!
The wedding-guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are:

And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seemed there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends
And youths and maidens gay!

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn.

Assignment #1

Each paragraph must include a quotation from one of the texts under consideration. Use MLA style citation. Consult the “How to Cite Literature” directions in the home page. No need for a Works Cited as all texts come from the *Norton Anthology*. Do not use outside sources. I will grade these liberally and use them to assess how well you understand the material. No plagiarism.

When we read Coleridge’s work, we should be on the lookout for two elements—the supernatural, and the presence of the primary and secondary imagination at work. Using the poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, write a four paragraph essay in which you discuss these basic elements. Use at least two passages that illustrate the supernatural, and two that illustrate the primary and secondary imagination. Remember, unless it’s being written *about* in an imaginative way, the primary is not under control of the conscious will, but the secondary is. Make sure you not only discuss how your passage illustrates the element, discuss how Coleridge is employing it in the poem. In other words, tell us why he uses the supernatural or imagination.

Paragraph1

Briefly introduce your findings, then quote a passage that is an example of Coleridge’s use of supernatural/primary-secondary imagination. Explain how he employs it.

Paragraph2

Quote a passage that is an example of Coleridge’s use of supernatural/primary-secondary imagination. Explain how he employs it.

Paragraph3

Quote a passage that is an example of Coleridge’s use of supernatural/primary-secondary imagination. Explain how he employs it.

Paragraph 4

Quote a passage that is an example of Coleridge’s use of supernatural/primary-secondary imagination. Explain how he employs it. Summarize your findings.

A Good Essay:

1. Properly cites the texts;
2. Quotes two passages from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* that demonstrates his use of the supernatural and discusses how he uses it;
3. Quotes two passages from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* that demonstrate his use of the primary and secondary imagination and discuss how he uses them;
4. Provides an introduction to, and a summary of, your findings.

Assignment #2 Application

The willing suspension of disbelief allows us as an audience to enjoy works of art that are not based on realistic depictions of present or historical conditions. For this application tell us about one such entertainment that is not realistic, yet allows you fully into that fantastical world. It could be a book, movie, television show or video game.

Tell what the thing is;

Describe some of its fantastical features that are not based on reality;

Tell us why it captivates you.

You can write more if you want. Here's my contribution:

I have never been much for the fantasy genre of fiction. Years ago, when I took my sons to see the second installment of the Lord of the Rings trilogy, I was captivated. The world conjured seemed so lovingly made with such detail, that I immediately bought into it and became invested in the characters and their quest. The next day after I saw the movie, I went to a bookstore and bought the third installment. I didn't want to wait another year before it came out! Fortunately, I was on Christmas break and was able to pull an all-nighter to discover the magnificent ending.

A Good Application

1. Tells what the art is;
2. Describes the fantastical conditions;
3. Tells why it captures your imagination—for that is the point!

Worksheets

You must be able to answer these questions from reading the texts and my commentary. You may want to print these questions and answer them as you read. They will guide your reading and organize your notes. Your weekly quiz will be 10 of these questions.

1. Re-draw our scheme for coming to knowledge
2. How can we use this scheme to discuss the Romantic notion of the sublime?
3. How does the sublime relate to Coleridge and Wordsworth?
4. Hymn to Intellectual Beauty—explicate each stanza.
stanza1
stanza2
stanza3
stanza4
stanza5
stanza6
stanza7

The Defence of Poetry (pages from the *Norton Anthology*)

5. (857) What is the difference between imagination and reason?
6. What is poetry?
7. (858) What is mimesis?
8. What is the poet?
9. Why are the originators of language poets?
10. What else are the poets?
11. (859) How are poets legislators and prophets?
12. What is the poet's relationship to the eternal?
13. How does the poet's material differ from other artists?
14. (860) Is Plato a poet?

15. (861) What is a poem?
16. How does poetry differ from story and history?
17. What must poetry be accompanied by?
18. (861) How is a poet like a nightingale?
19. (862) How does the poem accomplish its goal?
20. How is this related to the moral life?
21. (864) How has society changed? How does this relate to our own life?
22. How does poetry transform all things? How does this relate to the sublime?
23. (865) How does poetry differ from logic? What does this say about the poet?
24. What does literary modernism say about this position?
25. What is another definition for poetry that he offers?
26. (869) What does he say about poets in the summary?
27. Be able to explicate "Alastor."

V. Shelley & the Romantic Sublime



Percy Shelley (1792-1822), perhaps more than any other romantic poet, represents the radical, revolutionary spirit that inhabits the movement. The son of wealthy aristocrats, Shelley was dismissed from Oxford after having published a tract which argued that the existence of God could not be proven by phenomenal reality. He supported the causes of liberty at home and abroad. Much of inheritance was spent on causes and indigent friends. He died by drowning in Italy after his boat was overwhelmed in a storm.

The Sublime

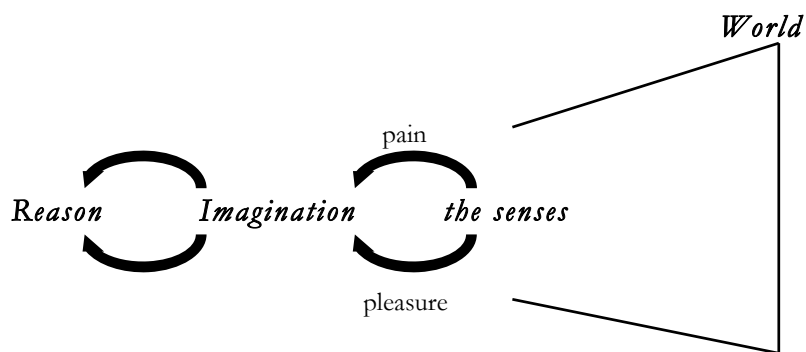
We have been discussing, though not explicitly, the notion of the sublime throughout our study of the romantics. Now we will provide a more technical definition and use that definition to characterize one of the major themes behind Shelley's work—the idea of beauty as eternal, immortal, and ephemeral.

First, let's recall our scheme for coming to knowledge we developed when discussing William Wordsworth.

If you recall, when we experience anything, we take in the external world through our senses. The sensory data then gets projected onto the "screen" of the imagination where it gets tagged with a marker of pleasure or pain. Remember, that marker makes it easier to remember things of great intensity.

Once it is projected onto the imagination, it is passed on to understanding, or reason, to be made sense of.

Now let's consider what happens when we experience something overwhelming. It must be



something sensory that includes an emotional component. The emotions most often are awe, fear, danger, and dread. Did you ever peer out over great heights and

feel a strange compulsion to jump? A dizzying pursuit of beauty that left few shaking and overcome? That is the sublime.

We can use our scheme for knowledge to illustrate what the sublime is. When you experience something sublime, it is too awesome for the imagination to hold it, so what does the imagination do? It passes it to reason. What does reason do with it? It's too immense so it passes it back to the imagination which passes it back to reason which passes it back to the imagination. This is a feedback loop that doesn't stop until we are out of the sublime moment. Some computers show a little wheel spinning when running an operation. If the wheel spins too long, you know it's time to reboot because your computer has just experienced the sublime!

For the romantics, and for literary scholars for centuries before, the sublime is a function of great beauty that breaks through the everydayness of existence that gets stale through repetition and caution. For Wordsworth this is triggered through our experience with nature. For Coleridge it is triggered through the imagination under sway of the supernatural. In romantic paintings you will see dramatic seascapes in storms, and high mountains, and deep chasms of dark rock as incidents of the sublime. "Aweful" and "awesome" share the same root "awe" which has its root in the meaning "to be afraid." The sublime is a fear that people seek because it is triggered by intense beauty that hints at the limits of human consciousness and, therefore, death.

Shelley and the Sublime

Shelley turns the notion of the sublime into a metaphysical concept. We can put it in terms of immanence and transcendence. The sublime is transcendent, but occasionally "touches" everyday reality. It is ephemeral, it leaves as quickly and randomly as it comes, but its presence gives meaning to our lives and enacts our esthetic sense, that is, our sense of the beautiful. It is interesting to note that if something is "pretty," it is not sublime, but "picturesque."

Shelley's notion of the sublime can be found in nearly all of his poetry, but his most direct statement about it can be found in the poem, "Intellectual Beauty." The title itself, "Intellectual Beauty" reminds me of one of the definitions of the sublime—it is a feeling in thought and a thought in feeling. I'll explicate "Intellectual Beauty" stanza by stanza. You should be getting better and better at deciphering the meaning of poetry yourself, so I'll skip a thought or two and let you fill in the meaning.

Intellectual Beauty

i.

The awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats though unseen among us; visiting
This various world with as inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower;
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,
It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance;
Like hues and harmonies of evening,
Like clouds in starlight widely spread,
Like memory of music fled,
Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

We start with the word "awful" and note the power is "unseen" and "inconstant." Shelley then moves through a series of analogies (comparisons) in the natural world. Note the ephemeral nature of these figures, "memory of music fled." The stanza ends by reminding us it is valuable not only for its own sake, but because it is mysterious.

ii.

Spirit of BEAUTY, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form, where art thou gone?
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?
Ask why the sunlight not for ever
Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain-river,
Why aught should fail and fade that once is shown,
Why fear and dream and death and birth
Cast on the daylight of this earth
Such gloom, why man has such a scope
For love and hate, despondency and hope?

The second stanza is a direct address to the spirit of beauty with the poet asking where it goes and why it goes. Without beauty, life seems desolate. The speaker then asks rhetorical questions about other aspects of life that are beautiful and mysterious. The last line hints that somehow human's capacity for "love and hate, etc" demonstrates that we can perceive much more than what is in front of us in everyday reality.

iii.

No voice from some sublimer world hath ever
To sage or poet these responses given:
Therefore the names of Demon, Ghost, and Heaven,
Remain the records of their vain endeavour:
Frail spells whose utter'd charm might not avail to sever,
From all we hear and all we see,

Doubt, chance and mutability.
Thy light alone like mist o'er mountains driven,
Or music by the night-wind sent
Through strings of some still instrument,
Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.

Shelley gives us a historical tour of the sublime here—when we talk about God or ghosts or heaven, we are attempting to name the sublime aspect of beauty. He notes any such project is a “vain endeavor.” When he again compares intellectual beauty to phenomenon in nature, do you recognize our friend the Aeolian harp?

iv.

Love, Hope, and Self-esteem, like clouds depart
And come, for some uncertain moments lent.
Man were immortal and omnipotent,
Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart.
Thou messenger of sympathies,
That wax and wane in lovers' eyes;
Thou, that to human thought art nourishment,
Like darkness to a dying flame!
Depart not as thy shadow came,
Depart not—lest the grave should be,

Like life and fear, a dark reality.

Shelley invests intellectual beauty with a foundational role in existence. It participates in romantic love, in thought, and, at the end of the stanza, indicates that it is the seat of eternity.

v.

While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
I call'd on poisonous names with which our youth is fed;
I was not heard; I saw them not;
When musing deeply on the lot
Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooing
All vital things that wake to bring
News of birds and blossoming,
Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;

I shriek'd, and clasp'd my hands in ecstasy!

Like Wordsworth recalling in “Tintern Abbey” how he interacted with nature as a youth, here Shelley recalls his experiences with magic and séances in order to get in touch with the other realm. One day, while thinking hard in springtime, he had his sublime moment and intellectual beauty touched him.

vi.

I vow'd that I would dedicate my powers
 To thee and thine: have I not kept the vow?
 With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
 I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
 Each from his voiceless grave: they have in vision'd bowers
 Of studious zeal or love's delight
 Outwatch'd with me the envious night:
 They know that never joy illum'd my brow
 Unlink'd with hope that thou wouldst free
 This world from its dark slavery,
 That thou, O awful LOVELINESS,
 Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express.
After his moment, the speaker decides to dedicate his life to intellectual beauty and knows that the moments of meaning in his own life have come from intellectual beauty.

vii.

The day becomes more solemn and serene
 When noon is past; there is a harmony
 In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
 Which through the summer is not heard or seen,
 As if it could not be, as if it had not been!
 Thus let thy power, which like the truth
 Of nature on my passive youth
 Descended, to my onward life supply
 Its calm, to one who worships thee,
 And every form containing thee,
 Whom, SPIRIT fair, thy spells did bind
 To fear himself, and love all human kind.
This last section is an invocation in which he asks intellectual beauty to descend upon him and, at the end, shows its moral worth, "to fear himself, and love all human kind."

A Defence of Poetry

Shelley's prose essay (that's its genre), is an apologia (defense) of the poetry as the supreme human endeavor. His case is made on the superiority of the imagination and the ability of the poet to enact new relations in the world. The reason he needs to make the case for poetry is the rise of the economic philosophy of utilitarianism, which holds that man is a machine who seeks pleasure and every pleasure is the same as any other. Therefore, poetry is no different than pinball or video games. Shelley's claim is radical and far-reaching. As a poet, I can't help but to agree!

ACCORDING to one mode of regarding those two classes of mental action, which are called reason and imagination, the former may be considered as mind contemplating the relations borne by one thought to another, however produced, and the latter, as mind acting upon those thoughts so as to color them with its own light, and composing from them, as from elements, other thoughts, each containing within itself the principle of its own integrity. The one is the poiein, or the principle of synthesis, and has for its objects those

forms which are common to universal nature and existence itself; the other is the logizein, or principle of analysis, and its action regards the relations of things simply as relations; considering thoughts, not in their integral unity, but as the algebraical representations which conduct to certain general results. Reason is the enumeration of qualities already known; imagination is the perception of the value of those qualities, both separately and as a whole. Reason respects the differences, and imagination the similitudes of things. Reason is to imagination as the instrument to the agent, as the body to the spirit, as the shadow to the substance. Many important points here. He says that imagination puts things together; reason takes them apart. Reason can describe known things; imagination can ascertain their value, not as parts, but as part of a whole (which reminds us of Coleridge's idea of the imagination as well). The last is a series of analogies—reason is an instrument, the agent (which handles the instrument) is the imagination. Next, reason is the body; imagination the spirit. Finally, reason is the shadow; imagination the object that casts the shadow.

Poetry, in a general sense, may be defined to be “the expression of the imagination”: and poetry is connate with the origin of man.

Here is his first definition of poetry—it is an expression of the imagination. In addition, it coincides with the origin of humankind (more on this later).

Man is an instrument over which a series of external and internal impressions are driven, like the alternations of an ever-changing wind over an Æolian lyre, which move it by their motion to ever-changing melody.

But there is a principle within the human being, and perhaps within all sentient beings, which acts otherwise than in the lyre, and produces not melody alone, but harmony, by an internal adjustment of the sounds or motions thus excited to the impressions which excite them. It is as if the lyre could accommodate its chords to the motions of that which strikes them, in a determined proportion of sound; even as the musician can accommodate his voice to the sound of the lyre. A child at play by itself will express its delight by its voice and motions; and every inflexion of tone and every gesture will bear exact relation to a corresponding antitype in the pleasurable impressions which awakened it; it will be the reflected image of that impression; and as the lyre trembles and sounds after the wind has died away, so the child seeks, by prolonging in its voice and motions the duration of the effect, to prolong also a consciousness of the cause. In relation to the objects which delight a child these expressions are what poetry is to higher objects.

And then he goes further using the figure of the Aeolian harp—the imagination does not just make melody from the wind that stirs us into being, it makes harmony with those sounds.

The savage (for the savage is to ages what the child is to years) expresses the emotions produced in him by surrounding objects in a similar manner; and language and gesture, together with plastic or pictorial imitation, become the image of the combined effect of those objects, and of his apprehension of them. Man in society, with all his passions and his pleasures, next becomes the object of the passions and pleasures of man; an additional class of emotions produces an augmented treasure of expressions; and language, gesture, and the imitative arts, become at once the representation and the medium, the pencil and the picture, the chisel and the statute, the chord and the harmony. The social sympathies, or those laws from which, as from its elements, society results, begin to develop themselves from the moment that two human beings coexist; the future is contained within the present, as the plant within the seed; and equality, diversity, unity, contrast,

mutual dependence, become the principles alone capable of affording the motives according to which the will of a social being is determined to action, inasmuch as he is social; and constitute pleasure in sensation, virtue in sentiment, beauty in art, truth in reasoning, and love in the intercourse of kind. Hence men, even in the infancy of society, observe a certain order in their words and actions, distinct from that of the objects and the impressions represented by them, all expression being subject to the laws of that from which it proceeds. But let us dismiss those more general considerations which might involve an inquiry into the principles of society itself, and restrict our view to the manner in which the imagination is expressed upon its forms. In the youth of the world, men dance and sing and imitate natural objects, observing in these actions, as in all others, a certain rhythm or order. And, although all men observe a similar, they observe not the same order, in the motions of the dance, in the melody of the song, in the combinations of language, in the series of their imitations of natural objects.

“Mimesis” is imitation; in visual art, it would be painting things as they look to the eye. Look at the work of Abstract Expressionism for art that is non-mimetic.

For there is a certain order or rhythm belonging to each of these classes of mimetic representation, from which the hearer and the spectator receive an intenser and purer pleasure than from any other: the sense of an approximation to this order has been called taste by modern writers. Every man in the infancy of art observes an order which approximates more or less closely to that from which this highest delight results: but the diversity is not sufficiently marked, as that its gradations should be sensible, except in those instances where the predominance of this faculty of approximation to the beautiful (for so we may be permitted to name the relation between this highest pleasure and its cause) is very great.

The order of experience often produces pleasure. When the esthetic order reaches its peak it nears the idea of beauty.

Those in whom it exists in excess are poets, in the most universal sense of the word; and the pleasure resulting from the manner in which they express the influence of society or nature upon their own minds, communicates itself to others, and gathers a sort of reduplication from that community. Their language is vitally metaphorical; that is, it marks the before unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates their apprehension, until the words which represent them, become, through time, signs for portions or classes of thoughts instead of pictures of integral thoughts; and then if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganized, language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse.

Here are two of his more memorable statements. First, if you have an excessive sensitivity to beauty, then you might just be a poet. More specifically, poets, because they use metaphorical language, mark new relations among things of the world. This is a crucial notion. The first one who said, “My love is a red, red rose” probably swayed his lady love. It’s been used so much since, it has lost its power. Come up with a brand new metaphor to describe your love, it may just have a powerful effect. Shelley will go on to say that this finding of new relations applies to all thinkers. So Einstein, who saw the cosmos in ways that no one else did up to that moment would be a poet to Shelley.

These similitudes or relations are finely said by Lord Bacon to be “the same footsteps of nature impressed upon the various subjects of the world” ¹—and he considers the faculty which perceives them as the storehouse of axioms common to all knowledge. In the infancy of society every author is necessarily a poet, because language itself is poetry; and to be a poet is to apprehend the true and the beautiful, in a word, the

good which exists in the relation, subsisting, first between existence and perception, and secondly between perception and expression. Every original language near to its source is in itself the chaos of a cyclic poem: the copiousness of lexicography and the distinctions of grammar are the works of a later age, and are merely the catalogue and the form of the creations of poetry.

Crucial point and a Romantic notion. When society was just forming, the first speakers were poets because they made new relations all the time with language—what used to be just a sound, was now **related** to an object or idea.

But poets, or those who imagine and express this indestructible order, are not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance, and architecture, and statuary, and painting: they are the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society, and the inventors of the arts of life, and the teachers, who draw into a certain propinquity with the beautiful and the true that partial apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world which is called religion. Hence all original religions are allegorical, or susceptible of allegory, and, like Janus, have a double face of false and true. Poets, according to the circumstances of the age and nation in which they appeared, were called, in the earlier epochs of the world, legislators, or prophets: a poet essentially comprises and unites both these characters.

Any original is a poet. The developers of religion, of law, of music and dance—poets all. He claims that poets are both legislators (bind in laws) and prophets (their ideas carry into the future).

For he not only beholds intensely the present as it is, and discovers those laws according to which present things ought to be ordered, but he beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germs of the flower and the fruit of latest time. Not that I assert poets to be prophets in the gross sense of the word, or that they can foretell the form as surely as they foreknow the spirit of events: such is the pretence of superstition, which would make poetry an attribute of prophecy, rather than prophecy an attribute of poetry.

A poet participates in the eternal, the infinite, and the one; as far as relates to his conceptions, time and place and number are not. The grammatical forms which express the moods of time, and the difference of persons, and the distinction of place, are convertible with respect to the highest poetry without injuring it as poetry; and the choruses of Æschylus, and the book of Job, and Dante's "Paradise" would afford, more than any other writings, examples of this fact, if the limits of this essay did not forbid citation.

The idea of the poets stride into the future because they have contact with eternity which carries future time with it.

The creations of sculpture, painting, and music are illustrations still more decisive. Language, color, form, and religious and civil habits of action, are all the instruments and materials of poetry; they may be called poetry by that figure of speech which considers the effect as a synonym of the cause. But poetry in a more restricted sense expresses those arrangements of language, and especially metrical language, which are created by that imperial faculty, whose throne is curtained within the invisible nature of man. And this springs from the nature itself of language, which is a more direct representation of the actions and passions of our internal being, and is susceptible of more various and delicate combinations, than color, form, or motion, and is more plastic and obedient to the control of that faculty of which it is the creation. For language is arbitrarily produced by the imagination, and has relation to thoughts alone; but all other materials, instruments, and The material of poetry is the imagination itself because language is a product of the imagination.

conditions of art have relations among each other, which limit and interpose between conception and expression. The former is as a mirror which reflects, the latter as a cloud which enfeebls, the light of which both are mediums of communication. Hence the fame of sculptors, painters, and musicians, although the

intrinsic powers of the great masters of these arts may yield in no degree to that of those who have employed language as the hieroglyphic of their thoughts, has never equalled that of poets in the restricted sense of the term; as two performers of equal skill will produce unequal effects from a guitar and a harp. The fame of legislators and founders of religions, so long as their institutions last, alone seems to exceed that of poets in the restricted sense; but it can scarcely be a question, whether, if we deduct the celebrity which their flattery of the gross opinions of the vulgar usually conciliates, together with that which belonged to them in their higher character of poets, any excess will remain. We have thus circumscribed the word poetry within the limits of that art which is the most familiar and the most perfect expression of the faculty itself. It is necessary, however, to make the circle still narrower, and to determine the distinction between measured and unmeasured language; for the popular division into prose and verse is inadmissible in accurate philosophy.

Sounds as well as thoughts have relation both between each other and towards that which they represent, and a perception of the order of those relations has always been found connected with a perception of the order of the relations of thoughts. Hence the language of poets has ever affected a certain uniform and harmonious recurrence of sound, without which it were not poetry, and which is scarcely less indispensable to the communication of its influence, than the words themselves, without reference to that peculiar order. Hence the vanity of translation; it were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its color and odor, as seek to transfuse from one language into another the creations of a poet. The plant must spring again from its seed, or it will bear no flower—and this is the burden of the curse of Babel.

An observation of the regular mode of the recurrence of harmony in the language of poetical minds, together with its relation to music, produced metre, or a certain system of traditional forms of harmony and language. Yet it is by no means essential that a poet should accommodate his language to this traditional form, so that the harmony, which is its spirit, be observed. The practice is indeed convenient and popular, and to be preferred, especially in such composition as includes much action: but every great poet must inevitably innovate upon the example of his predecessors in the exact structure of his peculiar versification. The distinction between poets and prose writers is a vulgar error. The distinction between philosophers and poets has been anticipated. Plato was essentially a poet—the truth and splendor of his imagery, and the melody of his language, are the most intense that it is possible to conceive. He rejected the measure of the epic, dramatic, and lyrical forms, because he sought to kindle a harmony in thoughts divested of shape and action, and he forebore to invent any regular plan of rhythm which would include, under determinate forms, the varied pauses of his style. Cicero sought to imitate the cadence of his periods, but with little success. Lord Bacon was a poet. His language has a sweet and majestic rhythm, which satisfies the sense, no less than the almost superhuman wisdom of his philosophy satisfies the intellect; it is a strain which distends, and then bursts the circumference of the reader's mind, and pours itself forth together with it into the universal element with which it has perpetual sympathy.

Poets always have to answer the charge of Plato that poetry corrupts (made in his vision of the ideal society *The Republic*). His response to Plato is that Plato can't mean that because Plato was himself a poet for the reasons he gives above.

All the authors of revolutions in opinion are not only necessarily poets as they are inventors, nor even as their words unveil the permanent analogy of things by images which participate in the life of truth; but as their periods are harmonious and rhythmical, and contain in themselves the elements of verse; being the echo of the eternal music. Nor are those supreme poets, who have employed traditional forms of rhythm on account

of the form and action of their subjects, less capable of perceiving and teaching the truth of things, than those who have omitted that form. Shakespeare, Dante, and Milton (to confine ourselves to modern writers) are philosophers of the very loftiest power.

A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth.

Another very simple, grand statement of definition of what poetry is.

There is this difference between a story and a poem, that a story is a catalogue of detached facts, which have no other connection than time, place, circumstance, cause and effect; the other is the creation of actions according to the unchangeable forms of human nature, as existing in the mind of the Creator, which is itself the image of all other minds.

He compares poetry to fiction and because fiction is timebound and poetry is eternal, poetry wins. Same argument with history.

The one is partial, and applies only to a definite period of time, and a certain combination of events which can never again recur; the other is universal, and contains within itself the germ of a relation to whatever motives or actions have place in the possible varieties of human nature. Time, which destroys the beauty and the use of the story of particular facts, stripped of the poetry which should invest them, augments that of poetry, and forever develops new and wonderful applications of the eternal truth which it contains. Hence epitomes have been called the moths of just history; they eat out the poetry of it. A story of particular facts is as a mirror which obscures and distorts that which should be beautiful; poetry is a mirror which makes beautiful that which is distorted. The parts of a composition may be poetical, without the composition as a whole being a poem. A single sentence may be considered as a whole, though it may be found in the midst of a series of unassimilated portions; a single word even may be a spark of inextinguishable thought. And thus all the great historians, Herodotus, Plutarch, Livy, were poets; and although the plan of these writers, especially that of Livy, restrained them from developing this faculty in its highest degree, they made copious and ample amends for their subjection, by filling all the interstices of their subjects with living images.

Having determined what is poetry, and who are poets, let us proceed to estimate its effects upon society. Poetry is ever accompanied with pleasure: all spirits on which it falls open themselves to receive the wisdom which is mingled with its delight.

Another foundational principle that can be found in Wordsworth and Coleridge, and indeed all poets of this period—the poem must be accompanied by pleasure.

In the infancy of the world, neither poets themselves nor their auditors are fully aware of the excellence of poetry: for it acts in a divine and unapprehended manner, beyond and above consciousness; and it is reserved for future generations to contemplate and measure the mighty cause and effect in all the strength and splendor of their union. Even in modern times, no living poet ever arrived at the fulness of his fame; the jury which sits in judgment upon a poet, belonging as he does to all time, must be composed of his peers: it must be impanelled by Time from the selectest of the wise of many generations.

Time will judge poets because the power of the poem stretches into the future.

A poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened, yet know not whence or why.

The poet is like a nightingale because the nightingale sings at night (according to Shelley) to please itself, and people listen with pleasure to the nightingale's song even though it sings from afar—here Shelley means both spatially and temporally.

The poems of Homer and his contemporaries were the delight of infant Greece; they were the elements of that social system which is the column upon which all succeeding civilization has reposed. Homer embodied the ideal perfection of his age in human character; nor can we doubt that those who read his verses were awakened to an ambition of becoming like to Achilles, Hector, and Ulysses: the truth and beauty of friendship, patriotism, and persevering devotion to an object, were unveiled to the depths in these immortal creations: the sentiments of the auditors must have been refined and enlarged by a sympathy with such great and lovely impersonations, until from admiring they imitated, and from imitation they identified themselves with the objects of their admiration. Nor let it be objected that these characters are remote from moral perfection, and that they can by no means be considered as edifying patterns for general imitation. Every epoch, under names more or less specious, has deified its peculiar errors; Revenge is the naked idol of the worship of a semi-barbarous age: and Self-deceit is the veiled image of unknown evil, before which luxury and satiety lie prostrate. But a poet considers the vices of his contemporaries as the temporary dress in which his creations must be arrayed, and which cover without concealing the eternal proportions of their beauty. An epic or dramatic personage is understood to wear them around his soul, as he may the ancient armor or the modern uniform around his body; whilst it is easy to conceive a dress more graceful than either. The beauty of the internal nature cannot be so far concealed by its accidental vesture, but that the spirit of its form shall communicate itself to the very disguise, and indicate the shape it hides from the manner in which it is worn. A majestic form and graceful motions will express themselves through the most barbarous and tasteless costume. Few poets of the highest class have chosen to exhibit the beauty of their conceptions in its naked truth and splendor; and it is doubtful whether the alloy of costume, habit, etc., be not necessary to temper this planetary music for mortal ears.

The whole objection, however, of the immorality of poetry rests upon a misconception of the manner in which poetry acts to produce the moral improvement of man. Ethical science arranges the elements which poetry has created, and propounds schemes and proposes examples of civil and domestic life: nor is it for want of admirable doctrines that men hate, and despise, and censure, and deceive, and subjugate one another. But poetry acts in another and diviner manner. It awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought. Poetry lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar objects be as if they were not familiar; it reproduces all that it represents, and the impersonations clothed in its Elysian light stand thenceforward in the minds of those who have once contemplated them, as memorials of that gentle and exalted content which extends itself over all thoughts and actions with which it coexists.

Here is a passage which reminds me of the characteristics of the sublime we discussed in explicating “Intellectual Beauty.”

The great secret of morals is love; or a going out of our nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasure of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause.

I hope you recognize this argument by now—because poetry is an extension of the imagination and the imagination is the instrument of moral good, poetry helps us become more moral. Remember, the more we can imagine what others go through, the more sensitive we will be to their plight.

(Except sociopaths take advantage of this knowledge.)

Poetry enlarges the circumference of the imagination by replenishing it with thoughts of ever new delight, which have the power of attracting and assimilating to their own nature all other thoughts, and which form new intervals and interstices whose void forever craves fresh food. Poetry strengthens the faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man, in the same manner as exercise strengthens a limb. A poet therefore would do ill to embody his own conceptions of right and wrong, which are usually those of his place and time, in his poetical creations, which participate in neither. By this assumption of the inferior office of interpreting the effect, in which perhaps after all he might acquit himself but imperfectly, he would resign a glory in a participation in the cause. There was little danger that Homer, or any of the eternal poets, should have so far misunderstood themselves as to have abdicated this throne of their widest dominion. Those in whom the poetical faculty, though great, is less intense, as Euripides, Lucan, Tasso, Spenser, have frequently affected a moral aim, and the effect of their poetry is diminished in exact proportion to the degree in which they compel us to advert to this purpose. Homer and the cyclic poets were followed at a certain interval by the dramatic and lyrical poets of Athens, who flourished contemporaneously with all that is most perfect in the kindred expressions of the poetical faculty; architecture, painting, music, the dance, sculpture, philosophy, and, we may add, the forms of civil life. For although the scheme of Athenian society was deformed by many imperfections which the poetry existing in chivalry and Christianity has erased from the habits and institutions of modern Europe; yet never at any other period has so much energy, beauty, and virtue been developed; never was blind strength and stubborn form so disciplined and rendered subject to the will of man, or that will less repugnant to the dictates of the beautiful and the true, as during the century which preceded the death of Socrates. Of no other epoch in the history of our species have we records and fragments stamped so visibly with the image of the divinity in man. But it is poetry alone, in form, in action, or in language, which has rendered this epoch memorable above all others, and the store-house of examples to everlasting time. For written poetry existed at that epoch simultaneously with the other arts, and it is an idle inquiry to demand which gave and which received the light, which all, as from a common focus, have scattered over the darkest periods of succeeding time. We know no more of cause and effect than a constant conjunction of events: poetry is ever found to coexist with whatever other arts contribute to the happiness and perfection of man. I appeal to what has already been established to distinguish between the cause and the effect.

It was at the period here adverted to that the drama had its birth; and however a succeeding writer may have equalled or surpassed those few great specimens of the Athenian drama which have been preserved to us, it is indisputable that the art itself never was understood or practised according to the true philosophy of it, as at Athens. For the Athenians employed language, action, music, painting, the dance, and religious institutions, to produce a common effect in the representation of the highest idealism of passion and of power; each division in the art was made perfect in its kind of artists of the most consummate skill, and was disciplined into a beautiful proportion and unity one towards the other. On the modern stage a few only of the elements capable of expressing the image of the poet's conception are employed at once. We have tragedy without music and dancing; and music and dancing without the highest impersonations of which they are the fit accompaniment, and both without religion and solemnity. Religious institution has indeed been usually banished from the stage. Our system of divesting the actor's face of a mask, on which the many expressions appropriated to his dramatic character might be moulded into one permanent and unchanging expression, is favorable only to a partial and inharmonious effect; it is fit for nothing but a monologue, where all the attention may be directed to some great master of ideal mimicry. The modern practice of blending comedy with tragedy, though liable to great abuse in point of practice, is undoubtedly an extension of the dramatic circle; but the comedy should be as in "King Lear," universal, ideal, and sublime. It is perhaps the

intervention of this principle which determines the balance in favor of “King Lear” against the “Oedipus Tyrannus” or the “Agamemnon,” or, if you will, the trilogies with which they are connected; unless the intense power of the choral poetry, especially that of the latter, should be considered as restoring the equilibrium. “King Lear,” if it can sustain this comparison, may be judged to be the most perfect specimen of the dramatic art existing in the world; in spite of the narrow conditions to which the poet was subjected by the ignorance of the philosophy of the drama which has prevailed in modern Europe. Calderon, in his religious autos, has attempted to fulfil some of the high conditions of dramatic representation neglected by Shakespeare; such as the establishing a relation between the drama and religion, and the accommodating them to music and dancing; but he omits the observation of conditions still more important, and more is lost than gained by the substitution of the rigidly defined and ever-repeated idealisms of a distorted superstition for the living impersonations of the truth of human passion.

But I digress. The connection of scenic exhibitions with the improvement or corruption of the manners of men has been universally recognized; in other words, the presence or absence of poetry in its most perfect and universal form has been found to be connected with good and evil in conduct or habit. The corruption which has been imputed to the drama as an effect, begins, when the poetry employed in its constitution ends: I appeal to the history of manners whether the periods of the growth of the one and the decline of the other have not corresponded with an exactness equal to any example of moral cause and effect. 16 The drama at Athens, or wheresoever else it may have approached to its perfection, ever coexisted with the moral and intellectual greatness of the age. The tragedies of the Athenian poets are as mirrors in which the spectator beholds himself, under a thin disguise of circumstance, stripped of all but that ideal perfection and energy which everyone feels to be the internal type of all that he loves, admires, and would become. The imagination is enlarged by a sympathy with pains and passions so mighty, that they distend in their conception the capacity of that by which they are conceived; the good affections are strengthened by pity, indignation, terror, and sorrow; and an exalted calm is prolonged from the satiety of this high exercise of them into the tumult of familiar life: even crime is disarmed of half its horror and all its contagion by being represented as the fatal consequence of the unfathomable agencies of nature; error is thus divested of its wilfulness; men can no longer cherish it as the creation of their choice. In a drama of the highest order there is little food for censure or hatred; it teaches rather self-knowledge and self-respect. Neither the eye nor the mind can see itself, unless reflected upon that which it resembles. The drama, so long as it continues to express poetry, is as a prismatic and many-sided mirror, which collects the brightest rays of human nature and divides and reproduces them from the simplicity of these elementary forms, and touches them with majesty and beauty, and multiplies all that it reflects, and endows it with the power of propagating its like wherever it may fall. 17 But in periods of the decay of social life, the drama sympathizes with that decay. Tragedy becomes a cold imitation of the form of the great masterpieces of antiquity, divested of all harmonious accompaniment of the kindred arts; and often the very form misunderstood, or a weak attempt to teach certain doctrines, which the writer considers as moral truths; and which are usually no more than specious flatteries of some gross vice or weakness, with which the author, in common with his auditors, are infected. Hence what has been called the classical and domestic drama. Addison’s “Cato” is a specimen of the one; and would it were not superfluous to cite examples of the other! To such purposes poetry cannot be made subservient. Poetry is a sword of lightning, ever unsheathed, which consumes the scabbard that would contain it. And thus we observe that all dramatic writings of this nature are unimaginative in a singular degree; they affect sentiment and passion, which, divested of imagination, are other names for caprice and appetite. The period in our own history of the grossest degradation of the drama is the reign of Charles II, when all forms in which poetry had been accustomed to be expressed became hymns to the triumph of kingly power over liberty and virtue. Milton

stood alone illuminating an age unworthy of him. At such periods the calculating principle pervades all the forms of dramatic exhibition, and poetry ceases to be expressed upon them. Comedy loses its ideal universality: wit succeeds to humor; we laugh from self-complacency and triumph, instead of pleasure; malignity, sarcasm, and contempt succeed to sympathetic merriment; we hardly laugh, but we smile. Obscenity, which is ever blasphemy against the divine beauty in life, becomes, from the very veil which it assumes, more active if less disgusting: it is a monster for which the corruption of society forever brings forth new food, which it devours in secret. The drama being that form under which a greater number of modes of expression of poetry are susceptible of being combined than any other, the connection of poetry and social good is more observable in the drama than in whatever other form. And it is indisputable that the highest perfection of human society has ever corresponded with the highest dramatic excellence; and that the corruption or the extinction of the drama in a nation where it has once flourished is a mark of a corruption of manners, and an extinction of the energies which sustain the soul of social life. But, as Machiavelli says of political institutions, that life may be preserved and renewed, if men should arise capable of bringing back the drama to its principles. And this is true with respect to poetry in its most extended sense: all language, institution, and form require not only to be produced but to be sustained: the office and character of a poet participate in the divine nature as regards providence, no less than as regards creation.

Civil war, the spoils of Asia, and the fatal predominance first of the Macedonian, and then of the Roman arms, were so many symbols of the extinction or suspension of the creative faculty in Greece. The bucolic writers, who found patronage under the lettered tyrants of Sicily and Egypt, were the latest representatives of its most glorious reign. Their poetry is intensely melodious; like the odor of the tuberose, it overcomes and sickens the spirit with excess of sweetness; whilst the poetry of the preceding age was as a meadow-gale of June, which mingles the fragrance of all the flowers of the field, and adds a quickening and harmonizing spirit of its own which endows the sense with a power of sustaining its extreme delight. The bucolic and erotic delicacy in written poetry is correlative with that softness in statuary, music, and the kindred arts, and even in manners and institutions, which distinguished the epoch to which I now refer. Nor is it the poetical faculty itself, or any misapplication of it, to which this want of harmony is to be imputed. An equal sensibility to the influence of the senses and the affections is to be found in the writings of Homer and Sophocles: the former, especially, has clothed sensual and pathetic images with irresistible attractions. Their superiority over these succeeding writers consists in the presence of those thoughts which belong to the inner faculties of our nature, not in the absence of those which are connected with the external; their incomparable perfection consists in a harmony of the union of all. It is not what the erotic poets have, but what they have not, in which their imperfection consists. It is not inasmuch as they were poets, but inasmuch as they were not poets, that they can be considered with any plausibility as connected with the corruption of their age. Had that corruption availed so as to extinguish in them the sensibility to pleasure, passion, and natural scenery, which is imputed to them as an imperfection, the last triumph of evil would have been achieved. For the end of social corruption is to destroy all sensibility to pleasure; and, therefore, it is corruption. It begins at the imagination and the intellect as at the core, and distributes itself thence as a paralyzing venom, through the affections into the very appetites, until all become a torpid mass in which hardly sense survives. At the approach of such a period, poetry ever addresses itself to those faculties which are the last to be destroyed, and its voice is heard, like the footsteps of Astræa, departing from the world. Poetry ever communicates all the pleasure which men are capable of receiving: it is ever still the light of life; the source of whatever of beautiful or generous or true can have place in an evil time. It will readily be confessed that those among the luxurious citizens of Syracuse and Alexandria, who were delighted with the poems of Theocritus, were less cold, cruel, and sensual than the remnant of their tribe. But corruption must utterly have destroyed the fabric

of human society before poetry can ever cease. The sacred links of that chain have never been entirely disjoined, which descending through the minds of many men is attached to those great minds, whence as from a magnet the invisible effluence is sent forth, which at once connects, animates, and sustains the life of all. It is the faculty which contains within itself the seeds at once of its own and of social renovation. And let us not circumscribe the effects of the bucolic and erotic poetry within the limits of the sensibility of those to whom it was addressed. They may have perceived the beauty of those immortal compositions, simply as fragments and isolated portions: those who are more finely organized, or born in a happier age, may recognize them as episodes to that great poem, which all poets, like the co-operating thoughts of one great mind, have built up since the beginning of the world.

The same revolutions within a narrower sphere had place in ancient Rome; but the actions and forms of its social life never seem to have been perfectly saturated with the poetical element. The Romans appear to have considered the Greeks as the selectest treasures of the selectest forms of manners and of nature, and to have abstained from creating in measured language, sculpture, music, or architecture, anything which might bear a particular relation to their own condition, whilst it should bear a general one to the universal constitution of the world. But we judge from partial evidence, and we judge perhaps partially. Ennius, Varro, Pacuvius, and Accius, all great poets, have been lost. Lucretius is in the highest, and Vergil in a very high sense, a creator. The chosen delicacy of expressions of the latter are as a mist of light which conceal from us the intense and exceeding truth of his conceptions of nature. Livy is instinct with poetry. Yet Horace, Catullus, Ovid, and generally the other great writers of the Vergilian age, saw man and nature in the mirror of Greece. The institutions also, and the religion of Rome, were less poetical than those of Greece, as the shadow is less vivid than the substance. Hence poetry in Rome seemed to follow, rather than accompany, the perfection of political and domestic society. The true poetry of Rome lived in its institutions; for whatever of beautiful, true, and majestic, they contained, could have sprung only from the faculty which creates the order in which they consist. The life of Camillus, the death of Regulus; the expectation of the senators, in their godlike state, of the victorious Gauls; the refusal of the republic to make peace with Hannibal, after the battle of Cannæ, were not the consequences of a refined calculation of the probable personal advantage to result from such a rhythm and order in the shows of life, to those who were at once the poets and the actors of these immortal dramas. The imagination beholding the beauty of this order, created it out of itself according to its own idea; the consequence was empire, and the reward ever-living fame. These things are not the less poetry, quia carent vate sacro. They are the episodes of that cyclic poem written by Time upon the memories of men. The Past, like an inspired rhapsodist, fills the theatre of everlasting generations with their harmony. At length the ancient system of religion and manners had fulfilled the circle of its revolutions. And the world would have fallen into utter anarchy and darkness, but that there were found poets among the authors of the Christian and chivalric systems of manners and religion, who created forms of opinion and action never before conceived; which, copied into the imaginations of men, became as generals to the bewildered armies of their thoughts. It is foreign to the present purpose to touch upon the evil produced by these systems: except that we protest, on the ground of the principles already established, that no portion of it can be attributed to the poetry they contain.

It is probable that the poetry of Moses, Job, David, Solomon, and Isaiah had produced a great effect upon the mind of Jesus and his disciples. The scattered fragments preserved to us by the biographers of this extraordinary person are all instinct with the most vivid poetry. But his doctrines seem to have been quickly distorted. At a certain period after the prevalence of a system of opinions founded upon those promulgated by him, the three forms into which Plato had distributed the faculties of mind underwent a sort of apotheosis,

and became the object of the worship of the civilized world. Here it is to be confessed that "Light seems to thicken," and

"The crow makes wing to the rocky wood,
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse,
And night's black agents to their preys do rouse."

But mark how beautiful an order has sprung from the dust and blood of this fierce chaos! how the world, as from a resurrection, balancing itself on the golden wings of Knowledge and of Hope, has reassumed its yet unwearied flight into the heaven of time. Listen to the music, unheard by outward ears, which is as a ceaseless and invisible wind, nourishing its everlasting course with strength and swiftness. The poetry in the doctrines of Jesus Christ, and the mythology and institutions of the Celtic conquerors of the Roman Empire, outlived the darkness and the convulsions connected with their growth and victory, and blended themselves in a new fabric of manners and opinion. It is an error to impute the ignorance of the dark ages to the Christian doctrines or the predominance of the Celtic nations. Whatever of evil their agencies may have contained sprang from the extinction of the poetical principle, connected with the progress of despotism and superstition. Men, from causes too intricate to be here discussed, had become insensible and selfish: their own will had become feeble, and yet they were its slaves, and thence the slaves of the will of others: lust, fear, avarice, cruelty, and fraud, characterized a race amongst whom no one was to be found capable of creating in form, language, or institution. The moral anomalies of such a state of society are not justly to be charged upon any class of events immediately connected with them, and those events are most entitled to our approbation which could dissolve it most expeditiously. It is unfortunate for those who cannot distinguish words from thoughts, that many of these anomalies have been incorporated into our popular religion.

It was not until the eleventh century that the effects of the poetry of the Christian and chivalric systems began to manifest themselves. The principle of equality had been discovered and applied by Plato in his "Republic" as the theoretical rule of the mode in which the materials of pleasure and of power produced by the common skill and labor of human beings ought to be distributed among them. The limitations of this rule were asserted by him to be determined only by the sensibility of each, or the utility to result to all. Plato, following the doctrines of Timæus and Pythagoras, taught also a moral and intellectual system of doctrine, comprehending at once the past, the present, and the future condition of man. Jesus Christ divulged the sacred and eternal truths contained in these views to mankind, and Christianity, in its abstract purity, became the exoteric expression of the esoteric doctrines of the poetry and wisdom of antiquity. The incorporation of the Celtic nations with the exhausted population of the south impressed upon it the figure of the poetry existing in their mythology and institutions. The result was a sum of the action and reaction of all the causes included in it; for it may be assumed as a maxim that no nation or religion can supersede any other without incorporating into itself a portion of that which it supersedes. The abolition of personal and domestic slavery, and the emancipation of women from a great part of the degrading restraints of antiquity, were among the consequences of these events.

The abolition of personal slavery is the basis of the highest political hope that it can enter into the mind of man to conceive. The freedom of women produced the poetry of sexual love. Love became a religion, the idols of whose worship were ever present. It was as if the statues of Apollo and the Muses had been endowed with life and motion, and had walked forth among their worshippers; so that earth became peopled with the inhabitants of a diviner world. The familiar appearance and proceedings of life became wonderful and heavenly, and a paradise was created as out of the wrecks of Eden. And as this creation itself is poetry, so its creators were poets; and language was the instrument of their art: "Galeotto fù il libro, e chi lo scrisse." The

Provençal trouvères, or inventors, preceded Petrarch, whose verses are as spells, which unseal the inmost enchanted fountains of the delight which is in the grief of love. It is impossible to feel them without becoming a portion of that beauty which we contemplate: it were superfluous to explain how the gentleness and the elevation of mind connected with these sacred emotions can render men more amiable, more generous and wise, and lift them out of the dull vapors of the little world of self. Dante understood the secret things of love even more than Petrarch. His "Vita Nuova" is an inexhaustible fountain of purity of sentiment and language: it is the idealized history of that period, and those intervals of his life which were dedicated to love. His apotheosis of Beatrice in Paradise, and the gradations of his own love and her loveliness, by which as by steps he feigns himself to have ascended to the throne of the Supreme Cause, is the most glorious imagination of modern poetry. The acutest critics have justly reversed the judgment of the vulgar, and the order of the great acts of the "Divine Drama," in the measure of the admiration which they accord to the Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. The latter is a perpetual hymn of everlasting love. Love, which found a worthy poet in Plato alone of all the ancients, has been celebrated by a chorus of the greatest writers of the renovated world; and the music has penetrated the caverns of society, and its echoes still drown the dissonance of arms and superstition. At successive intervals, Ariosto, Tasso, Shakespeare, Spenser, Calderon, Rousseau, and the great writers of our own age, have celebrated the dominion of love, planting as it were trophies in the human mind of that sublimest victory over sensuality and force. The true relation borne to each other by the sexes into which humankind is distributed has become less misunderstood; and if the error which confounded diversity with inequality of the powers of the two sexes has been partially recognised in the opinions and institutions of modern Europe, we owe this great benefit to the worship of which chivalry was the law, and poets the prophets.

The poetry of Dante may be considered as the bridge thrown over the stream of time, which unites the modern and ancient world. The distorted notions of invisible things which Dante and his rival Milton have idealized, are merely the mask and the mantle in which these great poets walk through eternity enveloped and disguised. It is a difficult question to determine how far they were conscious of the distinction which must have subsisted in their minds between their own creeds and that of the people. Dante at least appears to wish to mark the full extent of it by placing Rhipæus, whom Vergil calls justissimus unus, in Paradise, and observing a most heretical caprice in his distribution of rewards and punishments. And Milton's poem contains within itself a philosophical refutation of that system, of which, by a strange and natural antithesis, it has been a chief popular support. Nothing can exceed the energy and magnificence of the character of Satan as expressed in "Paradise Lost." It is a mistake to suppose that he could ever have been intended for the popular personification of evil. Implacable hate, patient cunning, and a sleepless refinement of device to inflict the extremist anguish on an enemy, these things are evil; and, although venial in a slave, are not to be forgiven in a tyrant; although redeemed by much that ennobles his defeat in one subdued, are marked by all that dishonors his conquest in the victor. Milton's Devil as a moral being is as far superior to his God, as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent in spite of adversity and torture, is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy, not from any mistaken notion of inducing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity, but with the alleged design of exasperating him to deserve new torments. Milton has so far violated the popular creed (if this shall be judged to be a violation) as to have alleged no superiority of moral virtue to his God over his Devil. Here is another example of a romantic poet addressing the immense shadow Milton casts over the proceedings.

And this bold neglect of a direct moral purpose is the most decisive proof of the supremacy of Milton's genius. He mingled as it were the elements of human nature as colors upon a single pallet, and arranged them in the composition of his great picture according to the laws of epic truth; that is, according to the laws of that principle by which a series of actions of the external universe and of intelligent and ethical beings is calculated to excite the sympathy of succeeding generations of mankind. The "Divina Commedia" and "Paradise Lost" have conferred upon modern mythology a systematic form; and when change and time shall have added one more superstition to the mass of those which have arisen and decayed upon the earth, commentators will be learnedly employed in elucidating the religion of ancestral Europe, only not utterly forgotten because it will have been stamped with the eternity of genius. 27 Homer was the first and Dante the second epic poet: that is, the second poet, the series of whose creations bore a defined and intelligible relation to the knowledge and sentiment and religion of the age in which he lived, and of the ages which followed it, developing itself in correspondence with their development. For Lucretius had limed the wings of his swift spirit in the dregs of the sensible world; and Vergil, with a modesty that ill became his genius, had affected the fame of an imitator, even whilst he created anew all that he copied; and none among the flock of mock-birds, though their notes were sweet, Apollonius Rhodius, Quintus Calaber, Nonnus, Lucan, Statius, or Claudian, have sought even to fulfil a single condition of epic truth. Milton was the third epic poet. For if the title of epic in its highest sense be refused to the "Æneid," still less can it be conceded to the "Orlando Furioso," the "Gerusalemme Liberata," the "Lusiad," or the "Faerie Queene." 28 Dante and Milton were both deeply penetrated with the ancient religion of the civilized world; and its spirit exists in their poetry probably in the same proportion as its forms survived in the unreformed worship of modern Europe. The one preceded and the other followed the Reformation at almost equal intervals. Dante was the first religious reformer, and Luther surpassed him rather in the rudeness and acrimony than in the boldness of his censures of papal usurpation. Dante was the first awakener of entranced Europe; he created a language, in itself music and persuasion, out of a chaos of inharmonious barbarians. He was the congregator of those great spirits who presided over the resurrection of learning; the Lucifer of that starry flock which in the thirteenth century shone forth from republican Italy, as from a heaven, into the darkness of the benighted world. His very words are instinct with spirit; each is as a spark, a burning atom of inextinguishable thought; and many yet lie covered in the ashes of their birth, and pregnant with the lightning which has yet found no conductor. All high poetry is infinite; it is as the first acorn, which contained all oaks potentially. Veil after veil may be undrawn, and the inmost naked beauty of the meaning never exposed. A great poem is a fountain forever overflowing with the waters of wisdom and delight; and after one person and one age has exhausted all its divine effluence which their peculiar relations enable them to share, another and yet another succeeds, and new relations are ever developed, the source of an unforeseen and an unconceived delight.

The age immediately succeeding to that of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio was characterized by a revival of painting, sculpture, and architecture. Chaucer caught the sacred inspiration, and the superstructure of English literature is based upon the materials of Italian invention.

But let us not be betrayed from a defence into a critical history of poetry and its influence on society. Be it enough to have pointed out the effects of poets, in the large and true sense of the word, upon their own and all succeeding times. But poets have been challenged to resign the civic crown to reasoners and mechanists, on another plea. It is admitted that the exercise of the imagination is most delightful, but it is alleged that that of reason is more useful. Let us examine as the grounds of this distinction what is here meant by utility. Pleasure or good, in a general sense, is that which the consciousness of a sensitive and intelligent being seeks, and in which, when found, it acquiesces. There are two kinds of pleasure, one durable, universal, and permanent; the other transitory and particular. Utility may either express the means of producing the former

or the latter. In the former sense, whatever strengthens and purifies the affections, enlarges the imagination, and adds spirit to sense, is useful. But a narrower meaning may be assigned to the word utility, confining it to express that which banishes the importunity of the wants of our animal nature, the surrounding men with security of life, the dispersing the grosser delusions of superstitions, and the conciliating such a degree of mutual forbearance among men as may consist with the motives of personal advantage. Undoubtedly the promoters of utility, in this limited sense, have their appointed office in society. In the passage above he is taking on the philosophers of utility.

They follow the footsteps of poets, and copy the sketches of their creations into the book of common life. They make space, and give time. Their exertions are of the highest value, so long as they confine their administration of the concerns of the inferior powers of our nature within the limits due to the superior ones. But whilst the sceptic destroys gross superstitions, let him spare to deface, as some of the French writers have defaced, the eternal truths character'd upon the imaginations of men. Whilst the mechanist abridges, and the political economist combines labor, let them beware that their speculations, for want of correspondence with those first principles which belong to the imagination, do not tend, as they have in modern England, to exasperate at once the extremes of luxury and want. They have exemplified the saying, "To him that hath, more shall be given; and from him that hath not, the little that he hath shall be taken away." The rich have become richer, and the poor have become poorer; and the vessel of the State is driven between the Scylla and Charybdis of anarchy and despotism. Such are the effects which must ever flow from an unmitigated exercise of the calculating faculty.

It is difficult to define pleasure in its highest sense; the definition involving a number of apparent paradoxes. For, from an inexplicable defect of harmony in the constitution of human nature, the pain of the inferior is frequently connected with the pleasures of the superior portions of our being. Sorrow, terror, anguish, despair itself, are often the chosen expressions of an approximation to the highest good. Our sympathy in tragic fiction depends on this principle; tragedy delights by affording a shadow of the pleasure which exists in pain. This is the source also of the melancholy which is inseparable from the sweetest melody. The pleasure that is in sorrow is sweeter than the pleasure of pleasure itself. And hence the saying, "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of mirth." Not that this highest species of pleasure is necessarily linked with pain. The delight of love and friendship, the ecstasy of the admiration of nature, the joy of the perception and still more of the creation of poetry, is often wholly unalloyed. The production and assurance of pleasure in this highest sense is true utility. Those who produce and preserve this pleasure are poets or poetical philosophers.

The exertions of Locke, Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire, Rousseau, and their disciples, in favor of oppressed and deluded humanity, are entitled to the gratitude of mankind. Yet it is easy to calculate the degree of moral and intellectual improvement which the world would have exhibited, had they never lived. A little more nonsense would have been talked for a century or two; and perhaps a few more men, women, and children burnt as heretics. We might not at this moment have been congratulating each other on the abolition of the Inquisition in Spain. But it exceeds all imagination to conceive what would have been the moral condition of the world if neither Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Calderon, Lord Bacon, nor Milton, had ever existed; if Raphael and Michael Angelo had never been born; if the Hebrew poetry had never been translated; if a revival of the study of Greek literature had never taken place; if no monuments of ancient sculpture had been handed down to us; and if the poetry of the religion of the ancient world had been extinguished together with its belief. The human mind could never, except by the intervention of these

excitements, have been awakened to the invention of the grosser sciences, and that application of analytical reasoning to the aberrations of society, which it is now attempted to exalt over the direct expression of the inventive and creative faculty itself.

We have more moral, political, and historical wisdom than we know how to reduce into practice; we have more scientific and economical knowledge than can be accommodated to the just distribution of the produce which it multiplies.

I would say this is even more true today than it was in his time. This is Shelley at his most prophetic.

The poetry in these systems of thought is concealed by the accumulation of facts and calculating processes.

There is no want of knowledge respecting what is wisest and best in morals, government, and political economy, or at least, what is wiser and better than what men now practise and endure. But we let “I dare not wait upon I would, like the poor cat in the adage.”

We want the creative faculty to imagine that which we know; we want the generous impulse to act that which we imagine; we want the poetry of life; our calculations have outrun conception; we have eaten more than we can digest. The cultivation of those sciences which have enlarged the limits of the empire of man over the external world, has, for want of the poetical faculty, proportionally circumscribed those of the internal world; and man, having enslaved the elements, remains himself a slave.

Again, prophecy! Think of the atomic bombs, cloning, pollution, and all manner of moral issues on the horizon. How many of you are tied to your smartphones all day? What other ways is what Shelley says here true?

He is saying that innovation and technological advancement is fine but if we do not have the imagination consider the **moral** consequences of what they bring, then we are setting ourselves up for disaster. Did you know some people consider us moving toward a “post-human” stage? Shelley would cringe then nod knowingly—he saw it coming.

To what but a cultivation of the mechanical arts in a degree disproportioned to the presence of the creative faculty, which is the basis of all knowledge, is to be attributed the abuse of all invention for abridging and combining labor, to the exasperation of the inequality of mankind? From what other cause has it arisen that the discoveries which should have lightened, have added a weight to the curse imposed on Adam? Poetry, and the principle of Self, of which money is the visible incarnation, are the God and Mammon of the world. The functions of the poetical faculty are twofold: by one it creates new materials of knowledge, and power, and pleasure; by the other it engenders in the mind a desire to reproduce and arrange them according to a certain rhythm and order which may be called the beautiful and the good. The cultivation of poetry is never more to be desired than at periods when, from an excess of the selfish and calculating principle, the accumulation of the materials of external life exceed the quantity of the power of assimilating them to the internal laws of human nature. The body has then become too unwieldy for that which animates it.

Poetry is indeed something divine.

Poetry participates in the eternal and the divine.

It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred. It is at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought; it is that from which all spring, and that which adorns all; and that which, if blighted, denies the fruit and the seed, and withholds from the barren world the nourishment and the succession of the scions of the tree of life. It is the perfect and consummate surface and bloom of all things; it is as the odor and the color of the rose to the texture of the elements which compose it, as the form and splendor of unfaded beauty to the

secrets of anatomy and corruption. What were virtue, love, patriotism, friendship—what were the scenery of this beautiful universe which we inhabit; what were our consolations on this side of the grave—and what were our aspirations beyond it, if poetry did not ascend to bring light and fire from those eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar? Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say, “I will compose poetry.” The greatest poet even cannot say it; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind (*Intellectual Beauty*), awakens to transitory brightness; this power arises from within, like the color of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our natures are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure.

Shelley is saying that poetry is not inspired by the will—we cannot make ourselves write poetry but must rely on inspiration. Literary modernists thought this ridiculous and wrote poetry as an expression of the will to create.

Could this influence be durable in its original purity and force, it is impossible to predict the greatness of the results; but when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet. I appeal to the greatest poets of the present day, whether it is not an error to assert that the finest passages of poetry are produced by labor and study. The toil and the delay recommended by critics can be justly interpreted to mean no more than a careful observation of the inspired moments, and an artificial connection of the spaces between their suggestions by the intertexture of conventional expressions; a necessity only imposed by the limitedness of the poetical faculty itself; for Milton conceived the “*Paradise Lost*” as a whole before he executed it in portions. We have his own authority also for the Muse having “dictated” to him the “unpremeditated song.” And let this be an answer to those who would allege the fifty-six various readings of the first line of the “*Orlando Furioso*.” Compositions so produced are to poetry what mosaic is to painting. This instinct and intuition of the poetical faculty are still more observable in the plastic and pictorial arts; a great statue or picture grows under the power of the artist as a child in a mother’s womb; and the very mind which directs the hands in formation is incapable of accounting to itself for the origin, the gradations, or the media of the process. 39 Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds. We are aware of evanescent visitations of thought and feeling sometimes associated with place or person, sometimes regarding our own mind alone, and always arising unforeseen and departing unbidden, but elevating and delightful beyond all expression: so that even in the desire and the regret they leave, there cannot but be pleasure, participating as it does in the nature of its object. It is as it were the interpretation of a diviner nature through our own; but its footsteps are like those of a wind over the sea, which the coming calm erases, and whose traces remain only as on the wrinkled sand which paves it. These and corresponding conditions of being are experienced principally by those of the most delicate sensibility and the most enlarged imagination; and the state of mind produced by them is at war with every base desire. The enthusiasm of virtue, love, patriotism, and friendship is essentially linked with such emotions; and whilst they last, self appears as what it is, an atom to a universe. Poets are not only subject to these experiences as spirits of the most refined organization, but they can color all that they combine with the evanescent hues of this ethereal world; a word, a trait in the representation of a scene or a passion will touch the enchanted chord, and reanimate, in those who have ever experienced these emotions, the sleeping, the cold, the buried image of the past. Poetry thus makes immortal all that is best and most beautiful in the world; it arrests the vanishing apparitions which haunt the interlunations of life, and veiling them, or in language or in form, sends them forth among mankind, bearing sweet news of kindred joy to those with whom their sisters abide—

abide, because there is no portal of expression from the caverns of the spirit which they inhabit into the universe of things. Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man.

Poetry turns all things to loveliness; it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds beauty to that which is most deformed; it marries exultation and horror, grief and pleasure, eternity and change; Poetry turns all its objects, even gross ones, into beauty.

it subdues to union under its light yoke all irreconcilable things. It transmutes all that it touches, and every form moving within the radiance of its presence is changed by wondrous sympathy to an incarnation of the spirit which it breathes: its secret alchemy turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which flow from death through life; it strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty, which is the spirit of its forms. 41 All things exist as they are perceived: at least in relation to the percipient. "The mind is its own place, and of itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven." But poetry defeats the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions. And whether it spreads its own figured curtain, or withdraws life's dark veil from before the scene of things, it equally creates for us a being within our being. It makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos. It reproduces the common universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being. It compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know. It creates anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration. It justifies the bold and true words of Tasso—"Non merita nome di creatore, se non Iddio ed il Poeta." 42 A poet, as he is the author to others of the highest wisdom, pleasure, virtue, and glory, so he ought personally to be the happiest, the best, the wisest, and the most illustrious of men. As to his glory, let time be challenged to declare whether the fame of any other institutor of human life be comparable to that of a poet. That he is the wisest, the happiest, and the best, inasmuch as he is a poet, is equally incontrovertible: the greatest poets have been men of the most spotless virtue, of the most consummate prudence, and, if we would look into the interior of their lives, the most fortunate of men: and the exceptions, as they regard those who possessed the poetic faculty in a high yet inferior degree, will be found on consideration to confine rather than destroy the rule. Let us for a moment stoop to the arbitration of popular breath, and usurping and uniting in our own persons the incompatible characters of accuser, witness, judge, and executioner, let us decide without trial, testimony, or form, that certain motives of those who are "there sitting where we dare not soar," are reprehensible. Let us assume that Homer was a drunkard, that Vergil was a flatterer, that Horace was a coward, that Tasso was a madman, that Lord Bacon was a peculator, that Raphael was a libertine, that Spenser was a poet laureate. It is inconsistent with this division of our subject to cite living poets, but posterity has done ample justice to the great names now referred to. Their errors have been weighed and found to have been dust in the balance; if their sins "were as scarlet, they are now white as snow"; they have been washed in the blood of the mediator and redeemer, Time. Observe in what a ludicrous chaos the imputations of real or fictitious crime have been confused in the contemporary calumnies against poetry and poets; consider how little is as it appears—or appears as it is; look to your own motives, and judge not, lest ye be judged. 43 Poetry, as has been said, differs in this respect from logic, that it is not subject to the control of the active powers of the mind, and that its birth and recurrence have no necessary connection with the consciousness or will. It is presumptuous to determine that these are the necessary conditions of all mental causation, when mental effects are experienced unsusceptible of being referred to them. The frequent recurrence of the poetical power, it is obvious to suppose, may produce in the mind a habit of order and harmony correlative with its own nature and with its effects upon other minds. But in the intervals of inspiration, and they may be frequent without being durable, a poet becomes a man, and is abandoned to the sudden reflux of the influences under which

others habitually live. But as he is more delicately organized than other men, and sensible to pain and pleasure, both his own and that of others, in a degree unknown to them, he will avoid the one and pursue the other with an ardor proportioned to this difference. And he renders himself obnoxious to calumny, when he neglects to observe the circumstances under which these objects of universal pursuit and flight have disguised themselves in one another's garments. But there is nothing necessarily evil in this error, and thus cruelty, envy, revenge, avarice, and the passions purely evil have never formed any portion of the popular imputations on the lives of poets.

I have thought it most favorable to the cause of truth to set down these remarks according to the order in which they were suggested to my mind, by a consideration of the subject itself, instead of observing the formality of a polemical reply; but if the view which they contain be just, they will be found to involve a refutation of the arguers against poetry, so far at least as regards the first division of the subject. I can readily conjecture what should have moved the gall of some learned and intelligent writers who quarrel with certain versifiers; I confess myself, like them, unwilling to be stunned by the Theseids of the hoarse Codri of the day. Bavius and Mævius undoubtedly are, as they ever were, insufferable persons. But it belongs to a philosophical critic to distinguish rather than confound.

Shelley provides a summary of his essay here.

The first part of these remarks has related to poetry in its elements and principles; and it has been shown, as well as the narrow limits assigned them would permit, that what is called poetry, in a restricted sense, has a common source with all other forms of order and of beauty, according to which the materials of human life are susceptible of being arranged, and which is poetry in an universal sense.

The second part will have for its object an application of these principles to the present state of the cultivation of poetry, and a defence of the attempt to idealize the modern forms of manners and opinions, and compel them into a subordination to the imaginative and creative faculty. For the literature of England, an energetic development of which has ever preceded or accompanied a great and free development of the national will, has arisen as it were from a new birth. In spite of the low-thoughted envy which would undervalue contemporary merit, our own will be a memorable age in intellectual achievements, and we live among such philosophers and poets as surpass beyond comparison any who have appeared since the last national struggle for civil and religious liberty. The most unfailing herald, companion, and follower of the awakening of a great people to work a beneficial change in opinion or institution, is poetry. At such periods there is an accumulation of the power of communicating and receiving intense and impassioned conceptions respecting man and nature. The person in whom this power resides, may often, as far as regards many portions of their nature, have little apparent correspondence with that spirit of good of which they are the ministers. But even whilst they deny and abjure, they are yet compelled to serve, that power which is seated on the throne of their own soul. It is impossible to read the compositions of the most celebrated writers of the present day without being startled with the electric life which burns within their words. They measure the circumference and sound the depths of human nature with a comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit, and they are themselves perhaps the most sincerely astonished at its manifestations; for it is less their spirit than the spirit of the age. Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.

In his famous formulation, poets are the “unacknowledged legislators” of the world.

Alastor

Alastor is a very difficult poem, but like Wordsworth's "Crossing Simplon Pass," it beautifully allegorizes (to use one of Shelley's words) the evermore about to be. Your four paragraph essay is based on "Alastor" so read it carefully. It is the story of someone seeking knowledge and eternal truth. He travels to the middle east and eventually the Caucasus (the region that may be the origin of our language). He has a dream in which a beautiful apparition appears (intellectual beauty). Just as he is about to embrace her, she disappears (evermore about to be). The rest of his life is spent in pursuit of a recreation of that dream and image. He ends up taking a boat deep into chasms and the source of a creek where he, lacking inspiration, expires. It is puzzling and gorgeously written with joules upon joules of linguistic energy. The sublime is everywhere in that poem.

Assignment #1

Each paragraph must include a quotation from one of the texts under consideration. Use MLA style citation. Consult the “How to Cite Literature” directions in the home page. No need for a Works Cited as all texts come from the *Norton Anthology*. Do not use outside sources. I will grade these liberally and use them to assess how well you understand the material. No plagiarism.

It’s true that “Alastor” is a rather difficult poem, one of the most difficult we’ll read all semester, but it so powerfully evokes the sublime that we must write about it. For this week’s assignment, you are to choose four passages from “Alastor” that illustrate different aspects of the sublime. There are some very obvious ones, and others that are as rich in imagery of the sublime as they are obscure. I think there are at least two approaches to take here. The first is to find passages that make the sublime real. There is one obvious scene where the sublime is made into a person. What are the characteristics of that person and that experience? The second approach is to find passages that illustrate natural imagery that *evoke* the sublime. The whole latter half of the poem are full of such imagery. Tell us what makes the imagery sublime. Make sure you concentrate on Shelley’s powerful poetic language.

Paragraph1

Briefly introduce your findings, then quote a passage that illustrates the sublime. What are the sublime’s characteristics in this passage?

Paragraph2

Quote a passage that illustrates the sublime. What are the sublime’s characteristics in this passage?

Paragraph3

Quote a passage that illustrates the sublime. What are the sublime’s characteristics in this passage?

Paragraph 4

Quote a passage that illustrates the sublime. What are the sublime’s characteristics in this passage? Summarize your findings.

A Good Essay:

1. Properly cites the texts;
2. Quotes four passages that illustrate or evoke the sublime;
3. Shows the different aspects of the sublime by referring to the passages;
4. Provides an introduction to, and a summary of, your findings.

Assignment #2 Application

This application is one of my favorites of the semester and it will be longer than your usual application posts. This should be three **paragraphs** and it is essentially a self-expressive narrative. Tell us a story about when you experienced the sublime. *I know you already have; you just didn’t have a name for it yet!* It could be an experience in nature, with tragedy, with love...a moment that took your breath away in both a bad and good way. There is always the fear of death lurking somewhere around the sublime—that’s why great heights often evoke it.

In your three paragraphs make sure you set the scene (paragraph one) including any background information. In the second paragraph narrate the moment of the sublime. Make sure you include both thoughts and emotions—remember the sublime is a feeling in the mind and a thought in your heart! In the third paragraph tell us about the aftermath and what, if anything, you learned from the experience.

Set up the scene;
Describe the moment of the sublime;
Discuss the aftermath.

You can write more if you want. Here's my contribution; it's a prose poem (that's a specialized genre!) from a collection of 50 narrative pieces:

He was schooled by Bridgeport badasses in the warehouse district during his college breaks.

He was introduced to them as "imported muscle." They called him "Stago," after a Polish contestant in the World's Strongest Man competition.

He napped on moving pads in the middle of a maze. He had arranged skids of lockers with a power lift called the Prime Mover.

Each morning on cold dark Grand Ave, he crossed the Chicago River, stepping over rat carcasses and feeling the river below.

When he looked down into the thick gray puzzle, the ice and snow crusted torrent of depth, he had the urge to jump. He was not suicidal, yet he tended the urge.

He learned later that feeling was the sublime.

A Good Application

1. Sets the scene;
2. Makes us feel the moment of the sublime;
3. Describes its aftermath.

Worksheets

You must be able to answer these questions from reading the texts and my commentary. You may want to print these questions and answer them as you read. They will guide your reading and organize your notes. Your weekly quiz will be 10 of these questions.

1. Why is Byron often considered the prototypical Romantic figure?
2. Why was Byron hounded out of England?
3. How does that relate to Don Juan?
4. What is irony?
5. How is *Don Juan* ironic?
6. How does that make this poem "modern"?
7. How long does he write this poem?

Stanzas in Parentheses

8. (1) How does the poem begin? How is it similar to "Rime"?
9. (7) What's ironic about this stanza?
10. (22) How does this relate to Byron's own life?
11. (42) What's Byron's take on Latin and Greek poetry?
12. (52) What about Byron's own time in college?
13. (57) What do we learn about Spanish blood?
14. (63) What "sociology" is being discussed here?
15. (71) What truth about a crush is shown here?
16. (76) How is self-deception part of the love portrayed?
17. (90) What's Byron's critique of Wordsworth and Coleridge?
18. (117) What happens between the two?

19. (135) What does Byron like to consume?
20. (166) Where was Don hidden?
21. (188) What happens after the row?
22. (194) What is Byron's insight about women?
23. (200) What are the qualities of his own poem that Byron discusses?
24. (205) What does he think about other poets?
25. (215) What does he note about his own life?

Canto II

26. (20) What is his physical state?
27. What happens to the ship Don Juan is on?
28. (77-103) What do they do for food? What happens to them?
29. (111-117) Who discovers Don Juan? What does she look like?
30. (126-128) Who is her father? What is his occupation?
31. What happens between Don Juan and Haidee?
32. (209-210) What do we learn about Byron in these stanzas?

Keats

33. What did Keats die of?
34. What is the relationship between Keats's poetry and sleep?
35. What are the qualities of Keats's verse?

Be able to explicate:

Ode to a Nightingale

#1

#2

#3

#4

#5

#6

#7

#8

36. What is negative capability?

VI. Don Juan & the Nightingale



George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824), was the most famous, indeed, notorious of the Romantic poets having achieved a substantial fame in his own lifetime. I like to think of him as one of the first rock and roll celebrities. He was born of aristocratic families, though money was always an issue. He formed a close friendship with the Shelleys and was an influential figure in continental Europe. His fame was based in a large way on a cult of personality. He was larger than life, anti-establishment, and had a prodigious lover with hundreds of paramours. He died fighting for Greek independence from the Ottomans.

The Self

We have discussed how the idea of the self is one of the keystones of the Romantic movement. This is certainly the case with Byron. But whereas Wordsworth and Shelley were seeking new poetic forms, Byron's verse is close to Neoclassical, that is it looks for its models in the Greek and Latin poetry. Byron's poetic heroes, though, are iconoclastic, flaunt social conventions, and live according to their own mores. Byron made his fame on the poem "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," and also wrote drama and comedic tracts. His work often includes a larger than life anti-hero.

In a way, the Byronic anti-hero is a kind of monstrous self, which later became associated with gothic figures such as Count Dracula and Frankenstein's monster.

This sense of monstrous self was reinforced by the headlines that Byron himself had caused to be written. He was famous for his sexual conquests and during divorce proceedings it was revealed that he had conducted an incestuous affair with his half sister. He became a social outcast and was essentially exiled from England.

Don Juan

Eventually, Byron settled on a long, satiric and self-referential "anti" epic named *Don Juan*. He started the work in 1818 and worked on it until his death. The poem follows the exploits of a young Spaniard (only loosely based on the mythic character), Don Juan, whose exploits in pursuit of females takes him through a number of wild adventures. *Don Juan* is one of the longest poems in the English language.

Perhaps more important than the character Don Juan is the narrator, a stand-in for Byron himself, for this narrator reveals as much about himself as he does his characters. This is one of the first essential points to understand about the poem—it is self-referential. When a work is self-referential, that means that the text “recognizes” itself as a text. Remember the Coleridgean idea of the willing suspension of disbelief? *Don Juan* doesn’t require that at all because the narrator keeps reminding us that he’s narrating a poem.

In addition to commenting on the poem’s own construction, Byron comments on, and critiques, social conventions and mores throughout the poem. Often, these comments on social conventions can be read in terms of Byron’s biography. Byron often comments on the nature of literature (another self-referential trait) and specific poets, including some we are familiar with.

All these comments on matter only peripherally related to the narration of Don Juan’s adventures, can be seen as digressions from the main plot. You digress when you leave the main topic of conversation. Byron’s work is, in essence, a series of digressions weaved around the adventures of Don Juan. The digressions are frequently triggered by events in the narrator’s life, including a description of an injured victim knocking on the narrator’s door late at night and how he took the victim in and nursed him back to health.

The digressions and commentary lead the poem to be a kind of open system that continues to remain open as long as Byron lives. It accommodates all the material that Byron cares to put in it, and in this way, contains a number of the characteristics of postmodern texts that we will discuss later on this semester.

Don Juan

Instead of reprinting the cantos you are assigned, I will discuss some stanzas in the categories with which we can organize the poem: Narration, Narrator’s Life, Digressions on Literature, Self-referential commentary, and Commentary on Social Mores. Since the poem is written in easily understood rhyming meter, the first thing you need to understand is the basic narration—that is, you should be responsible for what happens in the story from the first canto to the second that is reprinted in the Norton.

Canto 1

Stanza 1

I want a hero: an uncommon want,
When every year and month sends forth a new one,
Till, after cloying the gazettes with cant,
The age discovers he is not the true one;
Of such as these I should not care to vaunt,

I'll therefore take our ancient friend Don Juan—
We all have seen him, in the pantomime,
Sent to the devil somewhat ere his time.

First off, the poem begins like Coleridge's "Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner," as if the poem's construction is in the present time. Afterwards, we are immediately introduced to the self-referential aspect of the poem—the poem begins with Byron describing what he wants in his poem and who will be the subject of it.

Stanza 6

That is the usual method, but not mine—
My way is to begin with the beginning;
The regularity of my design
Forbids all wandering as the worst of sinning,
And therefore I shall open with a line
(Although it cost me half an hour in spinning)
Narrating somewhat of Don Juan's father,
And also of his mother, if you 'd rather.

You should be able to recognize the self-referential quality of this stanza. Indeed, he tells us how long it took him to write the one line. It is also an example of another literary term that we can use frequently when discussing Byron's work—irony. Irony is when there is a gap between what is said and what is meant. When he says here that digressions are the worst thing he can do in his poem, we kind of know that is all he is going to do.

Stanza 23

Don Jose and his lady quarrell'd—why,
Not any of the many could divine,
'T was surely no concern of theirs nor mine;
I loathe that low vice—curiosity;
But if there 's anything in which I shine,
'T is in arranging all my friends' affairs,
Not having of my own domestic cares.

Byron (or the narrator) is describing his own life and his own predilections in this stanza—he likes to get involved in his friends' affairs.

Stanza 42

Ovid's a rake, as half his verses show him,
Anacreon's morals are a still worse sample,
Catullus scarcely has a decent poem,
I don't think Sappho's Ode a good example,

Although Longinus tells us there is no hymn
Where the sublime soars forth on wings more ample:
But Virgil's songs are pure, except that horrid one
Beginning with 'Formosum Pastor Corydon.'

Here is a passage of general commentary on classical greek and roman poetry. Byron is describing how all these poets have some objectionable content. Even the admirable Virgil has homoerotic content.

Stanza 53

For my part I say nothing—nothing—but
This I will say—my reasons are my own—
That if I had an only son to put
To school (as God be praised that I have none),
'T is not with Donna Inez I would shut
Him up to learn his catechism alone,
No—no—I 'd send him out betimes to college,
For there it was I pick'd up my own knowledge.

Byron implies in this digression (which narrates his own life) that he learned about sex at college.

Stanza 62

Wedded she was some years, and to a man
Of fifty, and such husbands are in plenty;
And yet, I think, instead of such a ONE
'T were better to have TWO of five-and-twenty,
Especially in countries near the sun:
And now I think on't, 'mi vien in mente,'
Ladies even of the most uneasy virtue
Prefer a spouse whose age is short of thirty.

Byron is commenting here about the older man's propensity to marry a young wife. He considers this from the female perspective and deems that instead of having one husband of 50 years, she should have two of 25 years apiece. In addition, this canto repeats a theme throughout the poem itself—it is kind of a geographical sociology: people who live in warm climates are generally more hot-blooded and sexed up than those people from the "moral north" where the cold temperatures chills their impulsiveness.

Stanza 90

Young Juan wander'd by the glassy brooks,
Thinking unutterable things; he threw
Himself at length within the leafy nooks
Where the wild branch of the cork forest grew;

There poets find materials for their books,
And every now and then we read them through,
So that their plan and prosody are eligible,
Unless, like Wordsworth, they prove unintelligible.

While Don Juan is out in nature, the narrator digresses on a poet who often wrote about nature, Wordsworth, of whom Byron accuses of being not understandable.

Stanza 93

In thoughts like these true wisdom may discern
Longings sublime, and aspirations high,
Which some are born with, but the most part learn
To plague themselves withal, they know not why:
'T was strange that one so young should thus concern
His brain about the action of the sky;
If you think 't was philosophy that this did,
I can't help thinking puberty assisted.

We should recognize this—Don Juan is having a moment of the sublime. Byron, ever cynical and skeptical, thinks that perhaps the moment of the sublime has more to do with hormones than intellectual beauty.

Stanza 160

With prying snub-nose, and small eyes, he stood,
Following Antonia's motions here and there,
With much suspicion in his attitude;
For reputations he had little care;
So that a suit or action were made good,
Small pity had he for the young and fair,
And ne'er believed in negatives, till these
Were proved by competent false witnesses.

Byron's commentary on this lawyer reminds us of his own sensational divorce case which included depositions, lawyers and publicity.

Stanza 194

'Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
'T is woman's whole existence; man may range
The court, camp, church, the vessel, and the mart;
Sword, gown, gain, glory, offer in exchange
Pride, fame, ambition, to fill up his heart,
And few there are whom these cannot estrange;
Men have all these resources, we but one,

To love again, and be again undone.

It's true that there are many passages in Byron's poem that can be read as anti-feminist and Byron himself certainly did not always treat women with concern for their feelings. But this note from Donna Julia is a sensitive expression of the unequal terms of romantic love for women during the time he wrote. She correctly states that males can gain identity in many different venues, women are left with one. The novels of Jane Austen certainly take up this theme as well as Tolstoy's Anna Karenina.

The Nightingale



As a poet nearing the end of his middle age, I often think about the tragedy and inspiration in the life of John Keats (1795-1821). Keats was from a middle class family whose father died when Keats was quite young. He attended a progressive school until he was apprenticed to an apothecary and educated to become a surgeon.

At 18, though, he decided to dedicate his life to poetry and at his death, eight years later at the age of twenty-five, he had written some of the most skillful and obviously “beautiful” poetry in the English language. He nursed his brother through his fatal bout of tuberculosis, only to die of it himself. In looking at his life, his death seems tragic because who knows what kind of literary output he could have had were he to have lived. On the other hand, he did not waste his talent in leaving us a legacy of marvelous poetry.

Sleep and Poetry

One theme that shows up in much of Keats' work is that of sleep. When sick, sleep is the utmost palliative, where all the maladies disappear. Sleep is also the time of dreaming when our unconscious imagination is engaged and presents to us experiences that seem as real as reality itself. The twilight between consciousness and unconsciousness is a rich and liberated ground for creative thinking. Keats' poetry occupies that twilight space.

Sleep and Poetry

“Sleep and Poetry” was written as a kind of mission statement for Keats. In it he vows to devote himself to its study for ten years “overwhelm[ing]” himself in “poesy.” The poem provides a kind

of Jacob's ladder for poetic study and practice, starting with the pastoral. Pastoral poetry (do you recognize genre here?) is poetry set in rural landscapes, an ideal green field in the mind. After pastoral poetry, he'll move to poetry of human emotion "the strife/of human hearts" in which poetry gives expression to pathos. The next vision on poetry seems to be an elemental mythic view that reaches above concerns of the earth and emotion into an ethereal light of pure beauty.

Endymion

Two ideas that you need to receive from Endymion is the eternal ideal of beauty:

A thing of beauty is a joy forever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.

Like Shelley, who was a great influence on him, Keats asserts that beauty is eternal. Here he marries beauty to the theme of sleep and mortality—beauty creates a place for us of rest and dreams...of health and "quiet breathing." It's impossible not to think of Keats' brother and himself and the way that tuberculosis robs the lungs of their capacity to breathe. Consistently throughout his poetry, Keats opposes beauty to the corruptible body we inhabit.

The second idea to take from the poem is the "pleasure thermometer." The idea of the pleasure thermometer is that different telos, or goals, of pleasure bring increasingly more intense pleasures in return. Like "Sleep and Poetry" it starts with the beauty of nature in the pastoral. Grows in congenial relations with others, and reaches its peak in romantic relations of sexual and spiritual congress.

La Belle Dame sans Merci

We have a "romantic" in its medieval sense, ballad here that illustrates a realm where souls linger who have been seduced by the titular woman. Again, sleep plays a prominent role.

Sonnet to Sleep

The narrator addresses sleep itself in this poem, pointing out the gifts it brings..

Letter to George and Thomas Keats

You can get a real sense of the humanity of Keats in his letters. In the Dec, 1817 letter to his brothers, he discusses a quality that the poet must have. Where Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief" is a quality for audience, Keats' "negative capability" is a quality the writer must have. In the letter he says that negative capability is "when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason." Keats is describing a kind of meditative openness when engaging in creativity. It allows the poet to inhabit any character, create any drama, and describe any scene.

Ode to a Nightingale

This is Keats' most well-known poem and a powerfully sensual engagement with imagination, nature, and beauty. Of course sleep plays a role as well.

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
 My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
 One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
 But being too happy in thine happiness,—
 That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees
 In some melodious plot
 Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
 Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

The narrator begins the poem in drowsy depression and his senses are dulled when he hears the night call of the nightingale whose song embodies the summer "in full-throated ease." As we move through the poem, pay careful attention to the sounds of his phrases which are meant to evoke the experience they are describing.

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
 Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
 Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
 Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,

With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

The narrator wishes that he could have some of that wine that gives the bird its song. Its more than wine though, it's the very essence of summer, of the flowers of earth, the folk customs of those who work the earth. "Beaded bubbles winking at the brim" is another example of words that sound like the thing they are describing (onomatopoeia is the literary term for such linguistic constructions). Drinking the summer brew would allow him to leave the earth and become an anonymous songbird.

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

This is the psychological reason for his desire to disappear—life for humans is doubly cursed: our bodies are mortal and we can also contemplate and consider our own mortality. The passage can also be read as a reflection on his brother's death, "where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies." Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes—like Shelley's intellectual beauty, it is ephemeral.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

The narrator decides that it's not going to be the beverage that gets him to the place of the nightingale, but poetry will. Even though the mind resists, he makes it, "already with thee." The night achieves a magical sensuality of lush green and light breeze. Keats is a master throughout his poetry at creating imagery out of sensory experience—which takes, of course, negative capability.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Because it's nighttime and the narrator's with the bird, eyesight is limited, but all the smells of the night reach him and creates a full image. Can you detect the onomatopoeia in the last line?

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

The narrator confesses he has been "half in love with easeful death" perhaps because life is full of such suffering. When he has reached his union with the bird, it would be an ideal time to cease existing. He also understands, that the song of the bird, immortal, would continue to enchant the earth even after he is buried in it.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Like Shelley, we again consider the immortal property of beauty. The song of the nightingale has been forever part of human history (can you make a connection between this stanza and his poem "Ode to a Grecian Urn"?). It provides relief to the depressed and engages the magical and alchemical.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
 To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
 As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
 Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
 Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
 In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
 Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

Unfortunately, the narrator uses the word, "forlorn," and that breaks the spell. He is no longer united with the bird. He's back to his corruptible self and the song of the bird fades away as the bird flies away from the narrator's perch. After the song fades completely, the narrator cannot tell if the song was real in the first place. Indeed he speculates that the vision may have been a waking dream. The poem ends wondering whether he is awake or asleep. Do yourself a favor. Read this poem outloud. Your mouth, ears, and mind will thank you.

Assignment #1

There is no assignment #1 due this week for your first major essay is due.

Assignment #2 Application

You should write a paragraph of at least five sentences where you describe an experience you had that is like the experience that Keats describes in “ode to a Nightingale.” Did you ever have a dream so real that you thought it might have really happened? Did you ever have a dream that brought you to understand some truth about your life or life in general? If so, tell us about it. Use at least three sentences to describe the vision, and at least two sentences to describe your reaction upon awakening. Make sure that you describe the insight the dream brought you. If this never happened to you, use negative capability to make up such an experience, but don’t tell us that you made it up!

Describe the dream/vision;

Describe your reaction upon returning to consciousness;

Discuss the insight the experience brought you.

You can write more if you want. Here’s my contribution:

I had just picked up my son from wrestling and learned that he had puked three times at practice because it was so intense. When we got home I took a nap and dreamt that a former wrestling coach told me he just did not have the stuff to compete. “But he’s a state medalist who only practiced two times a week,” I exclaimed. The coach backtracked but I was still upset. When I woke up, I realized I was not going to push him and if he wanted to quit wrestling, that’s fine with me. He already plays football and lacrosse and I really don’t care, I realized, if he impresses the coach or not.

A Good Application

1. Describes the dream;
2. Shows us how it affected you;
3. Presents its insight.

Worksheets

You must be able to answer these questions from reading the texts and my commentary. You may want to print these questions and answer them as you read. They will guide your reading and organize your notes. Your weekly quiz will be 10 of these questions.

1. What are the differences between Romanticism and Victorianism?
2. What are notable dates during this time period?
3. What is imperialism?
4. What is utilitarianism?
5. Why does utilitarianism say that playing pushpins is no different than appreciating poetry?
5. What issues were foremost during this time period?
6. Who was Hegel?
7. What is the idea of meta-history?
8. What class ferment was happening during this time?
9. What is the textual structure of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*?
10. Why soul=stomach?
11. What is Deism?
12. What is the difference between pleasure and virtue?
13. What is happening to religious belief?
14. What is the importance of works?
15. What is the everlasting nay?
16. What is the God-given mandate?
17. What constitutes the spiritual journey?
18. What is nature?

19. What is another of Carlyle's critiques of utilitarianism?
20. What is the role of German romanticism in the text?
21. What is "plenary inspiration"?

Mill
On Liberty

22. What is the aim of humans?
23. What are customs and what is the problem with them?
24. How do we develop the self?
25. What are we like if we blindly follow custom?
26. Is a human a machine?
27. What is in dialectic with desires?
28. What is character?
29. What is conformity?
30. What is the Calvinist view of mankind?
31. What is the dichotomy?
32. What should restrain our selfishness?
33. Why is it important to be original?
34. Why the importance of Genius?
35. Why should we let eccentrics be?
36. How does custom prevent progress?
37. What are three things significant about his mentioning of China?

from The Subjection of Women

38. What are two reasons the subjection of women are wrong?
39. What about the nature argument?

40. How is this related to slavery?
41. Will those with power ever accept the logic of giving it up?
42. Do women want to be ruled by men?
43. What is different from slavery and all other oppressive relationships?
44. What has changed about the world?
45. What is wrong about making assumptions about the essential nature of the sexes?
46. What does development of character have to do with it?

VII. Victorian Dichotomies

As we discussed in the first chapter, there are rarely any hard and fast boundaries between literary periods because they are designations given the time after the fact. For the Victorian Age, though, there is a handy metric to define the period: she reigned from 1837 to 1901. That is the Victorian Period.

The Victorian Period was marked by great change in England and the world, much of it brought about by the Industrial Revolution and the technological and geopolitical transformation that it wrought. In addition, intellectually, there was a change in the way that history was viewed. History was less seen as cyclical than as a progress that resulted from conflicting forces, or dichotomies. A dichotomy is when you take something and split it, or see it as the result of, two conflicting forces. We will return to the idea of a dichotomy again and again in our discussion of Victorian literature.

Before we discuss the ideas of the Victorian Age, let's recall our graphic for the division of time periods and fill in some of the key concepts for Victorians. Note that many of the ideas for the Victorian Age are shown to be in dialectic with the ideas of romanticism.

1793	1837	1910	1939	1945	2001
<i>Romantic Age</i>	<i>Victorian Age</i>	<i>Modernism</i>	<i>Post-Modernism</i>	<i>PoPoMo</i>	
SELF	SOCIETY				
NATURE	MACHINE				
IMAGINATION	REASON				
ETERNITY	HISTORY				
ART	COMMERCE				

In looking at these different ideas, we'll come to a fuller understanding of the themes and approached of the Victorian Age.

SOCIETY

If the focus on romanticism was on the self, the focus for Victorians is society. Writers constantly focus on the social pressures that accompany being a man or woman in a society that is changing rapidly. This focus on the collective is also a consequence of the migration of the population to urban centers where people live in densely populated quarters. In addition, it is not primarily the spiritual and esthetic state of humans that absorb these writers' attention, but the social state—its responsibilities and demands. We will read a number of poems and texts that focus on the nature of Victorian society.

MACHINE

Where an idealized nature was model for romanticism, the machine plays a fundamental role in the Victorian Age. Let's begin by discussing an important economic, political, and social philosophy that posits human beings are machines that seek to maximize happiness and minimize pain (can you use our epistemological scheme to sketch this out?). It is called utilitarianism.

Remember that economics as a discipline really begins with Adam Smith in the late 18th century. Utilitarianism grew out of economics and is an early form of microeconomics, which deals with the choices of individuals rather (as in macroeconomics) the sum total of economic activity. The basic idea of utilitarianism were developed by Jeremy Bentham (extra credit if you tell me what strange request he made in his will) and James Mill. Essentially, utilitarianism sees humans as machines that want to maximize their pleasure and minimize pain. Ideas like moral good and spiritual worth are not good in themselves, but are only good when they increase our marginal pleasure. Consider Bentham's famous formulation that the game of pushpin is equal to art, poetry and music if it yields similar amounts of pleasure. Pushpin was a simple child's game where you had to maneuver needles so that they crossed. What Bentham is saying is that the activity doesn't matter—it is what the activity produces that is important. The pleasure one gets is the purpose. Compare this idea to the lofty claims for poetry that Shelley makes in his Defence.

A number of Victorian writers critiqued this idea (*Hard Times* by Charles Dickens being an obvious example) including two of the writers we'll discuss this unit. So rolling around in mud is equal to listening to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in this argument. In terms of organizing the

body politic, this yields a simple formulation that is still often used today. Society should be organized to achieve the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Can you detect a problem with this formulation? If you said, “if you are in a minority position, you’ll get screwed,” then you are right. John Stuart Mill will take this apart in his essay, “On Liberty.”

To this day, a version of utilitarianism, judicial cost-benefit analysis, is still widely used. In Dickens’ novel *Hard Times* he shows the twisted logic of social utilitarianism. As we discussed in the section above, the responsibilities of the state towards its citizens was a point of controversy and conflict. *Hard Times* depicts life in a poorhouse—a dormitory like setting where the poor live until they can get on their feet. Those who run the poorhouse mix ashes into breakfast gruel because they believe that the poor should not receive any pleasure from handouts. Make the handouts as unpleasant as possible and the poor will not want to be poor any more. Does this sound like a familiar argument?

In addition to humans being viewed as machines, and hardly a coincidence, is the economic reality that more and more people, children and adults alike, were tied, sometimes literally, to a machine for their labor. As countryside emptied, thousands poured into urban centers where they found work in manufacturing, becoming a cog in the industrial machine.

REASON

Utilitarianism grows out of a sense that superstition and institutions based on faith are outdated and should be replaced by analysis that is based on reason and without emotion. The whole idea of laissez-faire capitalism depends on the notion of an individual who will make rational decisions given the information they had. As we’ll see, the Hegelian historical notion of progress sees reason coming to know itself through a state as the zenith of historical progress.

HISTORY

One aspect of the Victorian Age that fascinates me and permeates much of the work is an idea of meta-history. “Meta-history” is when you see historical events in a larger pattern that you give a narrative to. Friedrich Hegel, the German philosopher, developed an idea of the progress of history that led to Marx and Engels’ view of history, and versions of their meta-histories can be found in the

texts of a number of writers. In addition, Darwin's theory of evolution can clearly be seen as a meta-history.

Recall that Hegel's idea of historical progress what reason coming to know itself. How does this progress come about? Through the process of dichotomy. We start with a thesis, the way things are and organized to be. Contradictions within that thesis emerge and an anti-thesis breaks off. In other words, the contradictions become their own thesis and battle the original. The next step is for the contradictions to unite in a synthesis. The synthesis embraces all the contradictions into a unity until new contradictions emerge in the synthesis and spawn another dichotomy and, eventually, another synthesis. Each synthesis is progress over the previous one, working toward an endpoint where the grand synthesis is reason or spirit itself—the force that has driven the progress. Let's take the Hegelian notion of history and look at it relative to Marx. Marx believed that the dichotomy is always the haves vs the have-nots and that conflict will reach its endpoint in the communist state which is a dictatorship of the proletariat, or working class.

Even if a number of the writers we study in this period do not ascribe explicitly to meta-narratives of history, mostly all were aware of, and brought into their work, the historical facts of the period in which they wrote. This notion is "historicity," the idea that our lives are governed by the particular historical circumstances into which we are born.

COMMERCE

Commerce drives the Victorian Age, from the change in social circumstances of its citizens, to England's imperialist drive for raw materials and markets for its goods. The Industrial Revolution is the background to all the texts. Of course, the focus on commerce and its driving force, laissez-faire capitalism exerts a great influence on the political state. While a few were getting very wealthy and many suffered in low-wage, highly dangerous labor. These workers could not vote and had few rights. There was agitation throughout the Victorian Age by the Chartism movement and the Labor Party. The first Reform Act of 1832 opened the franchise to vote to the middle and merchant classes and divided the country into more fair districts for parliamentary seats. But note voting rights were not extended to the working class until 1867 and women in 1928.

Carlyle and the Critique of Romanticism and Utilitarianism



Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) is what I would call a public intellectual. He interpreted past and present historical conditions for his age. He was born in a strict Calvinist household in Scotland but as he matured he reached a crisis of faith that resulted in his attempt to give faith a footing that was not based on outdated tradition. He wrote many books and pamphlets. It was his analysis of the French Revolution that brought him his most significant early public attention.

Sartor Resartus

Carlyle's Sartor Resartus is the ideal place to begin our discussion of the Victorian Age. In the passages we read, we can discover Carlyle's implicit critique of Romanticism as well as his dissection of the faults in utilitarianism. It is a wild and difficult text so the first step on the way to understanding it is to know its structure. I would characterize the genre as essay, though it is all made-up. The fictional aspects of the text function as a mask with which to explore his intellectual concerns. The structure of the piece is as follows: There is an editor who has the task of reconstructing the story, through documents and journals, of a German professor Diogenes Teufelsdröckh. So part of the text is what the editor says about Teufelsdröckh and his concerns and the material in quotations are direct quotes from the journals of Teufelsdröckh himself. Teufelsdröckh is undergoing a romantic and spiritual crisis in these two chapters. I would argue that his response to those crises is very Victorian. We will be reading "The Everlasting No" and "The Everlasting Yea."

The Everlasting No

Under the strange nebulous envelopment, wherein our Professor has now shrouded himself, no doubt but his spiritual nature is nevertheless progressive, and growing: for how can the "Son of Time," in any case, stand still? We behold him, through those dim years, in a state of crisis, of transition: his mad Pilgrimages, and general solution into aimless Discontinuity, what is all this but a mad Fermentation; wherefrom the fiercer it is, the clearer product will one day evolve itself?

Teufelsdröckh's spiritual crisis has two components—doubt and self-abnegation. Self-abnegation is when you empty your ego and desires in order to be filled back up with some spiritual enlightenment.

Such transitions are ever full of pain: thus the Eagle when he moults is sickly; and, to attain his new beak, must harshly dash off the old one upon rocks. What Stoicism soever our Wanderer, in his individual acts and motions, may affect, it is clear that there is a hot fever of anarchy and misery raging within; coruscations of which flash out: as, indeed, how could there be other? Have we not seen him disappointed, bemocked of Destiny, through long years? All that the young heart might desire and pray for has been denied; nay, as in the last worst instance, offered and then snatched away. Ever an "excellent Passivity;" but of useful, reasonable Activity, essential to the former as Food to Hunger, nothing granted: till at length, in this wild Pilgrimage, he must forcibly seize for himself an Activity, though useless, unreasonable. Alas, his cup of bitterness, which had been filling drop by drop, ever since that first "ruddy morning" in the Hinterschlag

Gymnasium, was at the very lip; and then with that poison-drop, of the Towgood-and-Blumine business, it runs over, and even hisses over in a deluge of foam.

He himself says once, with more justness than originality: "Men is, properly speaking, based upon Hope, he has no other possession but Hope; this world of his is emphatically the Place of Hope." What, then, was our Professor's possession? We see him, for the present, quite shut out from Hope; looking not into the golden orient, but vaguely all round into a dim copper firmament, pregnant with earthquake and tornado.

Alas, shut out from Hope, in a deeper sense than we yet dream of! For, as he wanders wearisomely through this world, he has now lost all tidings of another and higher. Full of religion, or at least of religiosity, as our Friend has since exhibited himself, he hides not that, in those days, he was wholly irreligious: "Doubt had darkened into Unbelief," says he; "shade after shade goes grimly over your soul, till you have the fixed, starless, Tartarean black."

He describes what happened when doubt was cast on all he previously believed.

To such readers as have reflected, what can be called reflecting, on man's life, and happily discovered, in contradiction to much Profit-and-Loss Philosophy, speculative and practical, that Soul is not synonymous with Stomach; who understand, therefore, in our Friend's words, "that, for man's well-being, Faith is properly the one thing needful; how, with it, Martyrs, otherwise weak, can cheerfully endure the shame and the cross; and without it, Worldlings puke up their sick existence, by suicide, in the midst of luxury:" to such it will be clear that, for a pure moral nature, the loss of his religious Belief was the loss of everything.

This is the text's first critique of utilitarianism. He calls utilitarianism "profit and loss philosophy" because utilitarianism posits that every decision we make is based on a calculation of what will bring us the greatest profit in happiness. In addition, he claims that utilitarianism equates soul with stomach, in other words, we choose only what makes our stomach happy, not our soul.

These, of course, are not soothing thoughts to a man going through a spiritual crisis where he is looking for something to base his faith on.

Unhappy young man! All wounds, the crush of long-continued Destitution, the stab of false Friendship and of false Love, all wounds in thy so genial heart, would have healed again, had not its life-warmth been withdrawn. Well might he exclaim, in his wild way: "Is there no God, then; but at best an absentee God, sitting idle, ever since the first Sabbath, at the outside of his Universe, and *seeing* it go? Has the word Duty no meaning; is what we call Duty no divine Messenger and Guide, but a false earthly Phantasm, made up of Desire and Fear, of emanations from the Gallows and from Doctor Graham's Celestial-Bed? Happiness of an approving Conscience! Did not Paul of Tarsus, whom admiring men have since named Saint, feel that *he* was 'the chief of sinners;' and Nero of Rome, jocund in spirit (*wohlgemuth*), spend much of his time in fiddling? Foolish Wordmonger and Motive-grinder, who in thy Logic-mill hast an earthly mechanism for the Godlike itself, and wouldst fain grind me out Virtue from the husks of Pleasure,—I tell thee, Nay! To the unregenerate Prometheus Vincit of a man, it is ever the bitterest aggravation of his wretchedness that he is conscious of Virtue, that he feels himself the victim not of suffering only, but of injustice. What then? Is the heroic inspiration we name Virtue but some Passion; some bubble of the blood, bubbling in the direction others *profit* by? I know not: only this I know, If what thou namest Happiness be our true aim, then are we all astray.

More of the utilitarian critique. He questions how humans could ever become virtuous if all they seek is happiness. He puns on James Mill's name, "thy Logic-mill." Furthermore, he casts doubt on the idea of the "watchmaker" god who plans the entire universe like building a watch, winds it up, and then watches from a transcendent position.

With Stupidity and sound Digestion man may front much. But what, in these dull unimaginative days, are the terrors of Conscience to the diseases of the Liver! Not on Morality, but on Cookery, let us build our

stronghold: there brandishing our frying-pan, as censer, let us offer sweet incense to the Devil, and live at ease on the fat things he has provided for his Elect!"

Thus has the bewildered Wanderer to stand, as so many have done, shouting question after question into the Sibyl-cave of Destiny, and receive no Answer but an Echo. It is all a grim Desert, this once-fair world of his; wherein is heard only the howling of wild beasts, or the shrieks of despairing, hate-filled men; and no Pillar of Cloud by day, and no Pillar of Fire by night, any longer guides the Pilgrim. To such length has the spirit of Inquiry carried him. "But what boots it (*was that's*)?" cries he: "it is but the common lot in this era. Not having come to spiritual majority prior to the *Siecle de Louis Quinze*, and not being born purely a Loghead (*Dummkopf*), thou hadst no other outlook. The whole world is, like thee, sold to Unbelief; their old Temples of the Godhead, which for long have not been rain-proof, crumble down; and men ask now: Where is the Godhead; our eyes never saw him?"

Reflecting on a skeptical age.

Pitiful enough were it, for all these wild utterances, to call our Diogenes wicked. Unprofitable servants as we all are, perhaps at no era of his life was he more decisively the Servant of Goodness, the Servant of God, than even now when doubting God's existence. "One circumstance I note," says he: "after all the nameless woe that Inquiry, which for me, what it is not always, was genuine Love of Truth, had wrought me! I nevertheless still loved Truth, and would bate no jot of my allegiance to her. 'Truth!' I cried, 'though the Heavens crush me for following her: no Falsehood! though a whole celestial Lubberland were the price of Apostasy.' In conduct it was the same. Had a divine Messenger from the clouds, or miraculous Handwriting on the wall, convincingly proclaimed to me *This thou shalt do*, with what passionate readiness, as I often thought, would I have done it, had it been leaping into the infernal Fire. Thus, in spite of all Motive-grinders, and Mechanical Profit-and-Loss Philosophies, with the sick ophthalmia and hallucination they had brought on, was the Infinite nature of Duty still dimly present to me: living without God in the world, of God's light I was not utterly bereft; if my as yet sealed eyes, with their unspeakable longing, could nowhere see Him, nevertheless in my heart He was present, and His heaven-written Law still stood legible and sacred there."

Meanwhile, under all these tribulations, and temporal and spiritual destitutions, what must the Wanderer, in his silent soul, have endured! "The painfullest feeling," writes he, "is that of your own Feebleness (*Unkruff*); ever, as the English Milton says, to be weak is the true misery. And yet of your Strength there is and can be no clear feeling, save by what you have prospered in, by what you have done. Between vague wavering Capability and fixed indubitable Performance, what a difference! A certain inarticulate Self-consciousness dwells dimly in us; which only our Works can render articulate and decisively discernible. Our Works are the mirror wherein the spirit first sees its natural lineaments. Hence, too, the folly of that impossible Precept, *Know thyself*, till it be translated into this partially possible one, *Know what thou canst work at*. *This is the Victorian Age in a nutshell—do not strive to know yourself, but strive to know what you can work at. Works are visible remainders of the orientation of our lives.*

"But for me, so strangely unprosperous had I been, the net-result of my Workings amounted as yet simply to—Nothing. How then could I believe in my Strength, when there was as yet no mirror to see it in? Ever did this agitating, yet, as I now perceive, quite frivolous question, remain to me insoluble: Hast thou a certain Faculty, a certain Worth, such even as the most have not; or art thou the completest Dullard of these modern times? Alas, the fearful Unbelief is unbelief in yourself; and how could I believe? Had not my first, last Faith in myself, when even to me the Heavens seemed laid open, and I dared to love, been all too cruelly belied? The speculative Mystery of Life grew ever more mysterious to me: neither in the practical Mystery had I made the slightest progress, but been everywhere buffeted, foiled, and contemptuously cast out. A feeble unit in the middle of a threatening Infinitude, I seemed to have nothing given me but eyes, whereby to

discern my own wretchedness. Invisible yet impenetrable walls, as of Enchantment, divided me from all living: was there, in the wide world, any true bosom I could press trustfully to mine? O Heaven, No, there was none! I kept a lock upon my lips: why should I speak much with that shifting variety of so-called Friends, in whose withered, vain and too-hungry souls Friendship was but an incredible tradition? In such cases, your resource is to talk little, and that little mostly from the Newspapers. Now when I look back, it was a strange isolation I then lived in. The men and women around me, even speaking with me, were but Figures; I had, practically, forgotten that they were alive, that they were not merely automatic. In the midst of their crowded streets and assemblages, I walked solitary; and (except as it was my own heart, not another's, that I kept devouring) savage also, as the tiger in his jungle. Some comfort it would have been, could I, like a Faust, have fancied myself tempted and tormented of the Devil; for a Hell, as I imagine, without Life, though only diabolic Life, were more frightful: but in our age of Down-pulling and Disbelief, the very Devil has been pulled down, you cannot so much as believe in a Devil. To me the Universe was all void of Life, of Purpose, of Volition, even of Hostility: it was one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb. Oh, the vast, gloomy, solitary Golgotha, and Mill of Death! Why was the Living banished thither companionless, conscious? Why, if there is no Devil; nay, unless the Devil is your God?"

A prey incessantly to such corrosions, might not, moreover, as the worst aggravation to them, the iron constitution even of a Teufelsdröckh threaten to fail? We conjecture that he has known sickness; and, in spite of his locomotive habits, perhaps sickness of the chronic sort. Hear this, for example: "How beautiful to die of broken-heart, on Paper! Quite another thing in practice; every window of your Feeling, even of your Intellect, as it were, begrimed and mud-bespattered, so that no pure ray can enter; a whole Drug-shop in your inwards; the fordone soul drowning slowly in quagmires of Disgust!"

Putting all which external and internal miseries together, may we not find in the following sentences, quite in our Professor's still vein, significance enough? "From Suicide a certain after-shine (*Nachschein*) of Christianity withheld me: perhaps also a certain indolence of character; for, was not that a remedy I had at any time within reach? Often, however, was there a question present to me: Should some one now, at the turning of that corner, blow thee suddenly out of Space, into the other World, or other No-world, by pistol-shot,—how were it? On which ground, too, I have often, in sea-storms and sieged cities and other death-scenes, exhibited an imperturbability, which passed, falsely enough, for courage."

"So had it lasted," concludes the Wanderer, "so had it lasted, as in bitter protracted Death-agony, through long years. The heart within me, unvisited by any heavenly dew-drop, was smouldering in sulphurous, slow-consuming fire. Almost since earliest memory I had shed no tear; or once only when I, murmuring half-audibly, recited Faust's Death-song, that wild *Selig der den er im Siegesglanze findet* (Happy whom *he* finds in Battle's splendor), and thought that of this last Friend even I was not forsaken, that Destiny itself could not doom me not to die. Having no hope, neither had I any definite fear, were it of Man or of Devil: nay, I often felt as if it might be solacing, could the Arch-Devil himself, though in Tartarean terrors, but rise to me, that I might tell him a little of my mind. And yet, strangely enough, I lived in a continual, indefinite, pining fear; tremulous, pusillanimous, apprehensive of I knew not what: it seemed as if all things in the Heavens above and the Earth beneath would hurt me; as if the Heavens and the Earth were but boundless jaws of a devouring monster, wherein I, palpitating, waited to be devoured.

"Full of such humor, and perhaps the miserablest man in the whole French Capital or Suburbs, was I, one sultry Dog-day, after much perambulation, toiling along the dirty little *Rue Saint-Thomas de l'Enfer*, among civic rubbish enough, in a close atmosphere, and over pavements hot as Nebuchadnezzar's Furnace; whereby doubtless my spirits were little cheered; when, all at once, there rose a Thought in me, and I asked myself: 'What *art* thou afraid of? Wherefore, like a coward, dost thou forever pip and whimper, and go

cowering and trembling? Despicable biped! what is the sum-total of the worst that lies before thee? Death? Well, Death; and say the pangs of Tophet too, and all that the Devil and Man may, will or can do against thee! Hast thou not a heart; canst thou not suffer whatsoever it be; and, as a Child of Freedom, though outcast, trample Tophet itself under thy feet, while it consumes thee? Let it come, then; I will meet it and defy it! And as I so thought, there rushed like a stream of fire over my whole soul; and I shook base Fear away from me forever. I was strong, of unknown strength; a spirit, almost a god. Ever from that time, the temper of my misery was changed: not Fear or whining Sorrow was it, but Indignation and grim fire-eyed Defiance.

"Thus had the EVERLASTING NO (*das ewige Nein*) pealed authoritatively through all the recesses of my Being, of my ME; and then was it that my whole ME stood up, in native God-created majesty, and with emphasis recorded its Protest. Such a Protest, the most important transaction in Life, may that same Indignation and Defiance, in a psychological point of view, be fitly called. The Everlasting No had said: 'Behold, thou art fatherless, outcast, and the Universe is mine (the Devil's);' to which my whole Me now made answer: 'I am not thine, but Free, and forever hate thee!'

Teufelsdröckh does not give in to the nihilistic belief that nothing matters and nothing is important. He re-asserts his fundamental freedom and divine destiny. Note that Teufelsdröckh as the embodiment of German idealism can stand in for romantics during this phase—highlighting the drama of the self. We'll see in the next session how he rehabilitates himself with Victorian values.

"It is from this hour that I incline to date my Spiritual New-birth, or Baphometric Fire-baptism; perhaps I directly thereupon began to be a Man."

The Everlasting Yea

"Temptations in the Wilderness!" exclaims Teufelsdröckh, "Have we not all to be tried with such? Not so easily can the old Adam, lodged in us by birth, be dispossessed. Our Life is compassed round with Necessity; yet is the meaning of Life itself no other than Freedom, than Voluntary Force: thus have we a warfare; in the beginning, especially, a hard-fought battle. For the God-given mandate, *Work thou in Well-doing*, lies mysteriously written, in Promethean Prophetic Characters, in our hearts; and leaves us no rest, night or day, till it be deciphered and obeyed; till it burn forth, in our conduct, a visible, acted Gospel of Freedom. And as the clay-given mandate, *Eat thou and be filled*, at the same time persuasively proclaims itself through every nerve,—must not there be a confusion, a contest, before the better Influence can become the upper? *I have put up this phrase on a poster near my door at home so I and my children will be reminded of what's important, "Work thou in well-doing."* Notice he opposes this orientation to the utilitarian one "*eat thou and be filled.*" He notes that the inscription to do good work is etched into our hearts.

"To me nothing seems more natural than that the Son of Man, when such God-given mandate first prophetically stirs within him, and the Clay must now be vanquished or vanquish,—should be carried of the spirit into grim Solitudes, and there fronting the Tempter do grimmest battle with him; defiantly setting him at naught till he yield and fly. Name it as we choose: with or without visible Devil, whether in the natural Desert of rocks and sands, or in the populous moral Desert of selfishness and baseness,—to such Temptation are we all called. Unhappy if we are not! Unhappy if we are but Half-men, in whom that divine handwriting has never blazed forth, all-subduing, in true sun-splendor; but quivers dubiously amid meaner lights: or smoulders, in dull pain, in darkness, under earthly vapors!—Our Wilderness is the wide World in an Atheistic Century; our Forty Days are long years of suffering and fasting: nevertheless, to these also comes an

end. Yes, to me also was given, if not Victory, yet the consciousness of Battle, and the resolve to persevere therein while life or faculty is left. To me also, entangled in the enchanted forests, demon-peopled, doleful of sight and of sound, it was given, after weariest wanderings, to work out my way into the higher sunlit slopes—of that Mountain which has no summit, or whose summit is in Heaven only!"

He says elsewhere, under a less ambitious figure; as figures are, once for all, natural to him: "Has not thy Life been that of most sufficient men (*tuchtigen Manner*) thou hast known in this generation? An outflush of foolish young Enthusiasm, like the first fallow-crop, wherein are as many weeds as valuable herbs: this all parched away, under the Droughts of practical and spiritual Unbelief, as Disappointment, in thought and act, often-repeated gave rise to Doubt, and Doubt gradually settled into Denial! If I have had a second-crop, and now see the perennial greensward, and sit under umbrageous cedars, which defy all Drought (and Doubt); herein too, be the Heavens praised, I am not without examples, and even exemplars."

He refers above to the everlasting no.

So that, for Teufelsdröckh, also, there has been a "glorious revolution:" these mad shadow-hunting and shadow-hunted Pilgrimages of his were but some purifying "Temptation in the Wilderness," before his apostolic work (such as it was) could begin; which Temptation is now happily over, and the Devil once more worsted! Was "that high moment in the *Rue de l'Enfer*," then, properly the turning-point of the battle; when the Fiend said, *Worship me, or be torn in shreds*; and was answered valiantly with an *Apote Satana*?—Singular Teufelsdröckh, would thou hadst told thy singular story in plain words! But it is fruitless to look there, in those Paper-bags, for such. Nothing but innuendoes, figurative crotchets: a typical Shadow, fitfully wavering, prophetic-satiric; no clear logical Picture. "How paint to the sensual eye," asks he once, "what passes in the Holy-of-Holies of Man's Soul; in what words, known to these profane times, speak even afar-off of the unspeakable?" We ask in turn: Why perplex these times, profane as they are, with needless obscurity, by omission and by commission? Not mystical only is our Professor, but whimsical; and involves himself, now more than ever, in eye-bewildering *chiaroscuro*. Successive glimpses, here faithfully imparted, our more gifted readers must endeavor to combine for their own behoof.

The above is the editor commenting on Teufelsdröckh's state.

He says: "The hot Harmattan wind had raged itself out; its howl went silent within me; and the long-deafened soul could now hear. I paused in my wild wanderings; and sat me down to wait, and consider; for it was as if the hour of change drew nigh. I seemed to surrender, to renounce utterly, and say: Fly, then, false shadows of Hope; I will chase you no more, I will believe you no more. And ye too, haggard spectres of Fear, I care not for you; ye too are all shadows and a lie. Let me rest here: for I am way-weary and life-weary; I will rest here, were it but to die: to die or to live is alike to me; alike insignificant."—And again: "Here, then, as I lay in that CENTRE OF INDIFFERENCE; cast, doubtless by benignant upper Influence, into a healing sleep, the heavy dreams rolled gradually away, and I awoke to a new Heaven and a new Earth. The first preliminary moral Act, Annihilation of Self (*Selbst-tödtung*), had been happily accomplished; and my mind's eyes were now unsealed, and its hands ungyved."

Might we not also conjecture that the following passage refers to his Locality, during this same "healing sleep;" that his Pilgrim-staff lies cast aside here, on "the high table-land;" and indeed that the repose is already taking wholesome effect on him? If it were not that the tone, in some parts, has more of riancy, even of levity, than we could have expected! However, in Teufelsdröckh, there is always the strangest Dualism: light dancing, with guitar-music, will be going on in the fore-court, while by fits from within comes the faint whimpering of woe and wail. We transcribe the piece entire.

"Beautiful it was to sit there, as in my skyey Tent, musing and meditating; on the high table-land, in front of the Mountains; over me, as roof, the azure Dome, and around me, for walls, four azure-flowing curtains,—namely, of the Four azure Winds, on whose bottom-fringes also I have seen gilding. And then to

fancy the fair Castles that stood sheltered in these Mountain hollows; with their green flower-lawns, and white dames and damosels, lovely enough: or better still, the straw-roofed Cottages, wherein stood many a Mother baking bread, with her children round her:—all hidden and protectingly folded up in the valley-folds; yet there and alive, as sure as if I beheld them. Or to see, as well as fancy, the nine Towns and Villages, that lay round my mountain-seat, which, in still weather, were wont to speak to me (by their steeple-bells) with metal tongue; and, in almost all weather, proclaimed their vitality by repeated Smoke-clouds; whereon, as on a culinary horologe, I might read the hour of the day. For it was the smoke of cookery, as kind housewives at morning, midday, eventide, were boiling their husbands' kettles; and ever a blue pillar rose up into the air, successively or simultaneously, from each of the nine, saying, as plainly as smoke could say: Such and such a meal is getting ready here. Not uninteresting! For you have the whole Borough, with all its love-makings and scandal-mongeries, contentions and contentments, as in miniature, and could cover it all with your hat.—If, in my wide Way-farings, I had learned to look into the business of the World in its details, here perhaps was the place for combining it into general propositions, and deducing inferences therefrom.

Before he is completely "made over" he has time for romantic musings in a tent overlooking the inspirations of nature. The scene could be from Wordsworth.

"Often also could I see the black Tempest marching in anger through the Distance: round some Schreckhorn, as yet grim-blue, would the eddying vapor gather, and there tumultuously eddy, and flow down like a mad witch's hair; till, after a space, it vanished, and, in the clear sunbeam, your Schreckhorn stood smiling grim-white, for the vapor had held snow. How thou fermentest and elaboratest, in thy great fermenting-vat and laboratory of an Atmosphere, of a World, O Nature!—Or what is Nature? Ha! why do I not name thee GOD? Art not thou the 'Living Garment of God'? O Heavens, is it, in very deed, HE, then, that ever speaks through thee; that lives and loves in thee, that lives and loves in me?

He begins to see nature as the living garments of god.

"Fore-shadows, call them rather fore-splendors, of that Truth, and Beginning of Truths, fell mysteriously over my soul. Sweeter than Dayspring to the Shipwrecked in Nova Zembla; ah, like the mother's voice to her little child that strays bewildered, weeping, in unknown tumults; like soft streamings of celestial music to my too-exasperated heart, came that Evangel. The Universe is not dead and demoniacal, a charnel-house with spectres; but godlike, and my Father's!

"With other eyes, too, could I now look upon my fellowman: with an infinite Love, an infinite Pity. Poor, wandering, wayward man! Art thou not tried, and beaten with stripes, even as I am? Ever, whether thou bear the royal mantle or the beggar's gabardine, art thou not so weary, so heavy-laden; and thy Bed of Rest is but a Grave. O my Brother, my Brother, why cannot I shelter thee in my bosom, and wipe away all tears from thy eyes!—Truly, the din of many-voiced Life, which, in this solitude, with the mind's organ, I could hear, was no longer a maddening discord, but a melting one; like inarticulate cries, and sobbings of a dumb creature, which in the ear of Heaven are prayers. The poor Earth, with her poor joys, was now my needy Mother, not my cruel Stepdame; Man, with his so mad Wants and so mean Endeavors, had become the dearer to me; and even for his sufferings and his sins, I now first named him Brother. Thus was I standing in the porch of that 'Sanctuary of Sorron;' by strange, steep ways had I too been guided thither; and ere long its sacred gates would open, and the 'Divine Depth of Sorron' lie disclosed to me."

In recognizing the creation of god in nature, he is able to see his fellow man in an enlightened way.

The Professor says, he here first got eye on the Knot that had been strangling him, and straightway could unfasten it, and was free. "A vain interminable controversy," writes he, "touching what is at present called Origin of Evil, or some such thing, arises in every soul, since the beginning of the world; and in every soul, that would pass from idle Suffering into actual Endeavoring, must first be put an end to. The most, in our time, have to go content with a simple, incomplete enough Suppression of this controversy; to a few

some Solution of it is indispensable. In every new era, too, such Solution comes out in different terms; and ever the Solution of the last era has become obsolete, and is found unserviceable. For it is man's nature to change his Dialect from century to century; he cannot help it though he would. The authentic *Church-Catechism* of our present century has not yet fallen into my hands: meanwhile, for my own private behoof I attempt to elucidate the matter so. Man's Unhappiness, as I construe, comes of his Greatness; it is because there is an Infinite in him, which with all his cunning he cannot quite bury under the Finite. Will the whole Finance Ministers and Upholsterers and Confectioners of modern Europe undertake, in joint-stock company, to make one Shoeblack HAPPY? They cannot accomplish it, above an hour or two: for the Shoeblack also has a Soul quite other than his Stomach; and would require, if you consider it, for his permanent satisfaction and saturation, simply this allotment, no more, and no less: *God's infinite Universe altogether to himself*, therein to enjoy infinitely, and fill every wish as fast as it rose. Oceans of Hochheimer, a Throat like that of Ophiuchus: speak not of them; to the infinite Shoeblack they are as nothing. No sooner is your ocean filled, than he grumbles that it might have been of better vintage. Try him with half of a Universe, of an Omnipotence, he sets to quarrelling with the proprietor of the other half, and declares himself the most maltreated of men.—Always there is a black spot in our sunshine: it is even, as I said, the *Shadow of Ourselves*.

"But the whim we have of Happiness is somewhat thus. By certain valuations, and averages, of our own striking, we come upon some sort of average terrestrial lot; this we fancy belongs to us by nature, and of indefeasible right. It is simple payment of our wages, of our deserts; requires neither thanks nor complaint; only such *overplus* as there may be do we account Happiness; any *deficit* again is Misery. Now consider that we have the valuation of our own deserts ourselves, and what a fund of Self-conceit there is in each of us,—do you wonder that the balance should so often dip the wrong way, and many a Blockhead cry: See there, what a payment; was ever worthy gentleman so used!—I tell thee, Blockhead, it all comes of thy Vanity; of what thou *fanciest* those same deserts of thine to be. Fancy that thou deservest to be hanged (as is most likely), thou wilt feel it happiness to be only shot: fancy that thou deservest to be hanged in a hair-halter, it will be a luxury to die in hemp.

"So true is it, what I then said, that *the Fraction of Life can be increased in value not so much by increasing your Numerator as by lessening your Denominator*. Nay, unless my Algebra deceive me, *Unity* itself divided by *Zero* will give *Infinity*. Make thy claim of wages a zero, then; thou hast the world under thy feet. Well did the Wisest of our time write: 'It is only with Renunciation (*Entsagen*) that Life, properly speaking, can be said to begin.'

"I asked myself: What is this that, ever since earliest years, thou hast been fretting and fuming, and lamenting and self-tormenting, on account of? Say it in a word: is it not because thou art not HAPPY? Because the THOU (sweet gentleman) is not sufficiently honored, nourished, soft-bedded, and lovingly cared for? Foolish soul! What Act of Legislature was there that *thou* shouldst be Happy? A little while ago thou hadst no right to *be* at all. What if thou wert born and predestined not to be Happy, but to be Unhappy! Art thou nothing other than a Vulture, then, that fliest through the Universe seeking after somewhat to *eat*; and shrieking dolefully because carrion enough is not given thee? Close thy *Byron*; open thy *Goethe*."

The end of this is a repudiation of romanticism ("close thy Byron") as well as a continuing critique of utilitarianism. If life is an elaborate calculation, then diminish your expectations (the denominator), your desires, and the numerator, what you get out of life, will increase. The closer you get to zero, the greater your fulfillment becomes. Try it. This actually works.

"*Es leuchtet mir ein*, I see a glimpse of it!" cries he elsewhere: "there is in man a HIGHER than Love of Happiness: he can do without Happiness, and instead thereof find Blessedness! Was it not to preach forth this same HIGHER that sages and martyrs, the Poet and the Priest, in all times, have spoken and suffered; bearing testimony, through life and through death, of the Godlike that is in Man, and how in the Godlike only has he Strength and Freedom? Which God-inspired Doctrine art thou also honored to be taught; O Heavens! and broken with manifold merciful Afflictions, even till thou become contrite and learn it! Oh,

thank thy Destiny for these; thankfully bear what yet remain: thou hadst need of them; the Self in thee needed to be annihilated. By benignant fever-paroxysms is Life rooting out the deep-seated chronic Disease, and triumphs over Death. On the roaring billows of Time, thou art not engulfed, but borne aloft into the azure of Eternity. Love not Pleasure; love God. This is the EVERLASTING YEA, wherein all contradiction is solved: wherein whoso walks and works, it is well with him."

And again: "Small is it that thou canst trample the Earth with its injuries under thy feet, as old Greek Zeno trained thee: thou canst love the Earth while it injures thee, and even because it injures thee; for this a Greater than Zeno was needed, and he too was sent. Knowest thou that '*Worship of Sorron*'? The Temple thereof, founded some eighteen centuries ago, now lies in ruins, overgrown with jungle, the habitation of doleful creatures: nevertheless, venture forward; in a low crypt, arched out of falling fragments, thou findest the Altar still there, and its sacred Lamp perennially burning."

Without pretending to comment on which strange utterances, the Editor will only remark, that there lies beside them much of a still more questionable character; unsuited to the general apprehension; nay wherein he himself does not see his way. Nebulous disquisitions on Religion, yet not without bursts of splendor; on the "perennial continuance of Inspiration;" on Prophecy; that there are "true Priests, as well as Baal-Priests, in our own day:" with more of the like sort. We select some fractions, by way of finish to this farrago.

"Cease, my much-respected Herr von Voltaire," thus apostrophizes the Professor: "shut thy sweet voice; for the task appointed thee seems finished. Sufficiently hast thou demonstrated this proposition, considerable or otherwise: That the Mythos of the Christian Religion looks not in the eighteenth century as it did in the eighth. Alas, were thy six-and-thirty quartos, and the six-and-thirty thousand other quartos and folios, and flying sheets or reams, printed before and since on the same subject, all needed to convince us of so little! But what next? Wilt thou help us to embody the divine Spirit of that Religion in a new Mythos, in a new vehicle and vesture, that our Souls, otherwise too like perishing, may live? What! thou hast no faculty in that kind? Only a torch for burning, no hammer for building? Take our thanks, then, and—thysself away. "Meanwhile what are antiquated Mythuses to me? Or is the God present, felt in my own heart, a thing which Herr von Voltaire will dispute out of me; or dispute into me? To the '*Worship of Sorron*' ascribe what origin and genesis thou pleasest, *has* not that Worship originated, and been generated; is it not *here*? Feel it in thy heart, and then say whether it is of God! This is Belief; all else is Opinion,—for which latter whoso will, let him worry and be worried."

"Neither," observes he elsewhere, "shall ye tear out one another's eyes, struggling over 'Plenary Inspiration,' and such like: try rather to get a little even Partial Inspiration, each of you for himself. One BIBLE I know, of whose Plenary Inspiration doubt is not so much as possible; nay with my own eyes I saw the God's-Hand writing it: thereof all other Bibles are but Leaves,—say, in Picture-Writing to assist the weaker faculty."

Or, to give the wearied reader relief, and bring it to an end, let him take the following perhaps more intelligible passage:—

"To me, in this our life," says the Professor, "which is an internecine warfare with the Time-spirit, other warfare seems questionable. Hast thou in any way a contention with thy brother, I advise thee, think well what the meaning thereof is. If thou gauge it to the bottom, it is simply this: 'Fellow, see! thou art taking more than thy share of Happiness in the world, something from my share: which, by the Heavens, thou shalt not; nay I will fight thee rather.'—Alas, and the whole lot to be divided is such a beggarly matter, truly a 'feast of shells,' for the substance has been spilled out: not enough to quench one Appetite; and the collective human species clutching at them!—Can we not, in all such cases, rather say: 'Take it, thou too-ravenous individual; take that pitiful additional fraction of a share, which I reckoned mine, but which thou so wantest;

take it with a blessing: would to Heaven I had enough for thee!"—If Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* be, 'to a certain extent, Applied Christianity,' surely to a still greater extent, so is this. We have here not a Whole Duty of Man, yet a Half Duty, namely the Passive half: could we but do it, as we can demonstrate it!

"But indeed Conviction, were it never so excellent, is worthless till it convert itself into Conduct. Nay properly Conviction is not possible till then; inasmuch as all Speculation is by nature endless, formless, a vortex amid vortices, only by a felt indubitable certainty of Experience does it find any centre to revolve round, and so fashion itself into a system. Most true is it, as a wise man teaches us, that 'Doubt of any sort cannot be removed except by Action.' On which ground, too, let him who gropes painfully in darkness or uncertain light, and prays vehemently that the dawn may ripen into day, lay this other precept well to heart, which to me was of invaluable service: '*Do the Duty which lies nearest thee,*' which thou knowest to be a Duty! Thy second Duty will already have become clearer.

He is rehabilitating duty from a society where god has decreasing power to motivate the soul.

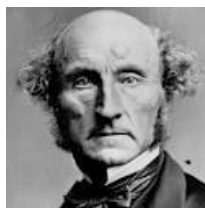
"May we not say, however, that the hour of Spiritual Enfranchisement is even this: When your Ideal World, wherein the whole man has been dimly struggling and inexpressibly languishing to work, becomes revealed, and thrown open; and you discover, with amazement enough, like the Lothario in *Wilhelm Meister*, that your 'America is here or nowhere'? The Situation that has not its Duty, its Ideal, was never yet occupied by man. Yes here, in this poor, miserable, hampered, despicable Actual, wherein thou even now standest, here or nowhere is thy Ideal: work it out therefrom; and working, believe, live, be free. Fool! the Ideal is in thyself, the impediment too is in thyself: thy Condition is but the stuff thou art to shape that same Ideal out of: what matters whether such stuff be of this sort or that, so the Form thou give it be heroic, be poetic? O thou that pinest in the imprisonment of the Actual, and criest bitterly to the gods for a kingdom wherein to rule and create, know this of a truth: the thing thou seekest is already with thee, 'here or nowhere,' couldst thou only see!

"But it is with man's Soul as it was with Nature: the beginning of Creation is—Light. Till the eye have vision, the whole members are in bonds. Divine moment, when over the tempest-tost Soul, as once over the wild-weltering Chaos, it is spoken: Let there be Light! Ever to the greatest that has felt such moment, is it not miraculous and God-announcing; even as, under simpler figures, to the simplest and least. The mad primeval Discord is hushed; the rudely jumbled conflicting elements bind themselves into separate Firmaments: deep silent rock-foundations are built beneath; and the skyey vault with its everlasting Luminaries above: instead of a dark wasteful Chaos, we have a blooming, fertile, heaven-encompassed World.

"I too could now say to myself: Be no longer a Chaos, but a World, or even Worldkin. Produce! Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product, produce it, in God's name! 'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee: out with it, then. Up, up! Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might. Work while it is called To-day; for the Night cometh, wherein no man can work."

Yes! This is the ultimate Victorian formulation—work and produce!

Liberty and Female Subjection



John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) was one of the leading philosophers and influential thinkers of the Victorian age. He was educated by his father, James Mill, one of the founders of utilitarianism and he achieved astounding scholarly success by the age of 14. later in life he suffered a personal crisis (much like our friend

Teufelsdröckh) brought on by the impersonal ethics of utilitarianism. He spent the rest of his life writing philosophy and working on progressive causes.

On Liberty

In this essay near to my heart, Mill argues that the danger to freedom does not always come from dictators but from the tyranny of the majority, where the pressure to conform is so great it snuffs out creativity and originality. A society that caters to the middle, he claims, is a moribund society. Long live the eccentric!

Few persons, out of Germany, even comprehend the meaning of the doctrine which Wilhelm von Humboldt, so eminent both as a *savant* and as a politician, made the text of a treatise—that "the end of man, or that which is prescribed by the eternal or immutable dictates of reason, and not suggested by vague and transient desires, is the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole;" that, therefore, the object "towards which every human being must ceaselessly direct his efforts, and on which especially those who design to influence their fellow-men must ever keep their eyes, is the individuality of power and development;" that for this there are two requisites, "freedom, and a variety of situations;" and that from the union of these arise "individual vigour and manifold diversity," which combine themselves in "originality."

Mill claims (like Carlyle) that the goal of every individual is to develop the self. The two things that help to develop the self are freedom and variety of situations. Diversity is essential.

Little, however, as people are accustomed to a doctrine like that of Von Humboldt, and surprising as it may be to them to find so high a value attached to individuality, the question, one must nevertheless think, can only be one of degree. No one's idea of excellence in conduct is that people should do absolutely nothing but copy one another. No one would assert that people ought not to put into their mode of life, and into the conduct of their concerns, any impress whatever of their own judgment, or of their own individual character. On the other hand, it would be absurd to pretend that people ought to live as if nothing whatever had been known in the world before they came into it; as if experience had as yet done nothing towards showing that one mode of existence, or of conduct, is preferable to another. Nobody denies that people should be so taught and trained in youth, as to know and benefit by the ascertained results of human experience. But it is the privilege and proper condition of a human being, arrived at the maturity of his faculties, to use and interpret experience in his own way. It is for him to find out what part of recorded experience is properly applicable to his own circumstances and character. The traditions and customs of other people are, to a certain extent, evidence of what their experience has taught *them*; presumptive evidence, and as such, have a claim to his deference: but, in the first place, their experience may be too narrow; or they may not have interpreted it rightly. Secondly, their interpretation of experience may be correct, but unsuitable to him. Customs are made for customary circumstances, and customary characters: and his circumstances or his character may be uncustomary. Thirdly, though the customs be both good as customs, and suitable to him, yet to conform to custom, merely *as* custom, does not educate or develop in him any of the qualities which are the distinctive endowment of a human being. The human faculties of perception, judgment, discriminative feeling, mental activity, and even moral preference, are exercised only in making a choice. He who does anything because it is the custom, makes no choice. He gains no practice either in discerning or in desiring what is best. The mental and moral, like the muscular powers, are improved only by being used. The faculties are called into no exercise by doing a thing merely because others do it, no more than by believing a thing only because others believe it. If the grounds of an opinion are not conclusive to the person's own reason, his act are not such as are consentaneous to his own feelings and character (where affection, or the rights of

others, are not concerned), it is so much done towards rendering his feelings and character inert and torpid, instead of active and energetic.

There are a number of important points in this paragraph and they have to do with the problems of following customs or acting in the customary way. First, customs might be based on too narrow an experience. Second, customs may be good for Joe but terrible for Mary. Third, the only way you develop the self is through exercising your action in moral decision making. If you let the customs decide for you, you are becoming morally weak.

He who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation. He who chooses his plan for himself, employs all his faculties. He must use observation to see, reasoning and judgment to foresee, activity to gather materials for decision, discrimination to decide, and when he has decided, firmness and self-control to hold to his deliberate decision. And these qualities he requires and exercises exactly in proportion as the part of his conduct which he determines according to his own judgment and feelings is a large one. It is possible that he might be guided in some good path, and kept out of harm's way, without any of these things. But what will be his comparative worth as a human being? It really is of importance, not only what men do, but also what manner of men they are that do it. Among the works of man, which human life is rightly employed in perfecting and beautifying, the first in importance surely is man himself. Supposing it were possible to get houses built, corn grown, battles fought, causes tried, and even churches erected and prayers said, by machinery—by automatons in human form—it would be a considerable loss to exchange for these automatons even the men and women who at present inhabit the more civilised parts of the world, and who assuredly are but starved specimens of what nature can and will produce. Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing.

The goal is to grow and develop not blindly follow rules. What would William Blake say about this?

It will probably be conceded that it is desirable people should exercise their understandings, and that an intelligent following of custom, or even occasionally an intelligent deviation from custom, is better than a blind and simply mechanical adhesion to it. To a certain extent it is admitted, that our understanding should be our own: but there is not the same willingness to admit that our desires and impulses should be our own likewise; or that to possess impulses of our own, and of any strength, is anything but a peril and a snare. Yet desires and impulses are as much a part of a perfect human being, as beliefs and restraints: and strong impulses are only perilous when not properly balanced; when one set of aims and inclinations is developed into strength, while others, which ought to co-exist with them, remain weak and inactive. It is not because men's desires are strong that they act ill; it is because their consciences are weak.

Another point that Blake would agree with. It is not desires themselves that are wrong and need to be snuffed out but the conscience needs to be strengthened and remember, the conscience is not strengthened by following custom

There is no natural connection between strong impulses and a weak conscience. The natural connection is the other way. To say that one person's desires and feelings are stronger and more various than those of another, is merely to say that he has more of the raw material of human nature, and is therefore capable, perhaps of more evil, but certainly of more good. Strong impulses are but another name for energy. Energy may be turned to bad uses; but more good may always be made of an energetic nature, than of an indolent and impassive one.

Energy is the goal here, develop energy because even though energy can be turned toward ill goals, nothing gets done without it.

Those who have most natural feeling, are always those whose cultivated feelings may be made the strongest. The same strong susceptibilities which make the personal impulses vivid and powerful, are also the source from whence are generated the most passionate love of virtue, and the sternest self-control. It is through the cultivation of these, that society both does its duty and protects its interests: not by rejecting the stuff of which heroes are made, because it knows not how to make them. A person whose desires and impulses are his own—are the expression of his own nature, as it has been developed and modified by his own culture—is said to have a character. One whose desires and impulses are not his own, has no character, no more than a steam-engine has a character. If, in addition to being his own, his impulses are strong, and are under the government of a strong will, he has an energetic character. Whoever thinks that individuality of desires and impulses should not be encouraged to unfold itself, must maintain that society has no need of strong natures—is not the better for containing many persons who have much character—and that a high general average of energy is not desirable.

The goal is to develop character.

What follows here is part of the Hegelian dialectic of history that will reappear at the end of selection as well. He argues that as civilizations develop, they might have to start out with a strong central authority because of the wildness still in people but as societies develop, they need less and less power controlling them from without.

In some early states of society, these forces might be, and were, too much ahead of the power which society then possessed of disciplining and controlling them. There has been a time when the element of spontaneity and individuality was in excess, and the social principle had a hard struggle with it. The difficulty then was, to induce men of strong bodies or minds to pay obedience to any rules which required them to control their impulses. To overcome this difficulty, law and discipline, like the Popes struggling against the Emperors, asserted a power over the whole man, claiming to control all his life in order to control his character—which society had not found any other sufficient means of binding. But society has now fairly got the better of individuality; and the danger which threatens human nature is not the excess, but the deficiency, of personal impulses and preferences. Things are vastly changed, since the passions of those who were strong by station or by personal endowment were in a state of habitual rebellion against laws and ordinances, and required to be rigorously chained up to enable the persons within their reach to enjoy any particle of security. In our times, from the highest class of society down to the lowest, every one lives as under the eye of a hostile and dreaded censorship. Not only in what concerns others, but in what concerns only themselves, the individual, or the family, do not ask themselves—what do I prefer? or, what would suit my character and disposition? or, what would allow the best and highest in me to have fair-play, and enable it to grow and thrive? They ask themselves, what is suitable to my position? what is usually done by persons of my station and pecuniary circumstances? or (worse still) what is usually done by persons of a station and circumstances superior to mine? I do not mean that they choose what is customary, in preference to what suits their own inclination. It does not occur to them to have any inclination, except for what is customary. Thus the mind itself is bowed to the yoke: even in what people do for pleasure, conformity is the first thing thought of; they like in crowds; they exercise choice only among things commonly done: peculiarity of taste, eccentricity of conduct, are shunned equally with crimes: until by dint of not following their own nature, they have no nature to follow: their human capacities are withered and starved: they become incapable of any strong wishes or native pleasures, and are generally without either opinions or feelings of home growth, or properly their own. Now is this, or is it not, the desirable condition of human nature?

Critical point—once people put too much emphasis on conformity what others do, even in their spare time, for pleasure and does not hurt anyone else, is looked down on as a crime. Can you think of any examples where this is still true?

It is so, on the Calvinistic theory. According to that, the one great offence of man is Self-will. All the good of which humanity is capable, is comprised in Obedience. You have no choice; thus you must do, and no otherwise: "whatever is not a duty, is a sin." Human nature being radically corrupt, there is no redemption for any one until human nature is killed within him. To one holding this theory of life, crushing out any of the human faculties, capacities, and susceptibilities, is no evil: man needs no capacity, but that of surrendering himself to the will of God: and if he uses any of his faculties for any other purpose but to do that supposed will more effectually, he is better without them.

Mill traces this crushing conformity to Calvinism which asserts that anything done that is not done out of duty is sinful. Because human beings are radically corrupt from original sin, the self must be extinguished instead of developed.

That is the theory of Calvinism; and it is held, in a mitigated form, by many who do not consider themselves Calvinists; the mitigation consisting in giving a less ascetic interpretation to the alleged will of God; asserting it to be his will that mankind should gratify some of their inclinations; of course not in the manner they themselves prefer, but in the way of obedience, that is, in a way prescribed to them by authority; and, therefore, by the necessary conditions of the case, the same for all.

In some such insidious form there is at present a strong tendency to this narrow theory of life, and to the pinched and hidebound type of human character which it patronises. Many persons, no doubt, sincerely think that human beings thus cramped and dwarfed, are as their Maker designed them to be; just as many have thought that trees are a much finer thing when clipped into pollards, or cut out into figures of animals, than as nature made them. But if it be any part of religion to believe that man was made by a good being, it is more consistent with that faith to believe, that this Being gave all human faculties that they might be cultivated and unfolded, not rooted out and consumed, and that he takes delight in every nearer approach made by his creatures to the ideal conception embodied in them, every increase in any of their capabilities of comprehension, of action, or of enjoyment. There is a different type of human excellence from the Calvinistic; a conception of humanity as having its nature bestowed on it for other purposes than merely to be abnegated. "Pagan self-assertion" is one of the elements of human worth, as well as "Christian self-denial." There is a Greek ideal of self-development, which the Platonic and Christian ideal of self-government blends with, but does not supersede. It may be better to be a John Knox than an Alcibiades, but it is better to be a Pericles than either; nor would a Pericles, if we had one in these days, be without anything good which belonged to John Knox.

Dichotomy alert! *Here is an important dichotomy that will show up again in our discussions. Remember the Hegelian notion of historical dialectic. Here is another version. Mill breaks social force into two poles—Christian Self-denial and Pagan Self-assertion. Christian self-denial is the Calvinistic notion that the self must be snuffed out, denied. Pagan self-assertion is taken from the Greek ideal that the goal of the human is to develop the self ideally. Mill claims that in England there is too much self-denial and not enough self-assertion.*

It is not by wearing down into uniformity all that is individual in themselves, but by cultivating it and calling it forth, within the limits imposed by the rights and interests of others, that human beings become a noble and beautiful object of contemplation; and as the works partake the character of those who do them, by the same process human life also becomes rich, diversified, and animating, furnishing more abundant aliment to high thoughts and elevating feelings, and strengthening the tie which binds every individual to the race, by making the race infinitely better worth belonging to. In proportion to the development of his individuality, each person becomes more valuable to himself, and is therefore capable of being more valuable to others. There is a greater fulness of life about his own existence, and when there is more life in the units

there is more in the mass which is composed of them. As much compression as is necessary to prevent the stronger specimens of human nature from encroaching on the rights of others, cannot be dispensed with; but for this there is ample compensation even in the point of view of human development. The means of development which the individual loses by being prevented from gratifying his inclinations to the injury of others, are chiefly obtained at the expense of the development of other people. And even to himself there is a full equivalent in the better development of the social part of his nature, rendered possible by the restraint put upon the selfish part. To be held to rigid rules of justice for the sake of others, develops the feelings and capacities which have the good of others for their object. But to be restrained in things not affecting their good, by their mere displeasure, develops nothing valuable, except such force of character as may unfold itself in resisting the restraint. If acquiesced in, it dulls and blunts the whole nature. To give any fair-play to the nature of each, it is essential that different persons should be allowed to lead different lives. In proportion as this latitude has been exercised in any age, has that age been noteworthy to posterity. Even despotism does not produce its worst effects, so long as Individuality exists under it; and whatever crushes individuality is despotism, by whatever name it may be called, and whether it professes to be enforcing the will of God or the injunctions of men.

Mill says that anything that crushes individuality and takes away personal liberty is despotism whether the despot is god or human.

Having said that Individuality is the same thing with development, and that it is only the cultivation of individuality which produces, or can produce, well-developed human beings, I might here close the argument: for what more or better can be said of any condition of human affairs, than that it brings human beings themselves nearer to the best thing they can be? or what worse can be said of any obstruction to good, than that it prevents this? Doubtless, however, these considerations will not suffice to convince those who most need convincing; and it is necessary further to show, that these developed human beings are of some use to the undeveloped—to point out to those who do not desire liberty, and would not avail themselves of it, that they may be in some intelligible manner rewarded for allowing other people to make use of it without hindrance.

In the first place, then, I would suggest that they might possibly learn something from them. It will not be denied by anybody, that originality is a valuable element in human affairs. There is always need of persons not only to discover new truths, and point out when what were once truths are true no longer, but also to commence new practices, and set the example of more enlightened conduct, and better taste and sense in human life. This cannot well be gainsaid by anybody who does not believe that the world has already attained perfection in all its ways and practices. It is true that this benefit is not capable of being rendered by everybody alike: there are but few persons, in comparison with the whole of mankind, whose experiments, if adopted by others, would be likely to be any improvement on established practice. But these few are the salt of the earth; without them, human life would become a stagnant pool. Not only is it they who introduce good things which did not before exist; it is they who keep the life in those which already existed. If there were nothing new to be done, would human intellect cease to be necessary? Would it be a reason why those who do the old things should forget why they are done, and do them like cattle, not like human beings? There is only too great a tendency in the best beliefs and practices to degenerate into the mechanical; and unless there were a succession of persons whose ever-recurring originality prevents the grounds of those beliefs and practices from becoming merely traditional, such dead matter would not resist the smallest shock from anything really alive, and there would be no reason why civilisation should not die out, as in the Byzantine Empire. Persons of genius, it is true, are, and are always likely to be, a small minority; but in order to have them, it is necessary to preserve the soil in which they grow. Genius can only breathe freely in an *atmosphere* of

freedom. Persons of genius are, *ex vi termini*, more individual than any other people—less capable, consequently, of fitting themselves, without hurtful compression, into any of the small number of moulds which society provides in order to save its members the trouble of forming their own character. If from timidity they consent to be forced into one of these moulds, and to let all that part of themselves which cannot expand under the pressure remain unexpanded, society will be little the better for their genius. If they are of a strong character, and break their fetters, they become a mark for the society which has not succeeded in reducing them to commonplace, to point at with solemn warning as "wild," "erratic," and the like; much as if one should complain of the Niagara river for not flowing smoothly between its banks like a Dutch canal. I insist thus emphatically on the importance of genius, and the necessity of allowing it to unfold itself freely both in thought and in practice, being well aware that no one will deny the position in theory, but knowing also that almost every one, in reality, is totally indifferent to it. People think genius a fine thing if it enables a man to write an exciting poem, or paint a picture. But in its true sense, that of originality in thought and action, though no one says that it is not a thing to be admired, nearly all, at heart, think that they can do very well without it. Unhappily this is too natural to be wondered at. Originality is the one thing which unoriginal minds cannot feel the use of. They cannot see what it is to do for them: how should they? If they could see what it would do for them, it would not be originality. The first service which originality has to render them, is that of opening their eyes: which being once fully done, they would have a chance of being themselves original. Meanwhile, recollecting that nothing was ever yet done which some one was not the first to do, and that all good things which exist are the fruits of originality, let them be modest enough to believe that there is something still left for it to accomplish, and assure themselves that they are more in need of originality, the less they are conscious of the want.

This hits close to home in our culture. Mill argues that geniuses move society forward and are responsible for progress in the arts and commerce. Genius only flowers he says in an atmosphere of freedom. Furthermore, and this is true, people who follow custom and are unoriginal, do not understand originality! Did you ever hear someone say, "Well that's different" and knew that it was clearly an insult? "Different" is associated with "bad."

In sober truth, whatever homage may be professed, or even paid, to real or supposed mental superiority, the general tendency of things throughout the world is to render mediocrity the ascendant power among mankind. In ancient history, in the middle ages, and in a diminishing degree through the long transition from feudality to the present time, the individual was a power in himself; and if he had either great talents or a high social position, he was a considerable power. At present individuals are lost in the crowd. In politics it is almost a triviality to say that public opinion now rules the world. The only power deserving the name is that of masses, and of governments while they make themselves the organ of the tendencies and instincts of masses. This is as true in the moral and social relations of private life as in public transactions. Those whose opinions go by the name of public opinion, are not always the same sort of public: in America they are the whole white population; in England, chiefly the middle class. But they are always a mass, that is to say, collective mediocrity. And what is a still greater novelty, the mass do not now take their opinions from dignitaries in Church or State, from ostensible leaders, or from books. Their thinking is done for them by men much like themselves, addressing them or speaking in their name, on the spur of the moment, through the newspapers.

How has mass communication made this even easier to do? What about our obsession with celebrities of all kinds?

I am not complaining of all this. I do not assert that anything better is compatible, as a general rule, with the present low state of the human mind. But that does not hinder the government of mediocrity from being mediocre government. No government by a democracy or a numerous aristocracy, either in its political acts

or in the opinions, qualities, and tone of mind which it fosters, ever did or could rise above mediocrity, except in so far as the sovereign Many have let themselves be guided (which in their best times they always have done) by the counsels and influence of a more highly gifted and instructed One or Few. The initiation of all wise or noble things, comes and must come from individuals; generally at first from some one individual. The honour and glory of the average man is that he is capable of following that initiative; that he can respond internally to wise and noble things, and be led to them with his eyes open. I am not countenancing the sort of "hero-worship" which applauds the strong man of genius for forcibly seizing on the government of the world and making it do his bidding in spite of itself. All he can claim is, freedom to point out the way. The power of compelling others into it, is not only inconsistent with the freedom and development of all the rest, but corrupting to the strong man himself. It does seem, however, that when the opinions of masses of merely average men are everywhere become or becoming the dominant power, the counterpoise and corrective to that tendency would be, the more and more pronounced individuality of those who stand on the higher eminences of thought. It is in these circumstances most especially, that exceptional individuals, instead of being deterred, should be encouraged in acting differently from the mass. In other times there was no advantage in their doing so, unless they acted not only differently, but better. In this age the mere example of nonconformity, the mere refusal to bend the knee to custom, is itself a service. Precisely because the tyranny of opinion is such as to make eccentricity a reproach, it is desirable, in order to break through that tyranny, that people should be eccentric. Eccentricity has always abounded when and where strength of character has abounded; and the amount of eccentricity in a society has generally been proportional to the amount of genius, mental vigour, and moral courage which it contained. That so few now dare to be eccentric, marks the chief danger of the time.

As the founding fathers knew—this is the problem with "majority rules." Dictatorship of the majority is still a dictatorship. Particularly if the majority works it to keep power in their hands.

There is one characteristic of the present direction of public opinion, peculiarly calculated to make it intolerant of any marked demonstration of individuality. The general average of mankind are not only moderate in intellect, but also moderate in inclinations: they have no tastes or wishes strong enough to incline them to do anything unusual, and they consequently do not understand those who have, and class all such with the wild and intemperate whom they are accustomed to look down upon.

This has been changing a bit. People who have certain moderate tastes don't understand those who do not share their own. I think of same sex coupling and marijuana use as two examples, but on these two fronts particularly, the ideas of what is "customary" are changing—and not everyone likes that!

Now, in addition to this fact which is general, we have only to suppose that a strong movement has set in towards the improvement of morals, and it is evident what we have to expect. In these days such a movement has set in; much has actually been effected in the way of increased regularity of conduct, and discouragement of excesses; and there is a philanthropic spirit abroad, for the exercise of which there is no more inviting field than the moral and prudential improvement of our fellow-creatures. These tendencies of the times cause the public to be more disposed than at most former periods to prescribe general rules of conduct, and endeavour to make every one conform to the approved standard. And that standard, express or tacit, is to desire nothing strongly. Its ideal of character is to be without any marked character; to maim by compression, like a Chinese lady's foot, every part of human nature which stands out prominently, and tends to make the person markedly dissimilar in outline to commonplace humanity.

As is usually the case with ideals which exclude one-half of what is desirable, the present standard of approbation produces only an inferior imitation of the other half. Instead of great energies guided by vigorous reason, and strong feelings strongly controlled by a conscientious will, its result is weak feelings and weak energies, which therefore can be kept in outward conformity to rule without any strength either of will or of reason. Already energetic characters on any large scale are becoming merely traditional. There is now scarcely any outlet for energy in this country except business. The energy expended in that may still be regarded as considerable. What little is left from that employment, is expended on some hobby; which may be a useful, even a philanthropic hobby, but is always some one thing, and generally a thing of small dimensions. The greatness of England is now all collective: individually small, we only appear capable of anything great by our habit of combining; and with this our moral and religious philanthropists are perfectly contented. But it was men of another stamp than this that made England what it has been; and men of another stamp will be needed to prevent its decline.

The despotism of custom is everywhere the standing hindrance to human advancement, being in unceasing antagonism to that disposition to aim at something better than customary, which is called, according to circumstances, the spirit of liberty, or that of progress or improvement. The spirit of improvement is not always a spirit of liberty, for it may aim at forcing improvements on an unwilling people; and the spirit of liberty, in so far as it resists such attempts, may ally itself locally and temporarily with the opponents of improvement; but the only unfailing and permanent source of improvement is liberty, since by it there are as many possible independent centres of improvement as there are individuals. *These previous two sentences are the key points and thesis of the essay.*

The progressive principle, however, in either shape, whether as the love of liberty or of improvement, is antagonistic to the sway of Custom, involving at least emancipation from that yoke; and the contest between the two constitutes the chief interest of the history of mankind. The greater part of the world has, properly speaking, no history, because the despotism of Custom is complete. This is the case over the whole East.[Pg 133] Custom is there, in all things, the final appeal; justice and right mean conformity to custom; the argument of custom no one, unless some tyrant intoxicated with power, thinks of resisting. And we see the result. Those nations must once have had originality; they did not start out of the ground populous, lettered, and versed in many of the arts of life; they made themselves all this, and were then the greatest and most powerful nations in the world. What are they now? The subjects or dependants of tribes whose forefathers wandered in the forests when theirs had magnificent palaces and gorgeous temples, but over whom custom exercised only a divided rule with liberty and progress. *He begins the meta-historical argument.*

A people, it appears, may be progressive for a certain length of time, and then stop: when does it stop? When it ceases to possess individuality. If a similar change should befall the nations of Europe, it will not be in exactly the same shape: the despotism of custom with which these nations are threatened is not precisely stationariness. It proscribes singularity, but it does not preclude change, provided all change together. We have discarded the fixed costumes of our forefathers; every one must still dress like other people, but the fashion may change once or twice a year. We thus take care that when there is change, it shall be for change's sake, and not from any idea of beauty or convenience; for the same idea of beauty or convenience would not strike all the world at the same moment, and be simultaneously thrown aside by all at another moment. But we are progressive as well as changeable: we continually make new inventions in mechanical things, and keep them until they are again superseded by better; we are eager for improvement in politics, in education, even in morals, though in this last our idea of improvement chiefly consists in persuading or forcing other people to be as good as ourselves. It is not progress that we object to; on the contrary, we flatter ourselves that we are the most progressive people who ever lived. It is individuality that we war against: we should think we had done wonders if we had made ourselves all alike; forgetting that the unlikeness of one person to another is

generally the first thing which draws the attention of either to the imperfection of his own type, and the superiority of another, or the possibility, by combining the advantages of both, of producing something better than either. We have a warning example in China—a nation of much talent, and, in some respects, even wisdom, owing to the rare good fortune of having been provided at an early period with a particularly good set of customs, the work, in some measure, of men to whom even the most enlightened European must accord, under certain limitations, the title of sages and philosophers. They are remarkable, too, in the excellence of their apparatus for impressing, as far as possible, the best wisdom they possess upon every mind in the community, and securing that those who have appropriated most of it shall occupy the posts of honour and power. Surely the people who did this have discovered the secret of human progressiveness, and must have kept themselves steadily at the head of the movement of the world. On the contrary, they have become stationary—have remained so for thousands of years; and if they are ever to be farther improved, it must be by foreigners. They have succeeded beyond all hope in what English philanthropists are so industriously working at—in making a people all alike, all governing their thoughts and conduct by the same maxims and rules; and these are the fruits. The modern *régime* of public opinion is, in an unorganised form, what the Chinese educational and political systems are in an organised; and unless individuality shall be able successfully to assert itself against this yoke, Europe, notwithstanding its noble antecedents and its professed Christianity, will tend to become another China.

Hegel uses China in the same way to show how a society that was very well advanced was now held back because of its blind allegiance to tradition and custom. In a larger sense, this Hegelian view of historical development, also provided cover for imperialism. Rudyard Kipling claimed it was “the white man’s burden” to colonize less-civilized countries. If the Hegelian paradigm places your country at a more advanced level than another country, then it is your right to “raise” that country. Of course, that really meant exploiting it for its resources and strategic geo-political value.

from the Subjection of Women

Read this text carefully for its relation to On Liberty. Here Mill argues that the one thing that keeps society from progressing the most is that half of its population is repressed and oppressed. Mill makes a strong, rational argument on the equality of women. He often brings up an argument of those who persist in believing in the superiority of men and then tears it apart using rational discourse. He approaches such subjects as biological determinism, slavery, and education for females. The meta-historical context is also discussed. This is the first of the texts during the Victorian age where we will be taking up what they called “The Woman Question.” Posing women as a question is not really progress but a question demands an answer and many were working toward a political answer—full legal rights and suffrage—to that question.

Assignment #1

Each paragraph must include a quotation from one of the texts under consideration. Use MLA style citation. Consult the “How to Cite Literature” directions in the home page. No need for a Works Cited as all texts come from the Norton Anthology. Do not use outside sources. I will grade these liberally and use them to assess how well you understand the material. No plagiarism.

Mill’s two essays, “On Liberty,” and “The Subjection of Women,” share many similarities in terms of how he argues and the argument itself. For this brief essay you are to discuss two quotes from “On Liberty” and show how they connect to the argument in “The Subjection of Women.”

Paragraph1

Briefly summarize both texts and provide a quotation from “On Liberty.” Explain what that passage means.

Paragraph2

Provide a passage from “The Subjection of Women.” Explain what it means and show how it relates to the quotation from “On Liberty.”

Paragraph3

Provide a quotation from “On Liberty.” Explain what that passage means.

Paragraph 4

Provide a passage from “The Subjection of Women.” Explain what it means and show how it relates to the quotation from “On Liberty.” This last paragraph ought to summarize your findings.

A Good Essay:

1. Properly cites the texts;
2. Quotes two passages from On Liberty and explains them;
3. Quotes two passages from The Subjection of Women, explains them, and relates them to the passages from On Liberty.
4. Provides an introduction to, and summary of, summary of your findings.

Assignment #2 Application

“On Liberty” is an essay that keeps my head nodding because I keep seeing people react the same way. For this posting of one paragraph, describe something you’ve witnessed in which the force of custom and conformity reared its ugly head in service of repressing someone or something which is different from the norm.

Narrate what happened.

Discuss how this relates to Mill’s text;

Tell us why you think people acted the way they did.

You can write more if you want. Here’s my contribution:

This did not happen recently but, to me, it's a perfect illustration. When Igor Stravinsky's ballet "The Rite of Spring" was first performed in 1913 there was a riot in the auditorium because it was so *different* from any classical ballet. The music was grating and laden with folk quotations; the dancing was quirky and violent; the costumes were other-worldly. The reaction of those in the audience was to riot! Of course, not people consider it a classic and when it is performed, no doubt, people sit quietly in their suits and ties and elegant gowns watching it in silence. To me, it is still wonderful, strange, and inspiring.

A Good Application

1. Describes an instant where the force of conformity rears its ugly head;
2. Tells why do you think it appeared in this situation;
3. Tells why you think people act this way.

Worksheets

You must be able to answer these questions from reading the texts and my commentary. You may want to print these questions and answer them as you read. They will guide your reading and organize your notes. Your weekly quiz will be 10 of these questions.

Arnold

1. Make sure you are able to explicate Matthew Arnold's poem, "Dover Beach."
2. What do Puritans have to do with it?
3. What do religious organizations help us to suppress?
4. What is the role of machines?
5. Radical freedom leads to what?
6. What does the aristocracy feel about freedom?
7. What does the merchant class feel about freedom?
8. What do the masses feel about freedom?
9. What is the dichotomy for Arnold and what are its characteristics?
10. What gives sweetness and light?
11. What gives fire and strength?
12. What is the one necessary thing?
13. What should it be?

Barrett-Browning

14. Be able to explicate "The Cry of the Children," and "Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point," and in particular, discuss the historical issues the poems engage.

Aurora Leigh

Line numbers where answers start are in parentheses.

15. (289) What is her aunt like?
16. (330) How does her aunt treat her according to utilitarian principles?
17. (360) How does her aunt represent Hebraism?

18. (385) What kind of education does she receive?
19. (425) What is the purpose of her education?
20. (455) What are the works of women like?

Book 2

21. (10) How is this like romanticism?
22. (75) What does Romney think of her writing?
23. (95) What is the critique of gender and poetry?
24. (350) What does Romney want?
25. (370) What is Romney's stereotype?
26. (415) What does Romney want out of marriage? What does Aurora think about that?
27. (455) What is Aurora's work?

Book 5

28. (185) What is the double vision of poets?

Think about it: What are at least two examples of Hellenism and Hebraism in the poem?

VIII. Elizabeth Barrett Browning: Mirror of the Age

Before we get to the mirror of the age, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, we'll look at another thinker who split the forces of history into dichotomous poles—Matthew Arnold.



Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) was a school inspector, poet, and cultural critic. Along with Mill, his critique of the Victorian middle class sensibility was placed in the context of meta-history. The basic dichotomy he uses is very close to Mill's idea of pagan self-assertion and Christian self-denial. His poem, "Dover each," also echoes one of the concerns of the age—how do we live by faith when we know longer except the assumptions of religion as being infallibly true.

from Culture and Anarchy

Pay careful attention to the way that the dichotomies in Arnold relate to those in John Stuart Mill. The historical situation that led to the riots he is discussing here was the Second Reform Act of 1867 as well as a continuation of Catholic Emancipation where the restrictive rules on Catholics in England were relieved. Arnold is critiquing the middle class which opposed parts of both these liberatory movements.

from Chapter 1: Sweetness and Light

The impulse of the English race towards moral development and self-conquest has nowhere so powerfully manifested itself as in Puritanism; nowhere has Puritanism found so adequate an expression as in the religious organisation of the Independents. The modern Independents have a newspaper, the Nonconformist, written with great sincerity and ability. The motto, the standard, the profession of faith which this organ of theirs carries aloft, is: "The Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion." There is sweetness and light, and an ideal of complete harmonious human perfection! One need not go to culture and poetry to find language to judge it. Religion, with its instinct for perfection, supplies language to judge it: "Finally, be of one mind, united in feeling," says St. Peter. There is an ideal which judges the Puritan ideal,—"The Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion!" And religious organisations like this are what people believe in, rest in, would give their lives for! Such, I say, is the wonderful virtue of even the beginnings of perfection, of having conquered even the plain faults of our animality, that the religious organisation which has helped us to do it can seem to us something precious, salutary, and to be propagated, even when it wears such a brand of imperfection on its forehead as this. And men have got such a habit of giving to the language of religion a special application, of making it a mere jargon, that for the condemnation which religion itself passes on the shortcomings of their religious organisations they have no ear; they are sure to cheat themselves and to explain this condemnation away. They can only be reached by the criticism which culture, like poetry, speaking a language not to be sophisticated, and resolutely testing these organisations by the ideal of a human perfection complete on all sides, applies to them.

Arnold believes you should measure values and institutions against the backdrop of the best of culture—literature, art, music, science—the best of what’s been written and said. The force of Puritanism Arnold finds at fault.

But men of culture and poetry, it will be said, are again and again failing, and failing conspicuously, in the necessary first stage to perfection, in the subduing of the great obvious faults of our animality, which it is the glory of these religious organisations to have helped us to subdue. True, they do often so fail: they have often been without the virtues as well as the faults of the Puritan; it has been one of their dangers that they so felt the Puritan's faults that they too much neglected the practice of his virtues. I will not, however, exculpate them at the Puritan's expense; they have often failed in morality, and morality is indispensable; they have been punished for their failure, as the Puritan has been rewarded for his performance. They have been punished wherein they erred; but their ideal of beauty and sweetness and light, and a human nature complete on all its sides, remains the true ideal of perfection still; just as the Puritan's ideal of perfection remains narrow and inadequate, although for what he did well he has been richly rewarded. Notwithstanding the mighty results of the Pilgrim Fathers' voyage, they and their standard of perfection are rightly judged when we figure to ourselves Shakspeare or Virgil,—souls in whom sweetness and light, and all that in human nature is most humane, were eminent,—accompanying them on their voyage, and think what intolerable company Shakspeare and Virgil would have found them! In the same way let us judge the religious organisations which we see all around us. Do not let us deny the good and the happiness which they have accomplished; but do not let us fail to see clearly that their idea of human perfection is narrow and inadequate, and that the Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion will never bring humanity to its true goal. As I said with regard to wealth,—let us look at the life of those who live in and for it;—so I say with regard to the religious organisations. Look at the life imaged in such a newspaper as the Nonconformist;—a life of jealousy of the Establishment, disputes, tea-meetings, openings of chapels, sermons; and then think of it as an ideal of a human life completing itself on all sides, and aspiring with all its organs after sweetness, light, and perfection!

From Chapter 2: Doing as One Likes

When I began to speak of culture, I insisted on our bondage to machinery, on our proneness to value machinery as an end in itself, without looking beyond it to the end for which alone, in truth, it is valuable.

Arnold critiques the idea of the machine as the model for Victorian life.

Freedom, I said, was one of those things which we thus worshipped in itself, without enough regarding the ends for which freedom is to be desired. In our common notions and talk about freedom, we eminently show our idolatry of machinery. Our prevalent notion is,—and I quoted a number of instances to prove it,—that it is a most happy and important thing for a man merely to be able to do as he likes. On what he is to do when he is thus free to do as he likes, we do not lay so much stress. Our familiar praise of the British Constitution under which we live, is that it is a system of checks,—a system which stops and paralyses any power in interfering with the free action of individuals. To this effect Mr. Bright, who loves to walk in the old ways of the Constitution, said forcibly in one of his great speeches, what many other people are every day saying less forcibly, that the central idea of English life and politics is the assertion of personal liberty. Evidently this is so; but evidently, also, as feudalism, which with its ideas and habits of subordination was for many centuries silently behind the British Constitution, dies out, and we are left with nothing but our system of checks, and our notion of its being the great right and happiness of an Englishman to do as far as possible what he likes, we are in danger of drifting towards anarchy.

If there is too much emphasis on freedom, Arnold asserts, anarchy becomes a danger because there is not belief in institutional checks to hold the worst of people’s behavior in check.

We have not the notion, so familiar on the Continent and to antiquity, of the State—the nation, in its collective and corporate character, entrusted with stringent powers for the general advantage, and controlling individual wills in the name of an interest wider than that of individuals. We say, what is very true, that this notion is often made instrumental to tyranny; we say that a State is in reality made up of the individuals who compose it, and that every individual is the best judge of his own interests. Our leading class is an aristocracy, and no aristocracy likes the notion of a State-authority greater than itself, with a stringent administrative machinery superseding the decorative inutilities of lord-lieutenancy, deputy-lieutenancy, and the posse comitatûs, which are all in its own hands. Our middle-class, the great representative of trade and Dissent, with its maxims of every man for himself in business, every man for himself in religion, dreads a powerful administration which might somehow interfere with it; and besides, it has its own decorative inutilities of vestrymanship and guardianship, which are to this class what lord-lieutenancy and the county magistracy are to the aristocratic class, and a stringent administration might either take these functions out of its hands, or prevent its exercising them in its own comfortable, independent manner, as at present.

Then as to our working-class. This class, pressed constantly by the hard daily compulsion of material wants, is naturally the very centre and stronghold of our national idea, that it is man's ideal right and felicity to do as he likes.

In the comments above, Arnold goes through the different classes in England and explains why they place such a priority on personal liberty.

I think I have somewhere related how Monsieur Michelet said to me of the people of France, that it was "a nation of barbarians civilised by the conscription." He meant that through their military service the idea of public duty and of discipline was brought to the mind of these masses, in other respects so raw and uncultivated. Our masses are quite as raw and uncultivated as the French; and, so far from their having the idea of public duty and of discipline, superior to the individual's self-will, brought to their mind by a universal obligation of military service, such as that of the conscription,—so far from their having this, the very idea of a conscription is so at variance with our English notion of the prime right and blessedness of doing as one likes, that I remember the manager of the Clay Cross works in Derbyshire told me during the Crimean war, when our want of soldiers was much felt and some people were talking of a conscription, that sooner than submit to a conscription the population of that district would flee to the mines, and lead a sort of Robin Hood life under ground.

For a long time, as I have said, the strong feudal habits of subordination and deference continued to tell upon the working-class. The modern spirit has now almost entirely dissolved those habits, and the anarchical tendency of our worship of freedom in and for itself, of our superstitious faith, as I say, in machinery, is becoming very manifest. More and more, because of this our blind faith in machinery, because of our want of light to enable us to look beyond machinery to the end for which machinery is valuable, this and that man, and this and that body of men, all over the country, are beginning to assert and put in practice an Englishman's right to do what he likes; his right to march where he likes, meet where he likes, enter where he likes, hoot as he likes, threaten as he likes, smash as he likes.

Blind faith in machinery, and not the purposes of those machines, as well as the loosening restraints of feudalism has led to flirtation with rioting and anarchy.

All this, I say, tends to anarchy; and though a number of excellent people, and particularly my friends of the liberal or progressive party, as they call themselves, are kind enough to reassure us by saying that these are trifles, that a few transient outbreaks of rowdiness signify nothing, that our system of liberty is one which itself cures all the evils which it works, that the educated and intelligent classes stand in overwhelming strength and majestic repose, ready, like our military force in riots, to act at a moment's notice,—yet one finds that one's liberal friends generally say this because they have such faith in themselves and their nostrums,

when they shall return, as the public welfare requires, to place and power. But this faith of theirs one cannot exactly share, when one has so long had them and their nostrums at work, and sees that they have not prevented our coming to our present embarrassed condition; and one finds, also, that the outbreaks of rowdyism tend to become less and less of trifles, to become more frequent rather than less frequent; and that meanwhile our educated and intelligent classes remain in their majestic repose, and somehow or other, whatever happens, their overwhelming strength, like our military force in riots, never does act.

How, indeed, should their overwhelming strength act, when the man who gives an inflammatory lecture, or breaks down the Park railings, or invades a Secretary of State's office, is only following an Englishman's impulse to do as he likes; and our own conscience tells us that we ourselves have always regarded this impulse as something primary and sacred? Mr. Murphy lectures at Birmingham, and showers on the Catholic population of that town "words," says Mr. Hardy, "only fit to be addressed to thieves or murderers." What then? Mr. Murphy has his own reasons of several kinds. He suspects the Roman Catholic Church of designs upon Mrs. Murphy; and he says, if mayors and magistrates do not care for their wives and daughters, he does. But, above all, he is doing as he likes, or, in worthier language, asserting his personal liberty. "I will carry out my lectures if they walk over my body as a dead corpse; and I say to the Mayor of Birmingham that he is my servant while I am in Birmingham, and as my servant he must do his duty and protect me."

Murphy's speeches inspired violence against catholics, their properties and businesses.

Touching and beautiful words, which find a sympathetic chord in every British bosom! The moment it is plainly put before us that a man is asserting his personal liberty, we are half disarmed; because we are believers in freedom, and not in some dream of a right reason to which the assertion of our freedom is to be subordinated. Accordingly, the Secretary of State had to say that although the lecturer's language was "only fit to be addressed to thieves or murderers," yet, "I do not think he is to be deprived, I do not think that anything I have said could justify the inference that he is to be deprived, of the right of protection in a place built by him for the purpose of these lectures; because the language was not language which afforded grounds for a criminal prosecution." No, nor to be silenced by Mayor, or Home Secretary, or any administrative authority on earth, simply on their notion of what is discreet and reasonable! This is in perfect consonance with our public opinion, and with our national love for the assertion of personal liberty.

From Chapter 5: Porro Unum Est Necessarium

Arnold starts out by extolling the positive aspects of one of the dichotomous forces—Hellenism and its qualities, sweetness and light. Hellenism stands for Greek origin and has to do with the development of the self, curiosity about the world, appreciation of nature, art, and beauty. Which of Mill's dichotomies does this match?

Sweetness and light evidently have to do with the bent or side in humanity which we call Hellenic. Greek intelligence has obviously for its essence the instinct for what Plato calls the true, firm, intelligible law of things; the love of light, of seeing things as they are. Even in the natural sciences, where the Greeks had not time and means adequately to apply this instinct, and where we have gone a great deal further than they did, it is this instinct which is the root of the whole matter and the ground of all our success; and this instinct the world has mainly learnt of the Greeks, inasmuch as they are humanity's most signal manifestation of it. Greek art, again, Greek beauty, have their root in the same impulse to see things as they really are, inasmuch as Greek art and beauty rest on fidelity to nature,—the best nature,—and on a delicate discrimination of what this best nature is. To say we work for sweetness and light, then, is only another way of saying that we work for Hellenism.

If Hellenism is one side of the equation, its opposition is Hebraism. Hebraism takes its origin the Judeo-Christina foundation (hear the echoes of Mill?). Its qualities are fire and strength.

But, oh! cry many people, sweetness and light are not enough; you must put strength or energy along with them, and make a kind of trinity of strength, sweetness and light, and then, perhaps, you may do some good. That is to say, we are to join Hebraism, strictness of the moral conscience, and manful walking by the best light we have, together with Hellenism, inculcate both, and rehearse the praises of both.

Or, rather, we may praise both in conjunction, but we must be careful to praise Hebraism most. "Culture," says an acute, though somewhat rigid critic, Mr. Sidgwick, "diffuses sweetness and light. I do not undervalue these blessings, but religion gives fire and strength, and the world wants fire and strength even more than sweetness and light." By religion, let me explain, Mr. Sidgwick here means particularly that Puritanism on the insufficiency of which I have been commenting and to which he says I am unfair. Now, no doubt, it is possible to be a fanatical partisan of light and the instincts which push us to it, a fanatical enemy of strictness of moral conscience and the instincts which push us to it. A fanaticism of this sort deforms and vulgarises the well-known work, in some respects so remarkable, of the late Mr. Buckle. Such a fanaticism carries its own mark with it, in lacking sweetness; and its own penalty, in that, lacking sweetness, it comes in the end to lack light too. And the Greeks,—the great exponents of humanity's bent for sweetness and light united, of its perception that the truth of things must be at the same time beauty,—singularly escaped the fanaticism which we moderns, whether we Hellenise or whether we Hebraise, are so apt to show, and arrived,—though failing, as has been said, to give adequate practical satisfaction to the claims of man's moral side,—at the idea of a comprehensive adjustment of the claims of both the sides in man, the moral as well as the intellectual, of a full estimate of both, and of a reconciliation of both; an idea which is philosophically of the greatest value, and the best of lessons for us moderns. So we ought to have no difficulty in conceding to Mr. Sidgwick that manful walking by the best light one has,—fire and strength as he calls it,—has its high value as well as culture, the endeavour to see things in their truth and beauty, the pursuit of sweetness and light. But whether at this or that time, and to this or that set of persons, one ought to insist most on the praises of fire and strength, or on the praises of sweetness and light, must depend, one would think, on the circumstances and needs of that particular time and those particular persons. And all that we have been saying, and indeed any glance at the world around us, shows that with us, with the most respectable and strongest part of us, the ruling force is now, and long has been, a Puritan force, the care for fire and strength, strictness of conscience, Hebraism, rather than the care for sweetness and light, spontaneity of consciousness, Hellenism.

Further qualities are discussed. Hebraism is for strictness of conscience; Hellenism for spontaneity of consciousness.

Well, then, what is the good of our now rehearsing the praises of fire and strength to ourselves, who dwell too exclusively on them already? When Mr. Sidgwick says so broadly, that the world wants fire and strength even more than sweetness and light, is he not carried away by a turn for powerful generalisation? does he not forget that the world is not all of one piece, and every piece with the same needs at the same time? It may be true that the Roman world at the beginning of our era, or Leo the Tenth's Court at the time of the Reformation, or French society in the eighteenth century, needed fire and strength even more than sweetness and light. But can it be said that the Barbarians who overran the empire, needed fire and strength even more than sweetness and light; or that the Puritans needed them more; or that Mr. Murphy, the Birmingham lecturer, and the Rev. W. Cattle and his friends, need them more?

The Puritan's great danger is that he imagines himself in possession of a rule telling him the unum necessarium, or one thing needful, and that he then remains satisfied with a very crude conception of what this rule really is and what it tells him, thinks he has now knowledge and henceforth needs only to act, and, in this dangerous state of assurance and self-satisfaction, proceeds to give full swing to a number of the instincts of his ordinary self. Some of the instincts of his ordinary self he has, by the help of his rule of life, conquered; but others which he has not conquered by this help he is so far from perceiving to need subjugation, and to be instincts of an inferior self, that he even fancies it to be his right and duty, in virtue of having conquered a

limited part of himself, to give unchecked swing to the remainder. He is, I say, a victim of Hebraism, of the tendency to cultivate strictness of conscience rather than spontaneity of consciousness.

The Latin title of this chapter means "the one needful thing, as Paul writes is faith. Arnold says that if you really believe that, once you have faith you do not need to develop yourself, be curious about the world, or check the part of yourself that wants to riot against those who share a different aspect of faith.

And what he wants is a larger conception of human nature, showing him the number of other points at which his nature must come to its best, besides the points which he himself knows and thinks of. There is no unum necessarium, or one thing needful, which can free human nature from the obligation of trying to come to its best at all these points. The real unum necessarium for us is to come to our best at all points. *Instead of faith being the one needful thing, Arnold argues, we should try to better all aspects of ourselves. Arnold believes England can't achieve its potential because people do not have enough Hellenism and have too much reliance on Hebraism.*

Instead of our "one thing needful," justifying in us vulgarity, hideousness, ignorance, violence,—our vulgarity, hideousness, ignorance, violence, are really so many touchstones which try our one thing needful, and which prove that in the state, at any rate, in which we ourselves have it, it is not all we want. And as the force which encourages us to stand staunch and fast by the rule and ground we have is Hebraism, so the force which encourages us to go back upon this rule, and to try the very ground on which we appear to stand, is Hellenism,—a turn for giving our consciousness free play and enlarging its range. And what I say is, not that Hellenism is always for everybody more wanted than Hebraism, but that for the Rev. W. Cattle at this particular moment, and for the great majority of us his fellow-countrymen, it is more wanted.

Dover Beach

In this great Victorian poem, the narrator confronts the loss of faith (like Carlyle in Sartor Resartus). The sea is roaring and as the tide recedes he finds in that movement the loss of faith that held a nation together. He proposes a private faith between himself and his lover instead, though their vows are dwarfed by the crashing of the sea in a near-meaningless world.

Mirror of the Age



Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861) was a famous poet during her lifetime whose political work drew attention to the plight of child labor and slavery. She received a good education from her brother's tutor. Her father was a despot and forbid any of his 11 children to marry. Physically and psychologically crippled by her father's tyranny, she lived much of her life as a secluded invalid in her father's house until the poet Robert Browning swept her away in marriage to Italy. In Italy, she became engaged in the movement to unify the country.

The Cry of the Children and Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point

The 20th century American poet, Thomas McGrath, made a very useful distinction when talking about political poetry. Tactical political poetry is poetry that addresses a specific issue in order to change its conditions. Strategic political poetry was poetry whose purpose it was to change people's consciousness and bring about a change in worldview. These two poems I would characterize as tactical. "The Cry of the Children," presents a portrait of child labor and its oppressive injustices. "Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" exposes the hypocrisies and cruelty of slavery in America.

Aurora Leigh

This is a poetic novel which follows the life of Aurora Leigh who was orphaned in Italy (her father was English and her mother Italian). She is brought back to England where she is raised by her spinster aunt and eventually pursued by her political activist first cousin Romney. This is more strategic poetry because although it addresses "the woman question" the characterizations reach for more than simple didactic lessons. Keep in mind Arnold's dichotomies because you will be using those dichotomies to analyze passages in this poem.

From Book 1

Then, land!—then, England! oh, the frosty cliffs
Looked cold upon me. Could I find a home
Among those mean red houses through the fog?
And when I heard my father's language first
From alien lips which had no kiss for mine,
I wept aloud, then laughed, then wept, then wept,—
And some one near me said the child was mad
Through much sea-sickness. The train swept us on.
Was this my father's England? the great isle?
The ground seemed cut up from the fellowship
Or verdure, field from field, as man from man;
The skies themselves looked low and positive,
As almost you could touch them with a hand,
And dared to do it, they were so far off
From God's celestial crystals; all things, blurred
And dull and vague. Did Shakspeare and his mates
Absorb the light here?—not a hill or stone
With heart to strike a radiant colour up
Or active outline on the indifferent air!

If we were to analyze this in terms of Arnold's dichotomies, how is England first presented to this Italian girl? What does she notice? How is the landscape described?

I think I see my father's sister stand
Upon the hall-step of her country-house
To give me welcome. She stood straight and calm,
Her somewhat narrow forehead braided tight
As if for taming accidental thoughts
From possible pulses; brown hair pricked with grey

By frigid use of life, (she was not old,
Although my father's elder by a year)
A nose drawn sharply, yet in delicate lines;
A close mild mouth, a little soured about
The ends, through speaking unrequited loves,
Or peradventure niggardly half-truths;
Eyes of no colour,—once they might have smiled,
But never, never have forgot themselves
In smiling; cheeks in which was yet a rose
Of perished summers, like a rose in a book,
Kept more for ruth than pleasure,—if past bloom,
Past fading also.

Can you detect Hebraism in the depiction of her aunt? Also, consider this in terms of feminism. When one group wants to oppress another, they indoctrinate members of the oppressed to do their oppression for them. The oppressed group internalizes the other's view of themselves. Aurora's aunt is suffering from this kind of self-hatred and wants to snuff out the free spirit of Aurora. Blake had much to say about this as well.

She had lived we'll say,
A harmless life, she called a virtuous life,
A quiet life, which was not life at all,
(But that, she had not lived enough to know)
Between the vicar and the county squires,
The lord-lieutenant looking down sometimes
From the empyreal, to assure their souls
Against chance vulgarisms, and, in the abyss,
The apothecary looked on once a year,
To prove their soundness of humility.
The poor-club exercised her Christian gifts
Of knitting stockings, stitching petticoats,
Because we are of one flesh after all
And need one flannel, (with a proper sense
Of difference in the quality)—and still
The book-club guarded from your modern trick
Of shaking dangerous questions from the crease,
Preserved her intellectual. She had lived
A sort of cage-bird life, born in a cage,
Accounting that to leap from perch to perch
Was act and joy enough for any bird.
Dear heaven, how silly are the things that live
In thickets and eat berries!

Another description of the plight of the middle class unmarried woman. During this time in England they were not able to own property or forge their own life. Read Jane Austen's novels for what that means. Even though she is not a very sympathetic character, she must be seen through the prism of the patriarchal society that leaves her with very few options for life.

I, alas,
A wild bird scarcely fledged, was brought to her cage,
And she was there to meet me. Very kind.
Bring the clean water; give out the fresh seed.
She stood upon the steps to welcome me,
Calm, in black garb. I clung about her neck,—
Young babes, who catch at every shred of wool
To draw the new light closer, catch and cling
Less blindly. In my ears, my father's word
Hummed ignorantly, as the sea in shells,
'Love, love, my child,' She, black there with my grief,
Might feel my love—she was his sister once—
I clung to her. A moment, she seemed moved.
Kissed me with cold lips, suffered me to cling,
And drew me feebly through the hall, into
The room she sate in.

There, with some strange spasm
Of pain and passion, she wrung loose my hands
Imperiously, and held me at arm's length,
And with two grey-steel naked-bladed eyes
Searched through my face,—ay, stabbed it through and through,
Through brows and cheeks and chin, as if to find
A wicked murderer in my innocent face,
If not here, there perhaps. Then, drawing breath,
She struggled for her ordinary calm,
And missed it rather,—told me not to shrink,
As if she had told me not to lie or swear,—
'She loved my father, and would love me too
As long as I deserved it.' Very kind.
How is this like the Calvinism that Mill describes? Whatever is not duty is a sin.

I understood her meaning afterward;
She thought to find my mother in my face,
And questioned it for that. For she, my aunt,
Had loved my father truly, as she could,
And hated, with the gall of gentle souls,
My Tuscan mother, who had fooled away
A wise man from wise courses, a good man
From obvious duties, and, depriving her,
His sister, of the household precedence,
Had wronged his tenants, robbed his native land,
And made him mad, alike by life and death,
In love and sorrow. She had pored for years
What sort of woman could be suitable
To her sort of hate, to entertain it with;

And so, her very curiosity
Became hate too, and all the idealism
She ever used in life, was used for hate,
Till hate, so nourished, did exceed at last
The love from which it grew, in strength and heat,
And wrinkled her smooth **conscience** (*hint*)
with a sense
Of disputable virtue (say not, sin)
When Christian doctrine was enforced at church
More puritanism.

.
And thus my father's sister was to me
My mother's hater. From that day, she did
Her duty to me, (I appreciate it
In her own word as spoken to herself)
Her duty, in large measure, well-pressed out,
But measured always. She was generous, bland,
More courteous than was tender, gave me still
The first place,—as if fearful that God's saints
Would look down suddenly and say, 'Herein
You missed a point, I think, through lack of love.'
Alas, a mother never is afraid
Of speaking angrily to any child,
Since love, she knows, is justified of love.
And I, I was a good child on the whole,
A meek and manageable child. Why not?
I did not live, to have the faults of life:
There seemed more true life in my father's grave
Than in all England. Since *that* threw me off
Who fain would cleave, (his latest will, they say,
Consigned me to his land) I only thought
Of lying quiet there where I was thrown
Like sea-weed on the rocks, and suffer her
To prick me to a pattern with her pin,
Fibre from fibre, delicate leaf from leaf,
And dry out from my drowned anatomy
The last sea-salt left in me.

So it was.

I broke the copious curls upon my head
In braids, because she liked smooth ordered hair.
I left off saying my sweet Tuscan words
Which still at any stirring of the heart
Came up to float across the English phrase,
As lilies, (*Bene . . or che ch'è*) because
She liked my father's child to speak his tongue.

The following long passage is a brilliant description and critique of the education that women received (you certainly can connect these ideas to Mill's essay on the subjection of women). Essentially, women were educated to be intelligent enough to follow conversations with their husbands and agree with them, but not so deeply that they could forge thoughts of their own that might be in conflict with that of their husbands.

I learnt the collects and the catechism,
The creeds, from Athanasius back to Nice,
The Articles . . the Tracts *against* the times,
(By no means Buonaventure's 'Prick of Love,')
And various popular synopses of
Inhuman doctrines never taught by John,
Because she liked instructed piety.
I learnt my complement of classic French
(Kept pure of Balzac and neologism,)
And German also, since she liked a range
Of liberal education,—tongues, not books.
I learnt a little algebra, a little
Of the mathematics,—brushed with extreme flounce
The circle of the sciences, because
She misliked women who are frivolous.
I learnt the royal genealogies
Of Oviedo, the internal laws
Of the Burmese Empire, . . by how many feet
Mount Chimborazo outsoars Himmeleh,
What navigable river joins itself
To Lara, and what census of the year five
Was taken at Klagenfurt,—because she liked
A general insight into useful facts.
I learnt much music,—such as would have been
As quite impossible in Johnson's day
As still it might be wished—fine sleights of hand
And unimagined fingering, shuffling off
The hearer's soul through hurricanes of notes
To a noisy Tophet; and I drew . . costumes
From French engravings, nereids neatly draped,
With smirks of simmering godship,—I washed in
From nature, landscapes, (rather say, washed out.)
I danced the polka and Cellarius,
Spun glass, stuffed birds, and modelled flowers in wax,
Because she liked accomplishments in girls.
I read a score of books on womanhood
To prove, if women do not think at all,
They may teach thinking, (to a maiden aunt
Or else the author)—books demonstrating
Their right of comprehending husband's talk
When not too deep, and even of answering

With pretty 'may it please you,' or 'so it is,'—
 Their rapid insight and fine aptitude,
 Particular worth and general missionariness,
 As long as they keep quiet by the fire
 And never say 'no' when the world says 'ay,'
 For that is fatal,—their angelic reach
 Of virtue, chiefly used to sit and darn,
 And fatten household sinners—their, in brief,
 Potential faculty in everything
 Of abdicating power in it: she owned
 She liked a woman to be womanly,
 And English women, she thanked God and sighed,
 (Some people always sigh in thanking God)
 Were models to the universe. And last
 I learnt cross-stitch, because she did not like
 To see me wear the night with empty hands,
 A-doing nothing. So, my shepherdess
 Was something after all, (the pastoral saints
 Be praised for't) leaning lovelorn with pink eyes
 To match her shoes, when I mistook the silks;
 Her head uncrushed by that round weight of hat
 So strangely similar to the tortoise-shell
 Which slew the tragic poet.

The coda to the description of education is commentary on woman's labor and relationship with their husbands. They do all this meaningless labor that the husband occasionally curses. While the women dream of how they could be perfect for their husbands, their husbands fantasize about someone else. Ultimately, the most tragic aspect of the woman's labor is that they are paid the worth of it which is, of course, nothing.

By the way,
 The works of women are symbolical.
 We sew, sew, prick our fingers, dull our sight,
 Producing what? A pair of slippers, sir,
 To put on when you're weary—or a stool
 To tumble over and vex you . . 'curse that stool!
 Or else at best, a cushion where you lean
 And sleep, and dream of something we are not,
 But would be for your sake. Alas, alas!
 This hurts most, this . . that, after all, we are paid
 The worth of our work, perhaps.

In looking down
 Those years of education, (to return)
 I wondered if Brinvilliers suffered more
 In the water torture, . . flood succeeding flood
 To drench the incapable throat and split the veins . .

Than I did. Certain of your feebler souls
Go out in such a process; many pine
To a sick, inodorous light; my own endured:
I had relations in the Unseen, and drew
The elemental nutriment and heat
From nature, as earth feels the sun at nights,
Or as a babe sucks surely in the dark,
I kept the life, thrust on me, on the outside
Of the inner life, with all its ample room
For heart and lungs, for will and intellect,
Inviolable by conventions. God,
I thank thee for that grace of thine!

At first,
I felt no life which was not patience,—did
The thing she bade me, without heed to a thing
Beyond it, sate in just the chair she placed,
With back against the window, to exclude
The sight of the great lime-tree on the lawn,
Which seemed to have come on purpose from the woods
To bring the house a message,—ay, and walked
Demurely in her carpeted low rooms,
As if I should not, harkening my own steps,
Misdoubt I was alive. I read her books,
Was civil to her cousin, Romney Leigh,
Gave ear to her vicar, tea to her visitors,
And heard them whisper, when I changed a cup,
(I blushed for joy at that!)—'The Italian child,
For all her blue eyes and her quiet ways,
Thrives ill in England; she is paler yet
Than when we came the last time; she will die.'

From Book 2

Aurora grows and becomes a poet. Her first cousin, Romney Leigh becomes her suitor. Romney is a progressive in many ways (except one!) and has dedicated his life to working for social justice. In the first scene he finds Aurora's book of poems. In the second scene she rejects his proposal and he is flabbergasted.

TIMES followed one another. Came a morn
I stood upon the brink of twenty years,
And looked before and after, as I stood
Woman and artist,—either incomplete,
Both credulous of completion. There I held
The whole creation in my little cup,
And smiled with thirsty lips before I drank,
'Good health to you and me, sweet neighbour mine

And all these peoples.'

I was glad, that day;
The June was in me, with its multitudes
Of nightingales all singing in the dark,
And rosebuds reddening where the calyx split.
I felt so young, so strong, so sure of God!
So glad, I could not choose be very wise!
And, old at twenty, was inclined to pull
My childhood backward in a childish jest
To see the face of't once more, and farewell!
In which fantastic mood I bounded forth
At early morning,—would not wait so long
As even to snatch my bonnet by the strings,
But, brushing a green trail across the lawn
With my gown in the dew, took will and way
Among the acacias of the shrubberies,
To fly my fancies in the open air
And keep my birthday, till my aunt awoke
To stop good dreams. Meanwhile I murmured on,
As honeyed bees keep humming to themselves;
"The worthiest poets have remained uncrowned
Till death has bleached their foreheads to the bone,
And so with me it must be, unless I prove
Unworthy of the grand adversity,—
And certainly I would not fail so much.
What, therefore, if I crown myself to-day
In sport, not pride, to learn the feel of it,
Before my brows be numb as Dante's own
To all the tender pricking of such leaves?
Such leaves? what leaves?"

I pulled the branches down,
To choose from.

'Not the bay! I choose no bay;
The fates deny us if we are overbold:
Nor myrtle—which means chiefly love; and love
Is something awful which one dare not touch
So early o' mornings. This verbenia strains
The point of passionate fragrance; and hard by,
This guelder rose, at far too slight a beck
Of the wind, will toss about her flower-apples.
Ah—there's my choice,—that ivy on the wall,
That headlong ivy! not a leaf will grow
But thinking of a wreath. Large leaves, smooth leaves,
Serrated like my vines, and half as green.
I like such ivy; bold to leap a height

'Twas strong to climb! as good to grow on graves
As twist about a thyrsus; pretty too,
(And that's not ill) when twisted round a comb.'

In a scene which ought to remind you of the romantics, she is frolicking in nature and decides to make herself a crown of leaves. Notably, she does not choose flowers to accentuate her beauty but laurel to emphasize that she has dedicated herself to poetry.

Thus speaking to myself, half singing it,
Because some thoughts are fashioned like a bell
To ring with once being touched, I drew a wreath
Drenched, blinding me with dew, across my brow,
And fastening it behind so, . . turning faced
. . My public!—Cousin Romney—with a mouth
Twice graver than his eyes.

I stood there fixed—
My arms up, like the caryatid, sole
Of some abolished temple, helplessly
Persistent in a gesture which derides
A former purpose. Yet my blush was flame,
As if from flax, not stone.

'Aurora Leigh,
The earliest of Aurora's!'

Hand stretched out
I clasped, as shipwrecked men will clasp a hand,
Indifferent to the sort of palm. The tide
Had caught me at my pastime, writing down
My foolish name too near upon the sea
Which drowned me with a blush as foolish. 'You,
My cousin!'

The smile died out in his eyes
And dropped upon his lips, a cold dead weight,
For just a moment . . 'Here's a book, I found!
No name writ on it—poems, by the form;
Some Greek upon the margin,—lady's Greek,
Without the accents. Read it? Not a word.
I saw at once the thing had witchcraft in't,
Whereof the reading calls up dangerous spirits;
I rather bring it to the witch.'

Remember the education of women? He calls her Greek "lady's greek" because it does not include accents. He also likens it to witchcraft, an old appellation for women who dare to think for themselves.

'My book!
You found it.' . .
'In the hollow by the stream,
That beach leans down into—of which you said,

The Oread in it has a Naiad's heart
And pines for waters.'

'Thank you.'

'Rather *you*,

My cousin! that I have seen you not too much
A witch, a poet, scholar, and the rest,
To be a woman also.'

With a glance

The smile rose in his eyes again, and touched
The ivy on my forehead, light as air.
I answered gravely, 'Poets needs must be
men or women—more's the pity.'

'Ah,

But men, and still less women, happily,
Scarce need be poets. Keep to the green wreath,
Since even dreaming of the stone and bronze
Brings headaches, pretty cousin, and defiles
The clean white morning dresses.'

For all his do-goodism, Romney is Hebraistic; he doesn't see the need for any poetry, much less from women.

'So you judge!

Because I love the beautiful, I must
Love pleasure chiefly, and be overcharged
For ease and whiteness! Well—you know the world.
And only miss your cousin; 'tis not much!—
But learn this: I would rather take my part
With God's Dead, who afford to walk in white
Yet spread His glory, than keep quiet here,
And gather up my feet from even a step,
For fear to soil my gown in so much dust.
I choose to walk at all risks.—Here, if heads
That hold a rhythmic thought, must ache perforce,
For my part, I choose headaches,—and to-day's
My birthday.'

Romney says poetry causes headaches. Aurora notes she chooses headaches and to spread God's glory as she wishes, through her poems.

'Dear Aurora, choose instead

To cure such. You have balsams.'

'I perceive!—

The headache is too noble for my sex.
You think the heartache would sound decenter,
Since that's the woman's special, proper ache,
And altogether tolerable, except
To a woman.'

Romney believes that the woman's role is to ease the headaches of the world.

[later in the book]

There he glowed on me
With all his face and eyes. 'No other help?'
Said he—'no more than so?'

'What help?' I asked.

'You'd scorn my help,—as Nature's self, you say,
Has scorned to put her music in my mouth,
Because a woman's. Do you now turn round
And ask for what a woman cannot give?'

Romney's pitch in proposing to Aurora is that he needs a helpmate in changing the world.

'For what she only can, I turn and ask,'
He answered, catching up my hands in his,
And dropping on me from his high-eaved brow
The full weight of his soul,—'I ask for love,
And that, she can; for life in fellowship
Through bitter duties—that, I know she can;
For wifehood . . will she?'

'Now,' I said, 'may God
Be witness 'twixt us two!' and with the word,
Meseemed I floated into a sudden light
Above his stature,—'am I proved too weak
To stand alone, yet strong enough to bear
Such leaners on my shoulder? poor to think,
Yet rich enough to sympathise with thought?
Incompetent to sing, as blackbirds can,
Yet competent to love, like HIM?'

I paused:

Perhaps I darkened, as the lighthouse will
That turns upon the sea. 'It's always so!
Anything does for a wife.'

She detects the hypocrisy in Romney's position. She, as a woman, is too weak to stand on her own yet strong enough to support her husband. Aurora rises in stature here as she understands her own strength to see these things clearly.

'Aurora, dear,
And dearly honoured' . . he pressed in at once
With eager utterance,—'you translate me ill.
I do not contradict my thought of you
Which is most reverent, with another thought
Found less so. If your sex is weak for art,
(And I who said so, did but honour you
By using truth in courtship) it is strong
For life and duty. Place your fecund heart

In mine, and let us blossom for the world
That wants love's colour in the grey of time.
With all my talk I can but set you where
You look down coldly on the arena-heaps
Of headless bodies, shapeless, indistinct!
The Judgment-Angel scarce would find his way
Through such a heap of generalised distress,
To the individual man with lips and eyes—
Much less Aurora. Ah, my sweet, come down,
And, hand in hand, we'll go where yours shall touch
These victims, one by one! till one by one,
The formless, nameless trunk of every man
Shall seem to wear a head, with hair you know,
And every woman catch your mother's face
To melt you into passion.'

Well, he says at least I was honest when I told you women were weak for poetry but strong for life and duty. There's Hellenism (her poetry is Greek!) and Hebraism, life and duty.

'I am a girl,'

I answered slowly; 'you do well to name
My mother's face. Though far too early, alas,
God's hand did interpose 'twixt it and me,
I know so much of love, as used to shine
In that face and another. Just so much;
No more indeed at all. I have not seen
So much love since, I pray you pardon me,
As answers even to make a marriage with,
In this cold land of England. What you love,
Is not a woman, Romney, but a cause:
You want a helpmate, not a mistress, sir,—
A wife to help your ends . . . in her no end!
Your cause is noble, your ends excellent,
But I, being most unworthy of these and that,
Do otherwise conceive of love. Farewell.'

Aurora's idea is clear—you want help and a mate but do not love the very specific person standing in front of you.

'Farewell, Aurora, you reject me thus?'

He said.

'Why, sir, you are married long ago.
You have a wife already whom you love,
Your social theory. Bless you both, I say.
For my part, I am scarcely meek enough
To be the handmaid of a lawful spouse.
Do I look a Hagar, think you?'

In rejecting him with this logic, Romney doesn't get what she's really saying. He thinks she rejects him because he has not wooed her enough with lovey-dovey language. He couldn't be further from the truth, but he continues on with his blunder.

'So, you jest!'

'Nay so, I speak in earnest,' I replied.

'You treat of marriage too much like, at least,
A chief apostle; you would bear with you
A wife . . . a sister . . . shall we speak it out?
A sister of charity.'

'Then, must it be

Indeed farewell? And was I so far wrong
In hope and in illusion, when I took
The woman to be nobler than the man,
Yourself the noblest woman,—in the use
And comprehension of what love is,—love,
That generates the likeness of itself
Through all heroic duties? so far wrong
In saying bluntly, venturing truth on love,
'Come, human creature, love and work with me,'—
Instead of, 'Lady, thou art wondrous fair,
'And, where the Graces walk before, the Muse
'Will follow at the lighting of the eyes,
'And where the Muse walks, lovers need to creep
'Turn round and love me, or I die of love."

She doesn't let his mistaken assumption go unanswered. She then goes on to argue that she herself has a vocation not to be made subservient to anyone else's.

With quiet indignation I broke in.

'You misconceive the question like a man,
Who sees a woman as the complement
Of his sex merely. You forget too much
That every creature, female as the male,
Stands single in responsible act and thought
As also in birth and death. Whoever says
To a loyal woman, 'Love and work with me,'
Will get fair answers, if the work and love
Being good themselves, are good for her—the best
She was born for. Women of a softer mood,
Surprised by men when scarcely awake to life,
Will sometimes only hear the first word, love,
And catch up with it any kind of work,
Indifferent, so that dear love go with it:
I do not blame such women, though, for love,
They pick much oakum; earth's fanatics make
Too frequently heaven's saints. But *me*, your work

Is not the best for,—nor your love the best,
 Nor able to commend the kind of work
 For love's sake merely. Ah, you force me, sir,
 To be over-bold in speaking of myself,—
 I, too, have my vocation,—work to do,
 The heavens and earth have set me, since I changed
 My father's face for theirs,—and though your world
 Were twice as wretched as you represent
 Most serious work, most necessary work,
 As any of the economists'. Reform,
 Make trade a Christian possibility,
 And individual right no general wrong;
 Wipe out earth's furrows of the Thine and Mine,
 And leave one green, for men to play at bowls;
 With innings for them all! . . what then, indeed,
 If mortals were not greater by the head
 Than any of their prosperities? what then,
 Unless the artist keep up open roads
 Betwixt the seen and unseen,—bursting through
 The best of your conventions with his best
 The unspeakable, imaginable best
 God bids him speak, to prove what lies beyond
 Both speech and imagination? A starved man
 Exceeds a fat beast: we'll not barter, sir,
 The beautiful for barley.—And, even so,
 I hold you will not compass your poor ends
 Of barley-feeding and material ease,
 Without a poet's individualism
 To work your universal. It takes a soul,
 To move a body: it takes a high-souled man,
 To move the masses . . even to a cleaner sty:
 It takes the ideal, to blow a hair's breadth off
 The dust of the actual.—ah, your Fouriers failed,
 Because not poets enough to understand
 That life develops from within.—For me,
 Perhaps I am not worthy, as you say,
 Of work like this! . . perhaps a woman's soul
 Aspires, and not creates! yet we aspire,
 And yet I'll try out your perhapses, sir;
 And if I fail . . why, burn me up my straw
 Like other false works—I'll not ask for grace,
 Your scorn is better, cousin Romney. I
 Who love my art, would never wish it lower
 To suit my stature. I may love my art,
 You'll grant that even a woman may love art,

Seeing that to waste true love on anything,
Is womanly, past question.'
From Book 5

This passage seems to set out Barrett-Browning's esthetic. The duty of a poet is to have a double vision—see things up close comprehensively, as well as being able to see, and write about, the big picture. So many Victorian poets wrote of themes from the past; she claims that the poet must be a mirror to the present age, a prophet of the “now.”

The critics say that epics have died out
With Agamemnon and the goat-nursed gods—
I'll not believe it. I could never dream
As Payne Knight did, (the mythic mountaineer
Who travelled higher than he was born to live,
And showed sometimes the goitre in his throat
Discoursing of an image seen through fog.)
That Homer's heroes measured twelve feet high.
They were but men!—his Helen's hair turned grey
Like any plain Miss Smith's, who wears a front:
And Hector's infant blubbered at a plume
As yours last Friday at a turkey-cock.
All men are possible heroes: every age,
Heroic in proportions, double-faced,
Looks backward and before, expects a morn
And claims an epos.

Ay, but every age
Appears to souls who live in it, (ask Carlyle)
Most unheroic. Ours, for instance, ours!
The thinkers scout it, and the poets abound
Who scorn to touch it with a finger-tip:
A pewter age,—mixed metal, silver-washed;
An age of scum, spooned off the richer past;
An age of patches for old gabardines;
An age of mere transition, meaning nought,
Except that what succeeds must shame it quite,
If God please. That's wrong thinking, to my mind,
And wrong thoughts make poor poems.

Every age,
Through being beheld too close, is ill-discerned
By those who have not lived past it. We'll suppose
Mount Athos carved, as Persian Xerxes schemed,
To some colossal statue of a man:
The peasants, gathering brushwood in his ear,
Had guessed as little of any human form
Up there, as would a flock of browsing goats.
They'd have, in fact, to travel ten miles off
Or ere the giant image broke on them,

Full human profile, nose and chin distinct,
Mouth, muttering rhythms of silence up the sky,
And fed at evening with the blood of suns;
Grand torso,—hand, that flung perpetually
The largesse of a silver river down
To all the country pastures. 'Tis even thus
With times we live in,—evermore too great
To be apprehended near.

But poets should
Exert a double vision; should have eyes
To see near things as comprehensibly
As if afar they took their point of sight,
And distant things, as intimately deep,
As if they touched them. Let us strive for this.
I do distrust the poet who discerns
No character or glory in his times,
And trundles back his soul five hundred years,
Past moat and drawbridge, into a castle-court,
Oh not to sing of lizards or of toads
Alive i' the ditch there!—'twere excusable;
But of some black chief, half knight, half sheep-lifter
Some beauteous dame, half chattel and half queen,
As dead as must be, for the greater part,
The poems made on their chivalric bones.
And that's no wonder: death inherits death.
Nay, if there's room for poets in the world
A little overgrown, (I think there is)
Their sole work is to represent the age,
Their age, not Charlemagne's,—this live, throbbing age,
That brawls, cheats, maddens, calculates, aspires,
And spends more passion, more heroic heat,
Betwixt the mirrors of its drawing-rooms,
Than Roland with his knights, at Roncesvalles.
To flinch from modern varnish, coat or flounce,
Cry out for togas and the picturesque,
Is fatal,—foolish too. King Arthur's self
Was commonplace to Lady Guenever;
And Camelot to minstrels seemed as flat,
As Regent street to poets.

Never flinch,
But still, unscrupulously epic, catch
Upon a burning lava of a song,
The full-veined, heaving, double-breasted Age:
That, when the next shall come, the men of that
May touch the impress with reverent hand, and say

'Behold,—behold the paps we all have sucked!
That bosom seems to beat still, or at least
It sets ours beating. This is living art,
Which thus presents, and thus records true life.'

Assignment #1

Each paragraph must include a quotation from one of the texts under consideration. Use MLA style citation. Consult the “How to Cite Literature” directions in the home page. No need for a Works Cited as all texts come from the Norton Anthology. Do not use outside sources. I will grade these liberally and use them to assess how well you understand the material. No plagiarism.

Barrett-Browning’s *Aurora Leigh* contains a critique of English society and gender roles. Much of the critique can be discussed in terms of the dichotomies Arnold sets out in *Culture and Anarchy*. For this assignment you will define the two poles in Arnold, and then find three passages in *Aurora Leigh* that can be discussed in terms of this dichotomy.

Paragraph1

Briefly define Hellenism and Hebraism from Matthew Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy*.

Paragraph2

Provide a passage from *Aurora Leigh* and explain how it can be discussed in terms of the two terms from Arnold.

Paragraph3

Provide a passage from *Aurora Leigh* and explain how it can be discussed in terms of the two terms from Arnold.

Paragraph 4

Provide a passage from *Aurora Leigh* and explain how it can be discussed in terms of the two terms from Arnold. This last paragraph ought to summarize your findings.

A Good Essay:

1. Properly cites the texts;
2. Accurately defines Hellenism and Hebraism;
3. Quotes three passages from *Aurora Leigh* and explains how they relate to these two terms from Arnold.
4. Provides an introduction to, and summary of, your findings.

Assignment #2 Application

Friedrich Nietzsche had two similar poles to Arnold’s—the Dionysian and the Apollonian. The Dionysian is the wild, fun, improvisatory and free; the Apollonian is the restrictive, the bringer of the law. In one paragraph, discuss the times when you need the Hellenistic (Dionysian) or the Hebraistic (Apollonian). If you can think of an instance when you need just the right mixture of both, use it!

Relate an instance when you need the Apollonian;

Relate an instance when you need the Dionysian;

Tell us which are you more inclined to have.

You can write more if you want. Here's my contribution:

When I throw the discus, and I have now for 35 years!, you have to have the exact right mix between the Hebraistic and Hellenistic. The Hebraistic is about control and strength-it is a very technical event and you must have the exact right timing. On the other hand, it is graceful and free and if you have just the right amount of wildness, you can throw it much further than you could if you just thought about what you were supposed to be doing. Another way to look at it is that all the training is the Hebraistic, but once you get in the ring, it's a hardy dose of sweetness and light! By the way, maybe you could have guessed, but both of these forces are fairly strong and insistent in me. Sometimes, they battle.

A Good Application

1. Describes you and the Hebraistic;
2. Describes you and the Hellenistic;
3. Discusses which one predominates in your personality.

Worksheets

You must be able to answer these questions from reading the texts and my commentary. You may want to print these questions and answer them as you read. They will guide your reading and organize your notes. Your weekly quiz will be 10 of these questions.

Browning

1. What is a dramatic monologue?
2. What is the difference between an internal and external monologue?
3. What is a motivating incident?
4. What is prosopopoeia?
5. How are we first introduced to the Duchess?
6. Why does the Duke keep it behind a curtain?
7. What amused the Duchess?
8. Why won't the Duke tell her to change?
9. What does the Duke do about her behavior?
10. What is the motivating incident for the monologue?
11. Why does he point out a sculpture at the end of the poem?
12. What kind of man is the duke?
13. Be able to sketch out a psychological portrait of Porphyria's lover.
14. Be able to sketch out a psychological portrait for the bishop ordering his tomb.
15. Be able to sketch out a psychological portrait of the monk who hates Brother Lawrence.

Tennyson

16. What social issue does "The Lady of Shalott" address?
17. What is her curse?

18. What happens when she transgresses the curse?
19. What are Lancelot's comments upon her death?
20. How is the poem "The Lotus Eaters" a critique of Romanticism?
21. How is the poem typical of Victorian attitudes?
22. What would Elizabeth Barrett Browning say about the subject of the poem?

IX. Personnae

In this chapter we'll look at two poets who were extremely popular during the Victorian age, the husband of Elizabeth Barrett, Robert Browning, and Alfred, Lord Tennyson. We will discuss the kind of poem Browning used to such great effect, the dramatic monologue, and we'll review the typical "Victorianess" of Tennyson.



Robert Browning (1812-1889) is the first poet whose voice we can hear as Edison recorded Browning reciting a poem in 1889. I also think of him embodying Victorianism as Mr. Ramsey walks up and down the house reciting Browning in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. After his wife's death, Browning returned to England from Italy and installed himself as the senior man of letters. His poems are noteworthy for their psychological realism and relentless experimentation with meter. We will focus on his use of **dramatic monologue** in his poetry.

Dramatic monologue, motivating incident, internal/external, tone

A specific type of narrative poem where the narration is in first person but is not assumed to be the author is called a **dramatic monologue**. In a dramatic monologue, the narration is assumed to be triggered by a **motivating incident**, that is, something that causes the character to begin the narration. If there is an external audience for the monologue, it is said to be an **exterior monologue**. If the audience is the speaker, in his or her mind, it is called an **interior monologue**. Hamlet's soliloquy is an interior monologue. The poet dons a mask to write a dramatic monologue and speaks through the mask of the character. That poetic mask is called **prosopopoeia** and the character whose mask the poet dons is the poet's **persona**.

My Last Duchess

"My Last Duchess" is an external dramatic monologue. Browning reveals the psychology of the duke through his speech and uncovers a not very well hidden secret.

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.

Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
the curtain I have drawn for you, but I)

We are introduced to the Duke as he shows a painting of his dead wife to the visitor. He keeps the painting under wraps for its subject seems to elicit interest from male viewers.

And seemed they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess's cheek: perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half flush that dies along her throat": such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot. She had
A heart--how shall I say?--too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.

It seems as if the duchess was a light-hearted creature who was easily moved, "too soon made glad." The tone would suggest that the Duke doesn't appreciate such characteristics.

Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace--all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men--good! but thanked
Somehow--I know not how--as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift.

The reason for the Duke's distaste of his wife's attitude is revealed here--she did not make herself enemy to all pleasures except her husband's status.

Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech--(which I have not)--to make your will
Quite clear to such a one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss
Or there exceed the mark"--and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse
--E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose

Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile?

We learn that the Duke never even tells her what he takes as her character flaw because that would be "stooping" and he doesn't think Dukes should stoop. They are stooped to.

This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive.

What commands do you think he gave? Why did his commands stop all smiles? What is the subtle sign of guilt, the return of the repressed?

Will't please you rise? We'll meet
the company below, then. I repeat
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretense
Of mine dowry will be disallowed
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

*Now the motivating incident is made clear. The Duke is arranging for a purchase, not another sculpture, but another wife. I know the Count would like to make a good match for his daughter but he ought to think twice about this duke. Another aspect of the narrative poem that the Browning monologue demonstrates is **tone**. Tone is the attitude the narrator has towards the subject of the narration. The Duke's tone is arrogant, preemptory, controlling.*

Porphyria's Lover, Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister, The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed's Church

All these poems are also Dramatic Monologues, males, who share with the Duke the desire to control circumstances that seem to be beyond their control. Because you will be using these poems to write your weekly assignment, I wanted to give a few ideas about the poetic masks involved. The speaker of "Porphyria's Lover" has stayed up all night with a corpse. How and why Porphyria became a corpse is the focus of the poem. In "The Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" there is a monk and a secluded monastery who hates his fellow monk, Brother Lawrence. He sabotages Brother Lawrence's plants, makes fun of him under his breath, and even considers making a deal with the devil to get back at Lawrence. In "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed's Church," a rather corrupt renaissance Bishop is giving directions to his sons on how to construct his tomb. He's weaving in and out of consciousness as he recounts his rivalry with another priest, Gandolph (no not that one!) for his love. In all of these poems, as you read them, consider the way the poems reveal the personality of the speaker, the mask that the poet dons.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson



mikebarrettarchive.com

If I asked any number of students who their favorite living American poet was, I suspect that most would be stumped for an answer (if we include MCs, then I imagine

there would be some answers). It was not the case with Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) who was a very popular poet during his lifetime and made himself a more than comfortable living through poetry. Educated in a contentious household led by a parson, Tennyson taught himself the master English prosody (the study of meter) and was a voracious reader. Though much of what he wrote concerned the past, he was fascinated by science and technology. He was, essentially, the national poet of England.

The Lady of Shalott

I can't help but think that Elizabeth Barrett-Browning was thinking about Tennyson when she wrote in Aurora Leigh that poets ought to take their material from the present age instead of reaching deeply into the past. One thing interesting about Tennyson is that his poems set in the past have contemporary meaning as shown in "The Lady of Shalott." The poem is set in the time of Arthur and His Knights (a popular theme in Victorian art because, perhaps, Britain was self-aware of the "glorious" empire it was building) yet addresses "the woman question."

Part I.

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
 To many-tower'd Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
 The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
 Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
 The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veil'd
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
By slow horses; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd
 Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?

Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
 The Lady of Shalott?

The poem opens with a pastoral scene that shows the beauty of nature compared to the gray walls and towers that hold the Lady of Shalott prisoner.

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
 Down to tower'd Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers "'Tis the fairy
 Lady of Shalott."

These workers hear the mournful tune of the Lady. Notable about this as well is the fact that she is separate from the natural economy that these men participate in. She is shut out from the world.

Part II.

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
 To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
 The Lady of Shalott.

And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
 Winding down to Camelot:
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
 Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,

Goes by to tower'd Camelot;
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed;
"I am half-sick of shadows," said
The Lady of Shalott.

She is imprisoned in her tower because of a curse of unknown origin. She is separate from the world of commerce and discourse, from the affairs of state. Her occupation is telling—she weaves, which is a traditional activity for woman. Because she spends so much time looking at the mirror, she remains forever abstracted from the vitality of the world.

Part III.

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A redcross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle-bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot:
And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather

Burn'd like one burning flame together,
 As he rode down to Camelot.
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
 Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
 As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
"Tirra lirra," by the river
 Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
 She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side;
"The curse is come upon me," cried
 The Lady of Shalott.

Entranced by the sight of Sir Lancelot, she looks down toward Camelot and the curse begins, represented by the cracked mirror.

Part IV.

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale-yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
 Over tower'd Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
 The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse--
Like some bold seër in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance--
With a glassy countenance

Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right--
The leaves upon her falling light--
Thro' the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot:
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darkened wholly,
Turn'd to tower'd Camelot;
For ere she reach'd upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
A corse between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they cross'd themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, "She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott."

She enters a boat, writes her name, and then floats down the river singing her death song. Tennyson seems to be sensitive to the plight of women in this poem by showing a woman from mythology who suffers a similar fate to the women of the Victorian age. Yet, he falls prey to a common position of artists in Victorianism, the beauty of a dead female body. This kind of image recurs many times (as we'll discuss in the next chapter). Lancelot essentially says, "Yes she's dead but boy was she good looking."

The Lotus Eaters

This is another poem taken from the past—it is from Homer's The Odyssey. In this episode sailors who eat of the lotus-flower become, essentially, addicted and fall into a state of soporific lassitude, content to watch sunsets and sing sad songs. Whether intended or not, I've always thought that this poem is a perfect way to represent how the Victorian age thought about romantics. They have eaten the lotus flowers and are content with gazing at the beauty of nature without doing anything productive

Assignment #1

Each paragraph must include a quotation from one of the texts under consideration. Use MLA style citation. Consult the “How to Cite Literature” directions in the home page. No need for a Works Cited as all texts come from the Norton Anthology. Do not use outside sources. I will grade these liberally and use them to assess how well you understand the material. No plagiarism.

Using Browning’s poems “Porphyria’s Lover,” “The Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister,” or “The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed’s Church,” write a four paragraph essay in which you describe the personality of the speaker of the poem by interpreting four different passages.

Paragraph1

Name and summarize the poem you are analyzing. Quote a passage and discuss what that passage tells us about the personality or psychology of speaker of the poem.

Paragraph2

Quote a passage and discuss what that passage tells us about the personality or psychology of speaker of the poem.

Paragraph3

Quote a passage and discuss what that passage tells us about the personality or psychology of speaker of the poem.

Paragraph 4

Quote a passage and discuss what that passage tells us about the personality or psychology of speaker of the poem. This last paragraph ought to summarize your findings, in other words, what kind of guy speaks the poem?

A Good Essay:

1. Properly cites the texts;
2. Quotes four passages from the poem that give insight into the psychology and personality of the speaker;
3. Accurately discusses the psychology/personality of the speaker.
4. Provides an introduction to, and summary of, your findings.

Assignment #2 Application

This should be fun. Write a paragraph which is a dramatic monologue. Do not tell us who this character is—it could be someone only you know, or a cultural figure. Imagine there is a motivating incident that makes this character speak. Provide, through the speech, what this character’s personality/psychology is like. Do not give any explicit clues. The response to your post will interpret the character!

Imagine a motivating incident that sparks your character to speak;

Provide a speech by your character;

The speech contains all kinds of clues as to the speaker’s personality/psychology.

You can write more if you want. Here's my contribution:

If he thinks he can keep it from me he's wrong. Like he was wrong when he put the steak in the cabinet and I smelled it out, climbed on the counter, and ate it. (I smell cat. I smell squirrel). I'll walk out the room like I don't care (I do care). Dammit, I'm running back and he acts like he won't give it to me. Okay, I'll rest for a second, long enough...long enough. Idiot, he threw it. It's mine again. I'll take it underneath the dining room table where no one can wrest it from me.

A Good Application

1. Has an implicit motivating incident;
2. Includes natural speech;
3. Provides clues to the speaker's personality.

Worksheets

You must be able to answer these questions from reading the texts and my commentary. You may want to print these questions and answer them as you read. They will guide your reading and organize your notes. Your weekly quiz will be 10 of these questions.

1. Who were the Pre-Raphaelite painters?
2. What were their principles?
3. What is the role of the female body as subject matter in these paintings?
4. What is considered beautiful?
5. Why?
6. What is significant about the painting “The Drowning of Ophelia”?
7. What happened to the model who posed for the painting?

Goblin Market

8. How does this poem relate to John Milton's *Paradise Lost*?
9. How are the Goblin Men related to men in general?
10. What evidence is that eating the fruit is premarital sex?
11. What is the presence of Hellenism and Hebraism in the poem?
12. What is the symbolic rape in the poem?
13. What is the symbolic sacrifice of Christ in the poem?
14. What is the ultimate message of the poem?
15. Be able to explicate “No, Thank You, John.”
16. Be able to explicate “Promises like Pie Crusts.”

X. Rossetti, Sisterhood and Pre-Raphaelites

Before we begin analyzing the work of Christina Rossetti, I want to discuss the painting of her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his group, the Pre-Raphaelites. The Pre-Raphaelites believed that painting had gone astray since the work of the Italian Renaissance master Raphael (1483-1520) by emphasizing compositional formulae at the expense of faithfully rendering nature.

The Pre-Raphaelites were devoted to naturalistic detail that also served symbolic purpose. They often chose Medieval imagery to work out their esthetic agenda. In addition, their work highlights one of the prominent themes of the Victorian age, and if you watch crime dramas you'll realize it's still prevalent today—the estheticization of the dead female form.

Susan Sontag, the 20th century American cultural critic, writes in her book *Illness as a Metaphor*, the way that women suffering from tuberculosis were seen as objects of beauty in the 19th century. This certainly was the case in Victorian, and pre-Raphaelite art. We recall the words of Lancelot as he gazed on the dead body of the the lady of Shalott: “She has a lovely face;/God in his mercy lend her grace,/The Lady of Shalott.” Here’s the etching of that scene from the Pre-Raphaelites, Dante Gabriel Rossetti:



This engraving captures a number of the qualities of Pre-Raphaelite art: it is based on a medieval subject; it is packed with realistic detail, and it contains a beautiful dead woman in it.

The model for the Lady of Shalott is Elizabeth Siddal who served as Dante Rossetti's muse. She was the model for thousands of his paintings, etchings, and drawings. He was engaged to her for many years and married her in 1860. She was already very sickly at that time and died of a laudanum overdose in 1862; she was 33 years old. Most believe that the death was a suicide

Dante Rossetti's sister, Christina Rossetti, wrote a poem, “In an Artist's Studio,” that laid bare what she thought of the objectification of the Siddal and the way that it erased her humanity. The poem also reminds me of the section of Barrett-Browning's poem, “Aurora Leigh,” when

Browning writes: "Or else at best, a cushion where you lean/And sleep, and dream of something we are not,/But would be for your sake."

Christina Rossetti's poem chronicles the way that her brother treats his model and mistress:

One face looks out from all his canvases,
One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans:
We found her hidden just behind those screens,
That mirror gave back all her loveliness.
A queen in opal or in ruby dress,
A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,
A saint, an angel -- every canvas means
The same one meaning, neither more nor less.
He feeds upon her face by day and night,
And she with true kind eyes looks back on him,
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:
Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;
Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;
Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.

Rossetti notes that what her brother paints is not the real woman who looks on him with love, but an idea that he dresses and paints to fulfill his idea.

In a very powerful painting by one of Dante Rossetti's Pre-Raphaelite brethren, John Everett Millais, Siddal serves as the model for the drowned Ophelia. Ophelia is Hamlet's love in Shakespeare's play and kills herself by drowning. Siddal lay in a tub to model for the painting. On display is the stunning photographic realism in the natural details that surround her as well in the rendering of her cold lifeless body.



This is an amazing painting with exact and rich rendering of the natural world, as well as the beauty of Siddal. But it's power and beauty is also derived from the rendering of the dead woman.

The end of Elizabeth Siddal seems sad enough, most likely death at her own hand, sickly and depressed at home. But it gets worse. Dante Rossetti was devastated by her death, and never really recovered. In a paroxysm of grief, he laid his notebook in her coffin when she was buried, as a sign of the renunciation of his art. Seven years later he was a shell of a man and had rekindled his desire to write poetry. He had Siddal's body exhumed so he could retrieve his notebook. Although he wasn't there, it was reported she was still beautiful and her hair had grown in the grave. Of course, that was the report! It was a dead female body.

There are many cultural reasons why there should be a fascination with the sickly and dead female figure. First, tuberculosis was widespread and many young women were dying of it. Second, during this time there was intense agitation to remake a patriarchal society so that it would be more equitable. The dead female requires no rights and makes no demands. As Blake taught us, there is always a dialectic going on in historical conditions. Every aspect of history has meaning and it is up to the engaged intellectual to decipher that meaning.

Christina Rossetti & Sisterhood



Christina Rossetti (1830-1894) was born into a lively house of Italian ex-patriots living in England. She was the youngest member of an intellectual and artistic family. She was highly religious and spent much of her life serving others. Her poetry contains rich imagistic description along with themes of renunciation and salvation. Although she was conservative and traditional in her religious sentiment, she was sensitive to the plight of women and developed a feminist sensibility.

Goblin Market

We discussed at the beginning of the semester how the poetry of John Milton, particularly Milton's Paradise Lost, which is the story of the fall of Adam and Even in the Garden of Eden as well as the monumental battle between Satan and his followers and God, Christ and the good angels. This poem by Rossetti reveals her twin concerns—rejection of the pleasures of sensuality, and a concern for sisterhood in a sacrificial relationship. There are echoes of Paradise Lost throughout the poem.

Morning and evening
Maids heard the goblins cry:
“Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:
Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump ungeck'd cherries,
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheek'd peaches,
Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries;—
All ripe together
In summer weather,—
Morns that pass by,
Fair eves that fly;
Come buy, come buy:
Our grapes fresh from the vine,
Pomegranates full and fine,
Dates and sharp bullaces,
Rare pears and greengages,
Damsons and bilberries,
Taste them and try:
Currants and gooseberries,

Bright-fire-like barberries,
Figs to fill your mouth,
Citrons from the South,
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;
Come buy, come buy.”

The poem opens with the temptation of sensuality. This is one of the themes of the poem—the lurid attraction of temptation. But as we’ll see with other passages, simple pleasures are valued. Pure pleasure for the sake of pure pleasure are seen as corrupt and sinful. Consider this relative to the fruit of the tree of Good and Evil in the garden of Eden.

Evening by evening
Among the brookside rushes,
Laura bow’d her head to hear,
Lizzie veil’d her blushes:
Crouching close together
In the cooling weather,
With clasping arms and cautioning lips,
With tingling cheeks and finger tips.

This gives you an idea of their relationship and how they depend on each other to resist temptation. Note, Laura and Lizzie are stand-ins for Adam and Eve. These primordial pair are sisters.

“Lie close,” Laura said,
Pricking up her golden head:
“We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits:
Who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry thirsty roots?”
“Come buy,” call the goblins
Hobbling down the glen.

“Oh,” cried Lizzie, “Laura, Laura,
You should not peep at goblin men.”
Lizzie cover’d up her eyes,
Cover’d close lest they should look;
Laura rear’d her glossy head,
And whisper’d like the restless brook:
“Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,
Down the glen tramp little men.
One hauls a basket,
One bears a plate,
One lugs a golden dish
Of many pounds weight.
How fair the vine must grow
Whose grapes are so luscious;
How warm the wind must blow

Through those fruit bushes.”

The sensuality of the eyes are first engaged by Laura who begins her description by saying how good they look.

“No,” said Lizzie, “No, no, no;
Their offers should not charm us,
Their evil gifts would harm us.”
She thrust a dimpled finger
In each ear, shut eyes and ran:
Curious Laura chose to linger
Wondering at each merchant man.
One had a cat’s face,
One whisk’d a tail,
One tramp’d at a rat’s pace,
One crawl’d like a snail,
One like a wombat prowld obtuse and furry,
One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry.
She heard a voice like voice of doves
Cooing all together:
They sounded kind and full of loves
In the pleasant weather.

So they are goblin men. The sensual delights these little men offer are animal. Certainly, as we’ll see, you could interpret eating the fruit as giving into men who desire sex.

Laura stretch’d her gleaming neck
Like a rush-imbedded swan,
Like a lily from the beck,
Like a moonlit poplar branch,
Like a vessel at the launch
When its last restraint is gone.
These are metaphors for Laura giving up her will and giving into temptation.

Backwards up the mossy glen
Turn’d and troop’d the goblin men,
With their shrill repeated cry,
“Come buy, come buy.”
When they reach’d where Laura was
They stood stock still upon the moss,
Leering at each other,
Brother with queer brother;
Signalling each other,
Brother with sly brother.
One set his basket down,
One rear’d his plate;
One began to weave a crown
Of tendrils, leaves, and rough nuts brown
(Men sell not such in any town);
One heav’d the golden weight
Of dish and fruit to offer her:

"Come buy, come buy," was still their cry.
 Laura stared but did not stir,
 Long'd but had no money:
 The whisk-tail'd merchant bade her taste
 In tones as smooth as honey,
 The cat-faced purr'd,
 The rat-faced spoke a word
 Of welcome, and the snail-paced even was heard;
 One parrot-voiced and jolly
 Cried "Pretty Goblin" still for "Pretty Polly;"—
 One whistled like a bird.

But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste:
 "Good folk, I have no coin;
 To take were to purloin:
 I have no copper in my purse,
 I have no silver either,
 And all my gold is on the furze
 That shakes in windy weather
 Above the rusty heather."

One of the things I find interesting about the poem is its economic theme. The pastoral economy of Lizzie and Laura is contrasted with the confectionary economy of the merchant goblin men. In addition, there is a little magic and voodoo going on as well. The goblin men want her hair as a sign of female sexuality (remember Elizabeth Siddal in her grave) and control.

"You have much gold upon your head,"
 They answer'd all together:
 "Buy from us with a golden curl."
 She clipp'd a precious golden lock,
 She dropp'd a tear more rare than pearl,
 Then suck'd their fruit globes fair or red:
 Sweeter than honey from the rock,
 Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,
 Clearer than water flow'd that juice;
 She never tasted such before,
 How should it cloy with length of use?
 She suck'd and suck'd and suck'd the more
 Fruits which that unknown orchard bore;
 She suck'd until her lips were sore;
Again, sexual imagery as well as completely giving herself over to sensual pleasure.
 Then flung the emptied rinds away
 But gather'd up one kernel stone,
 And knew not was it night or day
 As she turn'd home alone.

Lizzie met her at the gate

Full of wise upbraidings:
“Dear, you should not stay so late,
Twilight is not good for maidens;
Should not loiter in the glen
In the haunts of goblin men.
Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
Pluck’d from bowers
Where summer ripens at all hours?
But ever in the noonlight
She pined and pined away;
Sought them by night and day,
Found them no more, but dwindled and grew grey;
Then fell with the first snow,
While to this day no grass will grow
Where she lies low:
I planted daisies there a year ago
That never blow.
You should not loiter so.”

We have the exemplum of Jeanie who gave in to the goblin men. She became “theirs” and they never returned. She withered away and died. No flowers grew on her grave. In other words, her grave was barren (could not conceive).

“Nay, hush,” said Laura:
“Nay, hush, my sister:
I ate and ate my fill,
Yet my mouth waters still;
To-morrow night I will
Buy more;” and kiss’d her:
“Have done with sorrow;
I’ll bring you plums to-morrow
Fresh on their mother twigs,
Cherries worth getting;
You cannot think what figs
My teeth have met in,
What melons icy-cold
Piled on a dish of gold
Too huge for me to hold,
What peaches with a velvet nap,
Pellucid grapes without one seed:
Odorous indeed must be the mead
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink
With lilies at the brink,
And sugar-sweet their sap.”

She wants to recruit Lizzie in her sin. By her description of the fruit you can tell that she's still thinking about them—the pleasure is still resonating in her body.

Golden head by golden head,
Like two pigeons in one nest
Folded in each other's wings,
They lay down in their curtain'd bed:
Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
Like two wands of ivory
Tipp'd with gold for awful kings.
Moon and stars gaz'd in at them,
Wind sang to them lullaby,
Lumbering owls forbore to fly,
Not a bat flapp'd to and fro
Round their rest:
Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
Lock'd together in one nest.

This passage is a direct allusion to Adam and Eve before the fall. When they slept in their bower, no creature would disturb them and nature herself seemed to bless their innocent sleep.

Early in the morning
When the first cock crow'd his warning,
Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
Laura rose with Lizzie:
Fetch'd in honey, milk'd the cows,
Air'd and set to rights the house,
Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
Next churn'd butter, whipp'd up cream,
Fed their poultry, sat and sew'd;
Talk'd as modest maidens should:
Lizzie with an open heart,
Laura in an absent dream,
One content, one sick in part;
One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,
One longing for the night.

This is the domestic pastoral economy that has its own pleasures, but the pleasures are associated with good honest work. Compare to getting the fruit with just a lock of hair. Lizzie attends to her work with attention and care and Laura is abstracted from it.

At length slow evening came:
They went with pitchers to the reedy brook;
Lizzie most placid in her look,
Laura most like a leaping flame.
They drew the gurgling water from its deep;
Lizzie pluck'd purple and rich golden flags,
Then turning homeward said: "The sunset flushes

Those furthest loftiest crags;
Come, Laura, not another maiden lags.
No wilful squirrel wags,
The beasts and birds are fast asleep.”
But Laura loiter’d still among the rushes
And said the bank was steep.

And said the hour was early still
The dew not fall’n, the wind not chill;
Listening ever, but not catching
The customary cry,
“Come buy, come buy,”
With its iterated jingle
Of sugar-baited words:
Not for all her watching
Once discerning even one goblin
Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling;
Let alone the herds
That used to tramp along the glen,
In groups or single,
Of brisk fruit-merchant men.

Till Lizzie urged, “O Laura, come;
I hear the fruit-call but I dare not look:
You should not loiter longer at this brook:
Come with me home.
The stars rise, the moon bends her arc,
Each glowworm winks her spark,
Let us get home before the night grows dark:
For clouds may gather
Though this is summer weather,
Put out the lights and drench us through;
Then if we lost our way what should we do?”

The old cliché is that once men get what they want they won't want it anymore. It seems to be the case with the goblin men. They have gotten what they want from Laura so they do not call to her anymore, but they have not gotten to Lizzie yet, so they call to her.

Laura turn'd cold as stone
To find her sister heard that cry alone,
That goblin cry,
“Come buy our fruits, come buy.”
Must she then buy no more such dainty fruit?
Must she no more such succous pasture find,
Gone deaf and blind?
Her tree of life droop'd from the root:
This line is directly from Genesis and the story of Adam and Eve.

She said not one word in her heart's sore ache;
But peering thro' the dimness, nought discerning,
Trudg'd home, her pitcher dripping all the way;
So crept to bed, and lay
Silent till Lizzie slept;
Then sat up in a passionate yearning,
And gnash'd her teeth for baulk'd desire, and wept
As if her heart would break.

Day after day, night after night,
Laura kept watch in vain
In sullen silence of exceeding pain.
She never caught again the goblin cry:
"Come buy, come buy;"—
She never spied the goblin men
Hawking their fruits along the glen:
But when the noon wax'd bright
Her hair grew thin and grey;
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn
To swift decay and burn
Her fire away.

She begins to fade away, just as Jeanie did.

One day remembering her kernel-stone
She set it by a wall that faced the south;
Dew'd it with tears, hoped for a root,
Watch'd for a waxing shoot,
But there came none;
It never saw the sun,
It never felt the trickling moisture run:
While with sunk eyes and faded mouth
She dream'd of melons, as a traveller sees
False waves in desert drouth
With shade of leaf-crown'd trees,
And burns the thirstier in the sandful breeze.

She no more swept the house,
Tended the fowls or cows,
Fetch'd honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,
Brought water from the brook:
But sat down listless in the chimney-nook
And would not eat.

Again, the economic theme shows up again. Because all she thinks about is the fruit that she cannot have, she doesn't do work anymore. Remind you of Tennyson "The Lotus-Eaters"? It should. In the Victorian age, the first priority is work!

Tender Lizzie could not bear

To watch her sister's cankerous care
Yet not to share.
She night and morning
Caught the goblins' cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy;"—
Beside the brook, along the glen,
She heard the tramp of goblin men,
The yoke and stir
Poor Laura could not hear;
Long'd to buy fruit to comfort her,
But fear'd to pay too dear.
She thought of Jeanie in her grave,
Who should have been a bride;
But who for joys brides hope to have
Fell sick and died
In her gay prime,
In earliest winter time
With the first glazing rime,
With the first snow-fall of crisp winter time.

Here's a passage that explicitly relates eating the goblin fruit to pre-marital sex. Jeanie should have been married but for wanting those joys before she married, died.

Till Laura dwindling
Seem'd knocking at Death's door:
Then Lizzie weigh'd no more
Better and worse;
But put a silver penny in her purse,
Kiss'd Laura, cross'd the heath with clumps of furze
At twilight, halted by the brook:
And for the first time in her life
Began to listen and look.

Laugh'd every goblin
When they spied her peeping:
Came towards her hobbling,
Flying, running, leaping,
Puffing and blowing,
Chuckling, clapping, crowing,
Clucking and gobbling,
Mopping and mowing,
Full of airs and graces,
Pulling wry faces,
Demure grimaces,
Cat-like and rat-like,
Ratel- and wombat-like,

Snail-paced in a hurry,
Parrot-voiced and whistler,
Helter skelter, hurry skurry,
Chattering like magpies,
Fluttering like pigeons,
Gliding like fishes,—
Here come the men who are really like animals.
Hugg'd her and kiss'd her:
Squeez'd and caress'd her:
Stretch'd up their dishes,
Panniers, and plates:
"Look at our apples
Russet and dun,
Bob at our cherries,
Bite at our peaches,
Citrons and dates,
Grapes for the asking,
Pears red with basking
Out in the sun,
Plums on their twigs;
Pluck them and suck them,
Pomegranates, figs."—

"Good folk," said Lizzie,
Mindful of Jeanie:
"Give me much and many: —
Held out her apron,
Toss'd them her penny.
"Nay, take a seat with us,
Honour and eat with us,"
They answer'd grinning:
"Our feast is but beginning.
Night yet is early,
Warm and dew-pearly,
Wakeful and starry:
Such fruits as these
No man can carry:
Half their bloom would fly,
Half their dew would dry,
Half their flavour would pass by.
Sit down and feast with us,
Be welcome guest with us,
Cheer you and rest with us."—

They try to seduce her, but she won't have it (she keeps Jeannie in mind). She wants to keep the exchange as a strictly economic one, but they want to make it more personal.

“Thank you,” said Lizzie: “But one waits
At home alone for me:
So without further parleying,
If you will not sell me any
Of your fruits though much and many,
Give me back my silver penny
I toss’d you for a fee.”—

They won’t give her fruit, so like the frugal Victorian she is, she asks for her money back!

They began to scratch their pates,
No longer wagging, purring,
But visibly demurring,
Grunting and snarling.
One call’d her proud,
Cross-grain’d, uncivil;
Their tones wax’d loud,
Their looks were evil.
Lashing their tails
They trod and hustled her,
Elbow’d and jostled her,
Claw’d with their nails,
Barking, mewling, hissing, mocking,
Tore her gown and soil’d her stocking,
Twitch’d her hair out by the roots,
Stamp’d upon her tender feet,
Held her hands and squeez’d their fruits
Against her mouth to make her eat.

It doesn’t take a Freudian analyst to figure that this is a symbolic rape scene. The goblin men try to, forcefully, shove their fruit in her mouth while physically abusing her.

White and golden Lizzie stood,
Like a lily in a flood,—
Like a rock of blue-vein’d stone
Lash’d by tides obstreperously,—
Like a beacon left alone
In a hoary roaring sea,
Sending up a golden fire,—
Like a fruit-crown’d orange-tree
White with blossoms honey-sweet
Sore beset by wasp and bee,—
Like a royal virgin town
Topp’d with gilded dome and spire
Close beleaguer’d by a fleet
Mad to tug her standard down.
She’s a badass and won’t back down.

One may lead a horse to water,
Twenty cannot make him drink.

Though the goblins cuff'd and caught her,
Coax'd and fought her,
Bullied and besought her,
Scratch'd her, pinch'd her black as ink,
Kick'd and knock'd her,
Maul'd and mock'd her,
Lizzie utter'd not a word;
Would not open lip from lip
Lest they should cram a mouthful in:
But laugh'd in heart to feel the drip
Of juice that syrapp'd all her face,
And lodg'd in dimples of her chin,
And streak'd her neck which quaked like curd.
At last the evil people,
Worn out by her resistance,
Flung back her penny, kick'd their fruit
Along whichever road they took,
Not leaving root or stone or shoot;
Some writh'd into the ground,
Some div'd into the brook
With ring and ripple,
Some scudded on the gale without a sound,
Some vanish'd in the distance.

They beat her and cuff her and though she feels the allure of the fruit, she withstands their onslaught and gets her money back to return to Laura.

In a smart, ache, tingle,
Lizzie went her way;
Knew not was it night or day;
Sprang up the bank, tore thro' the furze,
Threaded copse and dingle,
And heard her penny jingle
Bouncing in her purse,—
Its bounce was music to her ear.

The economy!

She ran and ran
As if she fear'd some goblin man
Dogg'd her with gibe or curse
Or something worse:
But not one goblin scurried after,
Nor was she prick'd by fear;
The kind heart made her windy-paced
That urged her home quite out of breath with haste
And inward laughter.

She cried, "Laura," up the garden,

“Did you miss me?
Come and kiss me.
Never mind my bruises,
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeez’d from goblin fruits for you,
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me;
Laura, make much of me;
For your sake I have braved the glen
And had to do with goblin merchant men.”

An important part of the narrative of Paradise Lost is how the fall in the garden of Eden sets humankind up for the coming of Christ and redemption. Christians remind themselves of, and celebrate that redemption through the communion meal. Sure it’s cannibalistic (body and blood of Christ), but the ritual has a long history in culture. Lizzie is no different here—she offers up her body for Laura to “eat” in order that Laura be redeemed from her giving into the sensual temptation.

Laura started from her chair,
Flung her arms up in the air,
Clutch’d her hair:
“Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted
For my sake the fruit forbidden?
Must your light like mine be hidden,
Your young life like mine be wasted,
Undone in mine undoing,
And ruin’d in my ruin,
Thirsty, canker’d, goblin-ridden?”—
She clung about her sister,
Kiss’d and kiss’d and kiss’d her:
Tears once again
Refresh’d her shrunken eyes,
Dropping like rain
After long sultry drouth;
Shaking with aguish fear, and pain,
She kiss’d and kiss’d her with a hungry mouth.
She kisses her sister to get the antidote to the poisoned fruit. Sacrifice and redemption!

Her lips began to scorch,
That juice was wormwood to her tongue,
She loath’d the feast:
Writhing as one possess’d she leap’d and sung,
Rent all her robe, and wrung
Her hands in lamentable haste,
And beat her breast.
Her locks stream’d like the torch
Borne by a racer at full speed,
Or like the mane of horses in their flight,
Or like an eagle when she stems the light

Straight toward the sun,
Or like a caged thing freed,
Or like a flying flag when armies run.

Swift fire spread through her veins, knock'd at her heart,
Met the fire smouldering there
And overbore its lesser flame;
She gorged on bitterness without a name:
Ah! fool, to choose such part
Of soul-consuming care!
Sense fail'd in the mortal strife:
Like the watch-tower of a town
Which an earthquake shatters down,
Like a lightning-stricken mast,
Like a wind-uprooted tree
Spun about,
Like a foam-topp'd waterspout
Cast down headlong in the sea,
She fell at last;
Pleasure past and anguish past,
Is it death or is it life?

Life out of death.

Again, this is right out of Milton. Satan introduces death into the world; Christ responds by introducing eternal life.

That night long Lizzie watch'd by her,
Counted her pulse's flagging stir,
Felt for her breath,
Held water to her lips, and cool'd her face
With tears and fanning leaves:
But when the first birds chirp'd about their eaves,
And early reapers plodded to the place
Of golden sheaves,
And dew-wet grass
Bow'd in the morning winds so brisk to pass,
And new buds with new day
Open'd of cup-like lilies on the stream,
Laura awoke as from a dream,
Laugh'd in the innocent old way,
Hugg'd Lizzie but not twice or thrice;
Her gleaming locks show'd not one thread of grey,
Her breath was sweet as May
And light danced in her eyes.

Days, weeks, months, years

Afterwards, when both were wives
With children of their own;
Their mother-hearts beset with fears,
Their lives bound up in tender lives;
Laura would call the little ones
And tell them of her early prime,
Those pleasant days long gone
Of not-returning time:
Would talk about the haunted glen,
The wicked, quaint fruit-merchant men,
Their fruits like honey to the throat
But poison in the blood;
(Men sell not such in any town):
Would tell them how her sister stood
In deadly peril to do her good,
And win the fiery antidote:
Then joining hands to little hands
Would bid them cling together,
“For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather;
To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen whilst one stands.”

The poem ends with them now happily married—the human economy continues because they waited to procreate. When they talk to their daughters they emphasize the importance of sisterhood. This is a deceptively simple morality play with multiple meanings.

Assignment #1

Each paragraph must include a quotation from one of the texts under consideration. Use MLA style citation. Consult the “How to Cite Literature” directions in the home page. No need for a Works Cited as all texts come from the Norton Anthology. Do not use outside sources. I will grade these liberally and use them to assess how well you understand the material. No plagiarism.

Using Rossetti’s poems, “Promises like Pie Crust,” and “No, Thank You, John,” write a four paragraph essay in which you demonstrate that Rossetti’s position is a female-centered one. What about these poems tells you that she is not waiting at home for a man to come and rescue her from spinsterhood? What about these poems establishes a female first consciousness. You may want to consider how different these female speakers are from the female depicted in “In an Artist’s Studio.”

Paragraph1

Introduce, by giving a brief summary, of the poems. Quote one passage and discuss how it reflects a female oriented position. Make sure you tell what poem the passage is from.

Paragraph2

Quote one passage and discuss how it reflects a female oriented position. Make sure you tell what poem the passage is from.

Paragraph3

Quote one passage and discuss how it reflects a female oriented position. Make sure you tell what poem the passage is from.

Paragraph 4

Quote one passage and discuss how it reflects a female oriented position. Make sure you tell what poem the passage is from. Summarize (without judging) your findings.

A Good Essay:

1. Properly cites the texts;
2. Quotes four passages from the poems “No, Thank You, John,” and “Promises like Pie Crust” that show Rossetti adopts a position that is female-oriented and is not the stereotype of a woman at the service of men.
3. Interprets, does not judge.
4. Provides an introduction to, and summary of, your findings.

Assignment #2 Application

The goblin men distract us with promises of pleasure, but once we engage those goblin men, getting back to the world of work and ethical action is difficult. I’m not asking for confessions here, you can write about this in general, but what do you think goblin might represent today. What kinds of things, for you and others, serve as a distraction from the work you ought to do. I can think of dozens. You probably ought to speculate, who benefits from your giving into the temptations of these modern goblin men. One paragraph of at least five sentences.

Tell us who the goblin men are in our time;
Tell us what the goblin men provide;
How do the goblin men prevent us from fulfilling the best part of ourselves;
Who benefits from the actions of the goblin men.

You can write more if you want. Here's my contribution:

Goblin men...this is an obvious one and an easy one for me. My boys just went to the Fast Lane for snacks. I give my oldest \$2 and tell him to get me a box of "JuJu Beans." A large box of gelatinous, artificially flavored fruit chews. I looked at the box to discover that the entire thing is worth about 800 calories—enough calories for a good meal. Man they taste good. But that's a whole lot of empty, sugary calories that prevent me from eating right. I'm sure it's a pretty significant industry that makes them and profits greatly from my sweet tooth. I think I'll now put the box away and save the rest for tomorrow.

A Good Application

1. Designates modern goblin men;
2. Tells how the goblin men distract us;
3. Discusses who benefits from the goblin men.

Worksheets

You must be able to answer these questions from reading the texts and my commentary. You may want to print these questions and answer them as you read. They will guide your reading and organize your notes. Your weekly quiz will be 10 of these questions.

1. Where is the Congo?
2. Which country controlled the Congo during "The Heart of Darkness"?
3. What is colonialism?
4. Why does one country take over another country?
5. What is "the other"?
6. What is projection of the other?
7. What is enlightenment?
8. How does enlightenment relate to colonialism?
9. What is Hegel's idea of the historical dialectic?
10. How does the Hegelian notion relate to colonialism?
11. What does Western culture think is the purpose of nature?
12. Where does that convention come from?
13. Often, how is "the other" configured?
14. Who tells the story?
15. Why does Marlowe go to Africa?
16. What does he see on the French ship as he travels to the station?
17. How are the natives portrayed? How does this relate to previous notions of the other?
18. What does he see at the station?
19. Who does he want to meet?

What is the significance of:

20. The Romans
21. Blank space on maps
22. Sepulchral city
23. Swedish captain
24. Office ladies
25. Cannons
27. 1964 What does he see that reminds him of Dante's circle in hell?
28. 1965 What does he first hear of Kurtz?
29. 1966-7 What are three notable events on his way to the Central Station?
30. 1967 What had happened to his ship?
31. 1968 How is the manager portrayed?
32. 1970 What contributed to the sense of "unrealness" at the Central Station?
33. 1971 What does the "brickmaker" say about Kurtz?
34. 1972 What does Marlowe think about lies? What do they bring the taint of?
35. 1972 What does Marlowe say about the story itself? What theme could he be hinting at?
36. 1973 The theme is taken up with the pilgrims and the hippo. Explain.
37. 1975-6 What does the manager and his minion say about Kurtz? What is the plot?
38. 1977 What does the manager say to trust? What is its relation to the title and one of the themes?
39. 1977 How is nature described when he first goes up the river?
40. 1978 What is the atmosphere of the jungle?
41. 1979 How are natives described? How are they related to nature? Why would the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe fault Conrad for racism in this section?
42. 1979-80 How is the fireman described?

43. 1980 What note is discovered for them? How does it relate to the theme of absurdity?
44. 1980 What was noteworthy about the book Marlowe found?
45. 1983 How were the cannibals aboard fed and paid?
46. 1986 What happens a few miles up the station from seeing Kurtz?
47. 1987 What happens to the helmsman?
48. 1988 What does Marlowe predict he will miss most about Kurtz if he is dead?
49. 1988 Marlowe jumps forward in time. Why?
50. What are the ornamental balls?
51. What is Kurtz's physical state?
52. What are Kurtz's last words?
53. How does Marlowe settle it all with a lie?
54. In what way is this novella like "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"?

XI. Joseph Conrad and the Critique of Imperialism

Imperialism

The subject of imperialism and colonialism is complicated and its inception has a number of different causes. We will discuss some general ideas behind imperialism and its impact on the world. First, a definition: Imperialism is when one country takes over another country and installs its own state over that of the original inhabitants. The British imperialist period was a source of pride for most of the country. “The sun never sets on the British empire,” was a popular way to designate how vast the imperial holdings were. Here is a map of Britain’s empire in the 1920s.



(newworldencyclopedia.org)

Of course, Britain wasn’t the only country in the world colonizing other countries—Japan, Russia, the United States, France, Belgium, Germany, Portugal, Spain and others were all involved in amassing territory.

Why?

First off, countries are imperialist for economic reasons, particularly capitalist economies. In capitalism, you need ever-increasing markets for goods in order to grow. A single country can only

produce so much demand. As technology increased during the industrial revolution, a country like England could produce more goods than its citizens could consume. England opened up other global markets, often by force.

Second, there are ideological reasons. When we discussed the Hegelian idea of meta-history, we learned that in the 19th century the idea of history as a progressive movement was prevalent. European countries saw themselves as advanced compared to the native populations of India, Africa, Asia, and South America; therefore, it was their destiny to bring their culture to and lift up those countries that were less advanced. This also had a religious component, as missionaries were almost always the first in a country in order to spread Christianity.

Third, and this is an aspect of the second, is that Enlightenment philosophy dictated that the light of reason would lead mankind in order to progress and achieve a civilization based on reasoning. Imperialism used the Enlightenment as a cover, indicating that it was bringing the light of reason to those who were primitives.

Fourth, once countries scrambled to increase their territories, the geoglobal balance of power was upset and countries looked for ways to increase or defend their power through expansion. Have you ever played the boardgame Risk? That is what these countries were doing: using the globe as a boardgame without much consideration for the natives of the country.

Of course we in America were originally the 13 colonies and our own history is one of expansion across the territory which meant displacing the native populations which were already here. “Manifest Destiny” is really just another name for imperialism.

The Native Other

Let's, again, start with a definition. “The Other,” is a person who is different in some significant way from you. If you are Caucasian then the Other is black. If you are straight, then the Other is gay. If everybody were alike except for eye color and you had blue eyes, then the Other would have brown eyes.

In an imperialist or colonial situation, the colonial views the Other as something less than human, or less developed human. That attitude allows the colonizer to oppress, order, and sometimes enslave and murder the Other. Thinking of native americans, for example, as “noble savages” is an example of projecting an image onto the Other. In a way, the Other often is an

empty signifier that the colonizer projects onto. The projection is often one of fear, eroticism, violence, savagery.

This notion of viewing the Other as a signifier of things that the imperialist or colonialist fears or represses is an important part of the dynamic between white and blacks. This discussion applies to the way natives are depicted and treated in *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad as well as slaves in 18th and 19th century America. Consider a series of association with the colors white and black. White symbolizes purity and good. Black symbolizes corruption and bad. Blackness, or darkness, symbolize mystery, the unknown, the frightening. White symbolizes light and the known. What happens when the white colonizer confronts person whose skin is a color with all these previously held association? They will project those associations onto the native Other.

One thing that is apparent to me, though, is that the colonizer, the oppressor, is not left unchanged from interaction with the Other. Sometimes, the Other acts in such a way that makes the colonizer question whether or not the Other is actually as who he projects him to be. In this little gap, the Other's humanity emerges.

Likewise, the Other is also deeply affected psychologically from this interaction, sometimes associating with the power the colonizer has, which leads to self-hatred and an adoption of those very same false projections the colonizer has. We also see this with men and women. Often, females are the most vigilant in enforcing *male* views on other women—i.e. being snarky about other women's weight, looks, attire, etc.

The Congo

The Congo, setting for the *Heart of Darkness*, is a case study in the violent oppression and brutality of imperialism. King Leopold II of Belgium desired to increase the prestige of Belgium with imperialist holdings. The basin of the Congo River was unexplored and Leopold set his eyes upon it. By 1885, Congo was essentially a private corporation of which Leopold was the sole shareholder. Using brutal methods, Leopold extracted as much wealth as possible from the region. Eventually, world outcry over the death and destruction taking place there forced Leopold to give up the corporation. The Congo then became a colony of Belgium and remained so until its independence in 1960.

The region has remained very turbulent since then and millions have died of starvation and wars the consequences of colonialism continue to be worked out.

Heart of Darkness



Joseph Conrad (1857-1924) was born in Poland, the son of a Polish national. Poland was a colony of the Russians at the time. From an early age, Conrad wanted to be a sailor. He left his family at 17 to go to France and become a seaman. He was a sailor for 20 years. When he worked for the British merchant navy, he learned English and began to write. He became one of the greatest 20th century English writers in his borrowed tongue. In 1890 he was second-in-command on a steamship on the Congo River and was horrified by the oppression and desperate violence in the Belgian Congo. *Heart of Darkness* is inspired by that experience.

Heart Of Darkness

When we discussed, the Other, we talked about projection. In this novella (genre) the heart of darkness can be many things: nature, the natives, the colonial enterprise, death. A novella is longer than a short story and shorter than a novel. I call it the “brunch” of literature. Instead of reprinting the entire story and interjecting, I’ll give notes every two pages or so. You may want to refer to the notes side by side as you read the story.

1953-55

The scene opens as a pleasure craft is waiting for the tide on the Thames River. In a way, this novella is set up like Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (there are a number of other connections as well). The narrator *is* the wedding guest and he is recounting the story that Marlowe told. Marlowe begins by reminding the other passengers that England itself was once a dark place to be explored and colonized when it was taken over by the Romans in the first century CE. He relates England’s own imperialist adventures to the Romans.

1956-1958

Nature and darkness are first related here. Part of what needs to be conquered is nature itself. Marlowe is likened to a Buddha. He makes a distinction between Roman imperialism and modern European imperialism—the Romans were out to conquer and didn’t kid themselves about any higher ideals. He understands the nature of colonialism—it is taking away from those who are different from you—the Other. He then recounts how the blank spaces on the map always fascinated him (projection) and he desired to get a commission. Eventually he does. He’s going to work for the Belgian concern. The previous captain of a steamship on the Congo got killed in the bush after abusing a tribal chief.

1959-1962

We receive a description of Brussels, the sepulchral city. The city is sepulchral because it looks like a tomb and certainly the colonial concern deals in death. “Absurdity” as a theme means that there is no reason or rationality to actions, personal or cosmic. Marlowe’s time when he gets ready for the job is meant to reinforce the absurdity of the colonial enterprise. He sees a doctor and gets his head measured. The

secretaries at the colonial office are knitting—like the three fates. Once he gets on the French ship to take him to the outer station. He catches a glimpse of natives—their realistic savagery reconnects him to reality. This passage has been oft quoted as evidence that although Conrad criticizes the colonial adventure, he himself participates in the “othering” of the natives. It is certainly true here. They are shown to be more “nature” than “human” with faces like grotesque masks. Then a very memorable scene that symbolizes the absurdity of the colonial adventure: often its guns would fire indiscriminately into the jungle—at no real target.

1963-1965

When he gets to the outer station and starts walking around he sees one native leading other natives in chains. This moment is historically important. My assumption is that the native on the side of the colonist was of the Tutsi tribe. Those in chains were of the Hutu tribe. The genocide in Rwanda (Hutus massacring Tutsis) includes this component. As we discussed in a previous chapter—the oppressor always finds it in his best interest to use the oppressed to repress themselves. He stumbles onto a number of workers who have gone to a grove to die. He likens this to one of the circles in Dante’s hell. He comes in contact with the other worldly horror of this country. He meets an accountant and the accountant first tells him about Kurtz—this superhuman man who brings more ivory to the company than the rest put together. Kurtz will loom over the rest of the novella.

1965-1968

Marlowe takes the long hike into the interior towards the Central Station to get his boat. There’s comic relief with a fat guy who keeps passing out, as well as horror as some natives are found dead by the pathside. When he finally arrives at the Central Station, he discovers that his ship has sunk (perhaps sabotage). He meets the manager whom he immediately mistrusts. The manager has no talent whatsoever but has succeeded because he never gets sick and people get sick constantly in the Congo—the most prevalent disease being malaria carried by mosquitoes. The mention of Kurtz seems to unnerve the manager.

1969-1971

Absurdity in the trying to put the fire out with a leaky bucket. There is corrupt plotting at the station and the manager is involved. We see a picture that Kurtz painted—it is symbolic of the Enlightenment. The manager places Marlowe in the same company as Kurtz—virtue and the light of “good.” The manager is portrayed as a hollow-man, an empty devil.

1972-1975

Marlowe says that the thing he can’t stand is a lie and then he asks his audience, including the narrator—do you see what I’m saying? It’s like a dream. The narrator describes the setting and Marlowe returns to the story. They need rivets to fix the boat and they have none but had all kinds at the outer station! Pilgrims show up who are trying to reach fortune in Africa. Section 2 begins with Marlowe resting on the ship and overhears the manager and relative speak of conspiracy against Kurtz whose methods are unsound.

1976-79

We find that they want to “hang” Kurtz for his methods. Kurtz had been sick and had a servant who was assisting him in his pursuits. The manager says to trust to nature and Marlowe shrinks back as if he has seen the heart of darkness, in nature and man. They finally get the rivets and move up the river, like going to the

very beginning of time. It is very tricky navigation. They had some natives with them carrying stinky hippo meat. The movement is mysterious, dangerous, and other-worldly.

1979-83

Marlowe makes an explicit connection between the natives and nature. In a passage that Conrad has been critiqued for, he mentions the shock at thinking that these natives have some relation to himself. We meet the fireman and Marlowe reinforces the idea that the surface reality of navigation was intense enough to forestall deeper contemplation. They come upon an island with stacked wood for their ship. They find an absurd note that tells them to hurry up and be cautious. Marlowe finds a seaman's manual that he thinks is annotated in some kind of code. When they were anchored in the fog natives shriek and holler from the bushes. The cannibals on the crew want to catch and eat them for they have hardly any food. And, we learn, they are being paid in brass wire. He comments on the cannibals' restraint (which the "civilized imperialists do not have).

1984-88

When the fog lifts they continue on their way. When they are a mile and a half from reaching the inner station, they are attacked. The helmsman who Marlowe thought was an arrogant fool, gets killed by a spear. The pilgrims come to the deck and fire indiscriminately into the bush (remember the French boat's cannons?). Marlowe is surprised when he realizes that his first thought is that he won't have the opportunity to meet with Kurtz. He would never hear his voice—then he flashes forward to the nature of that voice—extending from darkness. Marlowe lights his pipe and flashes forward again to a "girl" that he lets go with a "lie". He says Kurtz was impressively bald as if the wilderness had patted his head. Conrad experiments with narrative time in this section. He moves forward in the story, then back.

1989-93

We find that Kurtz had amassed a huge amount of ivory that the manager dismisses. Marlowe also comments on the acquisitive spirit of Kurtz who thought the entire jungle was him. Marlowe could hear the jungle laugh at this arrogance. Marlowe discusses what he is trying to do in the narration. It is rather foggy. He mentions that all of Europe contributed to Kurtz—Kurtz himself as the symbol of the imperialist enterprise. Marlowe also discusses the book that Kurtz wrote with high minded concern for the mission—only to revise it at the end by saying "exterminate the brutes." He returns to the narrative and pushes the helmsman's body into the river before the cannibals could eat him. Just as this happens they spy the inner station. Marlowe sees what he thinks are ornamental balls on top of Kurtz hut. They meet Kurtz "boy," a Russian sailor. He's portrayed as a clown. Marlowe asks him if he talks to Kurtz. The sailor says that you don't talk to Kurtz, you listen. Marlowe surmises that it's the sailor's sea manual. He gives it to him and discovers that the cipher is really just Russian. The fact that Marlowe thought it was code indicates his suspicious state of mind that he didn't recognize Russian.

1994-1996

We discover Kurtz is sick. We also discover that he has "gone native." When the colonial *imitates* the Other, that is "going native." Essentially, Kurtz got neighboring tribes to follow him. Kurtz stole ivory from the Russian sailor and threatened to kill him. Marlowe realizes Kurtz is insane and the jungle just looks on impassively. The ornamental knobs on Kurtz's hut? Marlowe discovers they are skulls to impress fear and terror. The Russian sailor claims they are the heads of "rebels" but Marlowe can see through that. They are rebels in the same way that the men dying in the grove were criminals.

1997-2000

A gaunt, sickly Kurtz is carried in with his small arsenal. Marlowe comments on Kurtz's commanding voice. Kurtz is followed by his native woman who was "savage and superb." Everyone is nervous because with the right words, Kurtz could have everybody killed. Marlowe hears Kurtz arguing with the manager. Kurtz doesn't want to leave. The manager claims Kurtz's method was unsound and associates Kurtz with Marlowe. Marlowe thinks the manager is vile and spineless, yet will outlive Kurtz. Marlowe discovers Kurtz had ordered the attack on the ship—he did not want to leave his station. At evening, Marlowe falls into a fitful sleep.

2001-2004

Kurtz tries to escape in the middle of the night and Marlowe pursues and catches up with him. Marlowe has a choice of nightmares—the manager and Kurtz, and he throws in with Kurtz. Marlowe sees the natives at a campfire practicing a ritual. Kurtz confesses that he had enormous plans. Marlowe detects the struggle of madness and nature inside Kurtz. Kurtz is concerned for his legacy. They return to the boat and the next morning it makes its way down the river toward the central station. On the way down river Kurtz talks and talks while Marlowe attends to the surface realities of the ship and its working. The darkness inside Kurtz is mentioned. We have seen the darkness associated with natives, nature, Kurtz, and imperialism. It is truly a multivalent symbol.

2005-2008

Perhaps the most famous last words in all of literature. Dying, Kurtz utters, "the horror, the horror." Looking in his heart, or nature, or imperialism, that's what he finds. They bury Kurtz in a muddy hole and Marlowe succumbs to malaria and almost dies himself. He says he had to live is nightmare out to the very end. The company wanted to get Kurtz's papers from Marlowe while he was sick. He gave the company his report (with the last line torn out about extermination). Marlowe keeps Kurtz's private letters. He goes to give the letters to Kurtz's intended. He describes the streets as if they were as mysterious and dark as the jungle. The fiancée comes clad in black; she is beautiful. She queries him on Kurtz's ideas and state in Africa.

2009-2011

She asks him what Kurtz's last words were. He lies—remember he hates lies, he thinks they carry the stink of death—and replies that his last words were her name. So he ends the story on a lie. Marlowe stops speaking and the narrator looks out and thinks that the river moves out into the heart of an immense darkness. Just like the rhyme of the ancient mariner, the auditor of Marlowe's story has internalized its message and is now a sadder and wiser man.

Assignment #1

Choose one of these options. Each passage must relate to one of the basic themes outlined. The last paragraph ought to include an answer to the final question.

Paragraph1

Introduce your theme. Quote one passage that reflects that theme and explain how it does.

Paragraph2

Quote one passage that reflects the theme and explain how it does.

Paragraph3

Quote one passage that reflects the theme and explain how it does.

Paragraph 4

Quote one passage that reflects the theme and explain how it does. Answer the final question.

A Good Essay:

1. Properly cites the texts;
 2. Quotes four passages from *Heart of Darkness* that reflect the theme you've chosen to explicate.
 3. Explains how the passages reflect the theme.
 3. Answers the last question
- I. List at least four images of the futility of the colonial enterprise. Explain what they mean. Final paragraph question: In what way is the colonial enterprise the Heart of Darkness?
- II. List at least four images of nature. Explain what Marlowe is saying about nature. Final paragraph question: In what way is nature the Heart of Darkness?
- III. List at least four images of death. Explain what Marlowe is saying about death. Final paragraph question: In what way is death the Heart of Darkness?
- IV. List at least four images of Kurtz. Explain what Marlowe is saying about the meaning of Kurtz. Final paragraph question: In what way is Kurtz the Heart of Darkness?
- V. List at least four images of the natives. Explain how Conrad depicts them. Final paragraph question: In what way does Conrad associate the natives and nature?

Assignment #2 Application

What remote place in the globe have you always wanted to go? Why do you think you've wanted to go there? What would you expect to find there? How would you expect to be treated by the

inhabitants? Would you go as imperialist or tourist? Are there any ways in which the tourist is like an imperialist? Write one paragraph asking these questions.

Tell where you would want to go.

Tell why you would want to go.

Tell what you would expect to find.

Tell how you would be expected to be treated.

You can write more if you want. Here's my contribution:

Since I was a young boy, I've wanted to go to Lapland above the Arctic Circle in Scandinavia. I've always been fascinated by their brightly colored clothes, their livelihood herding reindeers, and their shamanistic belief system. I always imagined I'd be welcomed because they are known for their hospitality, but I really don't know what their politics are, how well they get along with the Germanic tribes that colonized their area a few thousand years ago. I'd like to think I were a tourist but there is the gap of industrialization between my culture and theirs.

A Good Application

1. Tells where and why you'd want to visit;
2. Describes how the natives would treat you;
3. Acknowledges, to some degree, the sensitivities in visiting a foreign land as a first world traveler.

Worksheets

You must be able to answer these questions from reading the texts and my commentary. You may want to print these questions and answer them as you read. They will guide your reading and organize your notes. Your weekly quiz will be 10 of these questions.

1. Who was Gerard Manley Hopkins?
2. What is significant about his Catholicism (John Henry Newman)?
3. What is inscape?
4. What is instress?
5. What is the inscape of instress?
6. How does "Pied Beauty" relate to the idea of inscape?
7. How does the poem "As Kingfishers Catch Fire" relate to the idea of inscape and instress?
8. How does the poem "God's Grandeur" relate to inscape?
9. How does the poem "The Windhover" relate to the idea of the Sublime?
10. What is the meditational technique in the spiritual exercises?
11. How does despair emerge from the spiritual exercises?
12. How does the poem "Carrion Comfort" relate to the spiritual exercises?
13. How does the poem "No Worse there is None" relate to despair?
14. What does Hopkins final poem ask for?

XII. Gerard Manley Hopkins: Send My Roots Rain



Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) was a Jesuit priest, teacher and poet, whose stylistic innovation, sprung rhythm, made him an extremely influential poet. Unfortunately, during his lifetime, his poetry remained obscure and unpublished.

Hopkins was from a Protestant family in England and he showed himself to be a prodigious student early in his life. At Oxford, he gravitated toward the Oxford Movement and eventually became converted to Roman Catholicism.

The Oxford Movement sought to bring the Anglican Church (the national church of England) into more of a communion with the Roman Catholic Church and the orthodox churches. One of its leaders, John Henry Newman, eventually converted to Roman Catholicism.

Henry VII in the middle of the 16th century broke England from the Catholic Church because the pope would not grant him an annulment from Catherine Of Aragon. But note, the Protestant Reformation was well on its way when Henry VIII did this. England, as a country, became virulently anti-Catholic after this for France and Spain, two Catholic countries, were England's greatest enemies.

When Hopkins converted to Christianity it was a great shock to his family and Hopkins himself was distraught over the chasm it opened up between himself and his family. This was intensified when he took the holy orders with the Jesuits, who were considered the arch-enemies of Protestantism.

Hopkins' sensitive nature led him to be highly tuned to beauty in nature and humanity. It also, as we'll discuss, made him susceptible to deep spiritual despair. But whether his poems are desperate or ecstatic, his unique style and linguistic power have made a lasting effect on British Literature, and certainly, your humble textbook writer as well.

Inscape, Instress, the Inscape of Instress

In his extensive journals and some of his published essays, Hopkins discusses three terms that signify his perceptual psychology as well as an idea for how the divine inheres in the world. The first term we'll discuss is **Inscape**. For Hopkins, inscape is the internal design in all things in nature. Let's look at one of his poems, "God's Grandeur."

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

The poem describes the way in which the external world, nature has a design to it that has as its source the divine. It is this divine force, manifest through design, that gives the world its energy and its procreative urge. The Holy Spirit "broods" over the world, as if it were its nest. The idea of design of the divine is similarly shown in "Pied Beauty":

Glory be to God for dappled things —
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced — fold, fallow, and plough;
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

This poem demonstrates, specifically, what inscape is. It is the pattern of colors on cows and fish (like a rainbow trout). It is the patterns that embers make in a fire. It includes the patterns of farm fields growing different crops and part of different properties. Hopkins finds these designs beautiful as well as signs of the divine--form is an aspect of the Godhead for Hopkins.

Instress is the human ability to take in inscape. The fact that we can detect the divine presence in nature shows that we are programmed to seek God and nature helps us do so. We take

in (in-stress) this design apparently as a property of our soul. The poem "As Kingfishers Catch Fire" makes an explicit relation between inscape and instress and will lead us to the third idea in our introduction.

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves — goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,
Crying *Whát I dó is me: for that I came.*

I say móre: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: *thát* keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is —
Christ — for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

When you drop a stone into a well, it makes a sound and a pattern. When you strike a bell, the internal composition of the bell will lead to a unique sound coming out of it. When you pluck a string, its unique ration will make a unique sound. Living in the world means that the internal esign in all things becomes manifest in acting in the world, so a man who is committed to justice "justices" that is acts out of justice. Here's where instress comes in, if we look at people, we can instress their divine origin by seeing Christ "playing" across their faces. Our ability to recognize the internal form is instress and our relationship with others is affected by this.

With this poem in mind, what is the inscape of instress? That is, what is the divine form in our ability to take in divine form? Simply put, it is Christ in us. The divine in us can be found in our ability to see the divine in all things--natural as well as human. This sublime moment of instressing the divine can be found in his poem "The Windhover."

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
Of the rólling level úndernéath him steady áir, & stríding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl & gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird, -- the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!
Brute beauty & valour & act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, o my chevalier!
No wónder of it: shéer plód makes plóugh down síllion

Shine, & blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gáall themselves, & gásh góld-vermilion.

When the narrator's heart stirs for the bird, and especially when the narrator experiences the divine sublime and his heart "buckles" we understand that he has instressed the divine symbology in the flight of the bird in the morning as it makes its sweeping way across the sky. And the power of Christ's beauty is a billion times lovelier than that beautiful sight.

Hopkins and Despair

In order to understand the "Terrible Sonnets" of Hopkins, it's important to understand a little about the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. These spiritual exercises were developed by St. Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuits, as way to train yourself to get closer to God. Essentially, they are a three part movement--**Memory, Understanding, Will**.

First, you compose a site in your memory of one moment in Christ's life, and then you empty your mind of all else, in particular, inordinate attachments.

Second, you let your understanding go so you do not reach after a rational understanding of the divine. In other words, you stop thinking so much--you do not think at all.

Third, if you have accomplished the first two, you are completely empty and now ready yourself for the moment of Colloquy--a dialogue between two people--in which God enters your empty self and fills you with the Godhead. Your will becomes God's will so your actions are themselves as pure as God.

The problem with this type of spiritual exercise is that if you reach step three and the divine does not enter you are left with a deep spiritual emptiness called, "The Dark Night of the Soul."

Hopkins's dark sonnets are haunting descriptions of what it's like to be stuck in the dark night of the soul as in the poem, "No Worse there Is None":

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.
Comforter, where, where is your comforting?
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?
My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief
Woe, wórl-d-sorrow; on an áge-old anvil wince and sing —

Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked 'No lingering! Let me be fell: force I must be brief.'"

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
Durance deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep,
Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

Sprung rhythm is the use of alliteration and the piling of accents (or stresses) in a line of poetry--count the stresses in a Hopkins poem, not necessarily the syllables. This poem uses these aspects of sprung rhythm to great effect to show the mind and soul under the pressure of cracking. Indeed, all he can hope for at the end of the poem is death because he knows that will end his suffering.

Hopkins did indeed suffer greatly in his life. It's interesting to note though that he trusted that "Providence" would take care of his poetry. He accepted his obscurity and trusted that the divine plan, if it were so, would ensure that his work eventually would reach the light of day. In this, his faith was not misplaced.

Assignment #1

Each paragraph must include a quotation from one of the texts under consideration. Use MLA style citation. Consult the “How to Cite Literature” directions in the home page. No need for a Works Cited as all texts come from the Norton Anthology. Do not use outside sources. I will grade these liberally and use them to assess how well you understand the material. No plagiarism.

The terms “inscape” and “instress” get at the core of what it means to be human. Hopkins saw inscape in natural imagery and other humans. When he looked at his own “inscape” when he was in spiritual despair, he saw emptiness. For this essay you are to take two poetic images from his nature poems and two images from his despair poems. Compare them. What are their similarities? What makes them different? What can be attributed to inscape? What can be attributed to instress? It is an interesting comparison to make because Hopkins is applying his poetic energy to two very different themes.

Paragraph1

Introduce your procedure. Quote one passage of at least three lines from a nature poem. Discuss how Hopkins creates the image. Discuss its relation to inscape or instress.

Paragraph2

Quote one passage of at least three lines from a nature poem. Discuss how Hopkins creates the image. Discuss its relation to inscape or instress. If appropriate, make a connection to the previous passage.

Paragraph3

Quote one passage of at least three lines from a despair poem. Discuss how Hopkins creates the image. Discuss its relation to inscape or instress and compare it to the passages from the nature poems.

Paragraph 4

Quote one passage of at least three lines from a despair poem. Discuss how Hopkins creates the image. Discuss its relation to inscape or instress and compare it to the passages from the nature poems. Summarize your findings.

A Good Essay:

1. Properly cites the texts;
2. Quotes two passages from Hopkins’ nature poems that reflect his technique and put it in context of instress or inscape.
3. Quotes two passages from Hopkins’ despair poems that reflect his technique and put it in context of instress or inscape. Compare to the passages from the nature poems.
4. Summarize your findings.

Assignment #2 Application

What design in nature do you enjoy looking at? What does it make you think of? How does it affect you emotionally? Spiritually? For this application you are to consider inscape that you can detect. Describe the design thoroughly. Explore what it makes you think about and how it makes you feel. One paragraph of at least five sentences..

Describe the scene that expresses inscape to you.

Be thorough in your description.

Tell what it makes you consider.

Discuss any larger contexts it makes you consider.

You can write more if you want. Here's my contribution:

One aspect of inscape I think about all the time is what I experience when I travel and I cross a major river over a bridge. The bridge's inscape is directly related to nature—specifically, natural forces. Think about it—large human structure have to be made in relation to natural forces. In a way, those natural forces shape those human-made objects. I often find beauty in natural forms and I certainly find beauty in bridges that have to interact with natural forces—like gravity, space, tension, and mass. So much of what we do as humans is in response to nature and we don't even think about it. I've been lifting weights for years. Do the metal plates make me stronger? No. Gravity does. Those metal discs are the inscape of gravity.

A Good Application

1. Tells what the design is;
2. Describes the design;
3. Connects the design to a broader context.

Worksheets

You must be able to answer these questions from reading the texts and my commentary. You may want to print these questions and answer them as you read. They will guide your reading and organize your notes. Your weekly quiz will be 10 of these questions.

1. What are the differences among Modernism, Romanticism and Victorianism?
2. What do Freud, Marx, Einstein have to do with it?
3. What does WWI have to do with it?
4. What does fragmentation have to do with it?
5. What do multiple perspectives have to do with it?
6. What is the Modernist view of Victorianism?
7. What is intertextuality?
8. What is allusiveness?
9. Why is the city important?
10. Why is cinema important?
11. Why are people alienated from each other? What theme does this lead to?
12. What is collage?
13. What is the cinematic version of collage?
14. What is consciousness?
15. What is the difference between high culture and low culture?
16. What did many of these writers feel about the fictional unified past?
17. What is the view of meta-history after WWI?
18. What does Ireland have to do with it?
19. How is the "Lake of Innisfree" related to Romanticism?

20. How is "Who Goes with Fergus" related to Romanticism?
21. How does "September 1913" relate to the political?
22. How does "Easter 1916" revise "September 1913"?
21. How does "Circus Animals Desertion" demonstrate intertextuality and allusion?
22. How does it demonstrate missed connections?
23. How does it demonstrate collage?
24. How does it demonstrate innovation?
25. What does the last line of "Among School Children" mean?
26. Be able to explicate "Circus Animals Desertion."

1793	1837	1910	1939	1945	2001
<i>Romantic Age</i>	<i>Victorian Age</i>	<i>Modernism</i>		<i>Post-Modernism</i>	<i>PoPoMo</i>
SELF	SOCIETY	ALIENATION			
NATURE	MACHINE	CITY			
IMAGINATION	REASON	CONSCIOUSNESS			
ETERNITY	HISTORY	NIGHTMARE			
ART	COMMERCE	CINEMA			

Modernism Virginia Woolf once wrote, “On or about December 1910, human character changed.” Woolf notes that the first quarter of the 20th century was the culmination of myriad social, economic, cultural changes that we now identify as the Modernist period. Although what follows is a cursory discussion of a very complicated topic, it will provide enough context to understand Modernist esthetics. What had changed culturally? I will provide a quick survey of some major thinkers and events how they helped to bring about this change in human character.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) Marx in *The Communist Manifesto* and *Das Capital* provides an incisive critique of capitalistic society. Culture, he says, instead of being the best that has been created by a society, is really ideology that distributes power to the capital owning class at the expense of the working class. It covers over the basic antagonism, class struggle, that permeates every aspect of our social and economic lives.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) Freud surmised that what we know as the “self” is not a stable perceiving subject but the negotiation of drives, conscious and unconscious, that shape our actions. Indeed, what we think or say or dream should not be taken at face value but as representations of those drives. Consider Freud as an economist where the economy is mind.

Albert Einstein (1879-1955) Einstein’s 1905 paper on relativity showed that time is not absolute but relative; that is, the rate of time moving changes according to the system it’s observed from (and

this has been proved empirically). For example, let's say that you and I had clocks that were tested to move at exactly the same rate. Then you got on a rocket ship that approached the speed of light. When you returned we'd discover that I had aged substantially whereas you had hardly aged at all—even though time “felt” exactly the same to both of us.

F.H. Bradley (1846-1924) Bradley's philosophy was that Truth can never be wholly apprehended. Different perspectives gather different attributes of truth (can you see the relationship to Cubism?). The best we can do is to gather multiple perspectives in assemblage in order to come to knowledge.

World War I (1914-1918) WWI, or The Great War, or The War to End All Wars had many causes. The most prevalent was that the Ottoman Empire was collapsing and European powers and Russia were involved in a “great game” to divide its spoils. It was a war fought with modern weapons and 19th century military tactics by doddering European officers. Its brutality is nearly incomprehensible. Nine million soldiers were killed and Europe was tattered, an entire generation of its young men wiped out. So much for the progress of history. History became the nightmare from which Europe was trying to awake.

Anthropology and Primitivism With European powers having colonized much of the world, an interest in the indigenous cultures ensued. Painters and sculptors borrowed images from “primitive” art and the fledgling discipline of anthropology sought to understand the development of cultures over time, cultures of the world as well as European cultures.

Cinema By the turn of the century, cinema was established as a form of entertainment and document. By the 1920s in America, nearly half the population went to the movies at least once a week. Mass culture, mass M. Barrett *Making it New* 211 entertainment, is produced and distributed by mechanical means. Art in the age of mechanical reproduction had begun.

Formal Aspects of Modernism

Let's put these ideas together. It would seem that the basis of a “stable” culture, unified by shared history and a belief in progress of reason, was exposed as a fiction. Time is relative. Truths are contingent, or at least contingently knowable. Humans have the will to destroy all civilization.

Humans now could see themselves as the end point of a primitive culture that had advanced technologically but really hadn't become less "primitive" in desires or actions. What were the consequences for the esthetic features of literary Modernism given these cultural fractures? I'll list some of the major attributes.

Multiple Viewpoints A layering of perspectives in a literary work, not one of which captures the ultimate truth of the situation.

Image As we discovered in the chapter on the image, the literary movement of Imagism had its advent in literary Modernism and owes some of its shape to the views of the French philosopher Henri Bergson who asserted that in the flux of created reality there were nodes where meaning condensed, just as the image gathers emotional and physical depth.

Consciousness One of the distinguishing features between Modernism and Romanticism is that Romanticism's focus is on the imagination, a cognitive force field that connected to the primary energy of created manner. Modernism focuses on consciousness. Consciousness is the flow of sensation, memory, and thought. It is full of fissures, is connected associationally rather than logically, and is multiform. Consciousness itself can be seen as a collage of biology, sociology, and psychology.

The City Urban landscapes prevail in Modernist work reflecting the reality of economic and social conditions in the 20th century.

Allusiveness The text of a Modernist work contains myriad of elements, often including historical texts. This emphasizes **intertextuality** among all works of literature; that is, the way in which literary texts exist in a field of past and future texts.

High and Low Culture Reflecting the breakdown in culture evident in society is the idea that high and low cultural elements exist side by side. You can find ads, movie allusions, blues, jazz, alongside classical music, opera, and Shakespeare in a Modernist text.

Montage/Collage In film editing, a montage is a technique where a series of different shots are juxtaposed to signify activities accompanying a singular theme. In montage the separate film shots are discontinuous, but the viewer views them as pointing to a continuity, a unity of theme. In other words, the various scenes are aspects of one grand scene. The viewer is able to discern the relation among the discontinuous elements or makes one up if there's nothing obvious to discern.

Nostalgia There is a sense of loss, disappointment and despair in Modernist works because the collage elements do not cohere and the assemblage of a new culture will remain fragmentary despite the artist's most energetic gestures. In poetry the work most typical of the Modernism sketched above (and remember there are Modernisms, the Modernism launched by Gertrude Stein being different in many ways from the one described above) often yearn for a fictional, unified past. In addition, Modernism is constantly negotiating and renegotiating its relation to the past.

A Figure to Bridge the Periods: William Butler Yeats



William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) is a towering figure in English poetry in the 2nd century. Yeats is not only a highly skilled lyrical and political poet, but, being born in the Victorian Era, he starts out as a Modernist, heavily influenced by William Blake and William Wordsworth. He then goes through a middle period of civic and political engagement in his poetry, and ends his life as a Modernist. In this way,

Yeats bridges all three periods.

In order to understand the relevance of Yeats, it is important to understand a bit of the “Irish Question.” Since the 12th century England has attempted to control and colonize Ireland, finally achieving that control in the 16th century. In order to suppress the native Catholic population, there was mass emigration by the English into Ireland, particularly the north part of the country. Since England was Protestant, the ruling class in Ireland was the Protestant carpetbaggers and the native population was mired in poverty and discontent, with periodic insurrections arising.

By the 19th century, the spirit of reform was alive in England and “The Irish Question” denoted the issue of granting self-rule to the Irish. The tortured path to independence was interrupted by WWI and included a civil war afterward, but by 1930, Ireland was largely independent, except Northern Ireland, which kept remained part of Great Britain.

Yeats' descendants were Anglo, so he was Anglo-Irish, but he was a keen proponent of Irish independence and helped support the Gaelic Revival. For a long time, speaking the native gaelic

was illegal (a way to keep the oppressed, oppressed). At the turn of the 20th century there was intense interest in all things native, including the language (we'll see this in James' Joyce's "The Dead."). Yeats was a major figure in the Gaelic Revival and his poems reflect this desire to resurrect the heroic and mythic Ireland that had been so long oppressed. We'll start by looking at some of Yeats' Romantic-inspired poems.

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee;
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

Just like William Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," this poem proposes an idealized pastoral, natural location where the narrator is able to achieve a sense of calm, peace, and beauty which is set against the "roadway," or "pavements grey." This peace that he finds in nature is always carried with the narrator.

This notion of escape—or better yet, return—is reinforced in the poem, "Who Goes with Fergus." Fergus was a legendary Irish king who Yeats describes in this poem as leaving his throne to wander in the forest. The moon of the poem is ambivalent posing the loneliness and isolation of beauty here on earth:

Who will go drive with Fergus now,
And pierce the deep wood's woven shade,
And dance upon the level shore?
Young man, lift up your russet brow,
And lift your tender eyelids, maid,
And brood on hopes and fear no more.

And no more turn aside and brood
Upon love's bitter mystery;
For Fergus rules the brazen cars,
And rules the shadows of the wood,
And the white breast of the dim sea
And all dishevelled wandering stars.

Fergus now rules the wood and the sea underneath the “disheveled wandering stars.” These issues we brood on seem to be part of the suffering beauty of our life on earth and is what called Fergus to escape.

As we discussed in the introduction, one of the tenets of Modernism is its dislike of the ideas and values of Victorianism. This is clearly shown in the poem, “September 1913” in which Yeats rails on the bourgeoisie values of the Irish Middle Class, counterposing those values to the heroic spirit of self-sacrifice found in the legendary revolutionary leaders of Ireland’s past.

What need you, being come to sense,
But fumble in a greasy till
And add the halfpence to the pence
And prayer to shivering prayer, until
You have dried the marrow from the bone?
For men were born to pray and save:
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Yet they were of a different kind,
The names that stilled your childish play,
They have gone about the world like wind,
But little time had they to pray
For whom the hangman's rope was spun,
And what, God help us, could they save?
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Was it for this the wild geese spread
The grey wing upon every tide;
For this that all that blood was shed,
For this Edward Fitzgerald died,
And Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone,
All that delirium of the brave?
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Yet could we turn the years again,
And call those exiles as they were
In all their loneliness and pain,
You'd cry, 'Some woman's yellow hair
Has maddened every mother's son':
They weighed so lightly what they gave.
But let them be, they're dead and gone,
They're with O'Leary in the grave.

In this bitter and disappointed poem, Yeats is comparing the present day middle class values to the values of the revolutionary heroes of the past. It seems that in the present, the Irish people are in

thrall to their parish priests (prayer to shivering prayer) and care about nothing but money (add halfpence to the pence). The names mentioned in the poem, O'Leary, Robert Emmet, Wolfe Tone, were all men who worked for Irish independence—no matter what the cost, even if they paid with their lives. In the present time, Yeats believed that the middle class would just claim that these men were crazy. This poem is Yeats seeing how different present day Ireland was from the days of its “romantic past.” In a way, it heralds the end of Yeats’ own Romanticism.

Yet a mere three years later, there was a new class of Irish revolutionaries who tried to overthrow England on Easter in 1916—known as the Easter Rebellion. Many of the principals involved in the rebellion were known to Yeats and some were friends. Yeats revised his vision of “romantic” Ireland in his poem “Easter 1916” that designated this new revolutionary spirit as a “terrible beauty.”

I have met them at close of day
Coming with vivid faces
From counter or desk among grey
Eighteenth-century houses.
I have passed with a nod of the head
Or polite meaningless words,
Or have lingered awhile and said
Polite meaningless words,
And thought before I had done
Of a mocking tale or a gibe
To please a companion
Around the fire at the club,
Being certain that they and I
But lived where motley is worn:
All changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

That woman's days were spent
In ignorant good-will,
Her nights in argument
Until her voice grew shrill.
What voice more sweet than hers
When, young and beautiful,
She rode to harriers?
This man had kept a school
And rode our wingèd horse;
This other his helper and friend
Was coming into his force;
He might have won fame in the end,
So sensitive his nature seemed,
So daring and sweet his thought.
This other man I had dreamed
A drunken, vainglorious lout.

He had done most bitter wrong
To some who are near my heart,
Yet I number him in the song;
He, too, has resigned his part
In the casual comedy;
He, too, has been changed in his turn,
Transformed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

Hearts with one purpose alone
Through summer and winter seem
Enchanted to a stone
To trouble the living stream.
The horse that comes from the road,
The rider, the birds that range
From cloud to tumbling cloud,
Minute by minute they change;
A shadow of cloud on the stream
Changes minute by minute;
A horse-hoof slides on the brim,
And a horse plashes within it;
The long-legged moor-hens dive,
And hens to moor-cocks call;
Minute by minute they live:
The stone's in the midst of all.

Too long a sacrifice
Can make a stone of the heart.
O when may it suffice?
That is Heaven's part, our part
To murmur name upon name,
As a mother names her child
When sleep at last has come
On limbs that had run wild.
What is it but nightfall?
No, no, not night but death;
Was it needless death after all?
For England may keep faith
For all that is done and said.
We know their dream; enough
To know they dreamed and are dead;
And what if excess of love
Bewildered them till they died?
I write it out in a verse—
MacDonagh and MacBride
And Connolly and Pearse
Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

Yeats's ambivalence about this new spirit is evidence. Some of the people involved he admired, some he resented (a drunken vainglorious lout). But he seems to be hoping for a political resolution and not a violent one—many of those involved were executed. In some Blakean imagery, he notes that if grief and anger overwhelm a person—the person doesn't change and “troubles the living stream.” Despite his ambivalence, he is going to immortalize the names of these people in his verse, though he considers them, “a terrible beauty.”

Near the end of his life, Yeats was involved in political affairs, as a member of the Irish parliament and his verse had definitely become Modernist with his use of collage elements and a variety of allusions. This is powerfully shown in one of his last poems “The Circus Animals' Desertion,” in which he looks back at his own career and the subject matter of his poems throughout his life. He is seeking a new direction and compares these old poems to circus animals. Before I get to the poem itself I want to note that what makes Yeats such a great poet is his restless search for new form. He constantly looks to revivify his poetry by change and growth. This extends to his older years and “The Circus Animals' Desertion” stands a symbol of this relentless search for poetic matter and manner.

I

I sought a theme and sought for it in vain,
I sought it daily for six weeks or so.
Maybe at last, being but a broken man,
I must be satisfied with my heart, although
Winter and summer till old age began
My circus animals were all on show,
Those stilted boys, that burnished chariot,
Lion and woman and the Lord knows what.

II

What can I but enumerate old themes,
First that sea-rider Oisín led by the nose
Through three enchanted islands, allegorical dreams,
Vain gaiety, vain battle, vain repose,
Themes of the embittered heart, or so it seems,
That might adorn old songs or courtly shows;
But what cared I that set him on to ride,
I, starved for the bosom of his faery bride.

And then a counter-truth filled out its play,
"The Countess Cathleen" was the name I gave it;
She, pity-crazed, had given her soul away,

But masterful Heaven had intervened to save it.
I thought my dear must her own soul destroy
So did fanaticism and hate enslave it,
And this brought forth a dream and soon enough
This dream itself had all my thought and love.

And when the Fool and Blind Man stole the bread
Cuchulain fought the ungovernable sea;
Heart-mysteries there, and yet when all is said
It was the dream itself enchanted me:
Character isolated by a deed
To engross the present and dominate memory.
Players and painted stage took all my love,
And not those things that they were emblems of.

III

Those masterful images because complete
Grew in pure mind, but out of what began?
A mound of refuse or the sweepings of a street,
Old kettles, old bottles, and a broken can,
Old iron, old bones, old rags, that raving slut
Who keeps the till. Now that my ladder's gone,
I must lie down where all the ladders start
In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart.

In this poem, the narrator begins by questioning, now that he is an old man, what he is going to write about. In contemplation, stanza by stanza, Yeats reviews the subjects of his poems from the past. He discusses those old Irish mythological characters he featured in his poems (like Cuchulain and Fergus). He considers the dramas that he wrote which were highly political (although disguisedly). He understands that even when he was trying to make a point about the world at large, the material of his drama—the form and structure, the stage—took all his energy.

The last stanza always moves me. You may know that Jacob's Ladder is a biblical figure of the bridge between heaven and earth (Jacob saw angels moving up and down it). It is a Neoplatonic figure of the striving for increasingly more spiritual insight, and also assumes that the life on earth is corrupt and fallen. Yeats decides at the end that the dirty world with all its messy beauty will be the ground of his poetic inspiration, "the foul rag and bone shop of the heart." What an inspiration! Yeats decides to accept the human material condition as his inspiration.

Note the allusiveness in the poem, the way he constructs it by alluding to all these different figures from the past in order to come up with a new way to handle poetic form. This is a Modernist poem and a heartfelt response by Yeats to his own work up to that point.

Assignment #1

Each paragraph must include a quotation from one of the texts under consideration. Use MLA style citation. Consult the “How to Cite Literature” directions in the home page. No need for a Works Cited as all texts come from the Norton Anthology. Do not use outside sources. I will grade these liberally and use them to assess how well you understand the material. No plagiarism.

We’ve discussed how Yeats’ poetry can be seen as having representations of at least three periods—Romantic, Victorian, Modernist. Using at least two poems, write a four paragraph essay in which you compare the poems in terms of their representing different periods of Yeats’ development. For example, “Lake of Innisfree” is clearly Romantic while “Among School Children” is Modernist. You will want to discuss the different themes and images in the poems. Of course, “Circus Animals Desertion” is very clearly a Modernist poem for it is about becoming a Modernist!

Paragraph1

Briefly summarize both texts and provide a quotation of at least three lines from an early poem. Explain what period the passage represents. Discuss the theme taken up in the passage.

Paragraph2

Provide a quotation of at least three lines from an early poem. Explain what period the passage represents. Discuss the theme taken up in the passage.

Paragraph3

Provide a quotation of at least three lines from a middle or later poem. Explain what period the passage represents. Discuss the theme taken up in the passage. Compare it to the poem from the earlier period.

Paragraph 4

Provide a quotation of at least three lines from a middle or later poem. Explain what period the passage represents. Discuss the theme taken up in the passage. Compare it to the poem from the earlier period. Summarize your findings.

A Good Essay:

1. Properly cites the texts;
2. Quotes two passages from an earlier period in Yeats’ development and discuss the themes taken up in the passages.
3. Quotes two passages from a later period in Yeats’ development and discuss the themes taken up in the passages.
4. Provides an introduction to, and summary of your findings.

Assignment #2 Application

I really respect and appreciate Yeats because of the way that he keeps reinventing himself. For this application you are to write one paragraph in which you narrate how you “reinvented” yourself, how you consciously changed in order to meet the challenges of a new time period. Many of you are

young, so the historical demands may not be apparent, but surely you have changed yourself in some way to accommodate changes in your society.

Narrate how you were.

Describe the circumstance that made you change;

Narrate how you changed;

Show that change in action.

You can write more if you want. Here's my contribution:

Growing up in a fairly tough neighborhood in Chicago, I spent my youth brawling. It was an earlier time and many street disputes were settled with fists, not with guns. I've always carried that attitude secretly, even into the classroom. I would meet aggression with aggression. Until one day a student who had been disrespectful from the first day got on my last nerve. I kicked her out of class and she talked all the way out the door and down the corridor. So what did I do? I stood in the classroom door and yelled right back! Bad news. I was ashamed of my reaction and made a pledge then to adopt a Gandhian position of non-violence and peace from that point forward. So far, so good. A student last semester tried me in a thousand ways, but I kept thinking of Gandhi and turned my other cheek. It has made me a better teacher and a better man.

A Good Application

1. Describes what you were like before you changed;
2. Narrates the forces that caused you to change;
3. Shows your re-invented self.

Worksheets

You must be able to answer these questions from reading the texts and my commentary. You may want to print these questions and answer them as you read. They will guide your reading and organize your notes. Your weekly quiz will be 10 of these questions.

Joyce “The Dead”

1. What are the motifs in the Dead?
2. What about direction?
3. What is significant about the season?
4. How does Gabriel blow it with Lily and why?
5. What do we find out about Gabriel's relationship to Gretta?
6. Who is Freddy Malins?
7. What is the map of consciousness and what is its relation to Shakespeare?
8. What is the significance of Molly's dress?
9. Why is she upset at Gabriel?
10. Why won't Gabriel go to the Aran Islands?
11. What is important about his speech? What does it reflect?
12. What does Julia sing and what is its significance?

13. What about the food?
14. What do they talk about at dinner?
15. What is the significance of the speech?
16. What about the song they sing?
17. How does he really feel about his aunts?
18. What about the painting?
19. What is significant about the goodnights?
20. How does Gabriel feel on the way home?
21. Why does he get so mad about Freddy Malins?
22. Were her thoughts running with his?
23. What was she thinking about?
24. What is his reaction?
25. What is his epiphany?
26. What does he finally accept about himself and his life?
27. What direction does his mind travel in the final paragraph?

Woolf from *Mrs. Dalloway*

28. How does the opening demonstrate stream of consciousness?
29. How does the past intrude on Mrs. Dalloway's thoughts and on the present of the story?
30. How does the urban setting impact the story? What is its relationship to Modernism?
31. How does the narrative engage the issue of WWI?
32. How does the scene with the skywriting airplane reflect the Modernist idea of multiple perspectives?
33. What is an example of intertextuality in the selection?
34. What are collage elements in the selection?

Texts of Consciousness: Joyce and Woolf

James Joyce (1882-1941) It is impossible to choose a "greatest" in literature, but when people pick one writer of English prose to assume the title of Greatest of all Time (GOAT), it is hard not to argue when the choice is Joyce. Joyce was born of a middle class family in Dublin, Ireland and was educated under the stringent instructors of the Catholic Church. Joyce was a sensitive and intelligent boy who developed a lifelong love of music. As an adolescent he chose the church of art over the Catholic Church and eventually chose exile over residence in what he saw as philistine Ireland (likes Yeats in "September 1913." Joyce's writing career is like one long book. The first chapter, "Dubliners" (from which "The Dead" is excerpted) leads to the second--the autobiographical *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The third, *Ulysses*, follows the exploits of Leopold Bloom, a wandering Jew during the course of one day in Dublin. His last book, *Finnegan's Wake*, is a book of night, a dream book for which Joyce essentially invented a new language. Joyce's commitment to his art, fearless and sure, his relentless experimentation and his focus on the individual, then the collective, consciousness certainly make him a contender for GOAT, although supporters of his female peer, Virginia Woolf, might argue the point.

Consciousness

We discussed the role of consciousness in the previous chapter when introducing Modernism. I'd like to discuss this idea a little more. Take a second and try to "watch" what goes on in your mind in the present. If you can reach that sort of detachment, what you watch going on in the mind would be consciousness. My own definition of consciousness goes like this: just as the eyes function as the means by which we sense light energy, and the ears by which we sense vibrations in the air, consciousness is the means by which we sense the present--that continuous moment that lasts as long as we do. This continuous present includes everything we sense at a moment in time, all the memories we have, the biological responses to our environment, plus those conscious thoughts that our will (remember Coleridge?) directs. Now consider the mimetic function of writing. How do we represent this fluid composite of so many different images, energies, and textures of thought?

Writers like Joyce and Woolf began to experiment with rendering a character's consciousness by not telling what they thought but by showing it. This rendering is called **stream of**

consciousness. It is called “stream” because it is continuous, complex, and it flows. A contemporary of Joyce and Woolf, Dorothy Richardson, was a proponent of stream of consciousness in her novel series *Pilgrimage*. In the following passage from *Pointed Roofs*, the stream of consciousness passage is framed by dramatic action to pull us into her mind and then bring us out of it:

The organ was playing "The Wearin' o' the Green." It had begun that tune during the last term at school, in the summer. It made her think of rounders in the hot school garden, singing-classes in the large green room, all the class shouting "Gather roses while ye may," hot afternoons in the shady north room, the sound of turning pages, the hum of the garden beyond the sun-blinds, meetings in the sixth form study.... Lilla, with her black hair and the specks of bright amber in the brown of her eyes, talking about free-will.

She stirred the fire. The windows were quite dark. The flames shot up and shadows darted. We can see in this passage some of the characteristics of stream of consciousness. First it holds multiple metric times in place; memories and the present freely mingle. Second, it is organized associationally, that the progression of ideas is not logical but relate (or associate) in different ways. Third, it contains many textures: memories, poems, sensory details, abstractions all mix in the mind.

Virginia Woolf, also used stream of consciousness to great effect. Woolf's writing showed how consciousness can be alienating because each character, inevitably perceives the same event in a different way. In this passage from Woolf's *To The Lighthouse*, Lilly Briscoe looks at a painting she was working on, As in the Richardson passage we recognize the rich texture of this “recording” of Lilly's mind:

She could have wept. It was bad, it was bad, it was infinitely bad! She could have done it differently of course; the colour could have been thinned and faded; the shapes etherealised; that was how Paunceforte would have seen it. But then she did not see it like that. She saw the colour burning on a framework of steel; the light of a butterfly's wing lying upon the arches of a cathedral. Of all that only a few random marks scrawled upon the canvas remained. And it would never be seen; never be hung even, and there was Mr Tansley whispering in her ear, “Women can't paint, women can't write...”

She now remembered what she had been going to say about Mrs. Ramsay. The voices of the present, the past, colors, sensations, self-esteem all mix in this passage. Woolf is able to show both Lilly's character and social attitudes in this passage.

The last example is from James Joyce's *Ulysses*. In this novel the narrator follows Leopold Bloom, an Irish Jew, as he wanders around Dublin, Ireland on June 16th. During the day, he undergoes comic contemporary versions of Odysseus's travails in the *Odyssey*. Little did he know (well perhaps he had an inkling), while he was cavorting about, his wife Molly cheated on him with a character named Blazes Boylan (Molly's the figure of a moon—can you imagine what Blazes Boylan is a figure of?). When Bloom returns home, Molly is too wired to sleep and goes into a long reverie that ends with her remembering the time she first made love to Bloom. The entire last chapter is Molly's stream of consciousness, which includes memories, fantasies, consideration of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, exhortations, and ends the novel with a powerful affirmation:

it was leapyear like now yes 16 years ago my God after that long kiss I near lost my breath yes he said I was a flower of the mountain yes so we are flowers all a womans body yes that was one true thing he said in his life and the sun shines for you today yes that was why I liked him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is and I knew I could always get round him and I gave him all the pleasure I could leading him on till he asked me to say yes and I wouldnt answer first only looked out over the sea and the sky I was thinking of so many things he didnt know of Mulvey and Mr Stanhope and Hester and father and old captain Groves and the sailors playing all birds fly and I say stoop and washing up dishes they called it on the pier and the sentry in front of the governors house with the thing round his white helmet poor devil half roasted and the Spanish girls laughing in their shawls and their tall combs and the auctions in the morning the Greeks and the jews and the Arabs and the devil knows who else from all the ends of Europe and Duke street and the fowl market all clucking outside Larby Sharons and the poor donkeys slipping half asleep and the vague fellows in the cloaks asleep in the shade on the steps and the big wheels of the carts of the bulls and the old castle thousands of years old yes and those handsome Moors all in white and turbans like kings asking you to sit down in their little bit of a shop and Ronda with the old windows of the posadas glancing eyes a lattice hid for her lover to kiss the iron and the wineshops half open at night and the castanets and the night we missed the boat at Algeciras the watchman going about serene with his lamp and O that awful deepdown torrent O and the sea the sea crimson sometimes like fire and the glorious sunsets and the figtrees in the Alameda gardens yes and all the queer little streets and the pink and blue and yellow houses

and the rosegardens and the jessamine and geraniums and cactuses and Gibraltar as a girl where I was a Flower of the mountain yes when I put the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.

Virginia Woolf

It is interesting that Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) was born and died in the same years as Joyce. Although she wasn't a huge fan of his work, they share many traits and are the bookends of great fiction writers in the Modernism era. Woolf was born into an intellectual family with a philosopher father and a mother who was known for her great beauty. Though the circumstances in which she was born afforded her an intense education and access to renowned Victorian thinkers, her early life was marred by sexual abuse, and the death of loved ones. She suffered from depression throughout her life. As an adult, she lived in the Bloomsbury section of London and the group that surrounded she and her husband, Leonard Woolf, was known as the Bloomsbury group. It was within that group that she found her voice as a fiction writer, social critic, and feminist. She argued for female economic independence as the only way for women to achieve their own laurels in the arts and, as the passage above shows, wrote the female point of view with great insight and power. When Woolf went through her last depression, she believed that the Nazis were soon to take over England, the ultimate view of patriarchy. Instead of witnessing that horror, she filled her pockets with rocks and drowned herself in a river. Like Joyce, her immense, generous consciousness produced some of the most influential and powerful works of fiction in the 20th century. Her proponents, too, can argue that she is the GOAT.

Joyce's, "The Dead."

As you read this story, be aware of these six formal and contentual elements to be found in Joyce's text.

1. *Epiphany*—at the moment of climax, the main character will undergo a startling realization about him or herself.
2. *Appearance*—Joyce is a master of giving precise descriptions in a few phrases or sentences.
3. *Motif*—a motif is a recurrent pattern of imagery. It is a form of subtext, and, most importantly, it is triggered in language.
4. *Dialogue*—Joyce's stories have a healthy dose of speech.
5. *The "for" construction*—Joyce uses quite a bit of grammatical subordination for he finds that a good way to put together complex thoughts.
6. *The map of the mind*—although Joyce does do stream of consciousness in his later work, in these stories he gives us significant details and bits of dialogue that tell us what a character thinks.

In order to understand the story more fully, you should know a few things about Irish History. During the time the story takes place, Ireland is still under control of Great Britain. Great Britain had controlled Ireland, and exploited it, and brutally oppressed its people, since the 14th century. The Irish never accepted this situation and were always agitating for revolution.

Part of Britain's repression included making it illegal to speak or write Gaelic, which was the indigenous language of the Irish. Only in isolated pockets in Ireland did Gaelic survive, most notably the Aran Islands, three small islands off Galway on the west coast. During the time of the story, England had loosened its repressions and there was the Gaelic Revival, a nationalist movement which had a resurgence of Gaelic literature and culture central to the drive for independence. The main character, Gabriel, seems, at the mildest, ambivalent about the Gaelic Revival, and that is part of Gabriel's characterization.

As we've noted, a motif is a pattern of imagery (manifest by language). There are numerous motifs in this story which tie together brilliantly. I'll list the key ones (see if you can discover some more):

- a. *Shakespeare*
- b. *Grace*. Grace is a theological concept that indicates there is nothing we can do to earn salvation, but God gives it to us freely as a gift. Grace is a generous gift.
- c. *East vs West*. In Celtic mythology, we go West when we die, while, conversely, the East is a direction which indicates new life, birth.
- d. *Music*
- e. *Crossing*—there are a series of missed connections here where intentions, speech, and literal movements, cross each other in missing their marks.
- f. *Death/the past*.

g. Gabriel's sense of his own class compared to other's classes.

i. Gabriel as inconsistent consistence. He feels, sometimes at the very same time, that he is superior to others and a failure. This is what makes him a multi-dimensional character rather than a flat, shallow one.

Also note in the story how time is portrayed. There are a number of time shifts in the story—into the past, into the future, and indeed, time is one of the central themes in “The Dead.”

The Dead

Lily, the caretaker's daughter, was literally run off her feet. Hardly had she brought one gentleman into the little pantry behind the office on the ground floor and helped him off with his overcoat than the wheezy hall-door bell clanged again and she had to scamper along the bare hallway to let in another guest. It was well for her she had not to attend to the ladies also. But Miss Kate and Miss Julia had thought of that and had converted the bathroom upstairs into a ladies' dressing-room. Miss Kate and Miss Julia were there, gossiping and laughing and fussing, walking after each other to the head of the stairs, peering down over the banisters and calling down to Lily to ask her who had come.

It was always a great affair, the Misses Morkan's annual dance. Everybody who knew them came to it, members of the family, old friends of the family, the members of Julia's choir, any of Kate's pupils that were grown up enough and even some of Mary Jane's pupils too. Never once had it fallen flat. (*music*)

The time of the year is very important. It is close to the new year when we get rid of the old timey year and welcome in the baby new year. In Celtic culture, the new year was accompanied by rituals and this is no different.

For years and years it had gone off in splendid style as long as anyone could remember; ever since Kate and Julia, after the death of their brother Pat, had left the house in Stoney Batter and taken Mary Jane, their only niece, to live with them in the dark gaunt house on Usher's Island, the upper part of which they had rented from Mr Fulham, the corn- factor on the ground floor. That was a good thirty years ago if it was a day. Mary Jane, who was then a little girl in short clothes, was now the main prop of the household for she had the organ in Haddington Road. (*for construction*) She had been through the Academy and gave a pupils' concert every year in the upper room of the Antient Concert Rooms. Many of her pupils belonged to better-class families on the Kingstown and Dalkey line. Old as they were, her aunts also did their share. Julia, though she was quite grey, was still the leading soprano in Adam and Eve's, and Kate, being too feeble to go about much, gave music lessons to beginners on the old square piano in the back room. Lily, the caretaker's daughter, did housemaid's work for them. Though their life was modest they believed in eating well; the best of everything: diamond-bone sirloins, three-shilling tea and the best bottled stout. But Lily seldom made a mistake in the orders so that she got on well with her three mistresses. They were fussy, that was all. But the only thing they would not stand was back answers. (*recognize the indirect discourse here?*)

Of course they had good reason to be fussy on such a night. And then it was long after ten o'clock and yet there was no sign of Gabriel and his wife. Besides they were dreadfully afraid that Freddy Malins might turn up screwed. They would not wish for worlds that any of Mary Jane's pupils should see him under the influence; and when he was like that it was sometimes very hard to manage him. Freddy Malins always came late but they wondered what could be keeping Gabriel: and that was what brought them every two minutes to the banisters to ask Lily had Gabriel or Freddy come.

—O, Mr Conroy, said Lily to Gabriel when she opened the door for him, Miss Kate and Miss Julia thought you were never coming. Good-night, Mrs Conroy.

—I'll engage they did, said Gabriel, but they forget that my wife here takes three mortal hours to dress herself. (*"mortal" the death motif*)

He stood on the mat, scraping the snow from his goloshes, while Lily led his wife to the foot of the stairs and called out:

—Miss Kate, here's Mrs Conroy.

Kate and Julia came toddling down the dark stairs at once. Both of them kissed Gabriel's wife, said she must be perished alive and asked was Gabriel with her.

—Here I am as right as the mail, Aunt Kate! Go on up. I'll follow, called out Gabriel from the dark.

He continued scraping his feet vigorously while the three women went upstairs, laughing, to the ladies' dressing-room. A light fringe of snow lay like a cape on the shoulders of his overcoat and like toecaps on the toes of his goloshes; and, as the buttons of his overcoat slipped with a squeaking noise through the snow-stiffened frieze, a cold fragrant air from out-of-doors escaped from crevices and folds. (*how's this for description, we get olfactory imagery—the smell of the outside escaping from the folds of Gabriel's coat*)

—Is it snowing again, Mr Conroy? asked Lily. She had preceded him into the pantry to help him off with his overcoat. Gabriel smiled at the three syllables she had given his surname and glanced at her. She was a slim, growing girl, pale in complexion and with hay-coloured hair. The gas in the pantry made her look still paler. Gabriel had known her when she was a child and used to sit on the lowest step nursing a rag doll. (*appearance and this will be germane when it comes to his conversation that follows*)

—Yes, Lily, he answered, and I think we're in for a night of it.

He looked up at the pantry ceiling, which was shaking with the stamping and shuffling of feet on the floor above, listened for a moment to the piano and then glanced at the girl, who was folding his overcoat carefully at the end of a shelf.

—Tell me, Lily, he said in a friendly tone, do you still go to school?

—O no, sir, she answered. I'm done schooling this year and more.

—O, then, said Gabriel gaily, I suppose we'll be going to your wedding one of these fine days with your young man, eh?

The girl glanced back at him over her shoulder and said with great bitterness:

—The men that is now is only all palaver and what they can get out of you.

This is the first of Gabriel's three failures at connecting with females (in a way, three versions of his wife). Lily is the first. Let's trace the map of Gabriel's mind: he remembers her as a young girl, then he sees that she is older and attractive. He mentions her "wedding" which indicates that he thinks she is sexually mature. Lily is having none of such talk and responds that men are just trash and what they can get out of her (sexually). Remember "Two Gallants"? The violence of her response surprises Gabriel.

Gabriel coloured as if he felt he had made a mistake and, without looking at her, kicked off his goloshes and flicked actively with his muffler at his patent-leather shoes.

This is typical of Gabriel. When he feels as if he has made a social mistake, he tries to re-compose himself. This time by wiping his shoes.

He was a stout tallish young man. The high colour of his cheeks pushed upwards even to his forehead where it scattered itself in a few formless patches of pale red; and on his hairless face there scintillated restlessly the polished lenses and the bright gilt rims of the glasses which screened his delicate and restless eyes. His glossy black hair was parted in the middle and brushed in a long curve behind his ears where it curled slightly beneath the groove left by his hat.

More deft physical description—down to the groove in his hair left by his hat.

When he had flicked lustre into his shoes he stood up and pulled his waistcoat down more tightly on his plump body. Then he took a coin rapidly from his pocket.

—O Lily, he said, thrusting it into her hands, it's Christmas-time, isn't it? Just . . . here's a little . . .

He walked rapidly towards the door.

—O no, sir! cried the girl, following him. Really, sir, I wouldn't take it.

—Christmas-time! Christmas-time! said Gabriel, almost trotting to the stairs and waving his hand to her in deprecation.

The girl, seeing that he had gained the stairs, called out after him:

—Well, thank you, sir.

How does he make up for his mistake with Lily? He tries to pay her off. Remember "Araby"?

He waited outside the drawing-room door until the waltz should finish, listening to the skirts that swept against it and to the shuffling of feet. He was still discomposed by the girl's bitter and sudden retort. It had cast a gloom over him which he tried to dispel by arranging his cuffs and the bows of his tie. Then he took from his waistcoat pocket a little paper and glanced at the headings he had made for his speech. He was undecided about the lines from Robert Browning for he feared they would be above the heads of his hearers. Some quotation that they could recognise from Shakespeare or from the Melodies would be better. The indelicate clacking of the men's heels and the shuffling of their soles reminded him that their grade of culture differed from his. He would only make himself ridiculous by quoting poetry to them which they could not understand. They would think that he was airing his superior education. He would fail with them just as he had failed with the girl in the pantry. He had taken up a wrong tone. His whole speech was a mistake from first to last, an utter failure.

We have the Shakespeare motif, the music motif (wrong tone) the consistent inconsistency (he's both above his audience and a failure).

Just then his aunts and his wife came out of the ladies' dressing-room. His aunts were two small plainly dressed old women. Aunt Julia was an inch or so the taller. Her hair, drawn low over the tops of her ears, was grey; and grey also, with darker shadows, was her large flaccid face. Though she was stout in build and stood erect her slow eyes and parted lips gave her the appearance of a woman who did not know where she was or where she was going. Aunt Kate was more vivacious. Her face, healthier than her sister's, was all puckers and creases, like a shrivelled red apple, and her hair, braided in the same old-fashioned way, had not lost its ripe nut colour.

We get descriptions of the aunts and the first hint that Julia is in worse health than Kate, who is more vivacious—and described in terms of food, nuts and apples.

They both kissed Gabriel frankly. He was their favourite nephew, the son of their dead elder sister, Ellen, who had married T. J. Conroy of the Port and Docks.

—Gretta tells me you're not going to take a cab back to Monkstown to-night, Gabriel, said Aunt Kate.

—No, said Gabriel, turning to his wife, we had quite enough of that last year, hadn't we? Don't you remember, Aunt Kate, what a cold Gretta got out of it? Cab windows rattling all the way, and the east wind blowing in after we passed Merrion. Very jolly it was. Gretta caught a dreadful cold.

Aunt Kate frowned severely and nodded her head at every word.

—Quite right, Gabriel, quite right, she said. You can't be too careful.

—But as for Gretta there, said Gabriel, she'd walk home in the snow if she were let.

Mrs. Conroy laughed.

—Don't mind him, Aunt Kate, she said. He's really an awful bother, what with green shades for Tom's eyes at night and making him do the dumb-bells, and forcing Eva to eat the stirabout. The poor child! And she simply hates the sight of it!...O, but you'll never guess what he makes me wear now!

Joycean dialogue.

She broke out into a peal of laughter and glanced at her husband, whose admiring and happy eyes had been wandering from her dress to her face and hair. The two aunts laughed heartily too, for Gabriel's solicitude was a standing joke with them.

He's checking his wife out and seems to have a particular affinity for lustrous hair.

—Goloshes! said Mrs Conroy. That's the latest. Whenever it's wet underfoot I must put on my goloshes. Tonight even he wanted me to put them on, but I wouldn't. The next thing he'll buy me will be a diving suit.

Now we have the death motif and we learn something about Gabriel. Diving suits at the turn of the last century were huge things full of thick fabric and iron. We have a sense that Gabriel wants to protect his wife from aging, from dangers, from death. Perhaps Gabriel himself has not accepted the fact of mortality, for all of us.

Gabriel laughed nervously and patted his tie reassuringly while Aunt Kate nearly doubled herself, so heartily did she enjoy the joke. The smile soon faded from Aunt Julia's face and her mirthless eyes were directed towards her nephew's face. After a pause she asked:

—And what are goloshes, Gabriel?

—Goloshes, Julia! exclaimed her sister. Goodness me, don't you know what goloshes are? You wear them over your . . . over your boots, Gretta, isn't it?

—Yes, said Mrs Conroy. Guttapercha things. We both have a pair now. Gabriel says everyone wears them on the continent.

—O, on the continent, murmured Aunt Julia, nodding her head slowly.

A bit of geography—Ireland is to the west of England and the continent. Gabriel seems to be looking to the east for most things

Gabriel knitted his brows and said, as if he were slightly angered:

—It's nothing very wonderful but Gretta thinks it very funny because she says the word reminds her of Christy Minstrels.

—But tell me, Gabriel, said Aunt Kate, with brisk tact. Of course, you've seen about the room. Gretta was saying . . .

—O, the room is all right, replied Gabriel. I've taken one in the Gresham.

—To be sure, said Aunt Kate, by far the best thing to do. And the children, Gretta, you're not anxious about them?

—O, for one night, said Mrs Conroy. Besides, Bessie will look after them.

—To be sure, said Aunt Kate again. What a comfort it is to have a girl like that, one you can depend on! There's that Lily, I'm sure I don't know what has come over her lately. She's not the girl she was at all.

Gabriel was about to ask his aunt some questions on this point but she broke off suddenly to gaze after her sister who had wandered down the stairs and was craning her neck over the banisters.

—Now, I ask you, she said, almost testily, where is Julia going? Julia! Julia! Where are you going?

Julia, who had gone halfway down one flight, came back and announced blandly:

—Here's Freddy.

At the same moment a clapping of hands and a final flourish of the pianist told that the waltz had ended. The drawing-room door was opened from within and some couples came out. Aunt Kate drew Gabriel aside hurriedly and whispered into his ear:

—Slip down, Gabriel, like a good fellow and see if he's all right, and don't let him up if he's screwed. I'm sure he's screwed. I'm sure he is.

Gabriel went to the stairs and listened over the banisters. He could hear two persons talking in the pantry. Then he recognised Freddy Malins' laugh. He went down the stairs noisily.

—it's such a relief, said Aunt Kate to Mrs Conroy, that Gabriel is here. I always feel easier in my mind when he's here.... Julia, there's Miss Daly and Miss Power will take some refreshment. Thanks for your beautiful waltz, Miss Daly. It made lovely time.

A tall wizen-faced man, with a stiff grizzled moustache and swarthy skin, who was passing out with his partner said:

—And may we have some refreshment, too, Miss Morkan?

—Julia, said Aunt Kate summarily, and here's Mr Browne and Miss Furlong. Take them in, Julia, with Miss Daly and Miss Power.

—I'm the man for the ladies, said Mr Browne, pursing his lips until his moustache bristled and smiling in all his wrinkles. You know, Miss Morkan, the reason they are so fond of me is —

He did not finish his sentence, but, seeing that Aunt Kate was out of earshot, at once led the three young ladies into the back room. The middle of the room was occupied by two square tables placed end to end, and on these Aunt Julia and the caretaker were straightening and smoothing a large cloth. On the sideboard were arrayed dishes and plates, and glasses and bundles of knives and forks and spoons. The top of the closed square piano served also as a sideboard for viands and sweets. At a smaller sideboard in one corner two young men were standing, drinking hop-bitters.

Mr Browne led his charges thither and invited them all, in jest, to some ladies' punch, hot, strong and sweet. As they said they never took anything strong he opened three bottles of lemonade for them. Then he asked one of the young men to move aside, and, taking hold of the decanter, filled out for himself a goodly measure of whisky. The young men eyed him respectfully while he took a trial sip.

—God help me, he said, smiling, it's the doctor's orders.

His wizened face broke into a broader smile, and the three young ladies laughed in musical echo to his pleasantry, swaying their bodies to and fro, with nervous jerks of their shoulders. The boldest said:

—O, now, Mr Browne, I'm sure the doctor never ordered anything of the kind.

Mr Browne took another sip of his whisky and said, with sidling mimicry:

—Well, you see, I'm like the famous Mrs Cassidy, who is reported to have said: Now, Mary Grimes, if I don't take it, make me take it, for I feel I want it.

A comic interlude.

His hot face had leaned forward a little too confidentially and he had assumed a very low Dublin accent so that the young ladies, with one instinct, received his speech in silence. Miss Furlong, who was one of Mary Jane's pupils, asked Miss Daly what was the name of the pretty waltz she had played; and Mr Browne, seeing that he was ignored, turned promptly to the two young men who were more appreciative.

A red-faced young woman, dressed in pansy, came into the room, excitedly clapping her hands and crying:

—Quadrilles! Quadrilles!

Close on her heels came Aunt Kate, crying:

—Two gentlemen and three ladies, Mary Jane!

—O, here's Mr Bergin and Mr Kerrigan, said Mary Jane. Mr Kerrigan, will you take Miss Power? Miss Furlong, may I get you a partner, Mr Bergin. O, that'll just do now.

—Three ladies, Mary Jane, said Aunt Kate.

The two young gentlemen asked the ladies if they might have the pleasure, and Mary Jane turned to Miss Daly.

—O, Miss Daly, you're really awfully good, after playing for the last two dances, but really we're so short of ladies to-night.

—I don't mind in the least, Miss Morkan.

—But I've a nice partner for you, Mr Bartell D'Arcy, the tenor. I'll get him to sing later on. All Dublin is raving about him.

—Lovely voice, lovely voice! said Aunt Kate.

As the piano had twice begun the prelude to the first figure Mary Jane led her recruits quickly from the room. They had hardly gone when Aunt Julia wandered slowly into the room, looking behind her at something.

—What is the matter, Julia? asked Aunt Kate anxiously. Who is it?

Julia, who was carrying in a column of table-napkins, turned to her sister and said, simply, as if the question had surprised her:

—It's only Freddy, Kate, and Gabriel with him.

In fact right behind her Gabriel could be seen piloting Freddy Malins across the landing. The latter, a young man of about forty, was of Gabriel's size and build, with very round shoulders. His face was fleshy and pallid, touched with colour only at the thick hanging lobes of his ears and at the wide wings of his nose. He had coarse features, a blunt nose, a convex and receding brow, tumid and protruded lips. His heavy-lidded eyes and the disorder of his scanty hair made him look sleepy. He was laughing heartily in a high key at a story which he had been telling Gabriel on the stairs and at the same time rubbing the knuckles of his left fist backwards and forwards into his left eye.

Another portrait using significant details and actions to show us Freddy Malins—who is always “crossing” Gabriel.

—Good-evening, Freddy, said Aunt Julia.

Freddy Malins bade the Misses Morkan good-evening in what seemed an offhand fashion by reason of the habitual catch in his voice and then, seeing that Mr Browne was grinning at him from the sideboard, crossed the room on rather shaky legs and began to repeat in an undertone the story he had just told to Gabriel.

—He's not so bad, is he? said Aunt Kate to Gabriel.

Gabriel's brows were dark but he raised them quickly and answered:

—O no, hardly noticeable.

—Now, isn't he a terrible fellow! she said. And his poor mother made him take the pledge on New Year's Eve. But come on, Gabriel, into the drawing-room.

Before leaving the room with Gabriel she signalled to Mr Browne by frowning and shaking her forefinger in warning to and fro. Mr Browne nodded in answer and, when she had gone, said to Freddy Malins:

—Now, then, Teddy, I'm going to fill you out a good glass of lemonade just to buck you up.

Freddy Malins, who was nearing the climax of his story, waved the offer aside impatiently but Mr Browne, having first called Freddy Malins' attention to a disarray in his dress, filled out and handed him a full glass of lemonade. Freddy Malins' left hand accepted the glass mechanically, his right hand being engaged in

the mechanical readjustment of his dress. Mr Browne, whose face was once more wrinkling with mirth, poured out for himself a glass of whisky while Freddy Malins exploded, before he had well reached the climax of his story, in a kink of high-pitched bronchitic laughter and, setting down his untasted and overflowing glass, began to rub the knuckles of his left fist backwards and forwards into his left eye, repeating words of his last phrase as well as his fit of laughter would allow him.

Gabriel could not listen while Mary Jane was playing her Academy piece, full of runs and difficult passages, to the hushed drawing-room. He liked music but the piece she was playing had no melody for him and he doubted whether it had any melody for the other listeners, though they had begged Mary Jane to play something. Four young men, who had come from the refreshment-room to stand in the doorway at the sound of the piano, had gone away quietly in couples after a few minutes. The only persons who seemed to follow the music were Mary Jane herself, her hands racing along the key-board or lifted from it at the pauses like those of a priestess in momentary imprecation, and Aunt Kate standing at her elbow to turn the page.

Gabriel's eyes, irritated by the floor, which glittered with beeswax under the heavy chandelier, wandered to the wall above the piano. A picture of the balcony scene in Romeo and Juliet hung there and beside it was a picture of the two murdered princes in the Tower which Aunt Julia had worked in red, blue and brown wools when she was a girl. Probably in the school they had gone to as girls that kind of work had been taught, for one year his mother had worked for him as a birthday present a waistcoat of purple tabinet, with little foxes' heads upon it, lined with brown satin and having round mulberry buttons. It was strange that his mother had had no musical talent though Aunt Kate used to call her the brains carrier of the Morkan family. Both she and Julia had always seemed a little proud of their serious and matronly sister. Her photograph stood before the pierglass. She held an open book on her knees and was pointing out something in it to Constantine who, dressed in a man-o'-war suit, lay at her feet. It was she who had chosen the names for her sons for she was very sensible of the dignity of family life. Thanks to her, Constantine was now senior curate in Balbriggan and, thanks to her, Gabriel himself had taken his degree in the Royal University. A shadow passed over his face as he remembered her sullen opposition to his marriage. Some slighting phrases she had used still rankled in his memory; she had once spoken of Gretta as being country cute and that was not true of Gretta at all. It was Gretta who had nursed her during all her last long illness in their house at Monkstown.

Here is a map of the mind that follows Gabriel's mind. He is irritated by the highly reflective floor (perhaps he doesn't want to see his reflection?). His eyes move to some picture—Romeo and Juliet and Richard III—both Shakespeare. The plot of Romeo and Juliet revolves around the forbidden love between a young couple. What does that make him think of? His mother's own resistance to his wife Gretta on account of the difference in class.

He knew that Mary Jane must be near the end of her piece for she was playing again the opening melody with runs of scales after every bar and while he waited for the end the resentment died down in his heart. The piece ended with a trill of octaves in the treble and a final deep octave in the bass. Great applause greeted Mary Jane as, blushing and rolling up her music nervously, she escaped from the room. The most vigorous clapping came from the four young men in the doorway who had gone away to the refreshment-room at the beginning of the piece but had come back when the piano had stopped.

Lancers were arranged. Gabriel found himself partnered with Miss Ivors. She was a frank-mannered talkative young lady, with a freckled face and prominent brown eyes. She did not wear a low-cut bodice and the large brooch which was fixed in the front of her collar bore on it an Irish device.

If Lily was a stand-in for a very young Gretta, Ms. Ivors is a stand-in for a Gretta in young adulthood. What does it tell you about Gabriel that he noticed she didn't wear a low-cut dress? Perhaps he was looking for it! Also, instead of the décolletage he

was looking for, there is a brooch which indicates that Molly Ivors is part of the Gaelic Revival and an agitator for Irish independence.

When they had taken their places she said abruptly:

—I have a crow to pluck with you.

—With me? said Gabriel.

She nodded her head gravely.

—What is it? asked Gabriel, smiling at her solemn manner.

—Who is G. C.? answered Miss Ivors, turning her eyes upon him.

Gabriel coloured and was about to knit his brows, as if he did not understand, when she said bluntly:

—O, innocent Amy! I have found out that you write for *The Daily Express*. Now, aren't you ashamed of yourself?

—Why should I be ashamed of myself? asked Gabriel, blinking his eyes and trying to smile.

—Well, I'm ashamed of you, said Miss Ivors frankly. To say you'd write for a rag like that. I didn't think you were a West Briton.

The fact that Ivors calls Gabriel a "West Briton" indicates that she thinks his sympathies are to the east with England instead of to the west in Ireland. Remember what these directions symbolized.

A look of perplexity appeared on Gabriel's face. It was true that he wrote a literary column every Wednesday in *The Daily Express*, for which he was paid fifteen shillings. But that did not make him a West Briton surely. The books he received for review were almost more welcome than the paltry cheque. He loved to feel the covers and turn over the pages of newly printed books. Nearly every day when his teaching in the college was ended he used to wander down the quays to the second-hand booksellers, to Hickey's on Bachelor's Walk, to Webb's or Massey's on Aston's Quay, or to O'Clohissey's in the by-street. He did not know how to meet her charge. He wanted to say that literature was above politics. But they were friends of many years' standing and their careers had been parallel, first at the University and then as teachers: he could not risk a grandiose phrase with her. He continued blinking his eyes and trying to smile and murmured lamely that he saw nothing political in writing reviews of books.

When their turn to cross had come he was still perplexed and inattentive. Miss Ivors promptly took his hand in a warm grasp and said in a soft friendly tone:

—Of course, I was only joking. Come, we cross now.

Of course, they had "crossed" already in their conversation.

When they were together again she spoke of the University question and Gabriel felt more at ease. A friend of hers had shown her his review of Browning's poems. That was how she had found out the secret: but she liked the review immensely. Then she said suddenly:

—O, Mr Conroy, will you come for an excursion to the Aran Isles this summer? We're going to stay there a whole month. It will be splendid out in the Atlantic. You ought to come. Mr Clancy is coming, and Mr Kilkelly and Kathleen Kearney. It would be splendid for Gretta too if she'd come. She's from Connacht, isn't she?

Ivors wants him to go to the west of Ireland for vacation. Can you guess which directions he plans on going to?

—Her people are, said Gabriel shortly.

—But you will come, won't you? said Miss Ivors, laying her warm hand eagerly on his arm.

—The fact is, said Gabriel, I have already arranged to go—

—Go where? asked Miss Ivors.
—Well, you know every year I go for a cycling tour with some fellows and so—
—But where? asked Miss Ivors.
—Well, we usually go to France or Belgium or perhaps Germany, said Gabriel awkwardly.
—And why do you go to France and Belgium, said Miss Ivors, instead of visiting your own land?
—Well, said Gabriel, it's partly to keep in touch with the languages and partly for a change.
—And haven't you your own language to keep in touch with—Irish? asked Miss Ivors.
—Well, said Gabriel, if it comes to that, you know, Irish is not my language.

There we have it. He wants to go east. Remember the symbolism about death.

Their neighbours had turned to listen to the cross-examination. Gabriel glanced right and left nervously and tried to keep his good humour under the ordeal which was making a blush invade his forehead.

—And haven't you your own land to visit, continued Miss Ivors, that you know nothing of, your own people, and your own country?

—O, to tell you the truth, retorted Gabriel suddenly, I'm sick of my own country, sick of it!

—Why? asked Miss Ivors.

Gabriel did not answer for his retort had heated him.

—Why? repeated Miss Ivors.

They had to go visiting together and, as he had not answered her, Miss Ivors said warmly:

—Of course, you've no answer.

Gabriel tried to cover his agitation by taking part in the dance with great energy. He avoided her eyes for he had seen a sour expression on her face. But when they met in the long chain he was surprised to feel his hand firmly pressed. She looked at him from under her brows for a moment quizzically until he smiled. Then, just as the chain was about to start again, she stood on tiptoe and whispered into his ear:

—West Briton!

Might there also be a bit of flirtation in their argument and their dancing? He first "crosses" Lily, and then he "crosses" Ms. Ivors. His wife is soon to come.

When the lancers were over Gabriel went away to a remote corner of the room where Freddy Malins' mother was sitting. She was a stout feeble old woman with white hair. Her voice had a catch in it like her son's and she stuttered slightly. She had been told that Freddy had come and that he was nearly all right. Gabriel asked her whether she had had a good crossing. She lived with her married daughter in Glasgow and came to Dublin on a visit once a year. She answered placidly that she had had a beautiful crossing and that the captain had been most attentive to her. She spoke also of the beautiful house her daughter kept in Glasgow, and of all the nice friends they had there. While her tongue rambled on Gabriel tried to banish from his mind all memory of the unpleasant incident with Miss Ivors. Of course the girl or woman, or whatever she was, was an enthusiast but there was a time for all things. Perhaps he ought not to have answered her like that. But she had no right to call him a West Briton before people, even in joke. She had tried to make him ridiculous before people, heckling him and staring at him with her rabbit's eyes.

Freddy's mother talks about her own crossing.

He saw his wife making her way towards him through the waltzing couples. When she reached him she said into his ear:

—Gabriel, Aunt Kate wants to know won't you carve the goose as usual. Miss Daly will carve the ham and I'll do the pudding.

—All right, said Gabriel.

—She's sending in the younger ones first as soon as this waltz is over so that we'll have the table to ourselves.

—Were you dancing? asked Gabriel.

—Of course I was. Didn't you see me? What words had you with Molly Ivors?

—No words. Why? Did she say so?

—Something like that. I'm trying to get that Mr D'Arcy to sing. He's full of conceit, I think.

—There were no words, said Gabriel moodily, only she wanted me to go for a trip to the west of Ireland and I said I wouldn't.

His wife clasped her hands excitedly and gave a little jump.

—O, do go, Gabriel, she cried. I'd love to see Galway again.

—You can go if you like, said Gabriel coldly.

She looked at him for a moment, then turned to Mrs Malins and said:

—There's a nice husband for you, Mrs Malins.

While she was threading her way back across the room Mrs Malins, without adverting to the interruption, went on to tell Gabriel what beautiful places there were in Scotland and beautiful scenery. Her son-in-law brought them every year to the lakes and they used to go fishing. Her son-in-law was a splendid fisher. One day he caught a fish, a beautiful big big fish, and the man in the hotel boiled it for their dinner.

Gabriel hardly heard what she said. Now that supper was coming near he began to think again about his speech and about the quotation. When he saw Freddy Malins coming across the room to visit his mother Gabriel left the chair free for him and retired into the embrasure of the window. The room had already cleared and from the back room came the clatter of plates and knives. Those who still remained in the drawing-room seemed tired of dancing and were conversing quietly in little groups. Gabriel's warm trembling fingers tapped the cold pane of the window. How cool it must be outside! How pleasant it would be to walk out alone, first along by the river and then through the park! The snow would be lying on the branches of the trees and forming a bright cap on the top of the Wellington Monument. How much more pleasant it would be there than at the supper-table!

While going over the speech in his head he looks out the window. Joyce is very conscientious about recreating Dublin and scholars have noted that when Gabriel looks out the window here he is looking to the east.

He ran over the headings of his speech: Irish hospitality, sad memories, the Three Graces, Paris, the quotation from Browning. He repeated to himself a phrase he had written in his review: One feels that one is listening to a thought-tormented music. Miss Ivors had praised the review. Was she sincere? Had she really any life of her own behind all her propagandism? There had never been any ill-feeling between them until that night. It unnerved him to think that she would be at the supper-table, looking up at him while he spoke with her critical quizzing eyes. Perhaps she would not be sorry to see him fail in his speech. An idea came into his mind and gave him courage. He would say, alluding to Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia: Ladies and Gentlemen, the generation which is now on the wane among us may have had its faults but for my part I think it had certain qualities of hospitality, of humour, of humanity, which the new and very serious and hypereducated generation that is growing up around us seems to me to lack. Very good: that was one for Miss Ivors. What did he care that his aunts were only two ignorant old women?

Ouch! We find out what he really thinks about his aunts (although he just mad at women right now). Keep this in mind for the song after his toast.

A murmur in the room attracted his attention. Mr Browne was advancing from the door, gallantly

escorting Aunt Julia, who leaned upon his arm, smiling and hanging her head. An irregular musketry of applause escorted her also as far as the piano and then, as Mary Jane seated herself on the stool, and Aunt Julia, no longer smiling, half turned so as to pitch her voice fairly into the room, gradually ceased. Gabriel recognised the prelude. It was that of an old song of Aunt Julia's—Arrayed for the Bridal. Her voice, strong and clear in tone, attacked with great spirit the runs which embellish the air and though she sang very rapidly she did not miss even the smallest of the grace notes. (*the grace motif*) To follow the voice, without looking at the singer's face, was to feel and share the excitement of swift and secure flight. Gabriel applauded loudly with all the others at the close of the song and loud applause was borne in from the invisible supper-table. It sounded so genuine that a little colour struggled into Aunt Julia's face as she bent to replace in the music-stand the old leather-bound song-book that had her initials on the cover. Freddy Malins, who had listened with his head perched sideways to hear her better, was still applauding when everyone else had ceased and talking animatedly to his mother who nodded her head gravely and slowly in acquiescence. At last, when he could clap no more, he stood up suddenly and hurried across the room to Aunt Julia whose hand he seized and held in both his hands, shaking it when words failed him or the catch in his voice proved too much for him.

There is a Christina tradition that when we die we become the "bride" of Christ. When we first meet Aunt Kate, she is halfway in the dark. She sings her solo very beautifully and every one is moved by her performance. The significance of the song "Arrayed for the Bridal"? Aunt Kate is getting near her own crossing and the wedding with Christ at her death.

—I was just telling my mother, he said, I never heard you sing so well, never. No, I never heard your voice so good as it is to- night. Now! Would you believe that now? That's the truth. Upon my word and honour that's the truth. I never heard your voice sound so fresh and so . . . so clear and fresh, never.

Aunt Julia smiled broadly and murmured something about compliments as she released her hand from his grasp. Mr Browne extended his open hand towards her and said to those who were near him in the manner of a showman introducing a prodigy to an audience:

—Miss Julia Morkan, my latest discovery!

He was laughing very heartily at this himself when Freddy Malins turned to him and said:

—Well, Browne, if you're serious you might make a worse discovery. All I can say is I never heard her sing half so well as long as I am coming here. And that's the honest truth.

—Neither did I, said Mr Browne. I think her voice has greatly improved.

Aunt Julia shrugged her shoulders and said with meek pride:

—Thirty years ago I hadn't a bad voice as voices go.

—I often told Julia, said Aunt Kate emphatically, that she was simply thrown away in that choir. But she never would be said by me.

She turned as if to appeal to the good sense of the others against a refractory child while Aunt Julia gazed in front of her, a vague smile of reminiscence playing on her face.

—No, continued Aunt Kate, she wouldn't be said or led by anyone, slaving there in that choir night and day, night and day. Six o'clock on Christmas morning! And all for what?

—Well, isn't it for the honour of God, Aunt Kate? asked Mary Jane, twisting round on the piano-stool and smiling.

Aunt Kate turned fiercely on her niece and said:

—I know all about the honour of God, Mary Jane, but I think it's not at all honourable for the pope to turn out the women out of the choirs that have slaved there all their lives and put little whipper-snappers of boys over their heads. I suppose it is for the good of the Church if the pope does it. But it's not just, Mary Jane, and it's not right.

She had worked herself into a passion and would have continued in defence of her sister for it was a sore subject with her but Mary Jane, seeing that all the dancers had come back, intervened pacifically:

—Now, Aunt Kate, you're giving scandal to Mr Browne who is of the other persuasion.

Aunt Kate turned to Mr Browne, who was grinning at this allusion to his religion, and said hastily:

—O, I don't question the pope's being right. I'm only a stupid old woman and I wouldn't presume to do such a thing. But there's such a thing as common everyday politeness and gratitude. And if I were in Julia's place I'd tell that Father Healy straight up to his face . . .

—And besides, Aunt Kate, said Mary Jane, we really are all hungry and when we are hungry we are all very quarrelsome.

—And when we are thirsty we are also quarrelsome, added Mr Browne.

—So that we had better go to supper, said Mary Jane, and finish the discussion afterwards.

On the landing outside the drawing-room Gabriel found his wife and Mary Jane trying to persuade Miss Ivors to stay for supper. But Miss Ivors, who had put on her hat and was buttoning her cloak, would not stay. She did not feel in the least hungry and she had already overstayed her time.

—But only for ten minutes, Molly, said Mrs Conroy. That won't delay you.

—To take a pick itself, said Mary Jane, after all your dancing.

—I really couldn't, said Miss Ivors.

—I am afraid you didn't enjoy yourself at all, said Mary Jane hopelessly.

—Ever so much, I assure you, said Miss Ivors, but you really must let me run off now.

—But how can you get home? asked Mrs Conroy.

—O, it's only two steps up the quay.

Gabriel hesitated a moment and said:

—If you will allow me, Miss Ivors, I'll see you home if you really are obliged to go.

But Miss Ivors broke away from them.

—I won't hear of it, she cried. For goodness sake go in to your suppers and don't mind me. I'm quite well able to take care of myself.

—Well, you're the comical girl, Molly, said Mrs Conroy frankly.

—*Beannacht libh*, cried Miss Ivors, with a laugh, as she ran down the staircase.

Mary Jane gazed after her, a moody puzzled expression on her face, while Mrs Conroy leaned over the banisters to listen for the hall-door. Gabriel asked himself was he the cause of her abrupt departure. But she did not seem to be in ill humour: she had gone away laughing. He stared blankly down the staircase.

Molly Ivors leaves with a Gaelic phrase.

At that moment Aunt Kate came toddling out of the supper-room, almost wringing her hands in despair.

—Where is Gabriel? she cried. Where on earth is Gabriel? There's everyone waiting in there, stage to let, and nobody to carve the goose!

—Here I am, Aunt Kate! cried Gabriel, with sudden animation, ready to carve a flock of geese, if necessary.

A fat brown goose lay at one end of the table and at the other end, on a bed of creased paper strewn with sprigs of parsley, lay a great ham, stripped of its outer skin and peppered over with crust crumbs, a neat paper frill round its shin and beside this was a round of spiced beef. Between these rival ends ran parallel lines of side-dishes: two little minsters of jelly, red and yellow; a shallow dish full of blocks of blancmange and red jam, a large green leaf-shaped dish with a stalk-shaped handle, on which lay bunches of purple raisins and peeled almonds, a companion dish on which lay a solid rectangle of Smyrna figs, a dish of custard topped

with grated nutmeg, a small bowl full of chocolates and sweets wrapped in gold and silver papers and a glass vase in which stood some tall celery stalks. In the centre of the table there stood, as sentries to a fruit-stand which upheld a pyramid of oranges and American apples, two squat old-fashioned decanters of cut glass, one containing port and the other dark sherry. On the closed square piano a pudding in a huge yellow dish lay in waiting and behind it were three squads of bottles of stout and ale and minerals, drawn up according to the colours of their uniforms, the first two black, with brown and red labels, the third and smallest squad white, with transverse green sashes.

This makes me hungry.

Gabriel took his seat boldly at the head of the table and, having looked to the edge of the carver, plunged his fork firmly into the goose. He felt quite at ease now for he was an expert carver and liked nothing better than to find himself at the head of a well-laden table. (*the "for" construction*)

—Miss Furlong, what shall I send you? he asked. A wing or a slice of the breast?

—Just a small slice of the breast.

—Miss Higgins, what for you?

—O, anything at all, Mr Conroy.

While Gabriel and Miss Daly exchanged plates of goose and plates of ham and spiced beef Lily went from guest to guest with a dish of hot floury potatoes wrapped in a white napkin. This was Mary Jane's idea and she had also suggested apple sauce for the goose but Aunt Kate had said that plain roast goose without apple sauce had always been good enough for her and she hoped she might never eat worse. Mary Jane waited on her pupils and saw that they got the best slices and Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia opened and carried across from the piano bottles of stout and ale for the gentlemen and bottles of minerals for the ladies. There was a great deal of confusion and laughter and noise, the noise of orders and counter-orders, of knives and forks, of corks and glass- stoppers. Gabriel began to carve second helpings as soon as he had finished the first round without serving himself. Everyone protested loudly so that he compromised by taking a long draught of stout for he had found the carving hot work. (*the "for" construction*) Mary Jane settled down quietly to her supper but Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia were still toddling round the table, walking on each other's heels, getting in each other's way and giving each other unheeded orders. Mr Browne begged of them to sit down and eat their suppers and so did Gabriel but they said there was time enough so that, at last, Freddy Malins stood up and, capturing Aunt Kate, plumped her down on her chair amid general laughter.

When everyone had been well served Gabriel said, smiling: —Now, if anyone wants a little more of what vulgar people call stuffing let him or her speak.

Gabriel's sense of class.

A chorus of voices invited him to begin his own supper and Lily came forward with three potatoes which she had reserved for him.

—Very well, said Gabriel amiably, as he took another preparatory draught, kindly forget my existence, ladies and gentlemen, for a few minutes.

He set to his supper and took no part in the conversation with which the table covered Lily's removal of the plates. The subject of talk was the opera company which was then at the Theatre Royal. Mr Bartell D'Arcy, the tenor, a dark-complexioned young man with a smart moustache, praised very highly the leading contralto of the company but Miss Furlong thought she had a rather vulgar style of production. Freddy Malins said there was a negro chieftain singing in the second part of the Gaiety pantomime who had one of the finest tenor voices he had ever heard.

—Have you heard him? he asked Mr Bartell D'Arcy across the table.

—No, answered Mr Bartell D'Arcy carelessly.

—Because, Freddy Malins explained, now I'd be curious to hear your opinion of him. I think he has a grand voice.

—It takes Teddy to find out the really good things, said Mr Browne familiarly to the table.

—And why couldn't he have a voice too? asked Freddy Malins sharply. Is it because he's only a black?

Nobody answered this question and Mary Jane led the table back to the legitimate opera. One of her pupils had given her a pass for Mignon. Of course it was very fine, she said, but it made her think of poor Georgina Burns. Mr Browne could go back farther still, to the old Italian companies that used to come to Dublin—Tietjens, Ilma de Murzka, Campanini, the great Trebelli, Giuglini, Ravelli, Aramburo. Those were the days, he said, when there was something like singing to be heard in Dublin. He told too of how the top gallery of the old Royal used to be packed night after night, of how one night an Italian tenor had sung five encores to *Let Me Like a Soldier Fall*, introducing a high C every time, and of how the gallery boys would sometimes in their enthusiasm unyoke the horses from the carriage of some great prima donna and pull her themselves through the streets to her hotel. Why did they never play the grand old operas now, he asked, *Dinorah*, *Lucrezia Borgia*? Because they could not get the voices to sing them: that was why.

—O, well, said Mr Bartell D'Arcy, I presume there are as good singers to-day as there were then.

—Where are they? asked Mr Browne defiantly.

—In London, Paris, Milan, said Mr Bartell D'Arcy warmly. I suppose Caruso, for example, is quite as good, if not better than any of the men you have mentioned.

—Maybe so, said Mr Browne. But I may tell you I doubt it strongly.

—O, I'd give anything to hear Caruso sing, said Mary Jane.

—For me, said Aunt Kate, who had been picking a bone, there was only one tenor. To please me, I mean. But I suppose none of you ever heard of him.

—Who was he, Miss Morkan? asked Mr Bartell D'Arcy politely.

—His name, said Aunt Kate, was Parkinson. I heard him when he was in his prime and I think he had then the purest tenor voice that was ever put into a man's throat.

—Strange, said Mr Bartell D'Arcy. I never even heard of him.

—Yes, yes, Miss Morkan is right, said Mr Browne. I remember hearing of old Parkinson but he's too far back for me.

The talk at dinner is of the past and memories—these singers that are no longer remembered.

—A beautiful pure sweet mellow English tenor, said Aunt Kate with enthusiasm.

Gabriel having finished, the huge pudding was transferred to the table. The clatter of forks and spoons began again. Gabriel's wife served out spoonfuls of the pudding and passed the plates down the table. Midway down they were held up by Mary Jane, who replenished them with raspberry or orange jelly or with blancmange and jam. The pudding was of Aunt Julia's making and she received praises for it from all quarters. She herself said that it was not quite brown enough.

—Well, I hope, Miss Morkan, said Mr Browne, that I'm brown enough for you because, you know, I'm all brown.

All the gentlemen, except Gabriel, ate some of the pudding out of compliment to Aunt Julia. As Gabriel never ate sweets the celery had been left for him. Freddy Malins also took a stalk of celery and ate it with his pudding. He had been told that celery was a capital thing for the blood and he was just then under doctor's care. Mrs Malins, who had been silent all through the supper, said that her son was going down to

Mount Melleray in a week or so. The table then spoke of Mount Melleray, how bracing the air was down there, how hospitable the monks were and how they never asked for a penny-piece from their guests.

—And do you mean to say, asked Mr Browne incredulously, that a chap can go down there and put up there as if it were a hotel and live on the fat of the land and then come away without paying a farthing?

—O, most people give some donation to the monastery when they leave, said Mary Jane.

—I wish we had an institution like that in our Church, said Mr Browne candidly.

He was astonished to hear that the monks never spoke, got up at two in the morning and slept in their coffins. He asked what they did it for.

—That's the rule of the order, said Aunt Kate firmly.

—Yes, but why? asked Mr Browne.

Aunt Kate repeated that it was the rule, that was all. Mr Browne still seemed not to understand. Freddy Malins explained to him, as best he could, that the monks were trying to make up for the sins committed by all the sinners in the outside world. The explanation was not very clear for Mr Browne grinned and said:

—I like that idea very much but wouldn't a comfortable spring bed do them as well as a coffin?

—The coffin, said Mary Jane, is to remind them of their last end.

Speaking of the dead...

As the subject had grown lugubrious it was buried in a silence of the table during which Mrs Malins could be heard saying to her neighbour in an indistinct undertone:

—They are very good men, the monks, very pious men.

The raisins and almonds and figs and apples and oranges and chocolates and sweets were now passed about the table and Aunt Julia invited all the guests to have either port or sherry. At first Mr Bartell D'Arcy refused to take either but one of his neighbours nudged him and whispered something to him upon which he allowed his glass to be filled. Gradually as the last glasses were being filled the conversation ceased. A pause followed, broken only by the noise of the wine and by unsettling of chairs. The Misses Morkan, all three, looked down at the tablecloth. Someone coughed once or twice and then a few gentlemen patted the table gently as a signal for silence. The silence came and Gabriel pushed back his chair and stood up.

The patting at once grew louder in encouragement and then ceased altogether. Gabriel leaned his ten trembling fingers on the tablecloth and smiled nervously at the company. Meeting a row of upturned faces he raised his eyes to the chandelier. The piano was playing a waltz tune and he could hear the skirts sweeping against the drawing-room door. People, perhaps, were standing in the snow on the quay outside, gazing up at the lighted windows and listening to the waltz music. The air was pure there. In the distance lay the park where the trees were weighted with snow. The Wellington Monument wore a gleaming cap of snow that flashed westward over the white field of Fifteen Acres.

He began:

—Ladies and Gentlemen.

—It has fallen to my lot this evening, as in years past, to perform a very pleasing task but a task for which I am afraid my poor powers as a speaker are all too inadequate.

—No, no! said Mr Browne.

—But, however that may be, I can only ask you tonight to take the will for the deed and to lend me your attention for a few moments while I endeavour to express to you in words what my feelings are on this occasion.

—Ladies and Gentlemen. It is not the first time that we have gathered together under this hospitable roof, around this hospitable board. It is not the first time that we have been the recipients—or perhaps, I had

better say, the victims—of the hospitality of certain good ladies.

He made a circle in the air with his arm and paused. Everyone laughed or smiled at Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia and Mary Jane who all turned crimson with pleasure. Gabriel went on more boldly:

—I feel more strongly with every recurring year that our country has no tradition which does it so much honour and which it should guard so jealously as that of its hospitality. It is a tradition that is unique as far as my experience goes (and I have visited not a few places abroad) among the modern nations. Some would say, perhaps, that with us it is rather a failing than anything to be boasted of. But granted even that, it is, to my mind, a princely failing, and one that I trust will long be cultivated among us. Of one thing, at least, I am sure. As long as this one roof shelters the good ladies aforesaid—and I wish from my heart it may do so for many and many a long year to come—the tradition of genuine warm-hearted courteous Irish hospitality, which our forefathers have handed down to us and which we in turn must hand down to our descendants, is still alive among us.

A hearty murmur of assent ran round the table. It shot through Gabriel's mind that Miss Ivors was not there and that she had gone away discourteously: and he said with confidence in himself:

—Ladies and Gentlemen.

—A new generation is growing up in our midst, a generation actuated by new ideas and new principles. It is serious and enthusiastic for these new ideas and its enthusiasm, even when it is misdirected, is, I believe, in the main sincere. But we are living in a sceptical and, if I may use the phrase, a thought-tormented age (*Gabriel is the one who is thought-tormented*): and sometimes I fear that this new generation, educated or hypereducated as it is, will lack those qualities of humanity, of hospitality, of kindly humour which belonged to an older day. Listening to-night to the names of all those great singers of the past it seemed to me, I must confess, that we were living in a less spacious age. Those days might, without exaggeration, be called spacious days: and if they are gone beyond recall let us hope, at least, that in gatherings such as this we shall still speak of them with pride and affection, still cherish in our hearts the memory of those dead and gone great ones whose fame the world will not willingly let die.

—Hear, hear! said Mr Browne loudly.

—But yet, continued Gabriel, his voice falling into a softer inflection, there are always in gatherings such as this sadder thoughts that will recur to our minds: thoughts of the past, of youth, of changes, of absent faces that we miss here tonight. Our path through life is strewn with many such sad memories: and were we to brood upon them always we could not find the heart to go on bravely with our work among the living. We have all of us living duties and living affections which claim, and rightly claim, our strenuous endeavours.

—Therefore, I will not linger on the past. I will not let any gloomy moralising intrude upon us here to-night. Here we are gathered together for a brief moment from the bustle and rush of our everyday routine. We are met here as friends, in the spirit of good-fellowship, as colleagues, also to a certain extent, in the true spirit of camaraderie, and as the guests of—what shall I call them?—the Three Graces of the Dublin musical world.

The motifs of the past, death, music and grace are included in the speech.

The table burst into applause and laughter at this sally. Aunt Julia vainly asked each of her neighbours in turn to tell her what Gabriel had said.

—He says we are the Three Graces, Aunt Julia, said Mary Jane.

Aunt Julia did not understand but she looked up, smiling, at Gabriel, who continued in the same vein:

—Ladies and Gentlemen.

—I will not attempt to play to-night the part that Paris played on another occasion. I will not attempt

to choose between them. The task would be an invidious one and one beyond my poor powers. For when I view them in turn, whether it be our chief hostess herself, whose good heart, whose too good heart, has become a byword with all who know her, or her sister, who seems to be gifted with perennial youth and whose singing must have been a surprise and a revelation to us all to-night, or, last but not least, when I consider our youngest hostess, talented, cheerful, hard-working and the best of nieces, I confess, Ladies and Gentlemen, that I do not know to which of them I should award the prize.

Gabriel glanced down at his aunts and, seeing the large smile on Aunt Julia's face and the tears which had risen to Aunt Kate's eyes, hastened to his close. He raised his glass of port gallantly, while every member of the company fingered a glass expectantly, and said loudly:

—Let us toast them all three together. Let us drink to their health, wealth, long life, happiness and prosperity and may they long continue to hold the proud and self-won position which they hold in their profession and the position of honour and affection which they hold in our hearts.

All the guests stood up, glass in hand, and, turning towards the three seated ladies, sang in unison, with Mr Browne as leader:

For they are jolly gay fellows,
For they are jolly gay fellows,
For they are jolly gay fellows,
Which nobody can deny.

Aunt Kate was making frank use of her handkerchief and even Aunt Julia seemed moved. Freddy Malins beat time with his pudding-fork and the singers turned towards one another, as if in melodious conference, while they sang, with emphasis:

Unless he tells a lie,
Unless he tells a lie.

Then, turning once more towards their hostesses, they sang:
For they are jolly gay fellows,
For they are jolly gay fellows,
For they are jolly gay fellows,
Which nobody can deny.

Who would tell a lie when denying that they are "jolly gay fellows"? Remember Gabriel? He briefly thought his aunts were "two ignorant old women."

The acclamation which followed was taken up beyond the door of the supper-room by many of the other guests and renewed time after time, Freddy Malins acting as officer with his fork on high.

The piercing morning air came into the hall where they were standing so that Aunt Kate said:

—Close the door, somebody. Mrs Malins will get her death of cold.

—Browne is out there, Aunt Kate, said Mary Jane.

—Browne is everywhere, said Aunt Kate, lowering her voice.

Mary Jane laughed at her tone.

—Really, she said archly, he is very attentive.

—He has been laid on here like the gas, said Aunt Kate in the same tone, all during the Christmas. She laughed herself this time good-humouredly and then added quickly:

—But tell him to come in, Mary Jane, and close the door. I hope to goodness he didn't hear me.

At that moment the hall-door was opened and Mr Browne came in from the doorstep, laughing as if his heart would break. He was dressed in a long green overcoat with mock astrakhan cuffs and collar and

wore on his head an oval fur cap. He pointed down the snow-covered quay from where the sound of shrill prolonged whistling was borne in.

—Teddy will have all the cabs in Dublin out, he said. Gabriel advanced from the little pantry behind the office, struggling into his overcoat and, looking round the hall, said:

—Gretta not down yet?

—She's getting on her things, Gabriel, said Aunt Kate.

—Who's playing up there? asked Gabriel.

—Nobody. They're all gone.

—O no, Aunt Kate, said Mary Jane. Bartell D'Arcy and Miss O'Callaghan aren't gone yet.

—Someone is strumming at the piano, anyhow, said Gabriel.

Mary Jane glanced at Gabriel and Mr Browne and said with a shiver:

—It makes me feel cold to look at you two gentlemen muffled up like that. I wouldn't like to face your journey home at this hour.

—I'd like nothing better this minute, said Mr Browne stoutly, than a rattling fine walk in the country or a fast drive with a good spanking goer between the shafts.

—We used to have a very good horse and trap at home, said Aunt Julia sadly.

—The never-to-be-forgotten Johnny, said Mary Jane, laughing.

Aunt Kate and Gabriel laughed too.

—Why, what was wonderful about Johnny? asked Mr Browne.

—The late lamented Patrick Morkan, our grandfather, that is, explained Gabriel, commonly known in his later years as the old gentleman, was a glue-boiler.

—O, now, Gabriel, said Aunt Kate, laughing, he had a starch mill.

—Well, glue or starch, said Gabriel, the old gentleman had a horse by the name of Johnny. And Johnny used to work in the old gentleman's mill, walking round and round in order to drive the mill. That was all very well; but now comes the tragic part about Johnny. One fine day the old gentleman thought he'd like to drive out with the quality to a military review in the park.

—The Lord have mercy on his soul, said Aunt Kate compassionately.

—Amen, said Gabriel. So the old gentleman, as I said, harnessed Johnny and put on his very best tall hat and his very best stock collar and drove out in grand style from his ancestral mansion somewhere near Back Lane, I think.

Everyone laughed, even Mrs Malins, at Gabriel's manner and Aunt Kate said:

—O now, Gabriel, he didn't live in Back Lane, really. Only the mill was there.

—Out from the mansion of his forefathers, continued Gabriel, he drove with Johnny. And everything went on beautifully until Johnny came in sight of King Billy's statue: and whether he fell in love with the horse King Billy sits on or whether he thought he was back again in the mill, anyhow he began to walk round the statue.

Gabriel paced in a circle round the hall in his goloshes amid the laughter of the others.

—Round and round he went, said Gabriel, and the old gentleman, who was a very pompous old gentleman, was highly indignant. Go on, sir! What do you mean, sir? Johnny! Johnny! Most extraordinary conduct! Can't understand the horse!

Gabriel's best moment—a humorous tale about his grandfather who shared his own class pretensions.

The peals of laughter which followed Gabriel's imitation of the incident were interrupted by a resounding knock at the hall-door. Mary Jane ran to open it and let in Freddy Malins. Freddy Malins, with his hat well back on his head and his shoulders humped with cold, was puffing and steaming after his exertions.

—I could only get one cab, he said.

—O, we'll find another along the quay, said Gabriel.

—Yes, said Aunt Kate. Better not keep Mrs Malins standing in the draught.

Mrs Malins was helped down the front steps by her son and Mr Browne and, after many manoeuvres, hoisted into the cab. Freddy Malins clambered in after her and spent a long time settling her on the seat, Mr Browne helping him with advice. At last she was settled comfortably and Freddy Malins invited Mr Browne into the cab. There was a good deal of confused talk, and then Mr Browne got into the cab. The cabman settled his rug over his knees, and bent down for the address. The confusion grew greater and the cabman was directed differently by Freddy Malins and Mr Browne, each of whom had his head out through a window of the cab. The difficulty was to know where to drop Mr Browne along the route and Aunt Kate, Aunt Julia and Mary Jane helped the discussion from the doorstep with cross-directions and contradictions and abundance of laughter. As for Freddy Malins he was speechless with laughter. He popped his head in and out of the window every moment, to the great danger of his hat, and told his mother how the discussion was progressing till at last Mr Browne shouted to the bewildered cabman above the din of everybody's laughter:

—Do you know Trinity College?

—Yes, sir, said the cabman.

—Well, drive bang up against Trinity College gates, said Mr Browne, and then we'll tell you where to go. You understand now?

—Yes, sir, said the cabman.

—Make like a bird for Trinity College.

—Right, sir, cried the cabman.

The horse was whipped up and the cab rattled off along the quay amid a chorus of laughter and adieus.

Gabriel had not gone to the door with the others. He was in a dark part of the hall gazing up the staircase. A woman was standing near the top of the first flight, in the shadow also. He could not see her face but he could see the terracotta and salmonpink panels of her skirt which the shadow made appear black and white.

Gabriel is literally and figuratively in the dark about his wife.

It was his wife. She was leaning on the banisters, listening to something. Gabriel was surprised at her stillness and strained his ear to listen also. But he could hear little save the noise of laughter and dispute on the front steps, a few chords struck on the piano and a few notes of a man's voice singing.

He stood still in the gloom of the hall, trying to catch the air that the voice was singing and gazing up at his wife. There was grace and mystery in her attitude as if she were a symbol of something. He asked himself what is a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of. If he were a painter he would paint her in that attitude. Her blue felt hat would show off the bronze of her hair against the darkness and the dark panels of her skirt would show off the light ones. Distant Music he would call the picture if he were a painter.

For she is indeed listening to the "distant" music of her own secret past.

The hall-door was closed; and Aunt Kate, Aunt Julia and Mary Jane came down the hall, still laughing.

—Well, isn't Freddy terrible? said Mary Jane. He's really terrible.

Gabriel said nothing but pointed up the stairs towards where his wife was standing. Now that the hall-door was closed the voice and the piano could be heard more clearly. Gabriel held up his hand for them

to be silent. The song seemed to be in the old Irish tonality and the singer seemed uncertain both of his words and of his voice. The voice, made plaintive by distance and by the singer's hoarseness, faintly illuminated the cadence of the air with words expressing grief:

O, the rain falls on my heavy locks
And the dew wets my skin,
My babe lies cold . . .

—O, exclaimed Mary Jane. It's Bartell D'Arcy singing and he wouldn't sing all the night. O, I'll get him to sing a song before he goes.

—O do, Mary Jane, said Aunt Kate.

Mary Jane brushed past the others and ran to the staircase but before she reached it the singing stopped and the piano was closed abruptly.

—O, what a pity! she cried. Is he coming down, Gretta? Gabriel heard his wife answer yes and saw her come down towards them. A few steps behind her were Mr Bartell D'Arcy and Miss O'Callaghan.

—O, Mr D'Arcy, cried Mary Jane, it's downright mean of you to break off like that when we were all in raptures listening to you.

—I have been at him all the evening, said Miss O'Callaghan, and Mrs Conroy too and he told us he had a dreadful cold and couldn't sing.

—O, Mr D'Arcy, said Aunt Kate, now that was a great fib to tell.

—Can't you see that I'm as hoarse as a crow? said Mr D'Arcy roughly.

He went into the pantry hastily and put on his overcoat. The others, taken aback by his rude speech, could find nothing to say. Aunt Kate wrinkled her brows and made signs to the others to drop the subject. Mr D'Arcy stood swathing his neck carefully and frowning.

—It's the weather, said Aunt Julia, after a pause.

—Yes, everybody has colds, said Aunt Kate readily, everybody.

—They say, said Mary Jane, we haven't had snow like it for thirty years; and I read this morning in the newspapers that the snow is general all over Ireland.

—I love the look of snow, said Aunt Julia sadly.

—So do I, said Miss O'Callaghan. I think Christmas is never really Christmas unless we have the snow on the ground.

—But poor Mr D'Arcy doesn't like the snow, said Aunt Kate, smiling.

Mr D'Arcy came from the pantry, fully swathed and buttoned, and in a repentant tone told them the history of his cold. Everyone gave him advice and said it was a great pity and urged him to be very careful of his throat in the night air. Gabriel watched his wife who did not join in the conversation. She was standing right under the dusty fanlight and the flame of the gas lit up the rich bronze of her hair which he had seen her drying at the fire a few days before. She was in the same attitude and seemed unaware of the talk about her. At last she turned towards them and Gabriel saw that there was colour on her cheeks and that her eyes were shining. A sudden tide of joy went leaping out of his heart.

He notices her hair and her shining eyes and his desire is inflamed.

—Mr D'Arcy, she said, what is the name of that song you were singing?

—It's called The Lass of Aughrim, said Mr D'Arcy, but I couldn't remember it properly. Why? Do you know it?

—The Lass of Aughrim, she repeated. I couldn't think of the name.

—It's a very nice air, said Mary Jane. I'm sorry you were not in voice to-night.

—Now, Mary Jane, said Aunt Kate, don't annoy Mr D'Arcy. I won't have him annoyed.

Seeing that all were ready to start she shepherded them to the door where good-night was said:

—Well, good-night, Aunt Kate, and thanks for the pleasant evening.

—Good-night, Gabriel. Good-night, Gretta!

—Good-night, Aunt Kate, and thanks ever so much. Good-night, Aunt Julia.

—O, good-night, Gretta, I didn't see you.

—Good-night, Mr D'Arcy. Good-night, Miss O'Callaghan.

—Good-night, Miss Morkan.

—Good-night, again.

—Good-night, all. Safe home.

—Good-night. Good-night.

The morning was still dark. A dull yellow light brooded over the houses and the river; and the sky seemed to be descending. It was slushy underfoot; and only streaks and patches of snow lay on the roofs, on the parapets of the quay and on the area railings. The lamps were still burning redly in the murky air and, across the river, the palace of the Four Courts stood out menacingly against the heavy sky.

She was walking on before him with Mr Bartell D'Arcy, her shoes in a brown parcel tucked under one arm and her hands holding her skirt up from the slush.

Because she's wearing galoshes.

She had no longer any grace of attitude but Gabriel's eyes were still bright with happiness. The blood went bounding along his veins; and the thoughts went rioting through his brain, proud, joyful, tender, valorous.

She was walking on before him so lightly and so erect that he longed to run after her noiselessly, catch her by the shoulders and say something foolish and affectionate into her ear. She seemed to him so frail that he longed to defend her against something and then to be alone with her. Moments of their secret life together burst like stars upon his memory. A heliotrope envelope was lying beside his breakfast-cup and he was caressing it with his hand. Birds were twittering in the ivy and the sunny web of the curtain was shimmering along the floor: he could not eat for happiness. They were standing on the crowded platform and he was placing a ticket inside the warm palm of her glove. He was standing with her in the cold, looking in through a grated window at a man making bottles in a roaring furnace. It was very cold. Her face, fragrant in the cold air, was quite close to his; and suddenly she called out to the man at the furnace:

—Is the fire hot, sir?

But the man could not hear her with the noise of the furnace. It was just as well. He might have answered rudely.

A wave of yet more tender joy escaped from his heart and went coursing in warm flood along his arteries. Like the tender fires of stars moments of their life together, that no one knew of or would ever know of, broke upon and illumined his memory. He longed to recall to her those moments, to make her forget the years of their dull existence together and remember only their moments of ecstasy. For the years, he felt, had not quenched his soul or hers. Their children, his writing, her household cares had not quenched all their souls' tender fire. In one letter that he had written to her then he had said: Why is it that words like these seem to me so dull and cold? Is it because there is no word tender enough to be your name?

Gabriel is feeling romantic and nostalgic about their lives together. He remembers when he first met her and the feelings she inspired.

Like distant music (*map of the mind—the title of the painting returns here*) these words that he had written years before were borne towards him from the past. He longed to be alone with her. When the others had gone away, when he and she were in their room in the hotel, then they would be alone together. He would

call her softly:

—Gretta!

Perhaps she would not hear at once: she would be undressing. Then something in his voice would strike her. She would turn and look at him. . . .

He's looking forward to some marital relations when they get to the hotel room alone.

At the corner of Winetavern Street they met a cab. He was glad of its rattling noise as it saved him from conversation. She was looking out of the window and seemed tired. The others spoke only a few words, pointing out some building or street. The horse galloped along wearily under the murky morning sky, dragging his old rattling box after his heels, and Gabriel was again in a cab with her, galloping to catch the boat, galloping to their honeymoon.

As the cab drove across O'Connell Bridge Miss O'Callaghan said:

—They say you never cross O'Connell Bridge without seeing a white horse.

—I see a white man this time, said Gabriel.

Where? asked Mr Bartell D'Arcy.

Gabriel pointed to the statue, on which lay patches of snow. Then he nodded familiarly to it and waved his hand.

—Good-night, Dan, he said gaily.

When the cab drew up before the hotel Gabriel jumped out and, in spite of Mr Bartell D'Arcy's protest, paid the driver. He gave the man a shilling over his fare. The man saluted and said:

—A prosperous New Year to you, sir.

—The same to you, said Gabriel cordially.

She leaned for a moment on his arm in getting out of the cab and while standing at the curbstone, bidding the others good-night. She leaned lightly on his arm, as lightly as when she had danced with him a few hours before. He had felt proud and happy then, happy that she was his, proud of her grace and wifely carriage.

But we have no narrative of him dancing with her. Could he be mixing Molly Ivors with his wife in his mind?

But now, after the kindling again of so many memories, the first touch of her body, musical and strange and perfumed, sent through him a keen pang of lust. Under cover of her silence he pressed her arm closely to his side; and, as they stood at the hotel door, he felt that they had escaped from their lives and duties, escaped from home and friends and run away together with wild and radiant hearts to a new adventure.

Like Araby he is romanticizing his lust for his wife.

An old man was dozing in a great hooded chair in the hall. He lit a candle in the office and went before them to the stairs. They followed him in silence, their feet falling in soft thuds on the thickly carpeted stairs. She mounted the stairs behind the Porter, her head bowed in the ascent, her frail shoulders curved as with a burden, her skirt girt tightly about her. He could have flung his arms about her hips and held her still for his arms were trembling with desire to seize her and only the stress of his nails against the palms of his hands held the wild impulse of his body in check. The porter halted on the stairs to settle his guttering candle. They halted too on the steps below him. In the silence Gabriel could hear the falling of the molten wax into the tray and the thumping of his own heart against his ribs.

Watch for the word "falling" from here on in.

The porter led them along a corridor and opened a door. Then he set his unstable candle down on a

toilet-table and asked at what hour they were to be called in the morning.

—Eight, said Gabriel.

The porter pointed to the tap of the electric-light and began a muttered apology but Gabriel cut him short.

—We don't want any light. We have light enough from the street. And I say, he added, pointing to the candle, you might remove that handsome article, like a good man.

The porter took up his candle again, but slowly for he was surprised by such a novel idea. Then he mumbled good-night and went out. Gabriel shot the lock to.

A ghostly light from the street lamp lay in a long shaft from one window to the door. Gabriel threw his overcoat and hat on a couch and crossed the room towards the window. He looked down into the street in order that his emotion might calm a little. Then he turned and leaned against a chest of drawers with his back to the light. She had taken off her hat and cloak and was standing before a large swinging mirror, unhooking her waist. Gabriel paused for a few moments, watching her, and then said:

—Gretta!

She turned away from the mirror slowly and walked along the shaft of light towards him. Her face looked so serious and weary that the words would not pass Gabriel's lips. No, it was not the moment yet. *He is confused and unsure how to approach his wife for some marital action. Instead, he gets crossed by Freddy Malins.*

—You looked tired, he said.

—I am a little, she answered.

—You don't feel ill or weak?

—No, tired: that's all.

She went on to the window and stood there, looking out. Gabriel waited again and then, fearing that diffidence was about to conquer him, he said abruptly:

—By the way, Gretta!

—What is it?

—You know that poor fellow Malins? he said quickly.

—Yes. What about him?

—Well, poor fellow, he's a decent sort of chap after all, continued Gabriel in a false voice. He gave me back that sovereign I lent him and I didn't expect it really. It's a pity he wouldn't keep away from that Browne, because he's not a bad fellow at heart.

He was trembling now with annoyance. Why did she seem so abstracted? He did not know how he could begin. Was she annoyed, too, about something? If she would only turn to him or come to him of her own accord! To take her as she was would be brutal. No, he must see some ardour in her eyes first. He longed to be master of her strange mood.

—When did you lend him the pound? she asked, after a pause.

Gabriel strove to restrain himself from breaking out into brutal language about the sottish Malins and his pound. He longed to cry to her from his soul, to crush her body against his, to overmaster her. *He cannot accept his own feelings and intentions—a missed connection with himself.*

But he said:

—O, at Christmas, when he opened that little Christmas- card shop in Henry Street.

He was in such a fever of rage and desire that he did not hear her come from the window. She stood before him for an instant, looking at him strangely. Then, suddenly raising herself on tiptoe and resting her hands lightly on his shoulders, she kissed him.

—You are a very generous person, Gabriel, she said.

Gabriel, trembling with delight at her sudden kiss and at the quaintness of her phrase, put his hands on her hair and began smoothing it back, scarcely touching it with his fingers. (*her hair!*) The washing had made it fine and brilliant. His heart was brimming over with happiness. Just when he was wishing for it she had come to him of her own accord. Perhaps her thoughts had been running with his. (*we're about to find out this is not so true*) Perhaps she had felt the impetuous desire that was in him and then the yielding mood had come upon her. Now that she had fallen to him so easily he wondered why he had been so diffident.

He stood, holding her head between his hands. Then, slipping one arm swiftly about her body and drawing her towards him, he said softly:

—Gretta dear, what are you thinking about?

Piece of advice: if your romantic partner is deep in thought, do not ask, "What are you thinking about?" If they want to tell you, they will.

She did not answer nor yield wholly to his arm. He said again, softly:

—Tell me what it is, Gretta. I think I know what is the matter. Do I know?

She did not answer at once. Then she said in an outburst of tears:

—O, I am thinking about that song, The Lass of Aughrim.

She broke loose from him and ran to the bed and, throwing her arms across the bed-rail, hid her face. Gabriel stood stock-still for a moment in astonishment and then followed her. As he passed in the way of the cheval-glass he caught sight of himself in full length, his broad, well-filled shirt-front, the face whose expression always puzzled him when he saw it in a mirror and his glimmering gilt-rimmed eyeglasses.

This view of himself in the mirror prepares us for epiphany. Gabriel will be free to see himself as he really is.

He halted a few paces from her and said:

—What about the song? Why does that make you cry?

She raised her head from her arms and dried her eyes with the back of her hand like a child. A kinder note than he had intended went into his voice.

—Why, Gretta? he asked.

—I am thinking about a person long ago who used to sing that song.

—And who was the person long ago? asked Gabriel, smiling.

—It was a person I used to know in Galway when I was living with my grandmother, she said.

The smile passed away from Gabriel's face. A dull anger began to gather again at the back of his mind and the dull fires of his lust began to glow angrily in his veins.

—Someone you were in love with? he asked ironically.

—It was a young boy I used to know, she answered, named Michael Furey. He used to sing that song, The Lass of Aughrim. He was very delicate.

Gabriel was silent. He did not wish her to think that he was interested in this delicate boy.

—I can see him so plainly, she said after a moment. Such eyes as he had: big dark eyes! And such an expression in them—an expression!

—O then, you were in love with him? said Gabriel.

—I used to go out walking with him, she said, when I was in Galway.

A thought flew across Gabriel's mind.

—Perhaps that was why you wanted to go to Galway with that Ivors girl? he said coldly.

She looked at him and asked in surprise:

—What for?

Her eyes made Gabriel feel awkward. He shrugged his shoulders and said:

—How do I know? To see him perhaps.

She looked away from him along the shaft of light towards the window in silence.

—He is dead, she said at length. He died when he was only seventeen. Isn't it a terrible thing to die so young as that?

—What was he? asked Gabriel, still ironically.

—He was in the gasworks, she said.

Gabriel felt humiliated by the failure of his irony and by the evocation of this figure from the dead, a boy in the gasworks. While he had been full of memories of their secret life together, full of tenderness and joy and desire, she had been comparing him in her mind with another. A shameful consciousness of his own person assailed him. He saw himself as a ludicrous figure, acting as a pennyboy for his aunts, a nervous well-meaning sentimentalist, orating to vulgarians and idealising his own clownish lusts, the pitiable fatuous fellow he had caught a glimpse of in the mirror. Instinctively he turned his back more to the light lest she might see the shame that burned upon his forehead.

Epiphany stage one. He understands and will begin to accept the missed connection between his wife and himself. He is beginning to accept himself. Will he begin to accept our fate in death?

He tried to keep up his tone of cold interrogation but his voice when he spoke was humble and indifferent.

—I suppose you were in love with this Michael Furey, Gretta, he said.

—I was great with him at that time, she said.

Her voice was veiled and sad. Gabriel, feeling now how vain it would be to try to lead her whither he had purposed, caressed one of her hands and said, also sadly:

—And what did he die of so young, Gretta? Consumption, was it?

—I think he died for me, she answered.

Ouch.

A vague terror seized Gabriel at this answer as if, at that hour when he had hoped to triumph, some impalpable and vindictive being was coming against him, gathering forces against him in its vague world. But he shook himself free of it with an effort of reason and continued to caress her hand. He did not question her again for he felt that she would tell him of herself. Her hand was warm and moist: it did not respond to his touch but he continued to caress it just as he had caressed her first letter to him that spring morning.

—It was in the winter, she said, about the beginning of the winter when I was going to leave my grandmother's and come up here to the convent.

Look at the cleverness of Joyce's writing. Not only do we discover that Michael Furey died for love of her, but we also discover, subtly, that Gabriel caught her on the rebound. The first letter was that spring morning, after the winter when he died.

And he was ill at the time in his lodgings in Galway and wouldn't be let out and his people in Oughterard were written to. He was in decline, they said, or something like that. I never knew rightly.

She paused for a moment and sighed.

—Poor fellow, she said. He was very fond of me and he was such a gentle boy. We used to go out together, walking, you know, Gabriel, like the way they do in the country. He was going to study singing only for his health. He had a very good voice, poor Michael Furey.

—Well; and then? asked Gabriel.

—And then when it came to the time for me to leave Galway and come up to the convent he was

much worse and I wouldn't be let see him so I wrote a letter saying I was going up to Dublin and would be back in the summer and hoping he would be better then.

She paused for a moment to get her voice under control and then went on:

—Then the night before I left I was in my grandmother's house in Nuns' Island, packing up, and I heard gravel thrown up against the window. (*foreshadowing*) The window was so wet I couldn't see so I ran downstairs as I was and slipped out the back into the garden and there was the poor fellow at the end of the garden, shivering.

—And did you not tell him to go back? asked Gabriel.

—I implored of him to go home at once and told him he would get his death in the rain. But he said he did not want to live. I can see his eyes as well as well! He was standing at the end of the wall where there was a tree.

—And did he go home? asked Gabriel.

—Yes, he went home. And when I was only a week in the convent he died and he was buried in Oughterard where his people came from. O, the day I heard that, that he was dead!

She stopped, choking with sobs, and, overcome by emotion, flung herself face downward on the bed, sobbing in the quilt. Gabriel held her hand for a moment longer, irresolutely, and then, shy of intruding on her grief, let it fall gently and walked quietly to the window.

Gabriel, generously, understands and lets his wife go.

She was fast asleep.

Gabriel, leaning on his elbow, looked for a few moments unresentfully on her tangled hair and half-open mouth, listening to her deep-drawn breath. So she had had that romance in her life: a man had died for her sake. It hardly pained him now to think how poor a part he, her husband, had played in her life. He watched her while she slept as though he and she had never lived together as man and wife. His curious eyes rested long upon her face and on her hair: and, as he thought of what she must have been then, in that time of her first girlish beauty, a strange friendly pity for her entered his soul. He did not like to say even to himself that her face was no longer beautiful but he knew that it was no longer the face for which Michael Furey had braved death.

Epiphany stage two.

Perhaps she had not told him all the story. His eyes moved to the chair over which she had thrown some of her clothes. A petticoat string dangled to the floor. One boot stood upright, its limp upper fallen down: the fellow of it lay upon its side. (*map of the mind—what is speculating about in the rest of the story then looking at her undergarment?*) He wondered at his riot of emotions of an hour before. From what had it proceeded? From his aunt's supper, from his own foolish speech, from the wine and dancing, the merry-making when saying good- night in the hall, the pleasure of the walk along the river in the snow. Poor Aunt Julia! She, too, would soon be a shade with the shade of Patrick Morkan and his horse. He had caught that haggard look upon her face for a moment when she was singing Arrayed for the Bridal. Soon, perhaps, he would be sitting in that same drawing-room, dressed in black, his silk hat on his knees. The blinds would be drawn down and Aunt Kate would be sitting beside him, crying and blowing her nose and telling him how Julia had died. He would cast about in his mind for some words that might console her, and would find only lame and useless ones. Yes, yes: that would happen very soon.

Yes, yes! Epiphany stage three. Gabriel is saying yes to fate, to an acceptance of death as a natural part of life.

The air of the room chilled his shoulders. He stretched himself cautiously along under the sheets and

lay down beside his wife. One by one they were all becoming shades. Better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dismally with age. He thought of how she who lay beside him had looked in her heart for so many years that image of her lover's eyes when he had told her that he did not wish to live.

Generous tears filled Gabriel's eyes. He had never felt like that himself towards any woman but he knew that such a feeling must be love. The tears gathered more thickly in his eyes and in the partial darkness he imagined he saw the form of a young man standing under a dripping tree. Other forms were near. His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead. He was conscious of, but could not apprehend, their wayward and flickering existence. His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself which these dead had one time reared and lived in was dissolving and dwindling.

A few light taps upon the pane made him turn to the window. (*it's the ghost of Michael Furey tap tapping on the windowpane*) It had begun to snow again. He watched sleepily the flakes, silver and dark, falling obliquely against the lamplight.

Guess which direction we are moving as we trace the movement of the snow? Yes to the west. The ending of this story is poetic in its rhythm, repetition, and imagery. Gabriel is now finally ready for the west.

The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward. Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves. It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.

Guess which direction we are moving as we trace the movement of the snow? Yes to the west. The ending of this story is poetic in its rhythm, repetition, and imagery.

Excerpt from *Mrs. Dalloway*

Like Joyce's *Ulysses*, *Mrs. Dalloway* takes place during one day in the life of Clarissa Dalloway who is planning a party. Throughout the day, Clarissa meets a number of characters from her present as well as her past--her life mirroring the historical period in England. One of the characters she crosses is Septimus Smith who is suffering from a PTSD related psychosis and whose consciousness is contrasted with that of Mrs. Dalloway. In the skywriting scene that you are required to read, we see enacted the Modernist theme and formal technique of multiple viewpoints--as a number of characters look to the sky and see the skywriting, they each define the script in a different way.

In addition, you should detect many other elements of modernism in this excerpt--stream of consciousness, intertextuality, urban life, an ambivalent relation to the past and use of collage.

Assignment #1

Each paragraph must include a quotation from one of the texts under consideration. Use MLA style citation. Consult the “How to Cite Literature” directions in the home page. No need for a Works Cited as all texts come from the Norton Anthology. Do not use outside sources. I will grade these liberally and use them to assess how well you understand the material. No plagiarism.

You can use either the Joyce text or the Woolf text for this assignment. Although both Woolf and Joyce use the stream of consciousness technique, Joyce in “The Dead” doesn’t use it explicitly. He provides what I call “a map of consciousness” to Gabriel, while Woolf explicitly uses stream of consciousness. For this essay you are to quote passages from one author or the other that demonstrate an expression of a character’s consciousness. Quote the passage and discuss the technique used to reflect consciousness, as well as what the passage says about the character.

Paragraph1

Briefly summarize the text and provide a definition of consciousness. Quote a passage that demonstrates a character’s consciousness. Discuss how the author uses the technique and tell us what it says about the character.

Paragraph2

Quote a passage that demonstrates a character’s consciousness. Discuss how the author uses the technique and tell us what it says about the character.

Paragraph3

Quote a passage that demonstrates a character’s consciousness. Discuss how the author uses the technique and tell us what it says about the character.

Paragraph 4

Quote a passage that demonstrates a character’s consciousness. Discuss how the author uses the technique and tell us what it says about the character. Summarize your findings.

A Good Essay:

1. Properly cites the texts;
2. Defines consciousness and stream of consciousness.
3. Discusses the technique the authors uses to construct stream of consciousness and what the passages say about the character.
4. Provides an introduction to, and summary of your findings.

Assignment #2 Application

You can use yourself for this or a character you make up (a fiction). First give context to the character’s actions—where are they and what are they doing. Then try your hand at stream of consciousness. Take us into the mind of your character not by telling us what they think, but by showing us the texture of their thoughts. At least one paragraph of five sentences.

Tell us what the character is doing;

Give us a sustained passage of stream of consciousness.

You can write more if you want. Here's my contribution:

Scene: An old man is climbing a mountain in Wyoming.

How long? One hour? Two hours? 3:25! Only 20 minutes? 40 minutes until break an orange granola bar. Feet hurt, lungs hurt. That time on Mt. Rainier I was strong, young and beautiful. Stephanie was so fine in everyway for a girl to be. Her treasure trail. This trail is rocky, not one flat foot. Pain in the neck, the shoulder. Time goes I used to be young, now I'm old and it has only been 22 minutes since my last break. Mind, empty, empty mind. I've got to empty my mind.

A Good Application

1. Describes the situation of a character;
2. Gives the texture of the character's consciousness;
3. Captures the rhythm of thought.

Worksheets

You must be able to answer these questions from reading the texts and my commentary. You may want to print these questions and answer them as you read. They will guide your reading and organize your notes. Your weekly quiz will be 10 of these questions.

1. What are vegetative myths?
2. Which cultures have the vegetative myths?
3. What does the Rig Veda have to do with it?
4. Where is the home of the Rig Veda?
5. Who are the Aryans?
6. What do Abraham and Isaac have to do with it?
7. What does Christ have to do with it?
8. What does "The Lottery" have to do with it?
9. What does Corn starch have to do with it?
10. What does the Jolly Green Giant have to do with it?
11. What is the relationship between the kingdom and the king?
12. What do Arthurian legends have to do with it?
13. What do Tarot cards have to do with it?
14. What do gypsies have to do with it?
15. How is this Modernist?
16. How is this intertextual?
17. What are the motifs?
18. What is notable about the prophetess?

19. Why is April the cruelest month?
20. Winter kept who warm?
21. How many voices?
22. Fragmentation in what?
23. Is there water?
24. Why the opera?
25. What is the import of the hyacinth girl?
26. What about water?
27. What about Tristan and Iseult?
28. What is the significance of Madame Sosotris?
29. Why the tarot deck?
30. Why the opera?
31. What is the import of the hyacinth girl?
32. What about water?
33. What about Tristan and Iseult?
34. What is the significance of Madame Sosotris?
35. Why the tarot deck?
36. What card is missing?
37. What card is there?
38. What Shakespeare is being alluded to?
39. What is the city compared to?
40. How is this intertextuality?
41. What is the conversation about? How does it relate to vegetative myths?
42. Why a game of chess?

- 43. How is the woman described?
- 43. Why Philomel?
- 44. What is the conversation like between the male and female?
- 45. Shakespeare?
- 46. How is this Modernist at the end of this section?
- 47. What is the fate of the individual?
- 48. What are the significant aspects of the dialogue in the bar?

III

- 49. How is the city described?
- 50. Why have the heirs left?
- 51. High and low culture.
- 52. Why the quote from Parsifal?
- 53. Who does Mr. Eugenides relate to?
- 54. Why does he have currants in his pocket?
- 55. What is the role of Tiresias?
- 56. Narrate what happens between the woman and her lover. Why is sex being portrayed in this way?
- 57. What is the role of the fishermen?
- 58. What is the role of Tiresias?
- 59. Narrate what happens between the woman and her lover. Why is sex being portrayed in this way?
- 60. What is the role of the fishermen?
- 61. Why all the water imagery? Where are we going?
- 62. What does the voice of the narrator say? How does it relate to modernism?
- 63. What finally happens to the sailor? We are all sailors.

V

64. What does the first scene recall? Why?
65. What are we waiting for, literally and figuratively?
66. Who is the third who walks beside you?
67. What does K2 have to do with it?
68. Why does the cock crow?
69. What cultures are being melded together?
70. What does the thunder say?
71. How does the first person interpret it?
72. What does this mean for our lives?
73. How does the second person interpret it?
74. What does this mean for our lives?
75. How does the third person interpret it?
76. What does this mean for our lives?
77. What do the last lines mean?

Veggie Tales

The first thing that we need to cover is the idea of vegetative myths. The evidence is pretty convincing, but with the tracing of universal myths, ideology always intervenes. But here's how it goes. In Europe, particularly among German philologists, during the 19th century, there was intense scholarly interest in developing lines of similarity among myths of all cultures. The culminating achievement was James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* which synthesized the myths and ritual practices of numerous cultures. In hindsight, it can be read as a text that supports European imperialism and the idea that the Christian story is the apotheosis of such myths. Nonetheless, even as a hybrid of fiction and nonfictional anthropology, it is a utterly fascinating read.

Sacrifice

A vegetative myth is a story about a ritual enacted to ensure that the earth continues to supply humans with what they need to sustain themselves. At the center of vegetative myth is the idea of sacrifice. Something (or someone) must be sacrificed to make right the relationship between humans and the earth. Let's look at the story of Abraham and Isaac. Jehovah asks Abraham to sacrifice his first son to demonstrate his fidelity. Why the first son? There is a tradition of offering the first fruits of a crop to the presiding deity. Jehovah demands the same from Abraham. Just as Abraham is about to enact the sacrifice, an angel stays his hand and directs Abraham to sacrifice a ram caught in a nearby thornbush. This narrative reflects cultural movement from human sacrifice to animal sacrifice.

Another ritual Frazer writes about is before the spring planting. A human, often a stranger, an interloper, is chosen as a sacrificial victim. After the sacrifice, the body is either ritually shared (as a meal) among the population or the body is rendered into pieces and buried in the cropland to ensure a fruitful season.

One ritual Frazer describes has been made into a film called *The Wicker Man*. In this ritual, the community has a celebration and the first stranger that enters the village is crowned king of the festival. The stranger is feted and leads the parade, only to be sacrificed by burning in a wicker cage along with other sacrificial animals. The earth itself demands a sacrifice in order to serve humanity's needs.

A popular short story that used to be taught in high schools is Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery." The story takes place in a rural town somewhere in the Midwest. Everyone in town is talking about the yearly lottery. We are meant to understand it as a good thing. When someone mentions that other towns are getting rid of their lottery, an old man says, "Lottery in June, corn be high soon." So Jackson shows the relation between the growth of the corn and the lottery. The big day comes and the head of every family goes to the town square and picks from a box. One man gets a card with a black mark. Now all his family picks from the box and the mother gets the black marked card. In the town square, every one gathers and the woman's son is the first to hit her with a rock. The rest of the town follows suit. In "The Lottery" we are in the realm of vegetativemyths. A sacrifice ensures fertility.

Look at the most popular brand of cornstarch. On the packaging is an Indian woman who has a human head, but body of corn. She's the spirit of the corn. In places where forests were cleared to make room for planting, the spirit of the area was a green man. Recall any green man who presides over vegetables? Yes, it's the Jolly Green Giant. Now for a plate of delicious frozen peas and corn!

The Passion of Christ as Vegetative Myth

Let's think about how the passion of Christ narrative fits within this vegetative myth. First fruits get sacrificed, son of God. Remember having someone be the king of the festival only to be sacrificed. A week before his crucifixion, Christ is celebrated as he enters Jerusalem on a donkey and the crowd throws down palms on the road, more signs of vegetation. Christ claims that he is the "bread of life" and "fruit of the vine." Think about how we get wine. Take grapes and crush them in order to transform them into something that symbolizes life. During the last supper, Christ shares bread saying, "this is my body" and wine saying "this is my blood." The enacted sacrifice is meant to ensure that human's souls can be saved. Certainly these are all signs of the vegetative myth.

As someone who was brought up Roman Catholic, I was not surprised when I read Frazer discuss cultures sharing the body in meal of the sacrificial victim. Christians call that communion.

One of the most prevalent themes in Frazer's book is the idea of the king's relation to the landscape. If the king is vital and potent, the kingdom is. If the king is advanced in age and can no longer fulfill his duty, the whole land suffers. Frazer discusses tribal leaders in Africa who continue

to take wives as a sign of their vitality. In some, if the youngest wife is not satisfied sexually by the leader, it is time for him to step aside. These myths are a very important aspect of “The Wasteland.”

Besides Frazer’s book, Jesse Weston’s, *From Ritual to Romance* is also foundational to the poem. Weston’s book has an interesting thesis. In order to understand the thesis, you’ll need to know a little about the language we speak. English is a branch of the Germanic language which, along with most other languages of Europe, and some languages from the Middle East, Central Asia and India, is a part of the Indo-European linguistic branch. The group that spread the Indo-European language are called the Aryans. The Aryans brought their language from the steppes of central Asia west to Europe and east to India. Not a huge amount is known about this group, but we do know they must have been effective conquerors to spread their language so far.

Rig Vedas

We can derive some ideas about their culture from the Rig Vedas, a cycle of poems and texts from India that date back, at least to 1500 B.C.E. The theme of sacrifice runs through the vedas. It is clear that that much of the sacrificial imagery in Western culture has its antecedent in Aryan ritual practice. By the way, many of the scholars who traced the myths of the Aryans were German philologists. Who else used this notion of the Aryans as the original race that conquered and brought civilization to the world? Yes, Hitler and present day white supremacists. Remember, no matter what topic you discuss, you cannot escape ideology. Weston’s thesis is that vegetative myths were transmitted from

India west to Europe by gypsies through the use of tarot cards. Certainly, if you look at a deck of tarot cards you can see the prevalence of phallic, uterine, and vegetable imagery throughout. Furthermore, Weston argues, the stories of Arthur and his knights were the European transformation of these myths. It is a persuasive argument. For example, “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight” is a tale about a green man who shows up at King Arthur’s court and challenges the knights to a game of “you chop off my head and next year I’ll chop off yours.” The challenge takes place during the Christmas celebration. Anytime a green man shows up (Ho Ho Ho) we are in the realm of the vegetative. The search for the Holy Grail and Lance is interpreted as searching for the keys to fruition—the phallus and the womb. (Interesting to note: The Gospel of Nicodemus, where the grail imagery is found is also rife with anti-Semitism...ideology). Another Arthurian legend, the legend of the Fisher King, also involves vegetative imagery. In this story, the Fisher King has been injured

because a boar gored him in the “thigh.” For “thigh” read a little lower and to the left, where no one would want to be gored. So this Fisher King is bedridden and impotent. Therefore, the land becomes a wasteland until a hero is able to complete a task, solve a riddle, and restore the king to his youth and the land to its fruitfulness. By the way, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* reworks these tales, comedy ensues. Now we know enough to begin to tackle Eliot’s poem.

Eliot looks at post World War I Europe, in general, and London, in particular, and sees it as a wasteland in need of a heroic undertaking to make it fruitful again. I have copied the poem and will, in italics explain the sections as we move through them. In addition, I will give you periodic writing assignments that you will need to complete on other sheets. Those will be underlined. Later on you will turn those lines into your long poem. Let’s start with ten lines that use at least 12 important words (not “the” “a” “of” etc) from the material given about Modernism and vegetative myths above.

THE WASTE LAND

“Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis
vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent:
Sibylla ti theleis; respondebat illa: apothanein thelo.”
*The prophetess here explains that she seeks death because of her
decrepit condition.*

For Ezra Pound
il miglior fabbro.
The poem is dedicated to that notable literary host, Ezra Pound.

I. THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

April is the cruelest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Why is April the cruelest month? First off, consider the difficulty of waking yourself up after a long slumber. How about a five month slumber? Who is April cruelest to? How about the dead who are buried with no chance at growing again in the spring. Emily Dickinson wrote a poem on a similar theme where the robins, bees, and flowers were mocking the narrator during spring.

Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.
Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,

And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
 Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.
 And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,
 My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,
 And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
 Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
 In the mountains, there you feel free.
 I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.
Here we have the first instance of multiple voices. First the voice of the buried, then the voice of a hybrid European (not Russian, speaking German, from Lithuania). Going down into earth into winter, going south.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
 Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
 You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
 A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
 And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
 And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
 There is shadow under this red rock,
 (Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
 And I will show you something different from either
 Your shadow at morning striding behind you
 Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
 I will show you fear in a handful of dust.
The waste is emphasized here as well as the idea of fragmentation. The narrator is waiting for a savior.

Frisch weht der Wind
 Der Heimat zu
 Mein Irisch Kind,
 Wo weilest du?
This is from an opera based on an Arthurian tale of Tristan and Isolde. The opera is composed by Richard Wagner.

"You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
 "They called me the hyacinth girl."
 - Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,
 Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
 Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
 Living nor dead, and I knew nothing, 40
 Looking into the heart of light, the silence.
 Od' und leer das Meer.

In the wasteland nothing can grow. Earlier we needed water but here water but it brings death. Someone seems to have drowned and is stuck in spiritual limbo. The last line "waste and empty is the sea" is spoken by Isolde as she watches the ocean for Tristan to return.

Madame Sosostriis, famous clairvoyante,

Had a bad cold, nevertheless
 Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,
 With a wicked pack of cards. Here, said she,
 Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,
 (Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)
 Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,
 The lady of situations.
 Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel,
 And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,
 Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,
 Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find
 The Hanged Man. Fear death by water.
 I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.
 Thank you. If you see dear Mrs. Equitane,
 Tell her I bring the horoscope myself:
 One must be so careful these days.

Now we have an explicit connection to the tarot deck. If Madam Sosotris is so clairvoyant, how come she couldn't avoid getting a cold? If you are "stuffed up" you certainly aren't clear. We get our first glimpse of the drowned Phoenician sailor who shows up in many guises. We are introduced to a Shakespearean motif. The Tempest, which includes a shipwreck, contains a song, "full-fathom five thy father lies. Those are pearls that were his eyes." In a constellation of images, like consciousness, we move from the sailor to the drowned man who has pearls for eyes. Do you know why Madame Sosotris does not see any hanged man? The hanged man is a symbol of Christ who, because this is a wasteland, is nowhere to be found.

Unreal City,
 Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
 A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
 I had not thought death had undone so many.
 Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
 And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
 Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
 To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
 With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.

This is a powerful section. That narrator sees a crowd walking over London Bridge (flowed, as in water). Immediately the mind goes to a scene from Dante's Inferno. When the narrator first comes upon Hell, he cannot believe how many people have died and says, "so many. I had not thought death had undone so many." Essentially, the narrator is seeing the scene in front of him as taking place in Hell rather than London.

There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying "Stetson!
 "You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!
 "That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
 "Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
 "Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?

“Oh keep the Dog far hence, that’s friend to men,
“Or with his nails he’ll dig it up again!
“You! hypocrite lecteur! - mon semblable, - mon frere!”

We have the Phoenician sailor again who is also a merchant. There is an allusion to Sirius, the constellation that marked the flooding of the Nile. There is also an allusion to the vegetative myth of burying corpses. The passage ends with an allusion to Charles Baudelaire’s book of poems, The Flowers of Evil whose introductory poem ends with, “You! Hypocrite reader, my double, my brother.” We are no different, the poem says, than any of these characters.

II. A GAME OF CHESS

The relationships between men and women are shown to be nothing more than a game in this section.

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Glowed on the marble, where the glass
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines
From which a golden Cupidon peeped out 80
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra
Reflecting light upon the table as
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
From satin cases poured in rich profusion;
In vials of ivory and coloured glass
Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,
Unguent, powdered, or liquid - troubled, confused
And drowned the sense in odours; stirred by the air
That freshened from the window, these ascended 90
In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,
Flung their smoke into the laquearia,
Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.
Huge sea-wood fed with copper
Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,
In which sad light a carved dolphin swam.
Above the antique mantel was displayed
As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene
The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale 100
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
And still she cried, and still the world pursues,
“Jug Jug” to dirty ears.
And other withered stumps of time
Were told upon the walls; staring forms
Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed.
Footsteps shuffled on the stair.

Under the fi relight, under the brush, her hair
Spread out in fiery points
Glowed into words, then would be savagely still.

This scene of rich description show us a woman who seems to be upper class, or at least attempting to be. Her perfumes are "synthetic" and the senses "drown." For all the description and movement, she is static. There is an allusion to the Greek myth of Philomel here. Philomel was raped by her sister's husband, Tereus who then cut out her tongue so she couldn't name her rapist. The gods took pity on her and turned her into a nightingale which chirps his name. The phrase "upon the sylvan scene" is an allusion to Milton's Paradise Lost which is how Adam and Eve are described as we first see them in their innocent and natural locale. Their innocence is contrasted to this scene.

"My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
"Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.
"What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
"I never know what you are thinking. Think."
I think we are in rats' alley
Where the dead men lost their bones.
"What is that noise?"
The wind under the door.
"What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?"
Nothing again nothing.
"Do
"You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember
"Nothing?"
I remember
Those are pearls that were his eyes.
"Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?"

In the wasteland, communication between two people break down where nothing can be said or understood. Note also, we have a return of the Shakespeare motif of the drowned man.

But
O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag -
It's so elegant
So intelligent

High culture into low culture! The quote from Shakespeare leads to the speaker quoting some lyrics from Broadway show tunes.

"What shall I do now? What shall I do?"
I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street
"With my hair down, so. What shall we do to-morrow?
"What shall we ever do?"
The hot water at ten.
And if it rains, a closed car at four.

And we shall play a game of chess,
Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door.

Decisions are very hard to make in the wasteland. This reminds me of Eliot's character J. Alfred Prufrock.

When Lil's husband got demobbed, I said -
I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself,
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart.
He'll want to know what you done with that money he gave you
To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.
You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,
He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you.
And no more can't I, I said, and think of poor Albert,
He's been in the army four years, he wants a good time,
And if you don't give it him, there's others will, I said.
Oh is there, she said. Something o' that, I said. 150
Then I'll know who to thank, she said, and give me a straight look.
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
If you don't like it you can get on with it, I said.
Others can pick and choose if you can't.
But if Albert makes off, it won't be for lack of telling.
You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique.
(And her only thirty-one.)
I can't help it, she said, pulling a long face,
It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said.
(She's had fi ve already, and nearly died of young George.)
The chemist said it would be alright, but I've never been the same.
You are a proper fool, I said.
Well, if Albert won't leave you alone, there it is, I said,
What you get married for if you don't want children?
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
Well, that Sunday Albert was home, they had a hot gammon,
And they asked me in to dinner, to get the beauty of it hot -
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
Goonight Bill. Goonight Lou. Goonight May. Goonight.
Ta ta. Goonight. Goonight.
Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night.

This passage is a bravura example of the collage technique. In England when it's getting near closing time at a pub, the barkeep shouts out, "Hurry up please it's time." Of course, there's a double meaning here; the second meaning is it's time for the hero to come and restore the wasteland. There are two women here talking about a third woman, Lil. Think of it as The Real Housewives of the Wasteland section. Lil's husband is coming home from the Army and Lil looks like a wreck. The speaker implies that if Albert doesn't want Lil, the narrator will offer herself. One of

the reasons Lil looks so bad is that she's had five children and nearly died in childbirth. So she went to the pharmacist to solve the issue of an unwanted pregnancy. Of course, in the wasteland, a pregnancy can only end in abortion. To underline the shallowness of the speaker, after running down her friend so severely, she ends by saying, "Oh yeah, but one time they had me in for some ham and damn it was good ham!" As people say goodnight in the pub, we return to drowning, "Good night , ladies, good night sweet ladies." This spoken in Shakespeare's Hamlet by Ophelia who will soon end her life by drowning.

III. THE FIRE SERMON

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.
The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.
And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors;
Departed, have left no addresses.

There are no heirs to inherit the city. No one to take over the dynastic line. The nymphs have departed. There is no evidence of human interaction left.

By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept . . .
Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,
Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.
But at my back in a cold blast I hear
The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.
A rat crept softly through the vegetation
Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
While I was fishing in the dull canal
On a winter evening round behind the gashouse 190
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
And on the king my father's death before him.

We have an image of the Fisher King as well as another allusion to The Tempest. The first three lines refer to the Babylonian captivity of the Israelites

White bodies naked on the low damp ground
And bones cast in a little low dry garret,
Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.
But at my back from time to time I hear
The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.
O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter
And on her daughter
They wash their feet in soda water

This section moves like stream of consciousness, from imagery of graves to Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" to a pop song. My advice: Carpe Diem. Do not be afraid to live!

Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!

This last line is from a poem by the French poet Paul Verlaine about Parsifal and his search for the grail and the lance (Parsifal cures the Fisher King in some versions of the tale).

Twit twit twit

Jug jug jug jug jug jug

So rudely forc'd.

Tereu

We're back to Philomel and the nightingale.

Unreal City

Under the brown fog of a winter noon

Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant

Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants 210

C.i.f. London: documents at sight,

Asked me in demotic French

To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel

Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.

Now we have the Phoenician sailor as the Smyrna merchant. He's got some documents and speaks a bastardized version of French. He asks the narrator to meet him at the Cannon Street Hotel. Could it be for a gay liaison? Possibly. In the wasteland there certainly is no procreative sex. What about the currants in his pockets? Could it be one of those little packets of jam we get at breakfast joints? Yes, but also think of it as pun. What kind of person has currants in his pockets? If it's a drowned man, then those are ocean currents in his pockets.

t the violet hour, when the eyes and back

Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits

Like a taxi throbbing waiting,

I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,

Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see

At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives 220

Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,

The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights

Her stove, and lays out food in tins.

Out of the window perilously spread

Her drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays,

On the divan are piled (at night her bed)

Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays.

I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs

Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest -

I too awaited the expected guest.
 He, the young man carbuncular, arrives,
 A small house agent's clerk, with one bold stare,
 One of the low on whom assurance sits
 As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire.
 The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
 The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
 Endeavours to engage her in caresses
 Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
 Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
 Exploring hands encounter no defence;
 His vanity requires no response,
 And makes a welcome of indifference.
 (And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
 Enacted on this same divan or bed;
 I who have sat by Thebes below the wall
 And walked among the lowest of the dead.)
 Bestows one final patronising kiss,
 And gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit . . .
 She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
 Hardly aware of her departed lover;
 Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:
 "Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over."
 When lovely woman stoops to folly and
 Paces about her room again, alone,
 She smooths her hair with automatic hand,
 And puts a record on the gramophone.

First we need to know who Tiresias is. He was a Greek Theban prophet who, through a series of circumstances was turned into a woman. He lived fully as a woman. Then through circumstances he returned to manhood. Flash forward to Mount Olympus where Zeus argues that females have more pleasure in sex than males, a proposition Hera denies. Zeus says, "Well, I know someone who can tell me definitively who has more pleasure." He brings Tiresias to Olympus and asks him. "I've been both," he says. "Women have more pleasure." Hera is angered and blinds him for giving up the secret. Zeus can't undo what Hera has done but makes up for it by giving Tiresias the gift of second sight, prophecy. This is what Tiresias sees. A bored woman waiting for her "boyfriend." He's a self-centered ass. After a dinner out of tins, he makes his move. She doesn't say "no" even if she doesn't encourage him at all. He has his way and leaves. She kinda thinks, "well that's done." Remember Tiresias and the idea of female pleasure. She has absolutely none from this encounter.

"This music crept by me upon the waters"
 And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.
 O City city, I can sometimes hear
 Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street, 260
 The pleasant whining of a mandoline
 And a clatter and a chatter from within

Where fi shmen lounge at noon: where the walls
Of Magnus Martyr hold
Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.

In his footnotes, Eliot alludes to a book, The Proposed Demolition of English Churches. In other words, this nostalgic scene will never have the possibility of being repeated because the church is demolished.

The river sweats
Oil and tar
The barges drift
With the turning tide
Red sails
Wide
To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.
The barges wash
Drifting logs
Down Greenwich reach
Past the Isle of Dogs.
Weialala leia
Wallala leialala
The dog imagery occurs as we leave London along the Thames.

Elizabeth and Leicester
Beating oars
The stern was formed
A gilded shell
Red and gold
The brisk swell
Rippled both shores
Southwest wind
Carried down stream
The peal of bells
White towers
Weialala leia
Wallala leialala

When Elizabeth was queen there was hope that she would marry the Earl of Leicester. She didn't which left the kingdom without a direct heir.

"Trams and dusty trees.
Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew
Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees
Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe."
"My feet are at Moorgate, and my heart
Under my feet. After the event

He wept. He promised 'a new start'.
I made no comment. What should I resent?"
"On Margate Sands.
I can connect
Nothing with nothing.

This last couplet could be a description of the poem itself, an attempt to put together "nothings" that can connect with nothing. There is also a gnostic notion here that the city is a fallen body (like James Joyce's Finnegans Wake). We have now moved down to the southeast coast of England.

The broken fingernails of dirty hands.
My people humble people who expect
Nothing."
la la
To Carthage then I came
Burning burning burning burning
O Lord Thou pluckest me out
O Lord Thou pluckest 310
burning

The last lines are a passage from St. Augustine's Confessions which is a classic text of religious conversion. We are now in the Middle East working our way further east. We will end in India, the originary point of Indo-European sacrificial myths.

IV. DEATH BY WATER

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,
Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
And the profit and loss.
A current under sea
Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell
He passed the stages of his age and youth
Entering the whirlpool.
Gentile or Jew
O you who turn the wheel and look to windward, 320
Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you.

Here is the culmination of the drowned man. Those are pearls that were his eyes. And as Charles Baudelaire reminded us, that is you reader, double of the sailor, the drowned man's double.

V. WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

After the torchlight red on sweaty faces
After the frosty silence in the gardens
After the agony in stony places

The shouting and the crying
Prison and palace and reverberation
Of thunder of spring over distant mountains
He who was living is now dead
We who were living are now dying
With a little patience

This passage is an explicit the passion narrative. First the Garden of Gesthemene and then, while Christ is in the tomb, everyone else is dying, with a little patience.

Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water
If there were water we should stop and drink
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
If there were only water amongst the rock
Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit 340
There is not even silence in the mountains
But dry sterile thunder without rain
There is not even solitude in the mountains
But red sullen faces sneer and snarl
From doors of mudcracked houses
If there were water
And no rock
If there were rock
And also water
And water
A spring
A pool among the rock
If there were the sound of water only
Not the cicada
And dry grass singing
But sound of water over a rock
Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees
Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop
But there is no water

In the Rig Veda some of the most important rituals are enacted to make sure that there is annual flooding of the Ganges and Indus rivers. The flooding begins by spring monsoons that begin in the Himalaya mountains and descend from there. Here, so far, there is only dry sterile thunder, not the kind that brings torrents of rain and washes over the wasteland.

Who is the third who walks always beside you?

When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman
- But who is that on the other side of you?

This alludes to one of my favorite New testament stories. It is after the crucifixion and before Christ reveals himself. Two of his followers are traveling the road when a third comes with them and strikes up a conversation. They have such a good time in his company they invite him to dine with him and when he breaks bread, he reveals himself as Christ. It always reminds me of a story I read in a book on mountain climbing. Two climbers were attempting a summit of the most technically difficult mountain in the world, K2. They made it to the top and on the way down they were hit with a vicious storm. They had to bivouac for the night. A bivouac at that altitude is a recipe for death. In the middle of the night a third climber came and joined them. His presence cheered them. They made it to the morning and worked their way to base camp. When they arrived there they brewed three cups of tea. Startled, they looked at each other, and realized there were only two of them.

What is that sound high in the air
Murmur of maternal lamentation
Who are those hooded hordes swarming
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth 370
Ringed by the flat horizon only
What is the city over the mountains
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal

This starts with a vision of conquerors who sweep over the wasteland. We move onto the "falling towers" which symbolize the various centers of civilization progressing from Jerusalem to contemporary London.

A woman drew her long black hair out tight
And fiddled whisper music on those strings
And bats with baby faces in the violet light
Whistled, and beat their wings
And crawled head downward down a blackened wall
And upside down in air were towers
Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells.

This passage reminds me of the Goya painting, "The Witches Sabbath."

In this decayed hole among the mountains
In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing
Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel

There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.
It has no windows, and the door swings,
Dry bones can harm no one.
Only a cock stood on the rooftree
Co co rico co co rico
In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust
Bringing rain

*We have more onomatopoeia here with the cock crowing. This reminds us
of Peter's denying Christ during the crucifixion narrative.*

Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves
Waited for rain, while the black clouds
Gathered far distant, over Himavant.
The jungle crouched, humped in silence.
Then spoke the thunder

*What follows is the essence of the poem. The passage is based on a story in the Upanishads (Indian texts later than the
Rig Vedas). Three disciples asked the Hindu god Prajapati (who created man) what is the most important thing to do
in life. He answers with a thunderous "DA." Each disciple bears something different: Datta (give alms), Dayadhvam
(sympathize), Damyata (control). Do you see the modernist idea of multiple perspectives here? DA*

Datta: what have we given?
My friend, blood shaking my heart
The awful daring of a moment's surrender
Which an age of prudence can never retract
By this, and this only, we have existed
Which is not to be found in our obituaries
Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider
Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor
In our empty rooms

DA
Dayadhvam: I have heard the key
Turn in the door once and turn once only
We think of the key, each in his prison
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison
Only at nightfall, aetherial rumours
Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus

DA
Damyata: The boat responded
Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar 420
The sea was calm, your heart would have responded
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient

To controlling hands

Let's think about these more closely. Give what? Give yourself over to life. Live intensely. Dare to eat a peach. Eat a whole damn peck. Sympathize with yourself first and foremost. The idea of a prison confirms a prison. If you are looking for a key you have built a prison. "Mindforged manacles" William Blake says. "Prisons are built with the bricks of law." Control is a matter of skill, craftsmanship. Most importantly, the skilled sailor responds easily, like a martial art of "soft" "forms taking the energy around her and directing it.

I sat upon the shore

Fishing, with the arid plain behind me

Shall I at least set my lands in order?

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down

Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina

Quando fiam ceu chelidon - O swallow swallow

Le Prince d'Aquitaine a la tour abolie

These fragments I have shored against my ruins

Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.

Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.

The Italian is from Dante's Purgatorio (at least we're out of hell). In a self-reflexive moment, the poem is talking about itself, "these fragments I have shored against my ruins."

Shantih shantih shantih

The last three words are Sanskrit, like an "amen" at the end of a prayer—peace that surpasses understanding. Perhaps the poem suggests that the redemption of the wasteland lies outside of language and culture—it passeth understanding

Assignment #1

Each paragraph must include a quotation from one of the texts under consideration. Use MLA style citation. Consult the “How to Cite Literature” directions in the home page. No need for a Works Cited as all texts come from the Norton Anthology. Do not use outside sources. I will grade these liberally and use them to assess how well you understand the material. No plagiarism.

For this for paragraph essay you will be discussing how Eliot uses the collage technique. You will take at least 12 lines from the poem, you may have to use more, and show how the lines work in juxtaposition to form a constellation of meaning. For example, in the first 12 lines we have spring, winter, summer, and a few lines later a woman talking about Germany, Lithuania and Russia. Certainly these are disparate elements but they all indicate that the poem will be about the natural cycle and the human, more specifically, European, response to it.

Paragraph1

Briefly tell us where you are in the poem and define the collage technique. Then present the first passage in your “constellation” and explicate it.

Paragraph2

Present the second passage in your “constellation” and explicate it. Tell how it relates to the first passage.

Paragraph3

Present the third passage in your “constellation” and explicate it. Tell how it relates to the first and second passage.

Paragraph 4

Present the fourth passage in your “constellation” and explicate it. Tell how it relates to the first three passages. Summarize by explaining how the collage you assembled works in terms of the poem.

A Good Essay:

1. Properly cites the texts;
2. Defines the collage technique and tells the reader where we are in the poem when the quotes appear;
3. Discusses three passages that are juxtaposed and explicates them.
4. Explains how those passages combine to construct poetic meaning through the collage technique.

Assignment #2 Application

The poem ends with a suggestion: Give, sympathize, control. It’s really a profound message and is Eliot’s suggestion as a way to get out of the Wasteland. We obviously live in a different time with different concerns, needs, failures, and struggles. What are three keys that you offer as a way to live

in this PostPost Modern world of ours? What does the thunder say to you? Provide three keys and tell why we need them in this day. At least one paragraph of five lines.

I really think that technology has, as Shelley said, made us blind to its own implications. Most people blindly follow along the technological path offered them without consideration. We also live in a world where we are likely to judge before we observe, listen or analyze. Given this frenetic world we live in, here are three keys I propose: Be curious—keep your senses and mind open to all things. Be present—forget the past, don't spend too much time thinking about the future, be where you are ALWAYS...the present. Breath—concentrating on your breath grounds you in a profound way and will lead inevitably toward the first two.

A Good Application

1. Describes the current conditions of the world
2. Offers three keys to survive in this world;
3. Explains how the keys unlock good living.