Literary Movements for Students

Volume 1

Literary Movements for Students

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Literary Movements *for Students*

Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Literary Movements

Volume 1

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David Galens, Project Editor

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Literary Movements for Students, Volume 1

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Novels That Include the Names of French Soups

I. A. Richards, the well-known literary critic, once said, "A book is a machine to think with." In making this observation, Richards underscored the reciprocal relationship between reader and text and the fact that words don't just sit there full of meaning waiting to be discovered, but rather gain their meaning by the breadth and quality of knowledge readers bring to them. *Literary Movements for Students* provides readers with this knowledge by describing various literatures in their historical and cultural contexts, by providing representative examples of the best-known movements, and by encouraging students to explore those movements more deeply.

"Literary Movements" is really a misnomer, for often the texts described under this heading were considered neither literary nor part of a discernible movement when they were written. Labels are often attached to certain writers or texts by critics and literary historians for efficiency's sake and with the benefit of hindsight, often decades, sometimes centuries, after a text has been written. Part of identifying a movement is arguing for what features define the writing associated with it, and then locating those features in specific texts. This necessarily means that the description of movements is not objective, but colored by a critic or literary historian's own particular agendas, whether or not he or she is aware of such agendas. That said, there still needs to be some kind of organizing principle for studying texts, or else there would be no basis for discussion, no way of developing knowledge about them, of understanding how a poem or a novel or a play fits into its time or what it shares in common with other texts. Academia organizes itself, for better *and* worse, in disciplines, and the discipline of literature organizes itself in periods, which themselves are associated with movements. This kind of packaging enables closer scrutiny of the object studied, which paradoxically results in a more comprehensive understanding of the material. By organizing texts and writers in terms of literary movements, this series aims to provide readers with a foot in the door, a way to think about well-known texts and tools with which to think about them. It's important to remember, however, that it is just one way, not the only way, to study literature.

The word "literary" gained its current meaning as a term used to denote a quality of poems, plays, and fiction in the eighteenth century, when writing itself proliferated, and professional literary critics emerged to police it by giving names to this or that kind of writing. An adjectival form of "literature," "literary" was used to exclude other types of writing such as philosophy and history. Today it has an even narrower connotation, serving to mark literature that is "serious" and "cerebral," as opposed to "popular" such as the romance novel or the suspense thriller. One recent example of both the merits and pitfalls of associating one's work with the term is novelist Jonathan Franzen's now well-known spat with talk show host Oprah Winfrey in 2001. Franzen declined to have his novel, *The Corrections*, be named Winfrey's book of the month selection for her book club, which would

have virtually guaranteed it financial success, claiming that Winfrey's endorsement ruined his reputation in "high art" circles. Franzen eventually retracted his comment, but the damage had already been done. In this instance, Franzen was protecting his image as a producer of *literary*, as opposed to popular, novels. Franzen is not, however, a member of any literary movement if we understand "movement" to signify organized activities by a group of people with a stated objective, though his writing might be included under Realism.

Some literary movements did begin with a clear intention, organized activities, and a set of principles—surrealism, for example. French poet Guillame Apollinaire coined the term "surrealism," and André Breton, another French poet, spelled out the principles in the *Manifesto of Surrealism*. Other movements, such as twentieth-century Expressionism, elements of which are evident in art and theater of the nineteenth century, are more nebulous, harder to pin down in terms of features or history. There are no Expressionist manifestos, and some critics claim that no such animal as Expressionism even exists. Often, the term given to a literary movement becomes a point of contention for critics whose view of literary history differs from establishment norms. Postcolonialism is a good case in point. Some want to limit the term to signify texts produced in former British colonies after the fall of the British Empire. Others argue that almost all literature (including American) is, in theory, postcolonial, because in the end history is a series of wars and occupations, of one culture displacing another. Movements are not static, but dynamic, evolving from the fray of competing interests and historical developments. An entry on Postcolonialism written ten years from today will no doubt look radically different than the one you read here. It might include novels by writers from some of the former Soviet republics, or perhaps poems from an author of a state yet to be formed, whose people are now battling for independence. Ultimately, it is the shape of the movement itself that is important to grasp, and the context of how, when, and why a particular literature came into being. *Literary Movements for Students* gives you that "how," "when," and "why."

Say, for example, that you've just seen a production of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and were so impressed that you bought and read the book. You've heard Beckett's name associated with Absurdism, but don't really know what that is. If you look up Absurdism in *Literary Movements for Students*, you will find an overview of the movement, including its history, its prominent features, its primary practitioners, and how it is embodied not only in literature and Beckett's work, but in other media and disciplines such as film, painting, and philosophy. You might also find Beckett under Existentialism. *Literary Movement for Students* isn't reductive, but rather expansive in its treatment of movements, charting the crevices and crannies as much as the road most traveled. Movements are provisional by their very nature, contingent on institutional and historical forces, so you'll find a degree of crossover here, with writers and texts sometime listed under more than one movement. That's a good thing.

In the preface to his study historicizing the human sciences, *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault notes the hilarity of a passage from a story by Jorge Luis Borges in which Borges describes a Chinese encyclopedia's taxonomy of animals. Some of the categories include "belonging to the emperor," "fabulous," "embalmed," "frenzied," and "that from a long way off look like flies." One can also imagine a system of describing literature based on a principle other than literary movements. Such a system might include categories like "books over thirty-four pages," "poems with wine stains," "plays involving a butter dish, a butler, and two pencils," and "novels that include names of French soups." While teaching a course based on texts from one of these categories might well prove engaging, (I'd certainly like to try), one would have a difficult time justifying it to a curriculum review committee. The fact is, literature illustrates, and often instigates, social trends, and history speaks through writers, whether they want it to or not. As of today, critics have yet to make a case for novels that include the names of French soups to be considered a major literary movement. But you might want to check back in ten years, just in case.

Chris Semansky
Chemeketa Community College
Salem, Oregon

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of *Literary Movements for Students* (*LMfS*) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying literary movements by giving them easy access to information about a given literary movement. Part of Gale's "For Students" literature line, *LMfS* is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific literary movements.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the literary movement; discussion of certain representative authors and works associated with the movement; analysis of the movement's predominant themes; and an explanation of related literary techniques.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers to analyze the movement itself, students are also provided with important information on its literary and historical background. This includes a historical context essay, a sidebar comparing the time or place the movement occurred to modern Western culture, a critical essay, and previously published criticism on the movement (if available). A unique feature of *LMfS* is a specially commissioned critical essay on each literary movement, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each literary movement, information on media adaptations is provided (if available), as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers, study questions, and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on each movement.

Selection Criteria

The titles for both volumes of *LMfS* were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; *Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges*; and Arthur Applebee's 1993 study *Literature in the Secondary School: Studies of Curriculum and Instruction in the United States.*

Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that the first volume should deal with earlier movements that took place approximately before the twentieth century, while the second volume should deal primarily with the more modern movements of the twentieth century and beyond. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on discussing works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals—helped pare down the list for each

volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for movements to be included in possible future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in *LMfS* focuses on one literary movement. Each entry heading lists the full name of the movement and the approximate year of the movement's origin. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- **Introduction:** a brief overview of the movement, which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding it, and related themes.
- **Representative Authors:** this section includes basic facts about several authors associated with the movement, focusing on their relationship to the movement, including specific works written by the authors that might be typical of the movement.
- **Representative Works:** a description of specific works that have been identified as typical or representative of the movement.
- **Themes:** an overview of the major topics, themes, and issues related to the movement. Each theme discussed appears under a separate subhead and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- **Style:** this section addresses important style elements of the movement, such as setting, point of view, and narration, as well as important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism. Literary terms are explained within the entry but can also be found in the Glossary.
- **Movement Variations:** this section briefly discusses variations of the movement, including variations in geography (i.e., different countries), history (i.e., periodic revivals of the movement), philosophy, and art.
- **Historical Context:** this section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate *in which the movement took place.* This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the movement took place. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- **Critical Overview:** this section provides background on the critical reputation of the movement, including any public controversies surrounding the movement. For older movements, this section includes a history of how the movement was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent movements, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- **Criticism:** an essay commissioned for *LMfS* that specifically deals with the movement and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as one or more pieces of previously published criticism on the movement (if available).
- **Sources:** an alphabetical list of critical material used in compiling the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- **Further Reading:** an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. It includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- **Media Adaptations:** if available, a list of important film and television adaptations related to the movement, including source information. The list may also include such variations as audio recordings, musical adaptations, and stage adaptations.
- **Topics for Further Study:** a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the movement. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- **Compare and Contrast:** an "at-a-glance" comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the time and culture of the movement and late twentieth-century or early twenty-first-century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place in which the literary movement took place and modern Western culture.
- **What Do I Study Next?:** a list of works that might complement the featured literary movement or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same representative authors and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

LMfS includes "Novels That Include the Names of French Soups," a foreword by Chris Semansky, an educator and author who specializes in poetic works. This essay examines how literary movements come about in societies and how people study such movements. The essay also discusses how *Literary Movements for Students* can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading/viewing experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the representative authors and representative works covered in each volume of *LMfS*.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the representative authors and the authors of representative works covered in each volume of *LMfS* by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work or movement. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in **boldface**.

Each entry may include illustrations, including photos of the representative authors, stills from stage productions, and stills from film adaptations.

Citing Literary Movements for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of *Literary Movements for Students* may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed.

When citing text from *LMfS* that is not attributed to a particular author (e.g., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

The Bildungsroman. *Literary Movements for Students*. Ed. David Galens. Vol. 1. Farmington Hills, MI: The Gale Group, 2003.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from *LMfS* (usually the first piece under the "Criticism" subhead), the following format should be used:

Kerschen, Lois. Critical Essay on the Bildungsroman. *Literary Movements for Students*. Ed. David Galens. Vol. 1. Farmington Hills, MI: The Gale Group, 2003.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of *LMfS*, the following form may be used:

Carpenter, Charles A. "'Victims of Duty'? The Critics, Absurdity, and *The Homecoming*." *Modern Drama* Vol. 25, No. 4 (December 1982), 489–95; excerpted and reprinted in *Literary Movements for Students*, Vol. 2, ed. David Galens (Farmington Hills, MI: The Gale Group, 2003), pp.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of *LMfS*, the following form may be used:

Perry, Margaret. "The Major Novels." *Silence to the Drums: A Survey of the Literature of the Harlem Renaissance*. Greenwood Press, 1976, pp. 61–88; excerpted and reprinted in *Literary Movements for Students*, Vol. 2, ed. David Galens (Farmington Hills, MI: The Gale Group, 2003), pp.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of *Literary Movements for Students* welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest movements to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via E-mail at: **ForStudentsEditors@gale.com.** Or write to the editor at:

Editor, Literary Movements for Students
The Gale Group
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535

Literary Chronology

c. 750 B.C.?: Homer, author representative of Classicism, flourishes about this time.

c. 750 B.C.: *Iliad*, written by Homer and representative of Classicism, is created.

c. 534 B.C.: Thespis, author representative of Greek Drama, flourishes about this time.

c. 530 B.C.: Epicharmus, author representative of Greek Drama, is born.

c. 525 B.C.: Aeschylus, author representative of Greek Drama, is born.

c. 496 B.C.: Sophocles, author representative of Greek Drama, is born.

c. 485 B.C.: Euripides, author representative of Greek Drama and Classicism, is born.

472 B.C.: *Prometheus Bound*, written by Aeschylus and representative of Greek Drama, is produced.

458 B.C.: *Oresteia*, written by Aeschylus and representative of Greek Drama, is produced.

c. 456 B.C.: Aeschylus, author representative of Greek Drama, dies.

c. 450 B.C.: Aristophanes, author representative of Greek Drama, is born.

c. 450 B.C.: Crates, author representative of Greek Drama, flourishes about this time.

c. 445 B.C.: Eupolis, author representative of Greek Drama, flourishes about this time.

441 B.C.: *Antigone*, written by Sophocles and representative of Greek Drama, is produced.

c. 440 B.C.: Epicharmus, author representative of Greek Drama, dies.

431 B.C.: *Medea*, written by Euripides and representative of Classicism and Greek Drama, is produced.

c. 430 B.C.: Sophron, author representative of Greek Drama, flourishes about this time.

427 B.C.: *Oedipus the King*, written by Sophocles and representative of Greek Drama, is produced.

c. 420 B.C.: Cratinus, author representative of Greek Drama, dies.

c. 420 B.C.: Phrynichus, author representative of Greek Drama, flourishes about this time.

c. 414 B.C.: *Birds*, written by Aristophanes and representative of Greek Drama, is produced.

c. 411 B.C.: Eupolis, author representative of Greek Drama, dies.

411 B.C.: *Lysistrata*, written by Aristophanes and representative of Greek Drama, is produced.

c. 406 B.C.: Euripides, author representative of Greek Drama and Classicism, dies.

c. 406 B.C.: Sophocles, author representative of Greek Drama, dies.

c. 405 B.C.: *Bacchae*, written by Euripides and representative of Greek Drama, is produced posthumously.

405 B.C.: *Frogs*, written by Aristophanes and representative of Greek Drama, is produced.

c. 401 B.C.: *Oedipus at Colonus*, written by Sophocles and representative of Greek Drama, is produced.

c. 385 B.C.: Aristophanes, author representative of Greek Drama, dies.

c. 342 B.C.: Menander, author representative of Greek Drama, is born.

317 B.C.: *Dyscolus*, written by Menander and representative of Greek Drama, is produced.

c. 292 B.C.: Menander, author representative of Greek Drama, dies.

70 B.C.: Vergil, author representative of Classicism, is born.

19 B.C.: Vergil, author representative of Classicism, dies.

c. 19 B.C.: *Aeneid*, written by Vergil and representative of Classicism, is published.

1217: Giovanni Bonaventure, author representative of the Medieval Mystics, is born.

1259: *The Soul's Journey into God*, written by Bonaventure and representative of the Medieval Mystics, is published.

c. 1260: Meister Eckhart, author representative of the Medieval Mystics, is born.

1274: Giovanni Bonaventure, author representative of the Medieval Mystics, dies.

1293: John Ruusbroec, author representative of the Medieval Mystics, is born.

1295: Henry Suso, author representative of the Medieval Mystics, is born.

1300: Richard Rolle, author representative of the Medieval Mystics, is born.

1300: Johannes Tauler, author representative of the Medieval Mystics, is born.

c. 1300–c. 1327: Meister Eckhart's Sermons, written by Meister Eckhart and representative of the Medieval Mystics, is published.

1304: Francesco Petrarch, author representative of Humanism, is born.

c. 1327: Meister Eckhart, author representative of the Medieval Mystics, dies.

c. 1334: *The Exemplar*, written by Henry Suso and representative of the Medieval Mystics, is published.

1335: *The Spiritual Espousals*, written by John Ruusbroec and representative of the Medieval Mystics, is published.

c. 1340: *The Fire of Love*, written by Richard Rolle and representative of the Medieval Mystics, is published.

1342: Julian of Norwich, author representative of the Medieval Mystics, is born.

1347: Catherine of Siena, author representative of the Medieval Mystics, is born.

1349: Richard Rolle, author representative of the Medieval Mystics, dies.

c. 1350: *Familiar Letters*, written by Francesco Petrarch and representative of Humanism, is published.

c. 1350: *Theologia Germanica*, written by an unknown author and representative of the Medieval Mystics, is published.

c. 1350–c. 1400: *The Cloud of Unknowing*, written by an unknown author and representative of the Medieval Mystics, is published.

1361: Johannes Tauler, author representative of the Medieval Mystics, dies.

1366: Henry Suso, author representative of the Medieval Mystics, dies.

c. 1373: *Revelations of Divine Love*, written by Julian of Norwich and representative of the Medieval Mystics, is published.

1374: Francesco Petrarch, author representative of Humanism, dies.

1380: Catherine of Siena, author representative of the Medieval Mystics, dies.

1381: John Ruusbroec, author representative of the Medieval Mystics, dies.

1405: Lorenzo Valla, author representative of Humanism, is born.

c. 1416: Julian of Norwich, author representative of the Medieval Mystics, dies.

1433: Marsilio Ficino, author representative of Humanism, is born.

1444: *Book of Elegances, or Elegances of the Latin Language*, written by Lorenzo Valla and representative of Humanism, is published.

1447: Catherine of Genoa, author representative of the Medieval Mystics, is born.

1452: Girolamo Savonarola, author representative of Humanism, is born.

1457: Lorenzo Valla, author representative of Humanism, dies.

1463: Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, author representative of Humanism, is born.

c. 1466: Desiderius Erasmus, author representative of Humanism and Renaissance Literature, is born.

1469: Niccolò Machiavelli, author representative of Renaissance Literature, is born.

1478: Baldassare Castiglione, author representative of Humanism, is born.

c. 1478: Sir Thomas More, author representative of Humanism and Renaissance Literature, is born.

1494: Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, author representative of Humanism, dies.

c. 1494: François Rabelais, author representative of Renaissance Literature, is born.

1496: *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, written by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and representative of Humanism, is published posthumously.

1498: Girolamo Savonarola, author representative of Humanism, dies.

1499: Marsilio Ficino, author representative of Humanism, dies.

1500: *Adages*, written by Desiderius Erasmus and representative of Humanism, is published.

1510: Catherine of Genoa, author representative of the Medieval Mystics, dies.

1511: *The Praise of Folly*, written by Desiderius Erasmus and representative of Renaissance Literature, is published.

1516: *Utopia*, written by Sir Thomas More and representative of Humanism and Renaissance Literature, is published.

c. 1522: *The Spiritual Dialogue*, written by friends of Catherine of Genoa on the basis of Catherine's teachings and representative of the Medieval Mystics, is published.

1527: Niccolò Machiavelli, author representative of Renaissance Literature, dies about this time.

1528: *Book of the Courtier*, written by Baldassare Castiglione and representative of Humanism, is published.

1529: Baldassare Castiglione, author representative of Humanism, dies.

1532: *The Prince*, written by Niccolò Machiavelli and representative of Renaissance Literature, is published.

1533: Michel de Montaigne, author representative of Renaissance Literature, is born.

1535: Sir Thomas More, author representative of Humanism and Renaissance Literature, dies.

1536: Desiderius Erasmus, author representative of Humanism and Renaissance Literature, dies.

1547: Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, author representative of Renaissance Literature, is born about this time.

1553: François Rabelais, author representative of Renaissance Literature, dies.

1558: Thomas Kyd, author representative of Elizabethan Drama, is born.

1559: George Chapman, author representative of Elizabethan Drama, is born.

1564: Christopher Marlowe, author representative of Elizabethan Drama and Renaissance Literature, is born.

1564: William Shakespeare, author representative of Elizabethan Drama and Renaissance Literature, is born.

c. 1572: Thomas Dekker, author representative of Elizabethan Drama, is born.

1572: Ben Jonson, author representative of Elizabethan Drama, is born.

c. 1573: Thomas Heywood, author representative of Elizabethan Drama, is born.

1580: *The Essays*, written by Michel de Montaigne and representative of Renaissance Literature, is published.

1586: *The Spanish Tragedy*, written by Thomas Kyd and representative of Elizabethan Drama, is published.

c. 1587: *Tamburlaine the Great*, written by Christopher Marlowe and representative of Elizabethan Drama, is published.

1592: Michel de Montaigne, author representative of Renaissance Literature, dies.

1592: *The Jew of Malta*, written by Christopher Marlowe and representative of Elizabethan Drama, is published.

1593: Christopher Marlowe, author representative of Elizabethan Drama and Renaissance Literature, dies.

1594: Thomas Kyd, author representative of Elizabethan Drama, dies.

1598: *Everyman in His Humour*, written by Ben Johnson and representative of Elizabethan Drama, is published.

1600: *Hamlet*, written by William Shakespeare and representative of Elizabethan Drama and Renaissance Literature, is published.

1600: *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, written by Thomas Dekker and representative of Elizabethan Drama, is published.

1603: *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, written by Thomas Heywood and representative of Elizabethan Drama, is published.

1605–1615: *Don Quixote*, written by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra and representative of Renaissance Literature, is published.

1616: William Shakespeare, author representative of Elizabethan Drama and Renaissance Literature, dies.

1616: Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, author representative of Renaissance Literature, dies.

1631: John Dryden, author representative of Neoclassicism, is born.

1632: Thomas Dekker, author representative of Elizabethan Drama, dies.

1634: George Chapman, author representative of Elizabethan Drama, dies.

1637: Ben Jonson, author representative of Elizabethan Drama, dies.

1639: Jean Racine, author representative of Classicism, is born.

1641: Thomas Heywood, author representative of Elizabethan Drama, dies.

1660: Daniel Defoe, author representative of Neoclassicism, is born.

1667: *Andromaque*, written by Jean Racine and representative of Classicism, is published.

1668: *Of Dramatick Poesie: An Essay*, written by John Dryden and representative of Neoclassicism, is published.

1694: Voltaire, author representative of the Enlightenment, is born.

1699: Jean Racine, author representative of Classicism, dies.

1700: John Dryden, author representative of Neoclassicism, dies.

1709: Samuel Johnson, author representative of Neoclassicism, is born.

1711: David Hume, author representative of the Enlightenment, is born.

1712: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, author representative of the Enlightenment, is born.

1712: *The Rape of the Lock*, written by Alexander Pope and representative of Neoclassicism, is published.

1713: Denis Diderot, author representative of the Enlightenment, is born.

1717: Horace Walpole, author representative of Gothic Literature, is born.

1719: *Robinson Crusoe*, written by Daniel Defoe and representative of Neoclassicism, is published.

1727: *Gulliver's Travels*, written by Jonathan Swift and representative of Neoclassicism, is published.

1731: Daniel Defoe, author representative of Neoclassicism, dies.

1733: Christoph Martin Wieland, author representative of the Bildungsroman, is born.

1738: *London*, written by Samuel Johnson and representative of Neoclassicism, is published.

1749: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, author representative of Classicism and the Bildungsroman, is born.

1751–1765: *Encyclopédie*, written by Denis Diderot and representative of the Enlightenment, is published.

1757: William Blake, author representative of Romanticism, is born.

1759: *Candide*, written by Voltaire and representative of the Enlightenment, is published.

1760: William Beckford, author representative of Gothic Literature, is born.

1762: *Émile*, written by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and representative of the Enlightenment, is published.

1762: *The Social Contract*, written by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and representative of the Enlightenment, is published.

1764: Ann Radcliffe, author representative of Gothic Literature, is born.

1764: *The Castle of Otranto*, written by Horace Walpole and representative of Gothic Literature, is published.

1770: William Wordsworth, author representative of Romanticism, is born.

1771: Charles Brockden Brown, author representative of Gothic Literature, is born.

1772: Samuel Taylor Coleridge, author representative of Romanticism, is born.

1775: Matthew Gregory Lewis, author representative of Gothic Literature, is born.

1775: Jane Austen, author representative of Romanticism, is born.

1776: David Hume, author representative of the Enlightenment, dies.

1776: *Declaration of Independence*, written by Thomas Jefferson and others and representative of the Enlightenment, is published.

1778: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, author representative of the Enlightenment, dies.

1778: Voltaire, author representative of the Enlightenment, dies.

1780: Charles Robert Maturin, author representative of Gothic Literature, is born.

1784: Denis Diderot, author representative of the Enlightenment, dies.

1784: Samuel Johnson, author representative of Neoclassicism, dies.

1786: *Vathek*, written by William Beckford and representative of Gothic Literature, is published.

1788: George Gordon, Lord Byron, author representative of Romanticism, is born.

1790–1832: *Faust*, written by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and representative of Classicism, is published.

1792: Percy Bysshe Shelley, author representative of Romanticism, is born.

1794: *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, written by Ann Radcliffe and representative of Gothic Literature, is published.

1794: *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, written by William Blake and representative of Romanticism, is published.

1795: John Keats, author representative of Romanticism, is born.

1795: *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, written by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and representative of the Bildungsroman, is published.

1795: *The Monk*, written by Matthew Gregory Lewis and representative of Gothic Literature, is published.

1797: Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, author representative of Gothic Literature, Romanticism, and Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, is born.

1797: Horace Walpole, author representative of Gothic Literature, dies.

1798: *Wieland*, written by Charles Brockden Brown and representative of Gothic Literature, is published.

1799: Honoré de Balzac, author representative of Realism, is born.

1803: Ralph Waldo Emerson, author representative of Transcendentalism, is born.

1809: Edgar Allan Poe, author representative of Gothic Literature, is born.

1810: Charles Brockden Brown, author representative of Gothic Literature, dies.

1810: Margaret Fuller, author representative of Transcendentalism, is born.

1812: Charles Dickens, author representative of Realism and the Bildungsroman, is born.

1812–1818: *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, written by George Gordon, Lord Byron and representative of Romanticism, is published.

1813: Christoph Martin Wieland, author representative of the Bildungsroman, dies.

1813: Søren Kierkegaard, author representative of Existentialism, is born.

1813: *Pride and Prejudice*, written by Jane Austen and representative of Romanticism, is published.

1817: Jane Austen, author representative of Romanticism, dies.

1817: Henry David Thoreau, author representative of Transcendentalism, is born.

1818: *Frankenstein*, written by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley and representative of Romanticism, Gothic Literature, and Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, is published.

1818: Matthew Gregory Lewis, author representative of Gothic Literature, dies.

1819: "To Autumn," written by John Keats and representative of Romanticism, is published.

1819: George Eliot, author representative of Realism, is born.

1819: Walt Whitman, author representative of Transcendentalism, is born.

1820: *Melmoth the Wanderer*, written by Charles Robert Maturin and representative of Gothic Literature, is published.

1820: *Prometheus Unbound*, written by Percy Bysshe Shelley and representative of Romanticism, is published.

1821: Fyodor Dostoevsky, author representative of Existentialism and Realism, is born.

1821: Gustave Flaubert, author representative of Realism, is born.

1821: John Keats, author representative of Romanticism, dies.

1821: Charles Baudelaire, author representative of Symbolism, is born.

1822: Percy Bysshe Shelley, author representative of Romanticism, dies.

1823: Ann Radcliffe, author representative of Gothic Literature, dies.

1824: Charles Robert Maturin, author representative of Gothic Literature, dies.

1824: George Gordon, Lord Byron, author representative of Romanticism, dies.

1827: William Blake, author representative of Romanticism, dies.

1828: Leo Tolstoy, author representative of Realism, is born.

1828: Jules Verne, author representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, is born.

1832: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, author representative of Classicism and the Bildungsroman, dies.

1834: "The Fall of the House of Usher," written by Edgar Allan Poe and representative of Gothic Literature, is published.

1834: Samuel Taylor Coleridge, author representative of Romanticism, dies.

1835: Mark Twain, author representative of the Bildungsroman, is born.

1836: *Nature*, written by Ralph Waldo Emerson and representative of Transcendentalism, is published.

1837: William Dean Howells, author representative of Realism, is born.

1840: Émile Zola, author representative of Naturalism and Realism, is born.

1842: Stéphane Mallarmé, author representative of Symbolism, is born.

1842–1855: *The Human Comedy*, written by Honoré de Balzac and representative of Realism, is published.

1844: William Beckford, author representative of Gothic Literature, dies.

1844: Paul Verlaine, author representative of Symbolism, is born.

1845: *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, written by Margaret Fuller and representative of Transcendentalism, is published.

1847: *Jane Eyre*, written by Charlotte Brontë and representative of the Bildungsroman, is published.

1848: Joris-Karl Huysmans, author representative of Symbolism, is born.

1849: August Strindberg, author representative of Expressionism, is born.

1849: Edgar Allan Poe, author representative of Gothic Literature, dies.

1849–1850: *David Copperfield*, written by Charles Dickens and representative of Realism, is published.

1850: Honoré de Balzac, author representative of Realism, dies.

1850: Guy de Maupassant, author representative of Realism, is born.

1850: William Wordsworth, author representative of Romanticism, dies.

1850: Margaret Fuller, author representative of Transcendentalism, dies.

1851: Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, author representative of Romanticism, Gothic Literature, and Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, dies.

1852: *The Blithedale Romance*, written by Nathaniel Hawthorne and representative of Transcendentalism, is published.

1854: Arthur Rimbaud, author representative of Symbolism, is born.

1854: *Walden*, written by Henry David Thoreau and representative of Transcendentalism, is published.

1855: Søren Kierkegaard, author representative of Existentialism, dies.

1855: *Leaves of Grass*, written by Walt Whitman and representative of Transcendentalism, is published.

1856: H. Rider Haggard, author representative of Colonialism, is born.

1857: Joseph Conrad, author representative of Colonialism, is born.

1857: *Madame Bovary*, written by Gustave Flaubert and representative of Realism, is published.

1857: *Flowers of Evil*, written by Charles Baudelaire and representative of Symbolism, is published.

1861: *Great Expectations*, written by Charles Dickens and representative of the Bildungsroman, is published.

1862: Maurice Maeterlinck, author representative of Symbolism, is born.

1862: Henry David Thoreau, author representative of Transcendentalism, dies.

1864: Frank Wedekind, author representative of Expressionism, is born.

1865: Rudyard Kipling, author representative of Colonialism, is born.

1866: H. G. Wells, author representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, is born.

1866: *Crime and Punishment*, written by Fyodor Dostoevsky and representative of Realism, is published.

1867: Charles Baudelaire, author representative of Symbolism, dies.

1868: W. E. B. Du Bois, author representative of the Harlem Renaissance, is born.

1870: Charles Dickens, author representative of Realism and the Bildungsroman, dies.

1870: Frank Norris, author representative of Naturalism, is born.

1870: *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea*, written by Jules Verne and representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, is published.

1871: James Weldon Johnson, author representative of the Harlem Renaissance, is born.

1871: Stephen Crane, author representative of Naturalism, is born.

1871: Theodore Dreiser, author representative of Naturalism, is born.

1871–1872: *Middlemarch*, written by George Eliot and representative of Realism, is published.

1874: Amy Lowell, author representative of Imagism, is born.

1874: *Songs without Words*, written by Paul Verlaine and representative of Symbolism, is published.

1875: Thomas Mann, author representative of the Bildungsroman, is born.

1875–1877: *Anna Karenina*, written by Leo Tostoy and representative of Realism, is published.

1876: *The Afternoon of a Faun*, written by Stéphane Mallarmé and representative of Symbolism, is published.

1878: Georg Kaiser, author representative of Expressionism, is born.

1879: E. M. Forster, author representative of Colonialism, is born.

1880: "Ball of Fat," written by Guy de Maupassant and representative of Realism, is published.

1880: George Eliot, author representative of Realism, dies.

1880: Gustave Flaubert, author representative of Realism, dies.

1880: Aleksandr Blok, author representative of Symbolism, is born.

1880: *The Brothers Karamazov*, written by Fyodor Dostoevsky and representative of Existentialism, is published.

1881: Fyodor Dostoevsky, author representative of Existentialism and Realism, dies.

1882: James Joyce, author representative of Modernism and the Bildungsroman, is born.

1882: Jessie Redmon Fauset, author representative of the Harlem Renaissance, is born.

1882: Virginia Woolf, author representative of Modernism, is born.

1882: Ralph Waldo Emerson, author representative of Transcendentalism, dies.

1883: Franz Kafka, author representative of Existentialism and Expressionism, is born.

1883: Eugene O'Neill, author representative of Expressionism, is born.

1883: *The Story of an African Farm*, written by Olive Schreiner and representative of Colonialism, is published.

1884: *Against the Grain*, written by Joris Huysmans and representative of Symbolism, is published.

1885: Isak Dinesen, author representative of Colonialism, is born.

1885: F. S. Flint, author representative of Imagism, is born.

1885: Ezra Pound, author representative of Imagism and Modernism, is born.

1885: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, written by Mark Twain and representative of the Bildungsroman, is published.

1885: *Germinal*, written by Émile Zola and representative of Realism, is published.

1886: Alain Locke, author representative of the Harlem Renaissance, is born.

1886: Hilda Doolittle, author representative of Imagism, is born.

1886: John Gould Fletcher, author representative of Imagism, is born.

1886: *Illuminations*, written by Arthur Rimbaud and representative of Symbolism, is published.

1887: *She*, written by H. Rider Haggard and representative of Colonialism, is published.

1887: Georg Trakl, author representative of Expressionism, is born.

1888: T. S. Eliot, author representative of Modernism, is born.

1889: Claude McKay, author representative of the Harlem Renaissance, is born.

1890: *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, written by William Dean Howells and representative of Realism, is published.

1891: Zora Neale Hurston, author representative of the Harlem Renaissance, is born.

1891: Nella Larsen, author representative of the Harlem Renaissance, is born.

1891: Arthur Rimbaud, author representative of Symbolism, dies.

1891: *Spring's Awakening*, written by Frank Wedekind and representative of Expressionism, is published.

1892: Richard Aldington, author representative of Imagism, is born.

1892: J. R. R. Tolkien, author representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, is born.

1892: Walt Whitman, author representative of Transcendentalism, dies.

1893: Guy de Maupassant, author representative of Realism, dies.

1893: *Pelleas and Melisande*, written by Maurice Maeterlinck and representative of Symbolism, is published.

1894: Jean Toomer, author representative of the Harlem Renaissance, is born.

1894: Aldous Huxley, author representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, is born.

1895: Paul Eluard, author representative of Surrealism, is born.

1895: *Jude the Obscure*, written by Thomas Hardy and representative of the Bildungsroman, is published.

1895: *The Red Badge of Courage*, written by Stephen Crane and representative of Naturalism, is published.

1895: *The Time Machine: An Invention*, written by H. G. Wells and representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, is published.

1896: André Breton, author representative of Surrealism, is born.

1896: Paul Verlaine, author representative of Symbolism, dies.

1897: William Faulkner, author representative of Modernism, is born.

1897: Louis Aragon, author representative of Surrealism, is born.

1897: Phillipe Soupault, author representative of Surrealism, is born.

1898: C. S. Lewis, author representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, is born.

1898: Stéphane Mallarmé, author representative of Symbolism, dies.

1899: "The White Man's Burden," written by Rudyard Kipling and representative of Colonialism, is published.

1899: Miguel Ángel Asturias, author representative of Magic Realism, is born.

1899: Jorge Luis Borges, author representative of Magic Realism, is born.

1899: *McTeague: A Story of San Francisco*, written by Frank and representative of Naturalism, is published.

1899–1900: *Heart of Darkness*, written by Joseph Conrad and representative of Colonialism, is published.

1900: Stephen Crane, author representative of Naturalism, dies.

1900: Robert Desnos, author representative of Surrealism, is born.

1900: *Lord Jim*, written by Joseph Conrad and representative of Colonialism, is published.

1900: *Sister Carrie*, written by Theodore Dreiser and representative of Naturalism, is published.

1901: *A Dream Play*, written by August Strindberg and representative of Expressionism, is published.

1901: *Kim*, written by Rudyard Kipling and representative of Colonialism, is published.

1902: Langston Hughes, author representative of the Harlem Renaissance, is born.

1902: Frank Norris, author representative of Naturalism, dies.

1902: Émile Zola, author representative of Naturalism and Realism, dies.

1902: *The Immoralist*, written by André Gide and representative of Existentialism, is published.

1903: Countee Cullen, author representative of the Harlem Renaissance, is born.

1903: *The Call of the Wild*, written by Jack London and representative of Naturalism, is published.

1904: Alejo Carpentier, author representative of Magic Realism, is born.

1905: Jean-Paul Sartre, author representative of Existentialism, is born.

1905: Jules Verne, author representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, dies.

1906: Samuel Beckett, author representative of Absurdism, is born.

1907: Robert Heinlein, author representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, is born.

1907: Joris-Karl Huysmans, author representative of Symbolism, dies.

1908: Arthur Adamov, author representative of Absurdism, is born.

1908: Simone de Beauvoir, author representative of Existentialism, is born.

1910: Jean Genet, author representative of Absurdism, is born.

1910: Mark Twain, author representative of the Bildungsroman, dies.

1910: Leo Tolstoy, author representative of Realism, dies.

1911: "The Woman at the Store," written by Katherine Mansfield and representative of Colonialism, is published.

1912: Eugène Ionesco, author representative of Absurdism, is born.

1912: August Strindberg, author representative of Expressionism, dies.

1913: Albert Camus, author representative of Existentialism, is born.

1913: *Sons and Lovers*, written by D. H. Lawrence and representative of the Bildungsroman, is published.

1913: *Poems*, written by Georg Trakl and representative of Expressionism, is published.

1914: William Burroughs, author representative of the Beat Movement, is born.

1914: Georg Trakl, author representative of Expressionism, dies.

1914: *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed*, written by Amy Lowell and representative of Imagism, is published.

1915: *Of Human Bondage*, written by Somerset Maugham and representative of the Bildungsroman, is published.

1915: *The Metamorphosis*, written by Franz Kafka and representative of Expressionism, is published.

1915: *Cathay*, written by Ezra Pound and representative of Imagism, is published.

1916: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, written by James Joyce and representative of the Bildungsroman, is published.

1916: *Goblins and Pagodas*, written by John Gould Fletcher and representative of Imagism, is published.

1916: *Sea Garden*, written by Hilda Doolittle and representative of Imagism, is published.

1917: *The Citizens of Calais*, written by Georg Kaiser and representative of Expressionism, is published.

1917–1969: *The Cantos*, written by Ezra Pound and representative of Modernism, is published.

1918: Frank Wedekind, author representative of Expressionism, dies.

1918: *The Twelve*, written by Aleksandr Blok and representative of Symbolism, is published.

1919: *Images of War*, written by Richard Aldington and representative of Imagism, is published.

1919: *The Magnetic Fields*, written by André Breton and Philippe Soupault and representative of Surrealism, is published.

1920: William Dean Howells, author representative of Realism, dies.

1920: Isaac Asimov, author representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, is born.

1920: Ray Bradbury, author representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, is born.

1920: *The Emperor Jones*, written by Eugene O'Neill and representative of Expressionism, is published.

1920: *Otherworld: Cadences*, written by F. S. Flint and representative of Imagism, is published.

1921: Aleksandr Blok, author representative of Symbolism, dies.

1922: "The Waste Land," written by T. S. Eliot and representative of Modernism, is published.

1922: Jack Kerouac, author representative of the Beat Movement, is born.

1922: Kurt Vonnegut Jr., author representative of Postmodernism and Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, is born.

1922: *Ulysses*, written by James Joyce and representative of Modernism, is published.

1923: *Cane*, written by Jean Toomer and representative of Harlem Renaissance, is published.

1923: *Harmonium*, written by Wallace Stevens and representative of Modernism, is published.

1924: Joseph Conrad, author representative of Colonialism, dies.

1924: Franz Kafka, author representative of Existentialism and Expressionism, dies.

1924: *Manifesto of Surrealism*, written by André Breton and representative of Surrealism, is published.

1925: H. Rider Haggard, author representative of Colonialism, dies.

1925: Amy Lowell, author representative of Imagism, dies.

1925: Frantz Fanon, author representative of Postcolonialism, is born.

1925: *A Passage to India*, written by E. M. Forster and representative of Colonialism, is published.

1925: *The Trial*, written by Franz Kafka and representative of Existentialism, is published posthumously.

1925: *Color*, written by Countee Cullen and representative of Harlem Renaissance, is published.

1925: *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, written by Alain Locke and representative of Harlem Renaissance, is published.

1925: *An American Tragedy*, written by Theodore Dreiser and representative of Naturalism, is published.

1926: Neal Cassady, author representative of the Beat Movement, is born.

1926: Allen Ginsberg, author representative of the Beat Movement, is born.

1926: Michel Foucault, author representative of Postmodernism, is born.

1926: *The Sun Also Rises*, written by Ernest Hemingway and representative of Existentialism, is published.

1926: *The Weary Blues*, written by Langston Hughes and representative of Harlem Renaissance, is published.

1926: *Capital of Sorrow*, written by Paul Eluard and representative of Surrealism, is published.

1926: *Paris Peasant*, written by Louis Aragon and representative of Surrealism, is published.

1927: *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse*, written by James Weldon Johnson and representative of Harlem Renaissance, is published.

1927: *To the Lighthouse*, written by Virginia Woolf and representative of Modernism, is published.

1927: *Liberty or Love!*, written by Robert Desnos and representative of Surrealism, is published.

1928: Edward Albee, author representative of Absurdism, is born.

1928: Carlos Fuentes, author representative of Magic Realism, is born.

1928: Gabriel García Márquez, author representative of Magic Realism, is born.

1928: *Home to Harlem*, written by Claude McKay and representative of Harlem Renaissance, is published.

1928: *Quicksand*, written by Nella Larsen and representative of Harlem Renaissance, is published.

1929: *A Farewell to Arms*, written by Ernest Hemingway and representative of Modernism, is published.

1929: *The Sound and the Fury*, written by William Faulkner and representative of Modernism, is published.

1930: Harold Pinter, author representative of Absurdism, is born.

1930: Gregory Corso, author representative of the Beat Movement, is born.

1930: Derek Walcott, author representative of Postcolonialism, is born.

1930: Jacques Derrida, author representative of Postmodernism, is born.

1931: Donald Barthelme, author representative of Postmodernism, is born.

1931: Toni Morrison, author representative of Postmodernism, is born.

1932: Fernando Arrabal, author representative of Absurdism, is born.

1932: *Brave New World*, written by Aldous Huxley and representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, is published.

1934: Fredric Jameson, author representative of Postmodernism, is born.

1934: *Call It Sleep*, written by Henry Roth and representative of Modernism, is published.

1936: Václav Havel, author representative of Absurdism, is born.

1936: Rudyard Kipling, author representative of Colonialism, dies.

1937: *Out of Africa*, written by Isak Dinesen and representative of Colonialism, is published in English.

1937: *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, written by Zora Neale Hurston and representative of Harlem Renaissance, is published.

1937: *The Hobbit*, written by J. R. R. Tolkien and representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, is published.

1938: James Weldon Johnson, author representative of the Harlem Renaissance, dies.

1938: Ishmael Reed, author representative of Postmodernism, is born.

1938: *Nausea*, written by Jean-Paul Sartre and representative of Existentialism, is published.

1940: J. M. Coetzee, author representative of Postcolonialism, is born.

1941: James Joyce, author representative of Modernism and the Bildungsroman, dies.

1941: Virginia Woolf, author representative of Modernism, dies.

1941: Julia Kristeva, author representative of Postmodernism, is born.

1942: Isabel Allende, author representative of Magic Realism, is born.

1942: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, author representative of Postcolonialism, is born.

1943: Michael Ondaatje, author representative of Postcolonialism, is born.

1943: Terry Eagleton, author representative of Postmodernism, is born.

1943: *The Little Prince*, written by Antoine de Saint-Exupery and representative of Existentialism, is published.

1944: *Fictions*, written by Jorge Luis Borges and representative of Magic Realism, is published.

1945: Georg Kaiser, author representative of Expressionism, dies.

1945: Theodore Dreiser, author representative of Naturalism, dies.

1945: Robert Desnos, author representative of Surrealism, dies.

1946: Countee Cullen, author representative of the Harlem Renaissance, dies.

1946: H. G. Wells, author representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, dies.

1946: *The Stranger*, written by Albert Camus and representative of Existentialism, is published.

1947: Salman Rushdie, author representative of Postcolonialism, is born.

1947: *The Maids*, written by Jean Genet and representative of Absurdism, is published.

1947: *No Exit*, written by Jean-Paul Sartre and representative of Existentialism, is published in English.

1948: Claude McKay, author representative of the Harlem Renaissance, dies.

1949: Jamaica Kincaid, author representative of Postcolonialism, is born.

1949: Maurice Maeterlinck, author representative of Symbolism, dies.

1949: *The Kingdom of This World*, written by Alejo Carpentier and representative of Magic Realism, is published.

1949: *Men of Maize*, written by Miguel Ángel Asturias and representative of Magic Realism, is published.

1950: John Gould Fletcher, author representative of Imagism, dies.

1950: *The Bald Soprano*, written by Eugène Ionesco and representative of Absurdism, is published.

1950: *I, Robot*, written by Isaac Asimov and representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, is published.

1950: *The Martian Chronicles*, written by Ray Bradbury and representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, is published.

1950–1956: "The Chronicles of Narnia," written by C. S. Lewis and representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, are published.

1951: Laura Esquivel, author representative of Magic Realism, is born.

1952: Paul Eluard, author representative of Surrealism, dies.

1952: *The Chairs*, written by Eugène Ionesco and representative of Absurdism, is published.

1953: Eugene O'Neill, author representative of Expressionism, dies.

1953: *Waiting for Godot*, written by Samuel Beckett and representative of Absurdism and Existentialism, is published.

1953: *Invisible Man*, written by Ralph Ellison and representative of the Bildungsroman, is published.

1954: Alain Locke, author representative of the Harlem Renaissance, dies.

1954: *The Mandarins*, written by Simone de Beauvoir and representative of Existentialism, is published.

1955: Thomas Mann, author representative of the Bildungsroman, dies.

1955: *Ping-Pong*, written by Arthur Adamov and representative of Absurdism, is published.

1956: "Howl," written by Allen Ginsberg and representative of the Beat Movement, is published.

1957: Li-Young Lee, author representative of Postcolonialism, is born.

1957: *Endgame*, written by Samuel Beckett and representative of Absurdism, is published.

1957: *On the Road*, written by Jack Kerouac and representative of the Beat Movement, is published.

1958: "BOMB,"written by Gregory Corso and representative of the Beat Movement, is published.

1958: *A Coney Island of the Mind*, written by Lawrence Ferlinghetti and representative of the Beat Movement, is published.

1958: *The Dharma Bums*, written by Jack Kerouac and representative of the Beat Movement, is published.

1958: *Things Fall Apart*, written by Chinua Achebe and representative of Postcolonialism, is published.

1959: *The Zoo Story*, written by Edward Albee and representative of Absurdism, is published.

1959: *Naked Lunch*, written by William Burroughs and representative of the Beat Movement, is published.

1960: Albert Camus, author representative of Existentialism, dies.

1960: Zora Neale Hurston, author representative of the Harlem Renaissance, dies.

1960: F. S. Flint, author representative of Imagism, dies.

1961: Jessie Redmon Fauset, author representative of the Harlem Renaissance, dies.

1961: Hilda Doolittle, author representative of Imagism, dies.

1961: Frantz Fanon, author representative of Postcolonialism, dies.

1961: *The American Dream*, written by Edward Albee and representative of Absurdism, is published.

1961: *Stranger in a Strange Land*, written by Robert Heinlein and representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, is published.

1962: Isak Dinesen, author representative of Colonialism, dies.

1962: Richard Aldington, author representative of Imagism, dies.

1962: William Faulkner, author representative of Modernism, dies.

1962: *Aura*, written by Carlos Fuentes and representative of Magic Realism, is published.

1963: W. E. B. Du Bois, author representative of the Harlem Renaissance, dies.

1963: Aldous Huxley, author representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, dies.

1963: C. S. Lewis, author representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, dies.

1963: *The Bell Jar*, written by Sylvia Plath and representative of the Bildungsroman, is published.

1963: *Cat's Cradle*, written by Kurt Vonnegut Jr. and representative of Postmodernism, is published.

1963: *Conjure: Selected Poems, 1963–1970*, written by Ishmael Reed and representative of Postmodernism, is published.

1964: Nella Larsen, author representative of the Harlem Renaissance, dies.

1964: *The Garden Party*, written by Václav Havel and representative of Absurdism, is published.

1965: T. S. Eliot, author representative of Modernism, dies.

1965: *The Homecoming*, written by Harold Pinter and representative of Absurdism, is published.

1966: André Breton, author representative of Surrealism, dies.

1967: Langston Hughes, author representative of the Harlem Renaissance, dies.

1967: Jean Toomer, author representative of the Harlem Renaissance, dies.

1967: *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, written by Gabriel García Márquez and representative of Magic Realism, is published.

1967: *Of Grammatology*, written by Jacques Derrida and representative of Postmodernism, is published.

1968: Neal Cassady, author representative of the Beat Movement, dies.

1969: Jack Kerouac, author representative of the Beat Movement, dies.

1969: *Slaughterhouse Five*, written by Kurt Vonnegut Jr. and representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, is published.

1970: Arthur Adamov, author representative of Absurdism, dies.

1970: E. M. Forster, author representative of Colonialism, dies.

1972: Ezra Pound, author representative of Imagism and Modernism, dies.

1973: J. R. R. Tolkien, author representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, dies.

1974: Miguel Ángel Asturias, author representative of Magic Realism, dies.

1977: *Ceremony*, written by Leslie Marmon Silko and representative of Postcolonialism, is published.

1980: Jean-Paul Sartre, author representative of Existentialism, dies.

1980: Alejo Carpentier, author representative of Magic Realism, dies.

1980: *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, written by Julia Kristeva and representative of Postmodernism, is published.

1981: *Midnight's Children*, written by Salman Rushdie and representative of Postcolonialism, is published.

1982: Louis Aragon, author representative of Surrealism, dies.

1982: *The House of the Spirits*, written by Isabel Allende and representative of Magic Realism and Postcolonialism, is published.

1983: "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," written by Frederic Jameson and representative of Postmodernism, is published.

1983: *Overnight to Many Distant Cities*, written by Donald Barthelme and representative of Postmodernism, is published.

1984: Michel Foucault, author representative of Postmodernism, dies.

1985: *Love in the Time of Cholera*, written by Gabriel García Márquez and representative of Magic Realism, is published.

1986: Jean Genet, author representative of Absurdism, dies.

1986: Simone de Beauvoir, author representative of Existentialism, dies.

1986: Jorge Luis Borges, author representative of Magic Realism, dies.

1986: *Decolonizing the Mind*, written by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and representative of Postcolonialism, is published.

1986: *Rose*, written by Li-Young Lee and representative of Postcolonialism, is published.

1987: *Beloved*, written by Toni Morrison and representative of Postmodernism, is published.

1988: Robert Heinlein, author representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, dies.

1988: *A Small Place*, written by Jamaica Kincaid and representative of Postcolonialism, is published.

1989: Samuel Beckett, author representative of Absurdism, dies.

1989: Donald Barthelme, author representative of Postmodernism, dies.

1990: Phillipe Soupault, author representative of Surrealism, dies.

1990: *Outside History: Selected Poems, 1980–1990*, written by Eavan Boland and representative of Postcolonialism, is published.

1992: Isaac Asimov, author representative of Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature, dies.

1992: *The English Patient*, written by Michael Ondaatje and representative of Postcolonialism, is published.

1994: Eugène Ionesco, author representative of Absurdism, dies.

1994: *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, written by Edwidge Danticat and representative of Postcolonialism, is published.

1997: William Burroughs, author representative of the Beat Movement, dies.

1997: Allen Ginsberg, author representative of the Beat Movement, dies.

1999: *Disgrace*, written by J. M. Coetzee and representative of Postcolonialism, is published.

2001: Gregory Corso, author representative of the Beat Movement, dies.

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Table of Contents

Advisory Board ii

Novels That Include the Names of French Soups ix

Introduction xi

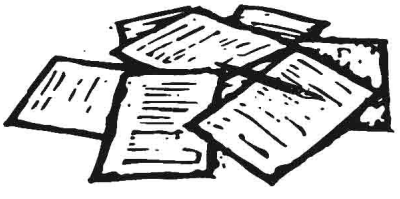
Literary Chronology xv

Acknowledgments xxix

Contributors xxxv

Bildungsroman 1
- Representative Authors 2
- Representative Works 3
- Themes 5
- Style 6
- Movement Variations 7
- Historical Context 8
- Critical Overview 10
- Criticism 10

Classicism 24
- Representative Authors 25
- Representative Works 27
- Themes 29
- Style 30
- Movement Variations 31
- Historical Context 32
- Critical Overview 33
- Criticism 34



Colonialism 48
Representative Authors 49
Representative Works 51
Themes 53
Style 55
Movement Variations 57
Historical Context 57
Critical Overview 60
Criticism 61

Elizabethan Drama 76
Representative Authors 77
Representative Works 79
Themes 81
Style 82
Movement Variations 83
Historical Context 85
Critical Overview 87
Criticism 87

Enlightenment 104
Representative Authors 105
Representative Works 107
Themes 108
Style 109
Movement Variations 110
Historical Context 111
Critical Overview 113
Criticism 114

Gothic Literature 130
Representative Authors 131
Representative Works 133
Themes 136
Style 137
Movement Variations 139
Historical Context 140
Critical Overview 142
Criticism 142

Greek Drama 155
Representative Authors 156
Representative Works 158
Themes 159
Style 162
Movement Variations 164
Historical Context 164
Critical Overview 166
Criticism 168

Humanism 174
Representative Authors 175
Representative Works 177
Themes 179
Style 180
Movement Variations 182
Historical Context 183
Critical Overview 185
Criticism 187

Medieval Mystics 199
Representative Authors 200
Representative Works 202
Themes 204
Style 206
Movement Variations 208
Historical Context 209
Critical Overview 211
Criticism 213

Neoclassicism 221
Representative Authors 222
Representative Works 224
Themes 226
Style 227
Movement Variations 228
Historical Context 229
Critical Overview 230
Criticism 231

Realism 246
Representative Authors 247
Representative Works 249
Themes 251
Style 253
Movement Variations 254
Historical Context 255
Critical Overview 257
Criticism 259

Renaissance Literature 270
Representative Authors 271
Representative Works 273
Themes 275
Movement Variations 277
Historical Context 278
Critical Overview 280
Criticism 280

Romanticism 292
Representative Authors 293
Representative Works 295
Themes 297
Style 299
Movement Variations 299
Historical Context 300
Critical Overview 301
Criticism 303

Transcendentalism 319
Representative Authors 320
Representative Works 322
Themes 324
Style 326
Movement Variations 327
Historical Context 328
Critical Overview 329
Criticism 330

Glossary of Literary Terms . . . 345

Cumulative Author/Title Index . . 383

Nationality/Ethicity Index 387

Subject/Thematic Index 389

Bildungsroman

Movement Origin

c. 1766

Bildungsroman is the name affixed to those novels that concentrate on the development or education of a central character. German in origin, "bildungs" means formation, and "roman" means novel. Although *The History of Agathon*, written by Christoph Martin Wieland in 1766–1767, may be the first known example, it was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, written in 1795, that took the form from philosophical to personal development and gave celebrity to the genre.

More than any other type of novel, the Bildungsroman intends to lead the reader to greater personal enrichment as the protagonist journeys from youth to psychological or emotional maturity. Traditionally, this growth occurs according to a pattern: the sensitive, intelligent protagonist leaves home, undergoes stages of conflict and growth, is tested by crises and love affairs, then finally finds the best place to use his/her unique talents. Sometimes the protagonist returns home to show how well things turned out. Some bildungsromane end with the death of the hero, leaving the promise of his life unfulfilled. Traditionally, English novelists complicate the protagonist's battle to establish an individual identity with conflicts from outside the self. German novelists typically concentrate on the internal struggle of the hero. The protagonist's adventures can be seen as a quest for the meaning of life or as a vehicle for the author's social and moral opinions as demonstrated through the protagonist.

The Bildungsroman was especially popular until 1860. However, anti-German sentiment during the world wars contributed to the demise of its influence, along with the emergence of a multitude of modern experiments in novel writing. Nonetheless, James Joyce wrote his Bildungsroman, *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, in 1916, and the genre has continued to be adopted, with distinguishing variations, by writers of many nationalities.

Representative Authors

Charles Dickens (1812–1870)

One of the greatest British writers of all time, Charles Dickens was a Victorian novelist who chose the Bildungsroman format for at least two of his most famous works: *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield*. Born in Portsmouth, England, on February 7, 1812, Dickens grew up in London. His father was a navy clerk who went to debtor's prison when Dickens was twelve. Forced to go to work in a shoe dye factory, he lived alone in fear and shame. These feelings led to the creation of his many orphan characters and his sympathy for the plight of the working class that made him the first great urban novelist. Although he was able to return to school and eventually clerked in a law firm, Dickens found his first success as a journalist and comic writer of the *Pickwick Papers*. However, his deep social concerns found expression in a rich intensity and variety in his later works. By the time of his death from a paralytic stroke at age fifty-eight on June 9, 1870, Dickens had written a number of works, including *A Christmas Carol*, *Oliver Twist*, and *A Tale of Two Cities*.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832)

Born on August 28, 1749, in Frankfurt, Germany, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe became one of Europe's most well-known and versatile writers. Noted for his lyrical poetry, his influential novels, and his dramatic poem *Faust*, Goethe also made substantial contributions in the fields of biology, music, and philosophy. He wrote the first comprehensive history of science. In 1795, he published *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, a novel that is considered a prime example of the Bildungsroman. In addition, Goethe profoundly affected the growth of literary Romanticism and introduced the novella. He died in Weimar on March 22, 1832, at the age of eighty-two.

James Joyce (1882–1941)

As a poet and novelist, James Joyce brought marked change to modern literature. Born in Dublin, Ireland, on February 2, 1882, Joyce moved frequently as a child because of his father's drinking and financial difficulties. Joyce's classic Künstlerroman (novel of an artist's development), *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, portrays a hero who is a character blend of Joyce and his father. Despite his family situation, Joyce received a good education at a Jesuit school. But like his hero in *A Portrait*, Joyce later rejected religion, family, and his home country, living most of his life on the European continent. However, he wrote almost exclusively about Dublin. Joyce felt that being an artist required exile to protect oneself from sentimental involvements and that he could not write about Dublin with integrity and objectivity unless he went away. *A Portrait* established the modern concept of the artist as a bohemian who rejects middle-class values. It also set the example for a number of modern Irish bildungsromane in which heroes achieve their quest when they come to believe that alienation from society, not finding one's place in the social order, is the mark of maturity. Joyce died in Zurich on January 13, 1941, when he was only fifty-nine years old, but his innovations in literary organization and style, particularly his use of stream-of-consciousness technique, remain unique.

Thomas Mann (1875–1955)

Considered the leading German novelist of the twentieth century, Thomas Mann was born in northern Germany on June 6, 1875. However, after 1933, he lived in either Switzerland or the United States because of his opposition to the Nazis. By then he had already won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1929. His masterpiece, *The Magic Mountain* (*Der Zauberberg*), was written in 1924 and is a Bildungsroman, as is a later work, *Doctor Faustus* (1947). The overall theme of Mann's works is the breakdown of civilization. Mann presents this theme in *The Magic Mountain* through a story about the patients in a Swiss sanatorium. *Doctor Faustus* is a Künstlerroman in which the protagonist is an artist who makes a pact with the devil to achieve creative vitality. The story ends tragically and parallels Germany's pact with Hitler to restore national vitality that ends in destruction. Mann died of phlebitis near Zurich on August 12, 1955.

Mark Twain (1835–1910)

Mark Twain is known as one of America's leading realists, native humorists, and local col-

orists. He was a master in the use of folklore, psychological realism, and dialects. Born Samuel Langhorne Clemens in Florida, Missouri, on November 30, 1835, he died of heart disease in the city he had long made his home, Hartford, Connecticut, on April 21, 1910. Twain produced not one but several classics, including what some believe to be the greatest American novel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), a picaresque and satirical Bildungsroman. Probably more than any other writer, Mark Twain provided a uniquely American, and usually comic, portrayal of the Bildungsroman hero. Sadly, Twain's satire became bitter as his personal tragedies and financial reverses led to the disillusionment and depression that cloud his later writings.

Christoph Martin Wieland (1733–1813)

Whenever the Bildungsroman is discussed, Christoph Martin Wieland, who was born in Germany on September 5, 1733, is mentioned as the writer of *The History of Agathon*, the precursor novel to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. A translator whose work reflects the Enlightenment, the early eighteenth-century period also known as the Age of Reason, and whose style shows rococo influences, Wieland translated twenty-two plays by Shakespeare into German (1762–1766) and also translated the classical writings of Horace and Lucian. Many of Wieland's own writings are set in Greece, including his *Die Geschichte des Agathon* (1766–1767, translated into English as *The History of Agathon* [1773]). In an early instance of publishing German literary periodicals, Wieland edited the journal *Der deutsche Merkur* (*The German Mercury*). Wieland died on January 21, 1813.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Representative Works

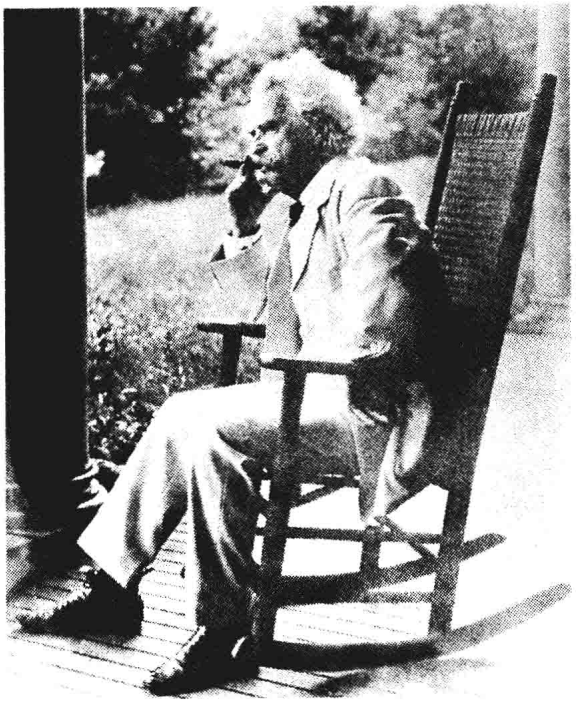
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Like the Bildungsroman hero, Huck leaves home to find an independent life, has a surrogate father in Jim, is in conflict with his society, and reaches maturity when he repents his treatment of Jim and puts fairness and friendship over expected behavior.

Though considered by some to be a masterpiece of American literature, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* initially scandalized reviewers and parents who thought it would corrupt young children with its depiction of a hero who lies, steals, and uses coarse language. In the last half of the twentieth century, the condemnation of the book continued on the grounds that its portrayal of Jim and use of the word "nigger" is racist. While some justify the book as a documentation of the racial notions prevalent at the time of its writing, the novel continues to appear on lists of books banned in schools across the United States.

The Bell Jar

Although Sylvia Plath is well known as a poet, her autobiographical Bildungsroman is one of the best-known works in modern American literature. The novel tells the story of Esther Greenwood, a student editor on an internship at a women's magazine in New York City. It follows the standard Bildungsroman pattern of the young person who goes to the big city to pursue professional aspirations. But there is no traditional happy ending. The psychological anguish of Plath's later poetry is related to the confessional revelations of *The Bell Jar*, in which she describes the events that led to her nervous breakdown. One month after the English publication of this book in 1963 under the pseudonym Victoria Lucas, Plath committed suicide. The novel was published in England under Plath's name in 1966 and in the United States in 1971.



Mark Twain

Great Expectations

Great Expectations, published in 1861 by Charles Dickens, follows the tradition of the Bildungsroman. The young protagonist, Pip, leaves his rural home to become a gentleman and win the girl of his dreams. While most Bildungsroman heroes have to make their own way, Pip has a mysterious benefactor who provides the wealth that Pip thinks will make him happy. However, in the course of finding his true values, Pip comes to realize that happiness comes not from money but from the appreciation of good friends, regardless of their social status, and from personal integrity. This novel has become an all-time classic that is still required reading in many high school curricula.

Invisible Man

Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* won the National Book Award when it was published in 1953. A first novel, it expresses in metaphorical language the Bildungsroman theme of searching for one's identity. The nameless black protagonist, looking for his identity, comes to the realization that he has been living the roles prescribed for him by white society. But once he steps outside the assigned sphere, he becomes "invisible" to a dominant culture that does not recognize his individuality. Employing symbols of the traditions of the frontier, the black community, and music, *Invisible Man* achieved international fame and remains one of the most important American works of the twentieth century.

Jane Eyre

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, published in 1847, is one of the first bildungsromane with a female protagonist. In this Victorian English novel, the female hero is constrained by social expectations determined by gender-specific beliefs. At age ten, Jane is sent to residential school where she acquires skills she later uses as a governess and a village schoolteacher. In its use of natural elements and the supernatural, the novel is both romantic and Gothic. *Jane Eyre* is a Bildungsroman in that it traces Jane's development from a dependent child to a mature and independent woman. The novel dramatizes the love affair between Jane and Edward Rochester, who is married at the time they meet. Rochester keeps his insane wife sequestered in his estate, and after she dies, he and Jane are reunited. In Charlotte Brontë's own life, she had been attracted to the married headmaster of the school in Brussels where she went to study French and to teach in 1842–1843. This unhappy experience, along with the author's memories of early school years at Cowan's Bridge, contributed to the composition of *Jane Eyre*, her first published work of fiction, which was an immediate success.

Jude the Obscure

Thomas Hardy introduced into Victorian literature the concept of fatalism. This belief assumes that humans are subject to arbitrary and random forces, like chance and timing, which shape their destinies. *Jude the Obscure*, published in 1895, received widespread criticism because it attacks the Anglican Church, the elitist admissions policies of Oxford University (called Christminster in the novel), and the rigid laws regarding marriage. As a Bildungsroman, the story follows Jude Fawley's route to destruction from what Hardy called in his preface "the tragedy of unfulfilled aims." Fawley, by trade a stonemason, has spiritual and intellectual ambitions that are thwarted by his exclusion from the university and his involvement with two women, the vulgar Arabella and the intellectual Sue. He marries the first and has one child with her; he does not marry the second, and he has two children by her. Tragedy overwhelms Jude when his oldest child kills the younger ones and hangs himself. Jude himself dies miserably, an alcoholic.

Of Human Bondage

Like so many autobiographical bildungsromane, *Of Human Bondage* (1915) draws from the unhappy early years of its author, W. Somerset Maugham. A popular twentieth-century English novelist, Maugham was a physician who abandoned medicine to write plays and novels. The hero in Maugham's most famous novel is a medical student with a clubfoot who falls in love with a promiscuous Cockney waitress. A still-admired 1935 film version of this obsessive and tragic love affair starred Bette Davis and Leslie Howard.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

James Joyce's generally agreed upon masterpiece is *Ulysses*, but his autobiographical Bildungsroman is *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, published in 1916. When Joyce's hero Stephen Dedalus grows up, he says farewell to his home country and to his family and religion as well. The *Norton Anthology of English Literature* describes this novel as portraying "the parallel movement toward art and toward exile." This novel of rebellion insists that the artist is an outcast and that his alienation is a necessary component of his being creative.

Sons and Lovers

Another autobiographical Bildungsroman, *Sons and Lovers* was D. H. Lawrence's third and most notable novel. Published in 1913, it is the coming-of-age story of Paul Morel, the son of a coal miner father and a controlling and ambitious mother who gives up on finding any fulfillment in her marriage. She turns her possessive attention to her children, especially Paul. The resulting struggle for sexual power and individual identity causes Paul difficulties in finding his professional place and establishing a healthy relationship with a woman his own age. This novel dramatizes some of the psychological points Freud explored under the label Oedipus Complex.

Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship

Written in 1795 by Wolfgang von Goethe as *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, this prototype of the Bildungsroman was translated into English by Thomas Carlyle in 1824. With this book, Goethe established the Bildungsroman as a novel of personal rather than philosophical development for the main character. His hero wanders through a series of love affairs, friendships, and occupations before settling down to marriage and responsible adulthood. Goethe's model was emulated by many notable writers and has had a strong influence on the development of the novel.

Themes

Coming of Age and Apprenticeship

Goethe's Bildungsroman appropriately uses the word "apprenticeship" in its title because one distinguishing factor of the genre is the learning process that brings the protagonist from childhood into adulthood. As a coming-of-age novel, the Bildungsroman focuses on the main character's apprenticeship. These experiences place the character near older practitioners whose roles as models the character either emulates or rejects.

Education

The Bildungsroman is a novel of formation or development. These terms imply that the Bildungsroman is also a novel about education, yet not necessarily in the narrow sense of the Erziehungsroman (novel of educational development). Life is an education, and the process of growing up as chronicled in the Bildungsroman is a series of experiences that teach lessons. The protagonist's education may be academic; it may also be in other areas, such as learning social graces, conducting business affairs, and gaining integrity in relationships.

Identity and the Self

The protagonist of the Bildungsroman has a unique talent. Part of the maturation process requires discovering this talent and figuring out how to use it. The journey and experiences of the hero are intended to provide an opportunity to examine the inner self and clarify important goals and how to pursue them. As part of the self-discovery, the hero gets a new perspective on his/her relationships with other people. In other words, facing the complexities of the adult world causes the protagonist to learn about others and about himself. Thus, the Bildungsroman is a psychological novel in which the main character evolves toward mature self-awareness.

Journey

In bildungsromane the hero leaves home on a journey or quest. Usually, the protagonist leaves a rural setting to travel into the wider world of the city. In this way, the character encounters a larger society that tests his or her mettle. The physical journey initiates change, and change brings growth.

Media Adaptations

- Image Entertainment produced James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in 1979 and released it on video in 2000. It starred Bosco Hogan and Sir John Gielgud.
- *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* can also be found on a Blackstone Audiobooks recording made in 1995 and read by Frederick Davidson. It is ten hours long.
- There are several film versions of *Jane Eyre*. A recent A & E Entertainment adaptation of the Charlotte Brontë book, starring Samantha Morton and Ciaran Hinds, was released on video in 1998. The 1944 production from Twentieth Century Fox starred Orson Welles, Joan Fontaine, and Margaret O'Brien.
- *Jane Eyre* is also available as an audio book from Audiobooks.com. Read by Maureen O'Brien, it is over twenty-one hours long. Another recording, done by Blackstone Audiobooks in 1994, is nineteen hours long and is read by Nadia May.
- Blackstone Audiobooks produced *Jude the Obscure* in 1997. Read by Frederick Davidson, it is sixteen hours long.
- Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* was recorded as an unabridged audio book in 2001 by Audiobooks.com. It is six hours in length and read by Joe Morton.
- One of the latest versions of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* was produced in 1999 by WGBH Boston Video. It is three hours long on a two-tape set and stars Ioan Gruufudd, Justine Waddell, and Charlotte Rampling.
- *Great Expectations* is also available as an audio book from a several different distributors. Audible.com has a 1987 production, narrated by Frank Muller, which runs for sixteen hours and forty minutes. Blackstone Audiobooks carries a nineteen hour, thirty minute version read by Frederick Davidson.

Love

Finding the right love is a component of the quest as it is enacted in the Bildungsroman. The movement into adulthood begins with separation and often resolves in maturity with adult connection. In some cases the character must negotiate among potential partners in order to discover the appropriate one. The formalization of that relationship may constitute the final event in the novel.

Search for the Meaning of Life

In the Bildungsroman, the novel of development, the hero develops through experiences that assist in clarifying the character's mature values. Growing up involves the search for universal truths. For Victorians, this involved achieving middle-class status, marrying, and settling down as a responsible citizen. But to writers like Joyce, these truths were associated with the artist's alienation and the necessary rejection of middle-class values.

Style

Audience

The Bildungsroman doesn't just tell a story. It involves the reader in the same process of education and development as the main character. The aim is to affect the reader's personal growth as well. However, at some point in the narrative, the reader may be in disagreement with the protagonist. Realizing that the hero has made a mistake in judgment, the reader, in effect, learns from the situation before the protagonist or otherwise compares his/her own morality against the moral of the story that the hero eventually learns.

Character

In the Bildungsroman, the focus is on one main character. The structure of the Bildungsroman is to follow this one character from youth to adulthood. Other characters exist in the story, of course, but

only in roles that have some kind of tie or relationship that contributes to the growth and development of the protagonist. With this concentration, it is then possible for the reader to become engrossed in the maturation process of the hero and learn the same life lessons.

Chronicle

A Bildungsroman is the chronicle, or record of events, of the protagonist from youth to adulthood. However, it is not an unbiased record, but more like a diary recording the life of a young person on the way to self-understanding and maturity. Consequently, the Bildungsroman uses a chronological time period to follow the hero from year to year.

Conflict

Growing up and finding one's purpose in life is difficult. There are many pitfalls, mistakes, and forces beyond one's control along the way. These conflicts between the protagonist and fate, or nature, or others, or self are part of the process of maturation that the Bildungsroman chronicles. Each crisis the hero endures helps to deepen his self-knowledge and strengthen or challenge his moral fortitude. Multiple conflicts are essential to the credibility of the Bildungsroman as a reflection of the real life experience.

Dialogue

Dialogue is the conversational interaction among the characters of a story. Since the Bildungsroman is focused on the main character, plot and narrative are secondary to dialogue. Using dialogue to carry the story makes the reader feel more of a witness to an actual scene. The reader knows little more than the hero has learned from talking with others and thus makes the same discoveries as the protagonist as events happen.

Movement Variations

American Novels

The American style of the Bildungsroman is a combination of the German Bildungsroman and the Spanish picaresque. The American Bildungsroman follows the pattern of moral growth for the protagonist as he discovers his identity in conflict with social norms. Blended into the story is the picaresque element of the hero being a traveler who has an outsider's perspective on what he encounters. Two American classics exemplify this structure: Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* and J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*.

English Novels

In an English Bildungsroman, the protagonist is often a poor orphaned boy whose goal is to become a cultured gentleman of means. As part of his self-education, he moves from his provincial home to an urban setting. While the German Bildungsroman emphasizes internal conflicts within the main character, the English Bildungsroman uses the outside world to threaten the hero's quest for identity. Many English bildungsromane draw from the author's own experience.

Entwickslungroman

Another name for Bildungsroman is the general term Entwickslungroman, or novel of development. This name applies to novels constructed to follow

Topics for Further Study

- Among the books that you have read, is there one that you think would fit in the Bildungsroman classification? Explain why it is a Bildungsroman, citing its characteristic features.
- Research the sociopolitical climate of Germany in 1795 and then describe how this climate may or may not have influenced the birth of the Bildungsroman genre.
- List several German authors and their works that continued the tradition of the Bildungsroman in their country in the nineteenth and/or twentieth centuries.
- Find an example of a Bildungsroman in a culture not traditionally associated with the genre, e.g., a Japanese, Indian, or Chinese work, and explain how this work is a version of the Bildungsroman in that culture.
- Explain how the Bildungsroman is similar to a psychological novel or a picaresque. Provide definitions of the genres and give examples of representative works.

the personality development of the protagonist. However, it is sometimes reserved for only those works that describe the hero's physical passage from youth to maturity without delving into his psychological progress. In other words, Bildungsroman-type novels that pay less attention to the hero's intellect and emotions than more fully developed works fit into the category of Entwickslungroman.

Erziehungsroman

Meaning "novel of education," this variation is a more pedagogic form of the Bildungsroman. Not only is it more concerned with the formal education and training of the protagonist, but the novel also intends to teach certain lessons about values to the reader as well.

Female Protagonist

The female protagonist of a Bildungsroman encounters problems specific to growing up female in a male-dominated world. Early female bildungsromane with female protagonists mostly follow the traditional pattern that the mature female sees marriage as her fulfillment. Intellectual and social development is often achieved through the mentorship of a knowledgeable and sophisticated man. In some early nineteenth-century female bildungsromane, the female's education occurs through an older and wiser husband. Later novels portray women entering marriage as the culmination of the mutual growth that occurs in a loving relationship.

While a male protagonist in a Bildungsroman may meet his pivotal crisis in the course of his professional career, the female protagonist's turning point may result from a romantic entanglement. Her journey of discovery may be more internal, or psychological, than that of her male counterpart.

Künstlerroman

This form of the Bildungsroman focuses on the development of the artist. In this case, the protagonist achieves a place and opportunity in which to practice his or her art. Thus, graduating from apprenticeship not only ends the formative stage of life but also establishes the destiny that the hero has sought. Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and Thomas Mann's *Dr. Faustus* are examples of this type.

Medical Subgenre

As defined by Anne Hudson Jones for *Lancet*, in this subgenre

> ... a young physician, often but not always an intern or resident, sets out to find his special calling and to master his craft. Whether he journeys from city to city or from rotation to rotation within the same hospital, his quest is the same.

Two examples of this subgenre are Sinclair Lewis's *Arrowsmith* and Samuel Shem's *The House of God.*

Military Subgenre

In this variation of the Bildungsroman, the protagonist enters the military as a young man. His path of discovery causes him to leave home, not necessarily for a city but for wherever the military sends him. Through the rigors of training and combat, the hero is challenged not only to find himself as a person but to find out how good he is as a soldier.

Social Protest Subgenre

The Bildungsroman may be a work of social protest when its female or male hero is a dispossessed or marginalized person. The female Bildungsroman may concern itself with gender issues in a patriarchal society, as in *Jane Eyre*. In other cases Bildungsromane explore the difficulties of growing up as a member of a minority group and may involve the fight for civil rights. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* belongs to this group. Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* combine female and minority issues interwoven in works of social protest.

Zeitroman

This variation of the Bildungsroman blends the development of the era in which the hero lives with his or her personal development. The protagonist thus serves as a reflection of his or her times. This type of novel provides an interesting study of the effects of historical context on character. For example, Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* dramatizes the effects of being a Civil War soldier on the protagonist.

Historical Context

Development of the Novel

Beginning in the early eighteenth century, long narratives began to be written in prose. The modern novel developed in England with Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Moll Flanders* (1722). These works were followed shortly by Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and Henry Fielding's

Compare & Contrast

- **1700–1800s:** Christoph Martin Wieland and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe develop the Bildungsroman, but the novel is still in its infancy as a literary form until the 1800s, when it begins to be used widely in Germany. The genre also includes some of the finest works of English, French, and American authors such as Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, Thomas Hardy, Gustave Flaubert, Mark Twain, and Kate Chopin.

  1900s–Today: Continuing as a relevant genre for novelists, bildungsromane are written by English-speaking authors such as James Joyce, W. Somerset Maugham, D. H. Lawrence, J. D. Salinger, Ralph Ellison, Toni Morrison, Philip Roth, and Alice Walker.

- **1700–1800s:** As a sign of maturity, the traditional male protagonist in the Bildungsroman is a person who finds his place in society and takes a responsible role in society.

  1900s–Today: As a sign of maturity, the modern protagonist is just as likely to reject society and live in isolation as to accept a role in the mainstream.

- **1700–1800s:** Bildungsromane with female protagonists slowly begin to appear, but the heroine is restricted by the domestic parameters of the times and seeks her education through a knowledgeable man and marriage.

  1900s–Today: Female protagonists in the Bildungsroman gain the freedom to explore various paths to self-discovery and may find fulfillment outside the home and marriage.

The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling (1747). These novels were highly episodic plot-driven stories. In Germany in 1766–1767, Wieland wrote *The History of Agathon*, the first example of a Bildungsroman. Then in 1795, Goethe produced *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. The term Bildungsroman was coined in 1817 by Karl von Morgenstern but not commonly applied until about 1870. The genre flourished through the middle decades of the nineteenth century, both in England and the United States. The historical novel, developed by Sir Walter Scott, was written also by Dickens and others. The popularity of the Bildungsroman genre waned in the early twentieth century, but variations of the form continued to be written throughout the twentieth century.

Cultural Climate

In 1789, the French Revolution began, followed by the Reign of Terror from 1793 to 1794 and the Napoleonic period from 1804 until 1815. In 1798 in England, Wordsworth and Coleridge published *Lyrical Ballads*, the preface to which marked a literary watershed that came to be known as the beginning of the Romantic period. The Victorian Age spanned the years of Queen Victoria's reign, from 1837 to her death in 1901. The era of greatest popularity for the Bildungsroman, the nineteenth century, thus spanned the Romantic and Victorian periods in literature. This time of economic and political turbulence saw repeated wars in Europe and social and mechanical transformations wrought by the Industrial Revolution. Germany got its first constitution in 1816. At the same time, several European countries strengthened their colonial territories.

According to the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, perceptive Victorians suffered from a sense of "being displaced persons in a world made alien by technological changes which had been exploited too quickly for the adaptive powers of the human psyche." With the Industrial Revolution came the rise of the middle class that gradually took control of the means of production, especially in England and the United States. Many middle-class Victorians wanted the stability of a set of rules to live by. Readers demanded guidance and edification from literature. The Bildungsroman, noted for

exemplifying middle-class standards, met their needs. Often times, its hero went from the lower working class to respectability as a gentleman. Along the way, he reviewed his values and usually concluded that a settled middle-class lifestyle was the best choice.

By the end of the Victorian period, writers were seeking more realism. Victorian values and self-assurance gave way to pessimism and stoicism. The French promoted a bohemian lifestyle that scoffed at notions of respectability. Novelists began experimenting with the time structure of their works, and stream-of-consciousness began to be written. As a genre so tied to convention, German influence, and orderly chronology, the Bildungsroman lost popularity as twentieth-century literary interests and innovations led elsewhere. Still, James Joyce chose the Bildungsroman form for his masterpiece *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in 1916, and the genre is still popular.

Critical Overview

Regarding bildungsromane, critics discuss whether novels other than the German ones written in the strict tradition of *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* qualify as examples of the genre. Purists argue that the Bildungsroman is so intertwined with German philosophical and literary heritage that the form does not occur in other languages. Others find common elements in many novels.

It is commonly held that Goethe's novel had widespread influence. For example, Ehrhard Bahr wrote for the *Reference Guide to World Literature*:

> *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* had a great influence on the Romantics and the history of the German novel. It provided, so to speak, the blueprint for all subsequent German novels. Early commentaries on the novel occur in correspondence between Friedrich Schiller and Goethe, in the letters by Wilhelm von Humboldt and Christian Gottfried Körner, and in Friedrich Schlegel's 1798 essay "On Goethe's *Meister*." Goethe's novel became a prime example of Romanticism.

Thomas Carlyle, a highly influential British historian, writer, and social critic, thought so much of Goethe's Bildungsroman that he translated the work in 1824 and also wrote a parody of it. After Carlyle, other English writers took up the genre. The great twentieth-century German novelist, Thomas Mann, also wrote a Bildungsroman (*The Magic Mountain*) and considered Goethe's novel one of the three greatest events of that era alongside the French Revolution and publication of Fichte's *Theory of Science*. Without doubt, it was a popular form of the novel in the nineteenth century, but when World War I began and critics continued to link the genre to the German tradition, it faded in popularity.

Two studies of the Bildungsroman are Martin Swales's *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* and Jerome Hamilton Buckley's *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding*. The first book argues that the genre is purely German; the second book finds a number of bildungsromane in English literature. The contrast between these two important critical works summarizes the debate over the Bildungsroman. Those who believe that the genre is used in other cultures often re-examine novels classified under other genres to prove the influence of the Bildungsroman on structure. Regarding the genre, critics analyze Scott's *Waverly*, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, and Plath's *The Bell Jar*. Some critics assign particular books to the genre; others specify subgenre based on certain characteristics—comic, female, black, Chicano, etc. Others debate whether early female Bildungsroman can be called feminist.

Bernard Selinger, in a 1999 article for *Modern Fiction Studies*, says that the Bildungsroman continues to interest both authors and critics. In his opinion, critics of the genre tend to move between seeing the genre as concerned with the integration of the hero into society, or with regarding the hero as alienated. This kind of criticism reflects the flexibility of the genre in the hands of skilled novelists throughout the literary world who know that each person's development has its own outcome.

Criticism

Lois Kerschen

Kerschen is a freelance writer and the director of a charitable foundation for children. In this essay, Kerschen counters the argument that the Bildungsroman is strictly a German form of the novel by citing examples of the genre written in other languages.

Repeatedly, the Bildungsroman is defined as a "German" form of the novel. Without doubt, the genre originated in Germany and became commonly used in that country. However, for some critics to maintain that the genre is still predominantly,

if not exclusively, German defies logic. Martin Swales, an oft-quoted authority on the Bildungsroman, says in his book *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* that "The Bildungsroman, both in theory and in practice, is little known outside Germany." Hans Eichner remarks in his "Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman" that this collection "very strongly suggests that the term 'Bildungsroman' is useful only when it is applied to the relatively small number of novels that are clearly in the tradition of *Wilhelm Meister*."

In fact, the term Bildungsroman is applied to many novels. While it is not a dominant genre, it has a universal appeal because it deals with the universal experience of growing up. The quest to become a responsible adult and find one's place in the world is so difficult that readers have sustained interest in this topic. Following the difficulties of the protagonist in a Bildungsroman, readers trace the arduous journey toward maturity and learn from the growth process observed in the text.

As every student of literature learns, a well-written story has certain basic elements: plot, character, point of view, setting, tone, and style. Any one of these elements can be emphasized over the others. In the case of the Bildungsroman, character is the primary focus. Furthermore, the structure of the story tends to follow the standard pattern: introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement. Along the way, the reader can expect the characters to show some development. If they do, they are dynamic, or round; if they do not, they are static, or flat. What distinguishes the Bildungsroman from other novels is the concentration on the development of the main character from youth to adulthood. This focus makes the genre distinctive yet connected to many variations written in other languages. Despite particular debates on the genre definition, many agree that the term Bildungsroman can be applied to novels of development.

In Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1849) and *Great Expectations* (1861), the protagonists are self-educated orphans who head to London with the goal of becoming gentlemen. The Victorian middle-class work ethic demanded that the hero learn a trade and earn his way to success. Dickens's Pip is an exception in that he has a benefactor and in that he rejects the expected lifestyle of marriage and success. The English Bildungsroman explores external and internal conflicts. George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* (1860) and *Middlemarch* (1871), and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) dramatize the female quest for development in an oppressive environment.

"Among modern novels, the variety that can be classified as bildungsromane seems endless. . . . No doubt examples could be found in nearly every culture in the world."

In Ireland in 1916, James Joyce wrote the quintessential Künstlerroman in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The use of the Bildungsroman form continued among recent Irish writers as a political novel according to Kristen Morrison in "William Trevor," an article for the *Twayne's English Authors* series. Morrison says that William Trevor's *Fools of Fortune* (1983) and *Nights at the Alexandra* (1987), Brian Moore's *The Mangan Inheritance* (1979), and John Banville's *Birchwood* (1973) and *Mefisto* (1986) are all written in this bildungs/political mode. In the typical Bildungsroman, the hero reaches maturity when the character assumes a responsible role in society. However, in these Irish variations of the form which focus on a sociopolitical situation, "alienation, not integration, is the mark of [the protagonist's] hard-won maturity."

In the United States, Dickens's contemporary Mark Twain also made use of the Bildungsroman. James E. Caron, in an article for the *Modern Language Quarterly*, makes the case that three of Twain's works can be classified as comic Bildungsroman: *Old Times on the Mississippi*, *Roughing It*, and *Innocents Abroad*. Twain's masterpiece, *Huckleberry Finn*, is a picaresque Bildungsroman. In 1925, Joyce's contemporary Sinclair Lewis published *Arrowsmith*, a medical Bildungsroman, and won the Pulitzer Prize. Anne Hudson Jones says in "Images of Physicians in Literature: Medical bildungsromane" that "In the best tradition of the Bildungsroman, Arrowsmith's efforts to find his life's work include many false starts and much travel and relocation." Another famous American author, Philip Roth, repeatedly uses elements of the Bil-

What Do I Study Next?

- The Bildungsroman is popularly used in Science Fiction, especially perhaps in Young Adult Science Fiction. For example, Orson Scott Card, famous author of juvenile books, wrote the Bildungsroman *Ender's Game*, which is also classified as military Bildungsroman. The book demonstrates the application of a long-standing genre to futuristic stories.
- Just as there is a category for black Bildungsroman, there are books such as Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* that are classified as Chicano bildungsromane. Also qualifying as a female Bildungsroman, selections from this book can often be found in high school literature texts. *The House on Mango Street* is worthy of study as another use of the Bildungsroman in a culture other than German or British.
- The picaresque novel is one of the oldest forms of the novel. *Don Quixote*, written by Miguel de Cervantes in 1605, and *Huckleberry Finn* can be classified in both categories, picaresque and Bildungsroman. Study the picaresque to learn about this other quest genre.
- Geta LeSeur's book *Ten Is the Age of Darkness* compares the Bildungsroman as used by African-American authors to that of African West Indian authors. LeSeur finds that African-American bildungsromane concentrate on protest while the West Indies Bildungsromane depict the simplicity and innocence of childhood even under the difficult circumstances of poverty. This book and the novels it describes give insight into the unique experience of children of color even as they establish the commonality of the coming-of-age experience for all people.

dungsroman, most notably in *The Ghost Writer* and in *Zuckerman Bound*. As with Twain works, these works are comic bildungsromane.

The female Bildungsroman challenges the assumption that the protagonist is a male. After Jane Austen, the woman in a Victorian Bildungsroman faces new objectives and uses different strategies. Like their male counterparts, these protagonists express independent thought and seek to pursue their own talents. They may end up married, but sometimes pursuit of a partner confounds their development, as seems to be the case with Maggie Tulliver in *Mill on the Floss*.

In the hands of nineteenth-century American female novelists, the Bildungsroman continued to work within the bounds of social acceptability but gave the heroine even more liberties. A spinster could have a rewarding life. If marriage comes, it is after the establishment of independence. But the heroine grows up surrounded and protected by women, so reality was purposely skirted to provide a suitable environment for the ideas suggested in *Little Women*, *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, and *Five Little Peppers*. Then Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899) defied convention and revealed the inner dissatisfaction and feeling of entrapment of a married woman. Among modern female bildungsromane, all the limits are stretched and challenged. Two American novels, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* and Erica Jong's *Fear of Flying*, are examples of the Bildungsroman format infused with unique feminine and modern questions.

The Bildungsroman is often a work of social protest because it privileges the experience of the outsider, the one who is marginalized and dispossessed. It tends to examine dominant culture from the point of view of one who is excluded or oppressed. Thus, as the protagonist struggles to claim identity and status in the context which denies that status, the reader has the opportunity to reevaluate the tacit assumptions of the majority. This reassessment takes place while the reader is invited by the text to identify with the one the society excludes. So the novel of protest locates the reader on the outside of the context the reader actually in-

habits and this new location clarifies questions about social belief and assumption.

In the black Bildungsroman *Invisible Man* (1952), Ellison's protagonist comes to realize that he has no identity outside the white definition of who he is. At the same time, the reader gains insight into slavery and the dehumanizing effect of bigotry. Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1977) and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982) explore both feminist and minority issues.

Among modern novels, the variety that can be classified as bildungsromane seems endless. For example, there are a multitude of interesting and popular works in Science Fiction. Other examples include works in the 1950s and 1960s from three French women novelists (Françoise Sagan, Françoise Mallet-Joris, and Claire Etcherelli) and three Francophone African novels (Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure* [1961], Camar Laye's *The Dark Child* [1953], and Mongo Beri's *Mission to Kala* [1957]. No doubt examples could be found in nearly every culture in the world. Of course, there would be differences unique to each culture and time period, but the basic concept of the Bildungsroman is everyone's story.

Source: Lois Kerschen, Critical Essay on the Bildungsroman, in *Literary Movements for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Illustration by Frederic W. Pailthorpe from Great Expectations *by Charles Dickens*

Martin Swales

In the following essay, Swales explores German bildungsromane to identify inherent problems in "character and selfhood" in the form.

At one point in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* the ruler of Japan shares with the audience his vision of a judicial system in which there would be perfect consonance between punishment and crime. The crimes which he chooses as test cases seem mercifully lightweight—which contrasts engagingly with the ghoulishness of the proposed remedies. One criminal who provokes the Mikado's ire is the bore, and it is decreed that he be condemned to listen to

> A series of sermons
> By mystical Germans
> Who preach from ten till four.

As far as I am aware, W. S. Gilbert is not here pillorying any particular tradition within German theology; rather, he exploits the happy coincidence that Germans rhymes with sermons to draw upon English skepticism about German culture generally and to suggest that the German cast of mind is characterized by prodigious learnedness and long-windedness, by an unrelieved spiritual profundity that transforms anything and everything into a mystical disquisition.

W. S. Gilbert is not alone in his reservations about the German mind. George Henry Lewes, in his pioneering work *Life and Works of Goethe* (1855), at one point defines the German cast of mind by asking his readers to imagine that a Frenchman, an Englishman, and a German have been commissioned to write a treatise about the camel. The Frenchman, after a brief contemplation of the animal in question, writes a feuilleton in blameless French which, however, adds nothing to the general knowledge of the camel. The Englishman spends two years observing camels and produces a bulky volume full of facts and scrupulous observation—but devoid of any overall idea or conceptual framework to hold the dossier together. And the German, despising French frivolity and English empiricism, retires to his study, there "to construct the Idea of a Camel from out of the depths of his Moral Consciousness. And he is still at it."

Now of course Lewes—himself the most persuasive advocate of German culture generally and of Goethe in particular—had no intention of damning the German tradition lock, stock, and barrel.

But it is interesting that he raises the notion of the appalling learnedness of the German mind in the prefatory paragraphs of his discussion of Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre.* In introducing this work, he speaks of the German's fondness for plunging "into the depths." "Of all the horrors known to the German of this school," Lewes continues, "there is no horror like that of the surface—it is more terrible to him than cold water."

I think I had better come clean at the outset and admit that it is my purpose to examine (among other texts) that novel of Goethe's that elicited from Lewes the prefatory apology of the camel parable. Moreover, I shall be looking not at one novel but at several, for I wish to examine that German novel genre—the Bildungsroman—which would seem, alas, to be the perfect corroboration of the Mikado's notion of the German-tradition-as-punishment. The Bildungsroman, the novel of personal growth and development, has traditionally been seen as the German counterpart to the realistic novel of England, France, and Russia. My enterprise—as is appropriate for a German topic—immediately raises a number of theoretical problems. First—and most obvious—one asks why one needs to bother with literary genres at all. Clearly there is no reason why the critic should not establish any conceivable genre for the purposes of comparison and contrast. We could envisage the novel of adultery, of bankruptcy, of aviation, and so on. Such a model of a genre would, I suspect, have no legitimate pretensions to historical status; it would simply be a heuristic tool, a grid that allows the critic to select a number of texts for analytical and comparative purposes. But this notion of the theoretical—or, as I would prefer to call it, taxonomic—genre should not prevent us from realizing that there is also such a thing as the historical genre.

Tzvetan Todorov outlines the vital issues when he points out that the concept of genre or species is one taken from the natural sciences but that "there is a qualitative difference as to the meanings of the term 'genre' or 'specimen' depending on whether they are applied to natural things or the works of the mind." He continues, "in the former case, the appearance of a new example does not necessarily modify the characteristics of the species . . . the birth of a new tiger does not modify the species in its definition," whereas in art "*every* work modifies the sum of possible works, each new example alters the species."

It is important to recognize that the literary species or genre is, then, a historically evolving thing and that the mechanism of that evolution is the interlocking of—in T. S. Eliot's terms—tradition and the individual talent. In other words, not all genre constructs are simply foisted on the individual works after the event by eager scholars in quest of a taxonomy. Rather, the historical agency of the genre constitutes, in Hans Robert Jauss's term, that "horizon of expectation" with reference to which each individual work is made and in the context of which each individual work is received by its contemporary—and subsequent—audience. The work activates these expectations in order to debate with them, to refashion, to challenge, perhaps even to parody them. Herein resides the clement of newness, the individuality which is at one and the same time the modification *and* the transmission of the literary genre.

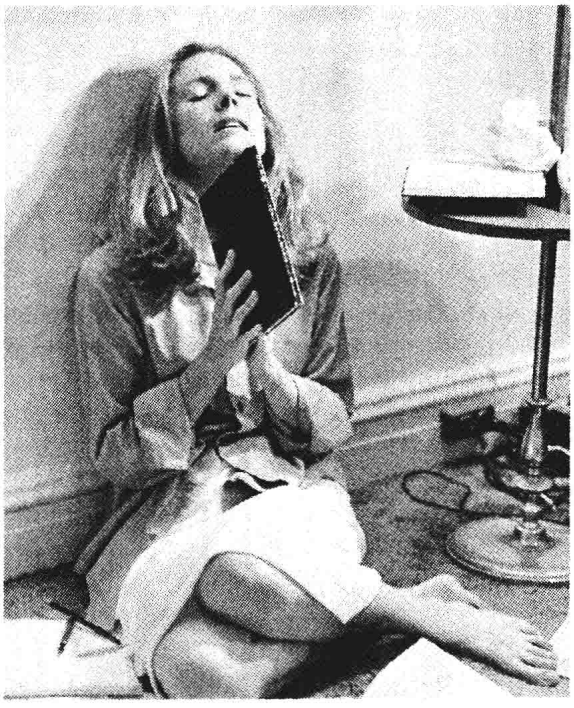
What, then, is a Bildungsroman? The word was coined in the second decade of the nineteenth century, but some fifty years elapsed before Wilhelm Dilthey's famous discussion of the genre which, as it were, put the term on the map with a vengeance. The capricious history of the term itself should not, however, blind us to the fact that the genre to which it refers existed as a particularly respected—and respectable—form of novel writing throughout the German nineteenth century. If there is an identifiable *terminus a quo*, it is in my view to be found around 1770 with the publication of the first edition of Wieland's *Agathon* in 1767 and of Friedrich von Blanckenburg's *Versuch über den Roman* (Essay on the Novel) in 1774. Blanckenburgs theoretical work grew out of his enthusiasm for Wieland's novel; for him (as also, incidentally, for Lessing) *Agathon* marked the coming of age of the novel form. Wieland's narrative, in Blanckenburgs eyes, transformed the traditional novel genre by investing it with a new psychological and intellectual seriousness. *Agathon* over and over again engages the reader in debate about novel fictions; in the process it repudiates the romance, which so longwindedly fuses love story and adventure novel, and it repudiates the moral constancy, the interpretative transparency, of traditional novel characters. For Blanckenburg, Wieland's signal achievement resided in his ability to get inside a character, to portray the complex stuff of human potential which, in interaction with the outside world, yields the palpable process of human *Werden*, of growth and change. By this means artistic—and human—dignity and cohesion was conferred on the sequence of episodic adventures which novel heroes, by tradition, underwent.

The Bildungsroman was born, then, in specific historical circumstances, in a demonstrable interlocking of theory and praxis. It is a novel form recognizably animated by the *Humanitätsideal* of late eighteenth-century Germany in that it is concerned with the whole person unfolding in all his complexity and elusiveness. It is a concern shared by Humboldt, Goethe, Schiller, and many others, and the discursive or theoretical formulations of the idea (and ideal) of *Bildung* are legion. But it is important to remember that what concerns us here is a genre of the novel, not a theoretical or cultural tract. And the novel makes certain demands in respect of plot and characterization that prevent the concern for *Bildung* from being articulated at a purely conceptual level. Indeed, this is part of the problem. The serious novel may be born with the advent of the Bildungsroman, but there remains a certain bad conscience, as it were. For the novel, it seems, retains that questionable legacy of having to do with events, adventures, episodes—all of which militate against human and poetic substance. The need constantly to rehabilitate the novel form is expressed with almost monotonous unanimity by German novel theorists throughout the nineteenth century, and it is nearly always couched in the same terms as a concern for *poetry* within the traditional *prose* of the novel. The danger with the novel is, apparently, that it all too readily backslides into an irredeemably prosaic condition. The paradigmatic statement is to be found in Hegel's *Aesthetics.*

> This novelistic quality is born when the knightly existence is again taken seriously, is filled out with real substance. The contingency of outward, actual existence has been transformed into the firm, secure order of bourgeois society and the state... Thereby the chivalrous character of these heroes whose deeds fill recent novels is transformed. They stand as individuals with their subjective goals of love, honor, ambition or with their ideals of improving the world, over against the existing order and prose of reality, which from all sides places obstacles in their path... These struggles are, however, in the modern world nothing but the apprenticeship, the education of the individual at the hands of the given reality... For the conclusion of such an apprenticeship usually amounts to the hero getting the rough spots knocked off him... In the last analysis he usually gets his girl and some kind of job, marries, and becomes a philistine just like all the others.

This is a crucial passage. And it is crucial in its all-pervasive ambivalence. On the one hand, Hegel affirms the seriousness of this kind of fiction, it being synonymous with the novel's ability to anchor the time-honored epic pattern in modern bourgeois reality. In this sense Hegel seems to offer his approval of the process by which a somewhat fastidious, idealistic—in a word, "poetic"—young man is licked into shape by the "prose" of bourgeois society. On the other hand, Hegel also seems to be saying that there is something debased—and debasing—about this process. That the highest wisdom of the novel and of its latter-day knightly adventurer should reside in the acquisition of wife, family, and job security seems a sorry—indeed philistine—reduction of the grand model. What is particularly suggestive for our purposes is the extent to which Hegel perceives the novel as hedging its bets in respect of prosaic, bourgeois reality. His comments tell us much about the Bildungsroman in that it is precisely this novel form that is animated by the dialectic of poetry and prose. And the uncertainty is nowhere more urgent, as Hegel himself saw, than with regard to the vexed question of the novel's ending. When Hegel formulates the essential theme of the novel as the conflict "between the poetry of the heart and the resisting prose of circumstances," he sets the seal on virtually all German thinking about the novel for the rest of the century. And his specter, or, to be more respectful, his *Geist*, can still be clearly felt in Lukács's *Die Theorie des Romans* of 1912.

I have already stressed that the Bildungsroman is a novel form that is concerned with the complex and diffused *Werden*, or growth, of the hero. How, then, is this process intimated narratively; how does it embody the dialectic of "poetry" and "prose"? In its portrayal of the hero's psychology the Bildungsroman operates with a tension between a concern for the sheer complexity of individual potentiality on the one hand and, on the other, a recognition that practical reality—marriage, family, a career—is a necessary dimension of the hero's self-realization, albeit one that by definition implies a limitation, indeed constriction, of the self. The tension is that between the *Nebeneinander* (the "one-alongside-another") of possible selves within the hero and the *Nacheinander* (the "one-after-another") of linear time, of practical activity, of story, or personal history. In one sense, then, the Bildungsroman undeniably has something of the rarefied epic of inwardness (the "mystical sermon") that has alienated its English readers in particular. It can tend to dissolve the lived chronology of a life into some providential scenario of symbolic patterns and recurrences. It can at times come perilously close to espousing what J. P. Stern has called "a chimerical freedom—as though somehow it were possible *not* to enter the river of experience that flows all one



A scene from a film production of The Bell Jar *based on the novel by Sylvia Plath*

way." It can be less than strenuous in its recognition of the chain of cause and effect within practical living and of the integrity and moral otherness of those characters with whom the protagonist comes into contact. On occasion we can feel that these characters exist, so to speak, not in their own right but for the educative benefit of the hero: that they are significant insofar as they are underwritten by a potentiality slumbering within him. This is as much as to say that these characters are part of a providential decor whose raison d'être is to be found in their relatedness (in a sense that can vary from the literal to the metaphorical) to the hero. But all this is only part of the truth about the Bildungsroman. For what the major novels of the tradition show is not achieved goals, not comfortable solutions, but at best directions, implications, intimations of the possible, which are shown to be no more than that. Moreover, they do not reach the point of dissolving all relationship to plot, to the *Nacheinander* of story. They may seem to promise just such an obliteration of the flow of resistantly linear experience. But they cannot deliver the goods; they do not break faith with the "prose" of the novel form and write an epistemological or aesthetic treatise. In E. M. Forster's words, "Yes, oh dear yes, the novel tells a story," and the story is made up not simply of beneficent experiences that welcome the "poetry" of the individual's inwardness; hence the tension I have spoken of, a tension which is sustained and narratively enacted—and not resolved. The grasping for clarity and losing it, the alternation of certainty of purpose with a sense of being swept along by the sheer randomness of living—these are seen to be the very stuff of human experience and to be such meaning and distinction as men are able to attain, as the Bildungsroman is able to affirm. The novel, then, is written for the sake of the journey—and not for the sake of the happy ending which that journey seems to promise.

This, then, is a sketch in necessarily broad strokes of the implications inherent in the Bildungsroman as a historical genre. I want now to comment briefly on six major texts from within that tradition. Specialist readers will, I hope, forgive me if these are but somewhat impressionistic interpretative sketches. I have tried elsewhere to provide the detailed argument both on the theory and on the praxis of the genre. I am here concerned with the implications the genre has for an understanding of the European novel as a whole; therefore, the individual text receives less than its due.

Wieland's *Agathon* (1767) operates with a profusion of narrative commentary, which on occasion reaches the proportions of a barrage. Over and over again the narrator reminds us that Agathon is not the usual novel hero; the typical protagonist should be both morally and epistemologically a constant, a known quantity throughout, whereas Agathon changes so frequently that the reader must ask if he will ever know and reliably understand him.

> He seemed by turns [nach und nach] a pious idealist, a Platonist, a republican, a hero, a stoic, a voluptuary; and he was none of these things, although he at various times passed through all these phases and always a little of each robbed off on him. It will probably continue like this for quite some time.

To look back on Agathon's life is to perceive a *Nacheinander*, a chronological sequence. Because the specific circumstances of Agathon's life change, Agathon himself changes. Yet he is always *potentially* the sum total of all these "phases," of all these possible selves—and of many others. In other words, Agathon's true self can only be conceived of as a *Nebeneinander*, as a clustering of manifold possibilities, of which at any given time he can only realize (in both senses of the word) a small proportion. Hence the narrator's irony: in one sense, the significance of the *Nacheinander*, of the plot sequence is relentlessly called into question,

but in another sense the hero *does* have a story which is somehow his and nobody else's. And stories need endings. Wieland here has recourse to the fiction of there being an original Greek manuscript on which his account is based. This manuscript ends with a typically novelistic (which is to say, improbable) happy ending, which Wieland both appropriates and undermines. His irony allows him to have his cake and eat it too: to tell a novel and to mount a critique of the expectations inherent in novel convention. Hence the happy ending, that epistemologically simple foreclosure of the process of human growth and self-discovery, is consistently undermined by the narrator's irony.

Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1796) operates with a comparable irony. Wilhelm leaves his bourgeois home and seeks experiences that promise an adequate extension of his personality. He is for some time attracted to the theater, a realm which clearly allows him to widen both actively and imaginatively his experience. But gradually he grows out of this phase of his life and finds himself more and more drawn to the Society of the Tower. The Society of the Tower is made up chiefly of aristocrats, and it is a world devoted to human—and humane—wholeness. In many ways the Society of the Tower would appear to be the goal of Wilhelm's quest, for it seems to reconcile individual limitation and human totality, practical activity and inherent potential, or—in Hegel's terms—the prose of the practical world and the poetry of the individual heart and imagination. In an appropriately dignified ceremony Wilhelm is admitted to the Society of the Tower; he receives a parchment scroll full of wise sayings, he learns that the boy Felix is indeed his son. Finally the words of graduation are pronounced over him: "Hail to thee, young man. Thy apprenticeship is done." We know that all the members of the Society of the Tower have contributed the history of their apprenticeships, their *Lehrjahre*, to its archive. The title of the novel refers to the hero's apprenticeship, and his very name—Meister—promises the attainment to mastery. We should, then, by rights have reached the end of the novel. Indeed, our expectations seem to be speedily confirmed, for our hero approaches life with a new mastery and certainty of purpose. He decides that Therese is the appropriate wife for himself and mother for Felix, and he proposes to her. But this action, alas, turns out to be a complete error, from whose consequences he is shielded by pure good fortune. It comes, therefore, as no surprise that our hero feels cheated; so do we, and so, one suspects, did Goethe's contemporary readers, on whose taste for novels of secret societies *Wilhelm Meister* clearly draws, without, as it were, delivering the goods. Goethe, it seems to me, is, like Wieland before him, mounting a critique of traditional novel expectations precisely in order to set up a narrative irony that both validates and calls into question the epistemological assumptions behind such expectations. We note that there is something strangely discursive and wordy about the Society of the Tower (it displays, for example, a somewhat schoolmasterly fondness for wise sayings and maxims). The Society may be dedicated to the concept of human wholeness, but it is not the embodiment of that wholeness. Nor does it confer inalienable possession of wisdom on the aspiring (but struggling) protagonist. The law of linear experience, the *Nacheinander* of plot, continues out beyond the promised goal. So how does the novel end? Like *Agathon* before it, it closes with a happy ending which is undercut by irony as fairy-tale ease and stage-managed providentiality take over.

At one point toward the end of Adalbert Stifter's *Der Nachsommer* (1857, translated as *Indian Summer*) the hero—we wait a long time before we discover that his name is Heinrich Drendorf—undertakes a world journey.

> I went first via Switzerland to Italy; to Venice, Florence, Rome, Naples, Syracuse, Palermo, Malta. From Malta I took a ship to Spain, which I crossed from south to north with many detours. I was in Gibraltar, Granada, Seville, Cordoba, Toledo, Madrid, and many other lesser towns... I had been absent for one and a half months less than two years. It was again spring when I returned.

For the first time in this lengthy novel, experiences are recounted which would commonly be regarded as interesting and exciting. Yet these details are reduced to a mere list, to an empty, cataloging baldness which is never applied to the things and modest activities of the Rose House, the dwelling of Risach, the mentor figure. The description of the world tour exudes an unmistakable inertia. Heinrich tells us, "I had been absent [ich war abwesend gewesen] for one and a half months less than two years," and this explains the deadness of the list. The places visited represent an exile from the centrality of the Rose House, an interlude of inauthenticity, of "being away from being." It is therefore understandable that, after what amounts to a package tour *avant la lettre*, Heinrich returns home with relief. But then he always returns with relief to the Rose House, for it is within that world that everyday objects and modest, recurring human activities can be celebrated

with a human (and narrative) affirmation that serves to highlight the emptiness of the world tour. Stifter's art is pitted, therefore, against common expectations of human and narrative interest. It is this which makes *Der Nachsommer* the painstaking yet incandescent litany that it is.

Der Nachsommer is a novel written against history in a dual sense: against social and political history, in that no narrative interest is displayed in the changes and frictions within mid-nineteenth-century Austrian society; against personal history, against story and plot, in that Heinrich's experiences ultimately all dissolve into a sublime stasis—hence the relative unimportance attached to the naming of the hero. In Hegel's terms, Stifter's novel does reconcile the poetry of inward values and the prose of outward, practical activity. It is also the one novel in the Bildungsroman tradition that resolves the tension between *Nebeneinander* and *Nacheinander.* But it can do so only by confining the story to a number of simple, practical activities underwritten by an urgent—almost hectoring—sense of human and artistic wholeness. The tone is one of sacramental pedantry; the difficulty attending upon the attempt to write an unproblematic Bildungsroman in fact serves to intimate the increasing tension to which the genre is prone, a tension which can be exorcised only by converting the novel into a monolithic litany.

Gottfried Keller's *Der grüne Heinrich* (1880, translated as *Green Henry*) is concerned, like so many of the major bildungsromane with an artist, or more accurately, with someone of artistic potential. Heinrich Lee tries throughout his early years to replace reality with the alternative world of his imaginative and fictive capacities. In the course of the novel, we see how he succumbs increasingly to that dualism which is so much of his own making. What Heinrich is unable to perceive is that reality—even the modest reality of a Swiss peasant community—is sustained not just by pragmatic allegiances and practical accommodations but also by an inward, imaginative assent which rounds out the modest facts and experiences into an all-embracing human totality. Because he cuts himself off from such human fulfillment, Heinrich condemns himself to an increasingly lifeless existence. His art suffers too, in that it is either a dissociated fantasy with no enlivening relationship to the objective world or a painstaking copy of physical details with no overall imaginative conception to sustain it. Heinrich returns to Switzerland at the end of the novel, becoming a "somewhat melancholy and monosyllabic civil servant."

Keller's novel is grounded in the disjunction within the protagonist's experience of the prose of concrete circumstances on the one hand, and of the poetry of the heart's potential on the other. The narrative perspective is all-important here; the second version of the novel is sustained in the first person throughout. The recollecting voice of Heinrich the narrator is able to document precisely the disjunction I have referred to above—and to suggest the alternative (but unrealized) possibility that there need be no such absolute gulf between poetry and prose, between the complex inwardness, the *Nebeneinander* of the inner man and the *Nacheinander* of his actual living in the realm of human society. The tension that is so characteristic of the Bildungsroman becomes here a dualism; moreover, Keller's novel suggests with an urgency rare in the genre the dangers of such unfocused idealism. There is, in this sense, a moral astringency to Keller's debate with the Bildungsroman tradition which so informs his own creation.

Finally, a few brief comments about two twentieth-century bildungsromane. Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (1924, *The Magic Mountain*, 1927) chronicles the experiences undergone by a young man in the course of a seven-year stay in a sanatorium. These years, it is suggested, constitute a journey into self-knowledge, a *Bildungsreise*, whose goal, it would seem, is to be found in the chapter entitled "Snow," in which Hans Castorp has a dream vision of the wholeness of man, of a totality which is not only greater than all antinomies but which is also humane, affirmative in its relationship to the living process. No reader can fail to sense the crucial importance of these insights. And yet the goal of Castorp's quest, once glimpsed, once formulated, is forgotten as he stumbles back through the snow to the sanatorium. The vision, the complete perception of human totality, exists outside ordinary time; it can be glimpsed as in a dream; it can be formulated discursively, but it cannot be possessed as an abiding and effective recipe for everyday living. The *Nebeneinander* cannot halt the *Nacheinander* of Castorp's experience; his personal history continues on its wayward path until he is caught up in the events of that other *Nacheinander* to which he has paid such scant attention—world history. For at the end of the novel, the "problem child of life" (*Sorgenkind des Lebens*) finds himself plunged into the holocaust of the First World War.

The rhythm of Mann's novel in many ways recalls that of *Wilhelm Meister;* the seeming Grails of both novels—the Society of the Tower, the snow

vision, both of which entail a perception of man as a humane totality—do not come at the end of the novels in which they occur. In both cases the hero emerges on the other side of the goal, feeling not really any the wiser. Both expressions of human totality have in common a certain discursiveness, a limitation to the conceptual postulation of totality, which is relativized by the demands of the hero's ongoing experience. What, then, do we make of Hans Castorp, our mediocre—*mittelmäßig*—protagonist? He is, I would suggest, mediocre in the precise sense of *Mittelmäßig*, "middle way." He is undistinguished by any dominant characteristic or capacity; he is the point at which the other characters in the novel, all of them so much better-known quantities than Hans Castorp, intersect. He is, as it were, over-endowed with potentiality. And yet the novel does not allow him to become simply a static cipher for the complexity of man, for he is also a Person, an ordinary individual who, like all of us, has to live his (and nobody else's) life.

Thomas Mann's employment of the Bildungsroman tradition in this novel is the measure of his urgent need, under the impact of the 1914–18 war, to review his own and his country's intellectual tradition. A similar critical urgency is, in my view, the source of Hermann Hesse's partly skeptical, partly affectionate employment of the genre in his last novel, *Das Glasperlenspiel* (1943, *The Glass Bead Game*)—where the pressure of historical events comes from the turmoil of the 1930s. The novel is narrated by an inhabitant of Castalia, an ivory-tower region dominated by intellect and meditation, who in the first few pages of his account makes derogatory remarks about the bourgeois fondness for biography. Such an interest in the individual and his life story is, he argues, symptomatic of a declining culture. Castalia, on the other hand, is sustained by the principle of suprapersonal service; it has its center of gravity in that model of synchronic universality, the Glass Bead Game, which, in its very abstraction from the specific, the individuated, the particular, creates a scenario for the total play of all human values and experiences. However, the experiences with which the narrator is crucially concerned are those of one man—Josef Knecht (the name, meaning, roughly, servant, is, of course, a contrastive echo of Goethe's Meister). Knecht joins the Castalian province and becomes its supreme exponent and servant as Master of the Glass Bead Game. But he then leaves Castalia, because he can no longer accept the abstraction and bloodlessness of the province's values. In its striving for spiritual totality, Castalia is hostile to the ontological dimension that is history. But Knecht, through his encounters with Pater Jacobus, comes to perceive the truth of history—to perceive that Castalia itself is, like everything else, a historical phenomenon. At the same time he realizes that he too is a historical phenomenon in the sense that he has a personal history, that he lives, not in timeless abstraction, but in the chronological specificity of choice, of cause and effect. In other words, he learns that he has a story, that his experiences are inalienably enshrined in the *Nacheinander* of a lived life. All this is faithfully reported by the narrator—without his ever modifying that Castalian ideology with which he begins his account and which Knecht's life so manifestly calls into question. It is here that we find in my view the narrative and thematic center of Hesse's text; and the conflict between the *Nebeneinander* (the Castalian striving for universality and totality) and the *Nacheinander* (of Knecht's story) is the measure of the novel's engagement with the Bildungsroman tradition.

The foregoing has been a somewhat rapid review of the theory and practice of the German Bildungsroman from about 1770 to 1943. I want in conclusion to inquire into the implications of this novel tradition for the European novel in general. Let me begin by clarifying one or two issues. In quantitative terms the Bildungsroman is by no means the only kind of novel to come out of Germany in the period with which I am concerned. Nevertheless, it must be said that most German novel writing of distinction does in some form or another partake of this genre. I know it is nowadays fashionable within the curiously neopositivistic enthusiasm for *Rezeptionsgeschichte* (the history of the reception of a work) to say that scholarly inquiry should be concerned not with literary quality but with the demonstrable history of reading habits within a given society. But it seems to me difficult to avoid the issue of literary quality—for the simple reason that no amount of *Rezeptionsgeschichte* will alter the feebleness of a novel such as Freytag's *Soll und Haben* (1855) when compared with, say, *Dombey and Son.* Moreover, as a number of critics have shown recently, the 1830s and 1840s in Germany witnessed a consistent—but ultimately unavailing—attempt to direct the novel away from the Bildungsroman, away from the dominant presence of *Wilhelm Meister* and toward a more socially and historically aware novel (after the manner of Walter Scott). The preeminence of the Bildungsroman can be gauged from the fact that it was not confined simply to serious novels for the

adult market. In 1880 there appeared a novel in the German language which must be accounted one of the supreme best-sellers of all time. It has been translated into dozens of foreign languages, it has been filmed and produced in television serializations, and its readership apparently numbers some forty million. If you are still wondering what I am talking about, let me give you the title. It is, of course, *Heidi* by Johanna Spyri. But this, let me hasten to add, is not the correct title of that amazingly successful book; for the first volume of Heidi's adventures is actually entitled *Heidis Lehr- und Wanderjahre.* All of which, I suppose, goes to show that not every novel in German which partakes of the Bildungsroman tradition has to be a sermon by a mystical German who preaches from ten till four.

Let me add a further word in justification of this novel tradition. W. H. Bruford, in a study of the term *Bildung*, has suggested many of the ways in which it speaks of the characteristic limitation of the German middle classes in the nineteenth century; the inwardness of the values esteemed, the fastidious aversion to practical affairs, to politics, the sacramental pursuit of self-cultivation; all these factors bespeak that well-known phenomenon, the *deutsche Misere*, which has been identified as the lack of bourgeois emancipation in nineteenth-century Germany. The specific social and economic circumstances that obtained and their impact on German cultural and intellectual life have been acutely analyzed by a number of distinguished commentators. Moreover, one should add that the nineteenth-century situation is part of a larger legacy which is bound up with the particularism of the Holy Roman Empire, with its tangle of small principalities. The lack of a unified national arena, of a focus, a metropolis where the spiritual issues of the age could find palpable enactment helped to produce a situation in which the nation existed as an inward—or, if not inward, then at least cultural and linguistic—unit, rather than as a demographic entity. One can register all this as a shortcoming, as something that in linguistic terms militated against there being an energetic language of public (and journalistic) debate. But the lack produced as its corollary a certain gain, a language that could explore inward and elusive experience with an assuredness and differentiation rare in other European languages. Such a language, usually associated with religious or mystical experience, became a potent contribution to the autobiographical and biographical narrative form with the advent of the complex phenomenon of secularization in the second half of the eighteenth century. The pietist, confessional mode is that inward quest for the soul's vindication which so often entails an awareness of sinfulness as a precondition of spiritual distinction. Such concerns (at once thematic and linguistic), in their secularized form, clearly gave the Bildungsroman part of its characteristic impetus. Now all this may be, to English observers, an inauspicious climate for the emergence of the modern novel in Germany. The dangerous historical consequences of the German reverence for inwardness are indicated in Bruford's book and have been underpinned in a recent article by R. Hinton Thomas, in which it is shown that the notion of *Bildung*—with its central concept of the organic personality—could be, and was, transferred into the sphere of social and political debate in Germany, and became part of the stock vocabulary of German conservatism on which Nazism was later to draw. These are pertinent insights. But neither Bruford nor Thomas are concerned in any thoroughgoing way with the Bildungsroman, which is after all, a vital part of the tradition they explore. And I want to insist that the Bildungsroman is precisely a voice from within the German intellectual tradition which can command our assent and respect—because it does not offer unequivocal certainties, unreflected values, but embodies the difficulties of those aspirations which, in their theoretical and discursive formulation, can prove so forbidding for English readers. In other words, if we want to look for a critique of *Bildung*, the Bildungsroman is an obvious and eloquent starting point. Moreover, it seems to me that many of the features of the Bildungsroman that allowed it in the past to be relegated to the periphery of the European novel tradition—with the familiar sigh of relief that it was yet another example of the pathology of the German mind—are now part of our experience of the twentieth-century novel. I have in mind the self-consciousness of the Bildungsroman, its discursiveness and self-reflectivity, its narrative obliqueness, its concern for the elusiveness of selfhood, its dialectical critique of the role of plot in the novel—all these things are not merely German (that is, provincial) excesses; they are the staple diet of the modern novelist's unease in respect of the form he has inherited. All of this makes it very tempting to engage in some polemical historicism—and to suggest that the Bildungsroman, precisely because it articulates the unease of a society not easily at home in the bourgeois age, speaks particularly forcefully to our age, when that unease is so very apparent.

We are, I suspect, all familiar with the argument that the novel expresses the contradictions of bourgeois society, that it has its roots in, to quote Raymond Williams's phrase, the "creative disturbance" generated by the norms of that society. Or to put the matter another way, the modern novel (and we must remember that, in terms of simple chronology, the Bildungsroman tradition in Germany coincides with the rise of the novel as a European phenomenon) is born under the astrological sign of irony. Ernst Behler has shown that irony as we know it came into being as the expression of a decisive change in sensibility which occurred in the late eighteenth century. He argues that up until this time irony was a stable rhetorical device (by which a speaker intimated the opposite of what he was saying). But with Friedrich Schlegel irony became enriched by the complex dimension of an author's relationship to his own creation. It was for this kind of irony that Schlegel praised *Wilhelm Meister* (at the same time wondering if Goethe would understand what he meant). And he was referring to irony as a structural principle, irony which issues in a kind of self-reflectivity in the novel. If the ground of that irony is the dialectic of the creative, inward potential of man on the one hand and on the other the necessary *donnée* of finite, palpable experience, then we can see that such irony is the articulation of vital issues inherent not only in the novel form but also in aesthetics, in philosophy, in history. This is perhaps why Hegel, in his comments on the novel, was so ambivalent precisely about the ironic constellation which he was expounding, why, when he incorporated references to a novel into his *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, they were to Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau.* For in this work Hegel perceived the situation of a mind unwilling to serve the values of society but unsure of its own integrity, seeking to realize itself in the complex modalities of its estrangement from the objective world. Lionel Trilling has superbly shown how Diderot's novel and Hegel's gloss on it are central to any understanding of the issues of selfhood, sincerity, authenticity in their (and our) time. In the novel's oscillation between potentiality and actuality—and it was that oscillation which Hegel saw as constitutive of *Bildung*—it enacts the deepest spiritual issues of its age. Moreover, we would do well to remember that Hegel was not alone in his admiration of *Le Neveu de Rameau.* It claimed both the interest and the active engagement of the translation process from none other than Goethe himself. This would, at the very least, suggest the improbability that Goethe's own *Wilhelm Mister* is an unproblematic pilgrimage toward human wholeness and fulfillment. But perhaps it might be felt that all this talk about irony is becoming rather heavyweight, not to say teutonically mystical. For Hegel, of course, every aspect of human experience was reducible to that ironic field of force in which mind and facts, idea and actuality intersect.

Let me then turn to less heady versions of the argument about irony and the novel. It has been shown, most cogently by Ian Watt, that the breakthrough in sensibility that makes the novel possible in the eighteenth century has to do with a perception of the *specific* nature of experience, with the individuality and particularity of the vital criteria which determine significance and truthfulness. In other words, in respect of narrative forms, the eighteenth century witnesses the breakdown of a stable, public rhetoric in favor of a private language in which the narrator appeals to the reader's own experience as epistemological authority. Wolfgang Kayser and others have argued that the birth of the modern novel is linked to the emergence of an overtly *personal* narrator. In theoretical terms, this entails a repudiation of the romance in favor of some more truthful (that is, unstable and personal) mode of narrative discourse. Let me take an example from Ian Watt's discussion of *Moll Flanders.* Watt points out the irony which results from a discrepancy between the experiences narrated and the kinds of values which the successful Moll, as recollecting narrator, espouses. He then goes on to ask how far this irony is, as it were, an articulated situation, or how far it is largely unreflected in the sense that the irony is there for us, the readers, but not for the characters. He concludes that the latter is the case, that *Moll Flanders* "is undoubtedly an ironic object, but it is not a work of irony." With this assessment I would agree. And I want to borrow Watt's categories and to risk a somewhat large generalization. If much English novel writing is, as would commonly be argued, realistic in spirit—that is, sustained by the imaginative concern to recreate and thereby to understand society, its pressures, its economic and moral sactions, its institutions and norms—then it is a fiction that operates with what J. P. Stern has called the "epistemological naivety" of realism. The social context is taken as given—it is so much the *donnée* of the novelist's art that it is not the subject of epistemological scrutiny. Now of course, in documenting the clash between individual values and social norms, between personal aspirations and the actuality of society, the realistic novel does not emerge with stable, reassuring assessments of the

Above all else, it can differentiate our awareness of how the novel can convey and explore the life of the mind, for the Bildungsroman is not simply an allegorical scenario of philosophical positions and values."

way its characters live, move, and have their being. Indeed, it is one of the hallmarks of the realistic novel as we know it that it reveals the jostling norms of the social and moral situation which it so persuasively evokes. But the realistic novel is concerned to reflect the jostling—rather than to reflect on the norms themselves. The result is the novel as "ironic object." And this I take to be as true of Defoe as it is of Balzac or Dickens. But I want to suggest that the Bildungsroman, although it may display a whole number of naivetés, does not suffer from *epistemological* naiveté. It is higly self-aware in respect of the interplay of values which it so unremittingly explores and articulates within the hero's experience. Hence, its irony is qualitatively different; it is irony as structural principle; it is the novel whose self-awareness generates the "work of irony" (in Watt's sense).

Here we arrive at the central objection to the German novel tradition: its lack of realism. There are two points I wish to make in answer to this charge. First, it seems to me a falsity to assume that the novel has to be wedded to the tenets of literary realism in order to be truly a novel. A number of recent studies of the novel have shown that the genre can appropriately be a self-conscious form in which referentiality of import is anything but the be-all and end-all. Moreover, it has been suggested that the realistic novel is but one, historically circumscribed, possibility within a much more durable and continuous tradition. Second, I want to insist that the concerns of the German Bildungsroman arc recognizably part of the overall situation of the nineteenth-century European novel. The conflict between individual aspirations and the resistant presence of practical limitations is as much a theme within, say, the Victorian novel as it is within the Bildungsroman. But with a difference. Within the framework of literary realism, this conflict finds palpable, outward enactment, and human growth and development is plotted on a graph of moral understanding; whereas in the German novel tradition, the tension between *Nebeneinander* and *Nacheinander* is essentially a debate about the coordinates of human cognition, and the issues raised arc epistemological rather than moral, are embedded in the narrator's (and reader's) capacity for reflectivity. If the German Bildungsroman is a legitimate voice within the European novel as bourgeois epic, then it has something to tell even English readers about the inherent potentialities of the novel form. Moreover, we should not forget that English novel theory changes in the second half of the nineteenth century, moving away from the unambiguous commitment to realism towards a greater concern for what Arnold called "the application of ideas to life." Stang and Graham have both highlighted the emergence in the 1880s of the so-called novel of ideas or philosophical romance. If the English novel theory of the 1750s (in the famous remarks of Dr. Johnson and Fielding) had repudiated the romance, by the 1880s the wheel had come full circle. And, as Elinor Shaffer has recently shown, a novel such as George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876) is vitally informed by a complex indebtedness to Goethe, to *Wilhelm Meister*, to the particular tradition of higher (that is, mythological) criticism in Germany; and thereby the strenuous moral concern of the English novel tradition interlocks with a mythopoeic consciousness, with a density of spiritual and cultural reflectivity which sustains—and is sustained by—the lives which that novel chronicles.

I hope I have said enough to suggest that the Bildungsroman should no longer be dismissed as a narrowly German exercise in the novel mode. For it is, in my view, a narrative genre that raises problems to do with character and selfhood in the novel, to do with plot, to do with the relationship between narrator and reader which can enrich our understanding of the possibilities of the novel form. Above all else, it can differentiate our awareness of how the novel can convey and explore the life of the mind, for the Bildungsroman is not simply an allegorical scenario of philosophical positions and values. No other novel form is so engaged creatively by the play of values and ideas; yet at the same time no other novel form is so tough in its refusal to hypostatize consciousness, thinking, in-

sight as a be-all and end-all. (Hence that insistent presence of the *Nacheinander* on which I have laid such emphasis.) No other novel has been so fascinated by the creative inner potential in man—hence its fondness for artists or cryptoartists as protagonists—yet no other novel has seen the artistic sensibility as one involving a whole set of epistemological problems that are not susceptible of easy, practical solutions.

Now of course, this concern for the life of the mind is not confined only to the novel in German literature. English readers have often felt that German culture generally is heavily philosophical (shades of the Mikado's objections!). There is much truth to this—but it can also gravely mislead. And I want to insist that German literature is philosophical not in the sense that it has a philosophical scheme which it wants to impose but rather in that it asks after the place of philosophizing, of reflectivity, in living. Ultimately its finest products always suggest that consciousness and being are inextricably intertwined; that consciousness is not a realm serenely encapsulated from the stresses and strains of living.

Source: Martin Swales, "Irony and the Novel: Reflections on the German Bildungsroman," in *Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman*, edited by James Hardin, University of South Carolina Press, 1991, pp. 46–68.

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Classicism

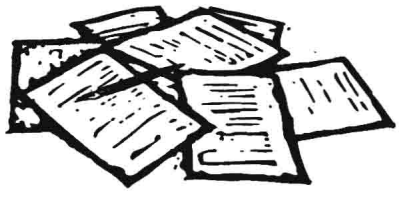
Movement Origin

c. 400 B.C.

Classicism, by the standards of many critics, is not necessarily defined by the boundaries of time; however, there are several major periods with which Classicism is generally associated, including the Golden Age of Greece, the age of Cicero and Augustus in Rome, and the Enlightenment periods of France, England, and Germany. Classicism also encompasses all of what is considered Neoclassicism, though it should be noted that the inverse is not considered true.

Both ancient Greek and ancient Roman cultures had definite ideas and attitudes about literature. The qualities they valued in literary works included a sense of restraint and of restricted scope, a dominance of reason, a sense of form, and a unity of purpose and design, to name a few. Clarity was especially important to the Greeks, emphasizing that communication was an act of informational transmission between multiple individuals rather than the end result of self-expression by a single individual. They also valued objectivity over passion.

Each classical revival emulated these characteristics differently. The French classicists stressed reason and intellect, while the English took great interest in form. The Germans wanted not only to imitate but to surpass the grandeur of the original classics. Some modern-day literary works also manifest various aspects of the classical traditions, as seen in the works of T. S. Eliot, though there is less agreement about whether they can truly be described as works of classicism.



Representative Authors

Euripides (c. 485–406 B.C.)

A writer during the first classical period in Greece, Euripides was a playwright of great import. The decline of the Golden Age in Greece, as a result of the Peloponnesian War, was witnessed by Euripides probably accounts for the overall tone of his tragedies. His works also serve as a chronicle of Athenian thought during a rather turbulent time in its history and are excellent representations of Attic Drama, the theatrical genre of the time.

Euripides was born in 485 B.C. in Athens, where he spent most of his life. Historians believe that he was from a middle-class background, which suggests that he was well educated. Euripides was also a friend of many of the great thinkers of the time, including Anaxagoras, Socrates, and Protagoras. During his childhood and into early adulthood, Euripides enjoyed the splendor of an Athens rich in resources and political allies.

In 455, Euripides wrote his first tetralogy, a composition including three tragedies and a satyr play. Ninety-two plays are known to have been written by the dramatist after the start of the war. Only nineteen of his plays still exist, most of them tragedies in the form of divine myths, marital narratives, and noble family histories.

Euripides's works were often not warmly received by the Greeks of his time, as he did not believe in the triumph of reason over passion, nor did he believe that reason and order regulated the universe. This idea is demonstrated in the gods of his plays, who do not always act in just or compassionate ways, even exhibiting the less desirable characteristics of their mortal counterparts. It has been suggested that, as a result of these stylistic differences, Euripides's work was not popular at dramatic festivals, earning him relatively few prizes. Euripides eventually left Athens in response to his critics and at the invitation of the Macedonia King Archelaus. Archelaus requested that Euripides's writings contribute to a new cultural center the king envisioned as a rival to Athens. Unfortunately, Euripides would live less than two years in Macedonia before he died.

Despite his unpopularity, Euripides has been tagged a "stylistic innovator" for his unconventional beliefs, particularly by contemporary critics who contend that his works contributed to the creation of modern drama. In his own time, Sophocles and others admired his work for its psychological realism and its use of simple, everyday dialogue in favor of the decorative aristocratic language that dominated the genre. The Dionysian festival would also revive his plays 100 years after his death in 406, to enjoy a much greater reception.

Vergil

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832)

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe has been recognized for his considerable writing talents as well as his genius. He has been called a shaping force in German literature, particularly in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. An exceptional man, Goethe excelled as a scientist, philosopher, musician, and artist, in addition to his literary accomplishments. Goethe's drama *Faust* has been compared to the works of Dante and Shakespeare and is an important piece of Romantic literature.

Goethe was born August 28, 1749, in Frankfurt, Germany. His mother was the daughter of the mayor, and his father spent much of his time writing memoirs, supporting local artists, and educating his children. Goethe's education was extensive at a very early age—so extensive that Goethe managed to write an epistolary novel (a novel written as a letter or series of letters) incorporating six different languages (German, French, Italian, English,

Latin, and Yiddish) by his early teens. He entered the University of Leipzig at the age of sixteen to study law but found greater satisfaction in studying art, literature, and music. After two semesters, Goethe dropped out of the university to pursue an education independently. Some of Goethe's earliest works created during this time include *Buch Annette* (translated as *Book for Annette*), a book of poetry inspired by a landlord's daughter at an inn Goethe frequented, and the play *Die Laune des Verliebten* (translated as *The Wayward Lover*), a pastoral comedy.

In 1768, Goethe became ill and returned to Frankfurt to rest and recover. He studied alchemy, astrology, and the occult during this time and read the works of Shakespeare, Lessing, and Rousseau before continuing his law studies in Strasbourg in March of 1770. Goethe remained in Strasbourg to practice law for several years. During this time, Goethe wrote an epistolary novel entitled *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, based on the true story of a man's suicide over a sour love affair and his own feelings for a friend's fiancée. The novel was wildly popular in Germany but was tagged immoral by British and American critics because of the suicide depicted.

The popularity of Goethe's *Werther* also earned Goethe various official posts in Weimar, by invitation of Duke Karl August, and he stayed for over twenty-five years. A trip to Italy in 1786 fueled his creativity. Goethe was so inspired by this trip that he ultimately changed his creative direction. He began writing poetry in classical form, utilizing principles of formal unity and ordered language, as demonstrated in *Hermann und Dorothea* (Herman and Dorothea) in 1798. Goethe also developed an interest in producing scientific writings, expounding on his knowledge of botany, optics, and light.

Goethe's greatest work, *Faust*, is considered a literary classic. It was published originally in two parts, the first in 1808 and the second posthumously in 1832. Goethe continued to write until his death on March 22, 1832, publishing his autobiography and several novels.

Homer (fl. c. 750 B.C.)

It is of interest to note that Homer, whom many consider one of the greatest poets of western civilization, may not have existed. Various critics and historians offer conflicting views as to whether the man actually lived or was a fictional character given credit for the work of many. Some believed him to be a bard by profession, a singing poet who composed and recited verses on legends and history. It is difficult to say when exactly the poet would have written. Based on language and style, it can be narrowed down to the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries B.C. The language of his works, a blend of Ionic and Aeolic, indicates that he was perhaps from the Island of Chios, off the western coast of Asia Minor, where one family has actually claimed him as a legitimate ancestor.

In support of this theory, Demokodos, who appears in the *Odyssey*, is believed to be a portrait of Homer, a blind minstrel who sings about the fall of Troy. Until the third century B.C., the Greeks insisted that an individual named Homer was responsible for both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, among other various minor works that have been attributed to the author. However, grammarians eventually began to wonder if the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were written by two different people.

In direct opposition to the idea of a single author, critics also point out that an anonymous group of bards may have been responsible for the work of Homer. Blind, wandering old bards were referred to as "homros" and may be the creative energy behind a fictional Homer. Scholars have also identified many inconsistencies or stylistic differences between the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, supporting the idea that they were the work of two different authors. Regardless of whether Homer's voice is that of one man or several, the literary greatness of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is unchallenged even today.

Jean Racine (1639–1699)

Born on December 22, 1639, in La Ferte-Milon, France, Jean Racine was orphaned as an infant and raised by his paternal grandparents. Racine's education was dictated by Jansenist doctrine, a sect within the Roman Catholic Church. Aside from his religious indoctrination, Racine also studied Greek and Latin literature. After studying theology in the south of France, Racine returned to Paris, where he befriended Molière. Molière's troupe performed Racine's first play, *La thébaïde, ou les frères ennemis* (translated as The Thebaid), a 1664 play about the rivalry between Oedipus's sons. After Molière agreed to put on his second play, *Alexandre le grand*, a year later, the friendship between Racine and Molière ended over creative differences when Racine pulled the play two weeks into its production.

This would be one of a series of conflicts for Racine. Upon seeing *Alexandre le grand*, Corneille

harshly criticized Racine for his work, in turn leading to a bitter rivalry between the two dramatists. Racine incited the anger of the Jansenists for denouncing them publicly, making nasty comments which painted the Catholic sect in a most unfavorable light. Finally, the Duchesse de Bouillona was an enemy of Racine's and intentionally engaged in activities that would upset Racine's career as a dramatist. In one instance, the Duchesse encouraged another dramatist to write a play to rival Racine's production. Additionally, she purposely purchased a group of good seats, only to leave them vacant on the opening nights of Racine's plays.

All of Racine's enemies took a toll on his career, and ultimately he left the theater and retired to family life. He then shared a job as royal historiographer, a high-profile post requiring him to travel with Louis XIV on military campaigns. He again put pen to paper at the request of the king's wife in 1689, writing the biblical story of *Esther* and a subsequent biblical drama *Athaliah*. Racine produced a few additional works before his death on April 21, 1699.

Racine's style is representative of several classical (and, by extension, neoclassical) ideals, namely those of simplicity, realism, and polish. Racine is also noted for the ease with which he conformed to the unities of action, time, and place, especially with plays larger in scope. It was common for the playwright to skillfully compress several years of story line into the course of two to three hours in an effort to preserve the convention. It has also been pointed out that Racine followed Aristotle's view that a cast of characters was inherently more important than any one figure within a drama.

Vergil (70–19 B.C.)

The accomplishments of Vergil as a gifted poet were an inspiration for Roman writers. Vergil drew on classical Greek conventions to compose his works while at the same time asserting his own unique sense of style. Critics also cite the strong influence his themes have had on Western literature, a vast canon from which countless authors can be named.

Publius Vergilius Maro was born on October 15, 70 B.C., at Andes in northern Italy. He was fairly well educated, which suggests his family was at least from the middle class, and was prepared for a career in law. However, he abandoned law practice after making one appearance in court. He retired to Naples, where he spent most of his life, to study philosophy. In 41 B.C., Vergil was forced to appeal to Octavian Caesar, who later became Augustus, to return his parents' land because it had been confiscated for distribution to war veterans. It was through the intercession of his friends that the land was returned. When Vergil wrote his *Eclogue*, they were partially an expression of his gratitude to his friends and to Octavian.

The *Eclogues*, written sometime between 42 and 37 B.C., were a series of pastoral poems, or poems composed on rural themes and involving shepherd characters. In the case of the ten poems comprising the *Eclogues*, unhappy shepherds unlucky in love featured in idealized settings (such setting being another convention of the pastoral form). The popularity of the works led to the publication of Vergil's *Georgics* (42–37 B.C.), a treatise on farming.

The final work Vergil undertook before his death was his grandest. The *Aeneid* was commissioned by the emperor, Augustus, as a way to promote his status as Roman Emperor. The epic glorifies the leader's ancestor Aeneas and prophesies of Rome's Golden Age. Vergil was paid handsomely for his tribute, which he worked on for roughly ten years until he died in 19 B.C. Curiously that same year, Vergil ordered his literary executor to burn the *Aeneid* in the event of his death upon a trip, planned to last three years, to Greece and Asia, during which he hoped to complete and polish the work. Augustus denied this request and instead had it edited and published, though nothing was added to it. The publication of the *Aeneid* ensured Vergil's fame as a poet and classicist.

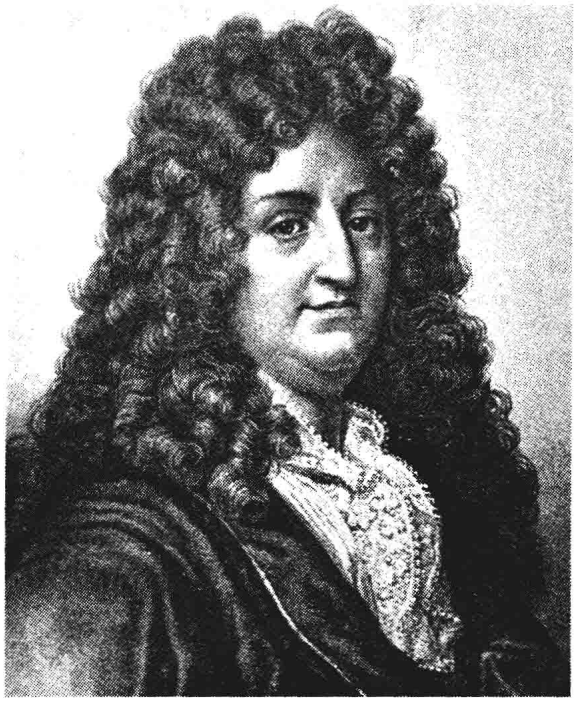
Representative Works

Aeneid

The *Aeneid* has not only greatly influenced every resurgence of Classicism but has likely changed the course of all of western literature. Its effect on modern writings is so profound that its extent and nature is likely unknowable.

The *Aeneid* recalls the travels of Aeneas, the Trojan Prince, after the fall of his city as a direct result of the Trojan War. Aeneas's journey takes him to Italy at the end of the fifth book. In book, six it is prophesied by Aeneas's dead father that his descendants will be responsible for Rome's future greatness as an empire.

The *Aeneid* has been called a work that is inherently Roman because of its sense of Augustan



Jean Racine

patriotism and imperialism. Structurally, Vergil also created his epic in the true mode of a classicist. His epic, apart from its Augustan flavor, is the product of Homeric epic poetry and other ancient practices and beliefs. The work also engages in a celebration of the Golden Age and a tribute to many important political figures of the day.

Vergil's *Aeneid* is equally recognized for its narrative form. In creating a shifting narrative from the objective to the subjective, Vergil is said to have refined narrative conventions. Scholars see this shifting of perspective as an important development in the work because it fosters a sense of psychological realism while providing for contextual depth and breadth to the work. In other words, it allows readers to have a greater understanding of the events of the work, due to the insights presented by various characters or voices. Vergil also refined the dactylic hexameter, a traditionally Greek meter, in his work.

Andromaque

The play *Andromaque* is Jean Racine's first major work, appearing in Paris in 1667. The play served as direct competition to Pierre Corneille's play *El Cid*. Racine believed that Corneille was intent on ruining Racine's reputation as a dramatist. The work draws on classical characters and themes for its substance: Rome, war, heroes, and fallen empires. The play, much like Racine's other works, would help to shape some of the dramatic literary conventions of the Neoclassical period.

The play takes place shortly after the fall of Troy. It centers on the fate of Andromaque, the widow of Hector, whom Pyrrhus, the son of Achilles (a major figure in the Trojan war), is holding captive. The Greeks send Oreste, the son of Agamemnon (the king who led the expedition against Troy), along with a communication requesting that both Andromaque and her son be returned to them lest Troy should rise once again. The entire plot is complicated by deep love interests.

The world of *Andromaque* is one dominated by passions. The ancients frowned on intense emotion, preferring the dominance of reason over passion, and to that end, the play is didactic, or instructional. An overindulgence in passion can only lead to tragic results for the characters. Pyrrhus is seemingly consumed by the passion he feels for Andromaque, stopping at nothing short of blackmail to win her love. Orestes believes, meanwhile, that his heroic efforts may win over the heart of Hermione, who is already committed to the brooding Pyrrhus. It is passion that leads to the death of Pyrrhus and then to Hermione's suicide. All of the characters in the play, on some level, allow their passions to spiral out of control, and the results are fatal.

Faust

Goethe's classic *Faust* was actually published in two parts. In 1790, Goethe published the incomplete *Faust: Ein Fragment*, which he later revised and published again in 1808 as *Faust: Eine Tragödie*. *Faust: Eine Tragödie* became known as *Faust I* when *Faust II* was published posthumously in 1832. The writing of the work nearly spanned Goethe's lifetime, beginning it in 1773. The parts distinctly document his energetic outlook as a young writer (Part I) and the seasoned views of a more mature mind (Part II).

Goethe's work is modeled after a traditional German tale, warning of the dangers inherent in making a pact with the devil. In the original version, Faustus makes a pact with the devil in order to gain magical powers. He uses them to resurrect Helen of Troy, who lives with him for several years. Faustus is discovered and eventually dragged down into hell, screaming for mercy, by one of God's agents. The moral of this Christian tale is simply that one should not attempt to conspire or

make secret agreements with the devil without expecting to lose one's soul.

In Goethe's version, the basic story of Faust is the same, with several additions to the original story line. Unlike in the traditional story, Faust's desire for knowledge, the very thing that compels him to make a pact with the devil, ultimately becomes his way to realize redemption.

The story of Faust, as retold by Goethe, has been called a secular tragedy that meets Aristotelian standards—the purging of fear and pity. Goethe incorporates various other classical elements to inform the text—traditional mythology, mysticism, as well as religious imagery—in order to create a sophisticated allegory of the cultural and political European life of the time.

Iliad

The *Iliad* is known as one of the greatest war epics in the history of Western literature. This masterpiece was even read and discussed by important historical figures such as Alexander the Great, who, as a schoolboy, was said to have memorized all of the passages that refer to his hero, Achilles. Its emphasis on humanistic values, those of honor, truth, compassion, loyalty, and devotion to both family and gods, has earned the work the critical reputation as being a guidebook to moralistic behavior.

The *Iliad* is the story of Achilles' anger and its effects, as expressed in the poet's invocation to the Muse of Poetry at the epic's opening. In Greek classical works, epic poets often invoke the help of the gods to assist them in their objectives. Structurally, the epic is divided into twenty-four books, accounting for the final months of the Trojan War, which lasted approximately ten years. Throughout the poem, references are made to specific past events that would have been familiar to a Greek audience.

The work is the unchallenged model for the Classic epic. It established the genre as one incorporating superhuman heroes whose achievements were accomplished for the benefit of society. Achilles, the work's protagonist, is in fact the product of a union between Thetis, a goddess, and Peleus, a mortal. Homer's poem is written in dactylic hexameter. (A line of dactylic hexameter is seventeen syllables long, which are grouped into five sets of three and an ending set of two with the accents always falling at the beginning of each set.) The *Iliad* begins at the crucial point of the Trojan conflict, utilizing the classical convention "in medias res" in which a work opens in the thick of the plot, often near the climax, and then later recounts the events leading up to it.

The *Iliad*, in addition to being the Classic, epic model, is looked to as a valuable record of the late Bronze Age, as it depicts tribal organization, burial customs, class distinctions, and warfare. Though it has some value as a historical document of ancient events, often other sources of information are looked to; however, this does not seem to tarnish its literary merit in the eyes of scholars.

Medea

The tragic play *Medea* (431 B.C.) was one of Euripides' greatest works. Written in the time of ancient Greece, the piece, in some respects, is less conventional than comparable Greek tragedies of the day, particularly in its female protagonist, Medea. Essentially the play centers on the passions of Medea, who kills her children in an effort to punish her husband for his infidelities. In addition to being criticized for his choice of a heroine, Euripedes was accused of being a misogynist, due in part to his violent portrayals of female characters, an issue still discussed by scholars today.

Euripides drew on Greek themes for the composition of his work, i.e., passion versus Socratic ideals, such as the belief that knowledge of what is good leads to virtue. However, his depiction of the triumph of passion over reason in *Medea* were not as well received as those depicting the inverse.

Euripides did not fly in the face of convention entirely, as noted by some critics. The playwright, though innovative in some ways, still resorted to the traditional unrhymed verse and inflexible meter characteristic of the Greek form. In terms of dialogue, however, the play does again stray from Greek tradition. Euripides had a preference for using common, everyday language in favor of the lofty diction so common to Greek plays, whose dialogue was dictated by noble heroes and heroines. *Medea*, like other works by Euripides, exposed its playwright as an innovator. His breaks with Greek tradition served to inspire modern dramatists.

Themes

History

M. I. Finley, in *The Ancient Greeks*, speaks of the Greeks' concern with the individual and with isolated incidents of the past as expressed in their historical works. According to Finley, the Greeks

Media Adaptations

- Both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were recorded as books on tape in 1992 by the Highbridge company. The *Odyssey* has been adapted to film several times, including a 1997 television miniseries and as the 2000 film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*
- *Faust* has been adapted to film numerous times, including a 1960 German production and a 1994 animated version by Jan Svankmajer.

were interested in history but did not take the pains that a historiographer would to report the past. He also asserts that the function of Greek history, as it expresses itself in the literature of the time, was often to provide an explanation for a current cult practice or ritual (also evidenced by the infusion of gods into these texts). Also, the events of such historical accounts do not offer a context of time or place. Greek "historians" were preoccupied with resurrecting a more glorious, heroic past and tended, in general, to view the past as being somehow "better" than the present. Most of these characteristics also permeate ancient Roman writings, like Vergil's *Aeneid*. Goethe, who wrote much later, shared this interest in history, drawing on the traditional German story of Faustus for the creation of his *Faust*. However, *Faust* does not glorify the past but rather serves as a social and political commentary on contemporary German life.

Order

Classic Greek and Roman writers also influenced the works of the later Classicists in their preference for order over chaos. Symmetry, continuity, smoothness, harmony, and logic were all characteristics classical writers would strive for in their works. The unities are an example or an outgrowth of this need for structure and for order. They are strict rules of dramatic structure formulated by Renaissance dramatists on the basis of Aristotle's views of drama, as expressed in his work *Poetics*. Among them are the three unities of action, time, and place. According to these rules, a play first must have a single plot with a beginning, middle, and an ending. Second, the action of a play should be restricted to the events of a single day. Finally, the scene should be restricted to a single location.

Reason versus Passion

It has been said that the Greeks loved to talk and listen, and they were keen on the art of conversation. Philosophers also taught by discourse and discussion. The art of conversation fed the value the Greeks placed on the process of determining the basis for an action, decision, or conviction. For them, conversation and reason went hand in hand.

The Greeks, like classicists that followed, looked unfavorably upon the over indulgence of intense emotion, preferring reason to passion. Racine's *Andromaque*, for example, centers on the fall of Troy. All of the characters in the play are dominated by their passions. The result is insanity or death, with the exception of Andromaque. Euripides' tragedy *Medea* is yet another fatal tale in which Medea's passion, rather than reason, informs her decisions. Indulging her jealous rage results in the murder of her own children.

Style

Pastoral

A pastoral is defined as a literary composition on a rural theme. The convention originated with classical Greek poet Theocritus during the third century B.C. In a pastoral, the characters are shepherds who speak in a courtly manner despite their simple setting. Like the poetry Theocritus, Vergil's *Eclogues* are about the experiences, love affairs, and pastimes of shepherds. Of the ten poems, a few are tragic love stories, a few involve singing contests, and the rest (the majority) recall the seizure of the shepherds' lands by retired Roman soldiers.

Tragedy

The tragic form was practiced extensively by the Greeks. It is usually a drama in prose or poetry involving a noble, courageous hero who, due to a character flaw, brings ruin upon himself or herself. In Racine's tragedy *Andromaque*, all of the characters seem to fall prey to one fatal flaw, that of passion. It is Pyrrhus's passion for Hector's wife that causes him to cast aside the affections of his betrothed, Hermione. In turn, in her passion, Hermione's disappointment with Pyrrhus causes his death. Finally, Oreste, in his love for Hermione,

complies with her passionate request to kill Pyrrhus in an effort to win her affections. All but Andromaque, by the play's end, either die or go mad as a result of their passionate natures.

Epic

An epic is a long narrative poem dedicated to the adventures of a hero. Usually the hero is a person of great national, historic, or legendary importance. Vergil's work the *Aeneid* has been identified as an epic of the highest caliber. It is, in some respects, an imitation of Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad.* The protagonist is the Trojan prince Aeneas. His wanderings, after the destruction of his city in the Trojan War, account for a very vast setting (another characteristic of the epic). The action in an epic is often given cosmic significance through the intervention of the supernatural forces. This characteristic is especially evident in the sixth book of the *Aeneid,* as Aeneas travels take him to the underworld. He encounters his dead father who reveals to him the future Greatness of Rome and Aeneas's own legacy.

Movement Variations

It is difficult to discuss Classicism in terms of its movement variations since any classical variation could, by definition, be considered a part of Classicism. The principles of Classicism have been a part of literature from its ancient origins in Greece until today. However, several periods of distinct classical revival have been recognized in the histories of Rome, France, England, and Germany.

Rome

Historians divide the movement in Rome into two periods, the Age of Cicero, from 80 to 43 B.C. and the Age of Augustus, from 37 B.C. to 14 A.D. The Roman culture is often considered an extension of early Greek civilization, the two often being described as Greco-Roman. The Romans, however, added their own political, military, and legal views to Greek values. Greek literature was the model for Roman writings in prose, poetry, as well as drama, and the works themselves were often composed in both Greek and Latin. Satire also formed the basis for Roman social commentary. Vergil (70–19 B.C.) and Cicero (106–43 B.C.) have been identified as the significant literary figures of the periods. Cicero was one of the greatest prose writers and orators of the time, whose works include numerous legal and political speeches as well as philosophical letters and essays.

Topics for Further Study

- The music of German Classicism captures the artistic expression of the movement as a whole. Study the works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart or another classical composer. Note the impact this music has had on the works of modern composers and musicians.
- Classicists incorporated Greek myths into their works to enrich their meaning. Investigate the origins of these myths and observe how their imitators have altered them. How can these deviations enhance or diminish the overall impact of a piece? Give specific examples.
- The Greeks and Romans have been looked upon as being part of the "glorious past" of Western civilization. Influences of this past are evident in contemporary Western society. Investigate the impact of such influences, positive and negative, on contemporary life.
- Works from many cultural periods all over the world have been said to incorporate classical attributes. Choose a piece of literature, art, or music and discuss its classical characteristics. Make a supported argument for what you think the author, artist, or composer was trying to achieve by incorporating these characteristics.

France

Historians have recognized the movement in France in the 1600s for its diversity in classical values. The French classicists wrote with an emphasis on reason and intellect. French intellectual Rene Descartes, for example, tended to shy away from authority as the ultimate source of truth. He put a great deal of emphasis instead on the process of reasoning from a priori knowledge, i.e., knowledge based on hypothesis or theory rather than experiment or experience. The French dramas of Racine and others strongly influenced the English Neoclassical period. In addition to drama, the French were also noted for their use of satire. Voltaire's *Candide* (1759) has been identified as one

of the best examples of satire. It systematically takes jabs at those in positions of power and privilege. This form of satire has also been identified as being part of a trend towards secularism and criticism of the church.

England

Although the terms Classicism and Neoclassicism are somewhat interchangeable (and often used as such), Neoclassicism (1660–1798) refers specifically to the literary periods in history that produced art inspired by the ancients. It is often defined as the Classicism that dominated English literature during the Restoration Age (1660–1700). In the early years of the movement, the country celebrated and enjoyed the reopening of theaters, when both William Wycherly and William Congreve were infusing the stage with their contemporary plays. Heroic drama, written in couplets, developed, as did the comedy of manners. Poetry tended to take the form of the mock epic, the verse essay, and satire, as used by Dryden, Pope and Swift. Literature drew on classic virtues such as order, restraint, simplicity, economy, and morality, all of which were guided by the politics of the day. The end of the movement would be greatly influenced by the works of Samuel Johnson. The "Age of Johnson," as it was called, represented a transition from a focus on classical study/imitation to an interest in folk literature and popular ballads. The gothic novel also emerged as a genre, due in large part to the efforts of Anne Radcliffe and Horace Walpole.

Germany

The Germans wanted not only to imitate the works of the Greeks and Romans but also to surpass them. In the eighteenth century, classical culture became a subject of great interest. German schools and colleges began offering courses in classical literature, history, and philosophy. Great intellectuals emerged, inspired by classical ideals. During this time period, classical and romantic literature flourished side by side. An interest in a German past was also evident, as expressed in Goethe's *Faust*, an adaptation of a traditional German/Christian tale. *Faust* symbolized the union of Classicism and Romanticism in the marriage of Faust and Helen of Troy. However, many scholars believe this era is best represented in the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, George Friedrich Handel, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Franz Joseph Haydn, four of the greatest classical composers the world has known.

Historical Context

The origins of Classicism are traceable to ancient Greece. Although Greek history includes the Golden Age, the fifth century B.C., one of the greatest periods of cultural development in Western civilization, it was often the negative aspects of their history—the events of war, of plague, and of a Golden Age lost—that became a source of inspiration for Greek classical writers.

Democracy in Greece

Pericles became the leader of the democratic party in Athens in 461 B.C. and ruled during Athens's Golden Age. When state pay was instituted for officials in 450 B.C., Athens nearly became a full democracy; class was no longer a factor in official appointments. However, women, metics, and slaves were still completely excluded from politics. A demonstrated lack of respect as well as the active censorship of these residents were also byproducts of Athenian success.

Historians estimate the population of Attica, the state over which Athens was the capital, to have been approximately 315,000 at the time. Of this population, 172,000 were Athenian citizens, 28,000 were resident aliens, and 115,000 were slaves. All were registered in political and religious units known as demes. The rural population was very small, the land either owned by wealthy nobles or by farmers, whose chief crops were said to be olives and oil. Over half of the grain coming into Athens was imported. The growing middle class, whose members were chiefly involved in commerce or were artisans and laborers, largely influenced urban life. The metics, or resident aliens, were involved in trade and finance, and the state slaves contributed to public works.

The Peloponnesian War

Athens's prosperity during the Golden Age was no reflection of its foreign relations. Expansionist policies in the outlying areas of Greece, which had been denied access to Athens, helped to form an ever-lengthening list of enemies. The growth of Athenian power also caused fear and suspicion in Sparta, the head of the Peloponnesian league.

The war began in 431 B.C., with raids by Athens in Peloponnesus and a Spartan attack on Attica. The conflict raged back and forth between Athens and Sparta, with no clear victor. While Athens was a dominating force on the seas, it was no match for Sparta's armies. Sparta, however, had

Compare & Contrast

- **400s B.C.:** A plague of unknown cause and the Peloponnesian war have a profound effect on the shape of Greek literature.

  Today: Cancer and AIDS, both of which have been called "the plague of the twentieth century," as well as both World Wars and the Vietnam War have resulted in entire subgenres of literature and have greatly affected the course of postmodern writing.

- **91–87 B.C.:** Rome's Italian allies go to war to remove Rome from her predominance in the Italian peninsula. Rome gains the upper hand in the dispute by granting full citizenship to the residents of all Italian cities once they reaffirm their loyalty to Rome.

  Today: The Civil Rights movement of the mid-twentieth century, led by such renowned figures as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, brings to pass the end of much discriminatory legislation and the implementation of Affirmative Action in the United States. Despite the progress brought about by the movement, hate crime, racial profiling, and discrimination continue to be pertinent and volatile topics.

- **1700s:** The excavation of Pompeii and Herculaneum, which were buried by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, sparks a revival in classical art, thought, and literature in England.

  Today: The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947, in caves less the 15 miles from Jerusalem, vitalizes interest in ancient Hebrew texts

no navy. Eventually, when both their resources depleted, Athens and Sparta signed a treaty in 421 B.C. that temporarily ended the conflict.

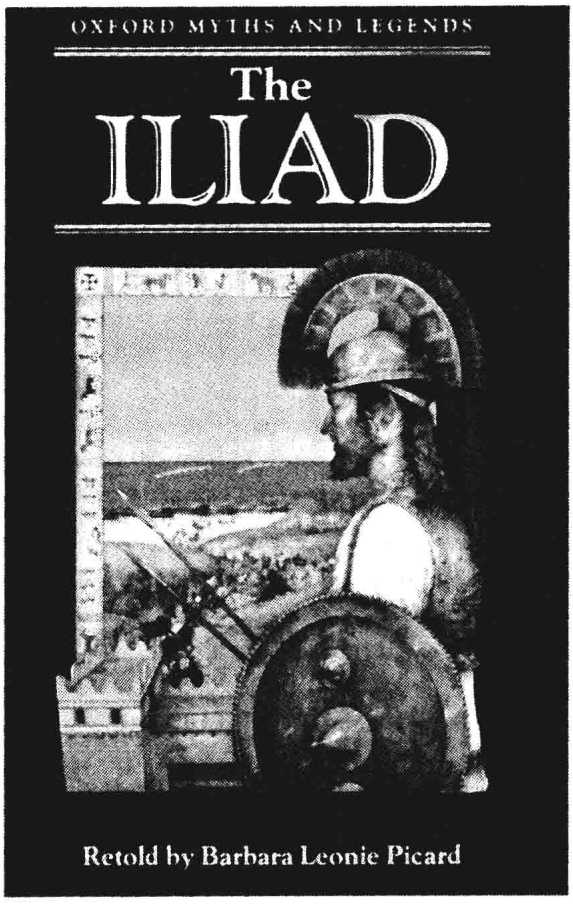
Nicias was elected to oversee a more peaceful Athens. But Alcibiades, a disciple of Socrates who was interested in the democratic leadership, had visions of aggressive expansionism. Alcibiades's rhetoric would once again excite and incite Athenians and Spartans to take up swords against one another. The final defeat of the Athenians occurred in 405 B.C. at Aegospotami when its final fleet was destroyed when taken by surprise. Athens was under a state of siege at the time, until 404 when it surrendered. Though the city of Athens was spared, its walls were torn down and many of its citizenry were slain.

The Plague

Historians estimate that from 430 to 429 B.C., a plague from the east decimated Athens. Overcrowding within the city walls caused it to spread rapidly, killing one-third of the population and crippling many others. The horror of the event changed the social and religious values of the culture dramatically. Pericles died of the plague in 429 B.C., and historians are quick to point out that his death was a pivotal event with respect to the Peloponnesian war.

Critical Overview

Scholars overwhelmingly acknowledge the debt the Western canon owes to the ancient Greeks and Romans, for their contributions not only to Western literature but to Western culture. The works of the classical writers were often admired for their restraint, restricted scope, sense of form, unity of design and aim, clarity, simplicity, and balance. They have been described as being models of conservatism and good sense, as demonstrated by the economy of their prose. Classical roots are evident throughout the history of Western literary thought, from the strict imitation of the Romans to the obscure, fragmented, and somewhat fuzzy poetry of the Symbolists.



Cover of The Iliad *by Homer*

But not all were champions of the classical convention. Trevor Ross has formulated his own conclusions in his discussion of the anticlassical revolution and its effect on poetry in his work entitled "Pure Poetry: Cultural Capital and the Rejection of Classicism." Ross begins his essay making much of the words of Romantic poet Joseph Wharton. Wharton was in favor of ridding poetry of its classical conventions altogether. He was more interested, instead, in promoting a "poetry of feeling." Wharton (as recalled by Ross) said of poets and the classical tradition, "We do not, it should seem, sufficiently attend to the difference there is betwixt a man of wit, a man of sense, and a true poet." Wharton was quick to point out that as men of wit and of sense, poets like Donne and Swift produce no "pure poetry."

Still other criticism surfaced as to the constraining or limiting nature of classical convention. Wharton is also identified for having similar sentiments, as quoted yet again by Ross. Said Wharton, perhaps as the "voice" of the Romanticists, classic form "lays genius under restraint, and denies it that free scope, that full elbow room, which is requisite for striking its most masterly strokes."

Finally, Ross himself has commented on what perhaps would be called the "true motives" of some of the classical poets. Although their aims were artistic, in their imitation of form and translation of works resided what has been called a rather "vigorously productive" form. Such literature, Ross points out, could be produced relatively quickly while at the same time, it could be modified to attract a wealthy patronage. Ross adds that the neoclassical poets were "less anxious to define their autonomy from economic interests than not to compromise their moral and ideological integrity as national poets."

Criticism

Laura Kryhoski

Kryhoski is currently employed as a freelance writer. In this essay, Kryhoski considers the influence of classic conventions and thought on the work of the symbolist poets.

Although most expressive in its Greek and Roman origins and perhaps its manifestations during the French, German, and English revivals, Classicism has still managed to wind its way forward, leaving behind it a trail of "new classics." The works of the symbolist poets in some ways rely on a classical tradition to provide powerful imagery and symbolism in order to evoke a response in the reader, juxtaposing them with more contemporary images. Gilbert Highet, in "The Classical Tradition," has also given great consideration to the factors that define a classic in order to find some common ground with Classicism. Is the work of T. S. Eliot, among others, classical?

Many examples can be found in the body of symbolist poetry to suggest its reliance on classical conventions. Symbolist poets were interested in the representation of single events and individual persons; they applied Greek values in their realization of such representations. They believed that subjects were not necessarily considered art unless representative of eternal ideals. Although Plato stressed this belief in his own way, his emphasis was the same. Both the philosopher and the symbolist poets held that the key to understanding what was identifiably art were eternal ideals, the disseminators and interpreters of truth. It has been said

What Do I Study Next?

- The second edition of Victor Davis Hanson's *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece* (2000) describes in great detail what actually took place on the battlefield in ancient Greece, where the Greeks developed the basic tactics for Western warfare. Their brief, violent, decisive head-on battles involve opponents fighting with great resolve to defeat their enemies. The author has been praised not only for his use of technical description but for the imagination he employs, particularly in explaining factors such as the tremendous weight of Greek armor. In this way, Hanson fleshes out such battle details, conveying the immense strength and bravery of Greek soldier contending with heavy equipment that obscured movement as well as hearing and vision.
- Originally published in 1903, Jane Ellen Harrison's *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (reprint, Princeton University Press, 1992) is noted for its consideration of how the ancient Greeks perceived the world around them and how these perceptions affected their religious practices. In her employment of both classical archeology and comparative evolutionary anthropology, Harrison challenges the Homeric depiction of religion in the *Iliad*. She rejects the previously accepted view in favor of extensive evidence supporting the views of the Greek masses, who favored "earthly spirits" to Homer's "sky bound" Olympians. Harrison examines Greek ritual with respect to Greek mythology. She is admired for her portrayal of the evolution of Greek religion, not only as a concise history but as a human endeavor.
- *Women in Antiquity: New Assessments* (1997) is a collection of original essays in which experts in classical studies offer their assessments of gender roles in antiquity. Some of the works examine a wide variety of topics studied over the past twenty years while others are representative of new areas of research. The roles of women are carefully considered with respect to Greek literature, Roman politics, ancient medicine, and early Christianity. The avenues that it opens for research in new directions and its focus on methodology make it a valuable resource.
- In *Basic Teachings of the Great Philosophers* (1989), S. E. Frost Jr. thoroughly explores many of the great philosophical challenges faced by the Western world, calling on the views of the most important Western philosophers, chapter by chapter. The topics covered include the nature of the universe, mankind's place in the universe, a discussion of good and evil, the nature of God, fate versus free will, the soul and immortality, mankind and the state, mankind and education, mind and matter, ideas and thinking, as well as some recent approaches to philosophy. Each chapter offers a discussion moving from the views of the early Greek philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, to more contemporary views, such as those of German philosophers like Johann Fitche, Friedrich Schelling, and Georg Hegel.

that the symbolists were not conscious Platonists, despite already adopting symbols from Greek conventions.

Symbolist poets left much to the imagination. Highet is quick to point out that this preference was antithetical to Greek convention. He points out that the Greeks tended to state the essentials, allowing the hearer to supply the details. The symbolist poets, however, did not state essentials but instead described, in vivid detail, related images, the idea being that the central thought is made evident by the existence of such details. To a great degree, then, the matter of interpretation was left strictly to the reader. An Impressionist painting serves as a good example of the genre at work. Standing at an arm's length from Claude Monet's "Water Lilies," all that is perceptible to the viewer is a muddied collection

"The contrast that results from the inclusion of these images from the ancient past is powerful because, by their nature, they are often quite foreign to what has been referred to as a more vulgar, violent, short-lived present."

of paint splotches randomly placed on a canvas. But as the viewer moves away from the canvas, the meaningless sea of paint starts to take form, to become ordered, until the viewer is able to see the beautiful image of lilies on a pond.

The works of the Classicists also employed very clear transitions, while In symbolist poetry, transitions between impressions have been characterized as being bewildering, confusing, and dreamy. Such transitions seem to be the product of a primitive impulse rather a logical sequence. The symbolists avoided symmetry, continuity, smoothness, harmony, and logic in favor of abrupt, unpredictable, random transitions. Essentially, such patterns roughly resemble a rambling conversation or monologue rather than a progression of well-balanced ideas. The symbolist form naturally does not lend itself to the kind of creative discipline required of the classical form.

Yet the employment of the Greek myth in the creation of symbolist imagery is of great importance to the integrity of the overall work. The contrast that results from the inclusion of these images from the ancient past is powerful because, by their nature, they are often quite foreign to what has been referred to as a more vulgar, violent, short-lived present. Again, there is a connection to the Platonist idea that symbolic figures become the source of immortal stories. The symbolists were intent on taking a complex personal emotion or state of being and immortalizing it symbolically, thus making it art.

T. S. Eliot uses Greek legend to expose what he sees as a modern life devoid of meaning. His introduction of mythic symbols does not serve to boost the present, i.e., by reflecting a glorious past in an even more glorious present. Instead, he tends to use classical allusions to expose horrible truths about contemporary society. Highet adds that Eliot uses such allusions to "accentuate the sordidness of today with that of the past." Eliot actively sought out weaknesses and exposed them. In one of Eliot's very first poems, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, the poet uses a lyrical, dramatic monologue infused with classical allusions to describe Prufrock, a character plagued by self-doubt. The first classical reference in the work is to Dante's *Inferno*, Canto 27, appearing as an epigraph. It is translated as follows:

> If I thought that I was speaking
> to someone who would go back to the world,
> the flame would shake no more.
> But since nobody has ever
> gone back alive from this place, if what I hear is true,
> I answer you without fear of infamy.

The quotation sets up the premise or theme of the work. Eliot seems to be stating that existence is a hell and there is no possibility of escaping from it. The poem also elaborates on such sentiments. The work is not simply commenting on the struggles of a man whose insecurities have gotten the best of him and have prevented him from approaching the woman of his dreams. Prufrock is full of self-doubt, assuredly, to this aim, but his doubts run much deeper. He also expresses doubts about society , the world, and even his ability to claim a meaningful existence. To this end, he uses, among others, Christian references from the classical period. At one point in the poem, Prufrock pauses to reflect not only upon what he cannot accomplish but upon what the end result of a union with a woman would mean. He envisions his own demise in the reference "Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter . . . ." The quotation is an allusion to the beheading of John the Baptist by order of King Herod. In this biblical story, the king has the head of the Baptist brought to queen Herodias in an effort to please her. Prufrock is likening himself to John the Baptist, whose fate is dictated by the whims of a woman.

The work is also full of haunting images of the industrial landscape. As Prufrock describes "yellow smoke that slides along the street," there is an allusion made to the classical poem "Works and Days" by Hesiod, an eighth century B.C. Greek poet: "And time for all the works and days of hands." The poem, which celebrates farm work, perhaps functions as a sigh would, a momentary memory of a more favorable past before returning

to the advent of the industrial age. These themes are not new to classical works, particularly the doubts Prufrock expresses about society and the world. The work of Goethe, particularly his *Faust*, also comments on a lack of meaning apparent in contemporary German political and social life. Alexander Pope, in *The Rape of the Lock*, used the tragedy of a woman "victimized" by her boyfriend to also expose a more superficial and trivial English society.

Eliot's *The Waste Land*, perhaps his most important work, has been said to also capture the hypocrisy, disillusionment, skepticism and excess of modern life. In this work, Eliot incorporates the rituals of various ancient fertility cults, both Christian and pagan, but heavily relies on those of the Greeks (Adonis, Osiris, or Attis) to capture man's desire for salvation. The end result of such juxtaposition of ancient with modern is an exposure of a contemporary life devoid of spirituality. Highet also refers to *The Waste Land*'s theme as that of "death by water." He states that the work "is an evocation of the many epitaphs on drowned sailors in the Greek Anthology."

While it is certainly true that the symbolists were amateurs, not scholars, of ancient literature, the symbols they borrowed from the tradition have served to fortify their works, giving them not only a basis for meaning but for overall interpretation. They held a firm belief that the problems of life must be examined through a noble lens, i.e., in comparison to a more noble past, in an effort to express the malaise or social sickness prevalent in contemporary society. Does this make the symbolists classicists? Consider Euripides, who, though definitely a classicist, did not adhere to the forms and conventions of his times, and who intentionally bucked Greek tradition in favor of his own more modern views. In the same spirit, T. S. Eliot may be characterized as a "classicist in literature" if we move beyond traditional definitions.

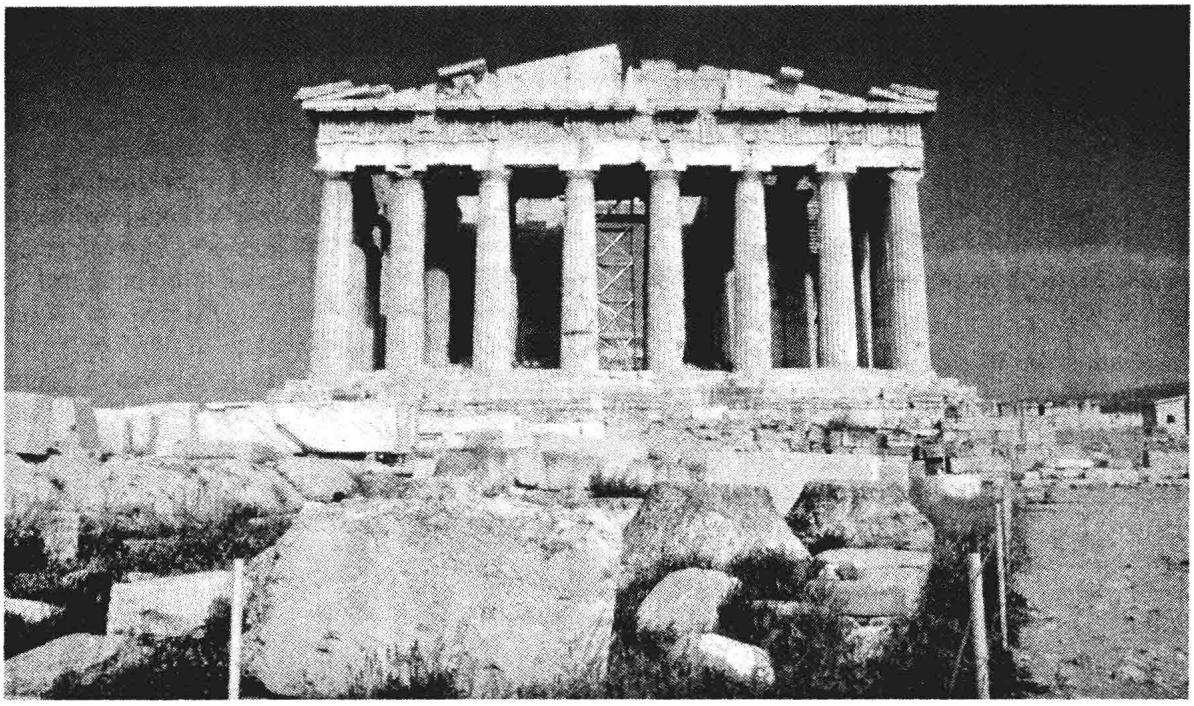
Source: Laura Kryhoski, Critical Essay on Classicism, in *Literary Movements for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Jean Hytier

In the following essay, Hytier explores how writers of the eighteenth century established the criteria for labeling seventeenth-century writers "classical."

We no longer know where we stand with regard to classicism. There was a time when everyone was more or less in agreement as to what was required for a French writer to deserve being called classical. But that time didn't last very long; in fact, I doubt that it went much beyond the end of the eighteenth century and the first third of the nineteenth. Voltaire, it would seem, used the expression "classical authors" only for the great writers of Greco-Latin antiquity, and he contrasted them with modern writers: "A man who has read nothing but classical authors scorns everything that is written in modern languages" (*Essai sur la poésie épique*). Yet Voltaire played a decisive role in singling out those writers of the seventeenth century who were worthy of being remembered. Raymond Naves, who rightly understood that classicism is essentially the expression of a particular taste, says that "the chief characteristic of criticism in the eighteenth century was to have recognized and sanctified the classicism of the previous period," and he points out the moment when that recognition began: "it was not until after 1735 that a real distinction was made between first-rate and mediocre writers, and Voltaire's *Temple du goût* played a crucial role in that development." Further, he tells us exactly when that classical taste began to change, its "weakening . . . confirmed in Marmontel by his contempt for Boileau" (*Le Goût de Voltaire*). Generally Voltaire did not use the word *classical* for the writers he speaks about in *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*. He may have used it by chance in the manner of the *Encyclopédie*, in which a supplement to the article "Classique" proposed "calling the good writers of Louis XIV's century, and of our own, *classical French writers*," or he may have done so to be accommodating. But at the bottom of his heart he was very reluctant to so exalt them. Two years before his death he wrote to the Comte de Touraille: "Today we have no Racines, no Molières, no La Fontaines, no Boileaus, and actually I doubt that we shall ever have any; but I prefer an enlightened century to an ignorant one that has produced seven or eight geniuses." He thus agreed with d'Alembert, who, shortly before, had written to Frederick II: "Our century—and again I concur with Your Majesty—does not equal the century of Louis XIV in genius and taste; but I feel that it surpasses it in its enlightenment" (February 14, 1744). Surely it would be worthwhile to find out how the custom of calling a few of the great seventeenth-century writers "classical" came to be established. There was a general agreement among minds, and the label was ready, but it had still to be applied.

Contrary to what one might believe, the schools were slow to take it up for one very simple reason,



Ruins of the Parthenon

which Louis Trénard brings out in a recent study. Under Louis XVI, he tells us, "the secondary schools, even the small ones, introduced—side by side with the culture of antiquity, which remained fundamental—lessons in French and *commentaries on seventeenth-century texts*" ("L'Enseignement secondaire sous la monarchie de juillet: Les Réformes de Salvandy," *La Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, April–June 1965). Now as soon as first-rate writers—who, although belonging to the previous century, could be compared in quality to the masters of Greco-Latin antiquity—were studied in class, the word *classical* was bound to take on two or three meanings. The time had gone when Saint-Marc, Boileau's editor, could consider "the works of this renowned writer as being, so to speak, the only classical book we have in our language. This book should be used at every level of education." That was in 1747. Early in the next century, in 1801, Marie-Joseph Chénier, in his *Observations sur le projet d'un nouveau dictionnaire de la langue française et sur le Dictionnaire de l'Académie*, alluded not only to the seventeenth-century writers but to those of the eighteenth, "all those great writers, all those celebrated classical authors, who were responsible for the glory of the Académie because they brought to it their own," and he proposed that the Institut make up a new dictionary, in which the definitions would be accompanied by examples "skillfully chosen from classical writers, from Malherbe to Voltaire, from Pascal to Buffon."

Marie-Joseph Chénier is a valuable witness for the use of the word that concerns us here. He sometimes gives his opinion about editions of celebrated authors. Thus, in 1801, he stated: "Jean-Jacques Rousseau, as a writer, certainly ranks among the leading classical authors of France"; in 1809: "the honor of being constantly reprinted falls to the great classical authors; in fact, that is the proof of their renown. . . Writers who are admired without being read are not admired for long; but Corneille and Bossuet, Racine and Pascal, La Fontaine and Fénélon, Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, are read again and again with delight." And he complimented Daunou on his edition of Boileau: "That is the tone in which all French classical authors should be annotated." But Marie-Joseph Chénier lived long enough (he died on January 10, 1811) to notice, and even to magnify, the threatening changes in the taste of writers and of the public. In his *Tableau historique de l'état et des progrès de la littérature française depuis 1789*, he was to write, apropos of *Atala:* "M. de Chateaubriand is pursuing the extraordinary poetics he developed in his *Génie du Christianisme*. Some day, no doubt, we

shall be able to judge his construction and his style on the basis of this new poetics, which is bound to be adopted in France as soon as we agree to forget completely the classical language and works."

But no, nothing of the sort happened. Neither the one nor the other was forsaken. And Chénier could hardly have imagined—or he would have cheered, not feared—that the day would come when the first flocks of romantics would be accused of timidity! Classical taste was to persist, and most probably it is, by its very nature, indestructible. But had he lived some fifteen years more—say, until 1824—how amazed Marie-Joseph would have been to see the Académie, in the sixth edition of its *Dictionnaire*, make note of this new meaning of the word *romantic*: "Also applied to certain writers who claim to have broken away from the rules of construction and style laid down by the example of classical authors." He would surely have been satisfied by this definition and by Auger's famous speech at the yearly public session of the Institut on April 14, 1824. But what would he have made of Stendhal's statement to the effect that living classicism, the classicism of Racine at the very time he was writing, should be called romantic? (His comments are not without some inconsistency in detail, for Delille also, in his time, was precisely the romantic who suited the contemporaries of the victors at Fontenoy: "You shoot first, Messieurs les Anglais!") Stendhal's bold assimilation of the terms was to lead to two very different formulas, both of which were destined for great success: Emile Deschanel's "the romanticism of the classics," and André Gide's interpretation of classicism as "subdued romanticism."

As soon as an absolute contrast no longer existed between the two notions, one could expect there to be disagreement over the particular characteristics of each. The young Ernest Renan gave a remarkable account of the two ideals. In the fourth of his *Cahiers de jeunesse* (1846), he noted:

> The impression one gets in reading the great romantic works (M. Lamartine) is painful: it is not that of a finite whole, as with Racine, for example. You feel that the entire subject has been exhausted, that the thought has been enclosed within its own circle: here, on the contrary, there is an emptiness, a hollow, for the enclosure is infinite. We are not full; we would like more, we are hungry, and with the classics we are not hungry. Everything is satisfied. That is because the classics are finite and the romantics are infinite. And the infinite is more. I prefer the infinite feeling of romanticism to the restricted and calm feeling of the other. One is a hyperbola, the other a circle.

This very curious contrast between two types of art, in which the heart inclines more toward the less perfect because it is the more beautiful, offers a clear parallel to the contrast that Renan was later to set up between the Greek temple and the Gothic church. But quite obviously this very subtle distinction itself has a romantic tinge, and the images of the open and the closed, which express it so well, foreshadow both Bergson and Wölflin. Stendhal's position was far simpler, but in contrasting every contemporary epoch with its immediate past, as if to compare a son to his father and his grandfather, he was unknowingly leading up to a new opposition that would contrast this romanticism with a more profound one, which, for want of a better label, would come to be called modern, and which Denis Saurat was to set great store by around 1930. Good old Nodier, writing about "the romantic genre" the same year that Stendhal was defining "romanticism" (1823), considered that "romanticism might be nothing other than the classicism of the moderns"—setting up a balance with Stendhal, for whom classicism could well have been no more than the romanticism of earlier writers.

The idea that to be a classical author, one had first to be a romantic, was a springboard for Emile Deschanel: "Our classical authors thus began by being literary revolutionaries, who went against the established rules and provoked some fiery battles" (Opening Lecture, April 27, 1881). This simply means that every great writer contributes something, and that he is, as Deschanel says, even when speaking of a Roman writer like Horace, an "innovator." Finally, Deschanel brought out the romanticism of the classical authors by the more or less justified resemblances he found between them and the writers of 1830. To establish the theory that there is a *classicism of the romantics*, in 1932 Pierre Moreau—with far sounder methods and a sharper sense of the nature of the problem—had only to find, among the writers of 1830, the traditional characteristics of the writers of 1660. Moreau's superiority over Deschanel is due not only to his more extensive and more discriminating erudition but to his firm hold on the basic distinction between the two types of spirit—the one tempered, enamored of unity and universality; the other, on the contrary, extreme, particular, going so far in its own direction that it reaches a paroxysm.

Once other general ideas, even vaguer than the former, were brought into the picture, the confusion could only become more glorious. Brunetière, in studying what he called "the naturalism of the

seventeenth century" (his 1883 lecture), had begun to cause a certain bewilderment. Lanson was also to speak of "classical naturalism" (*Histoire*, Bk. IV). Pellissier, on the contrary, spoke of the "realism of the romantics" (1912). Faguet, with his taste for conciliation, said, apropos of La Fontaine, that a realistic romantic is no less than a classical writer. Opposites proliferate of themselves—and idealism was bound to rush in. References to it can be found everywhere, but take a reliable historian of the classical doctrine, René Bray: for him "all of classical art is pure idealism"—such a vast concept that historians of philosophy finally lost their bearings, and one that could well embrace a good half of all the writers. The idealist novel has been contrasted with the realistic novel. Thus Conrad would be seen as classical, and probably not without justification: "I have been called a descriptive writer, a romantic, and also a realist . . . whatever dramatic and narrative gifts I may possess are always and instinctively used with an eye to achieving and bringing to light *ideal values*" (written apropos of *The Shadow Line*, in 1917, to Sir Sidney Calvin, Stevenson's biographer). All the adjectives may be applied to a single writer: Flaubert, for example, is romantic, classical, realistic, idealistic, etc. It is not a bit surprising that so many books and articles ask the question: What is a classical writer?

The best means of avoiding all the *isms* is to bring them down to one alone. An excellent principle would be to define them all in relation to classicism, making classicism the norm. Meanwhile, it has been suggested that the unavoidable opposition between romanticism and classicism be reduced to a simple variation of the first term. Thus a classical writer would be no more than a conditioned romantic—whence the success of Gide's formula "subdued romanticism." Although it has been made into a definition of classicism, this was not at all Gide's intention; for he was seeking a half-moral, half-aesthetic definition: "the art of expressing the most while saying the least"; "an art of reserve and modesty," rather well described by the figure of speech *litotes*. In that way Gide contrasted the classical writer, who is "more deeply moved than he wants to appear," with the romantic, for whom the important thing is not to be, "but to appear, deeply moved." For Gide, *subdued romanticism* is both the evangelical and triumphant sacrifice of individualism; it is the refusal of artistic self-infatuation; it is a renunciation of *mannerism* in order to arrive at the simplest and greatest sense of humanity. If "the work is strong and beautiful only by reason of its subdued romanticism," it is because "the work is even more beautiful when the element overcome was initially more rebellious." And if, in Gide's eyes, classicism is an almost exclusively French phenomenon, that is because in France, he says, "intelligence always tends to prevail over feeling and instinct." Repression is therefore indeed a condition of classicism—or more precisely, domination, discipline, mastery—but the essence of classicism lies in a balance of the most contrary qualities: "strength and gentleness, decorum and grace, logic and unconstraint, precision and poetry," all held in a perfectly natural equilibrium. Such is Gide's position, remarkably classical in itself and of supremely discriminating taste.

Gide's formula "subdued romanticism" dates from 1921. It is interesting to see how it fared through the years, as it was picked up again, adapted, and distorted. In 1924 Valéry was to say that "all classicism presupposes a previous romanticism [*romantisme antérieur*]" (Gide would have said *intérieur*); "the essence of classicism is to come afterward. Order presupposes a certain disorder which it has reduced" (that is indeed subdued romanticism); "a classical writer is one who bears a critic within himself, whom he closely associates with all his work." (And Gide: "How very reasonable all these works are! What balance! What moderation!") Valéry took a wry pleasure in stating that once a romantic has learned his trade, he becomes a Parnassian! Though somewhat limited, the comment is not absurd, and one might likewise see Flaubert as a sifted Balzac.

The idea of classicism following romanticism was to become a cliché in criticism, and a rather paradoxical one when we realize that historically it was the other way round. But a historian's resources are infinite, and one would have merely to go back to the legend of a Louis XIII romanticism for the rest to fall into place. For those who prefer the usual order, the Renaissance provides a first and most honorable example of classicism. The same manner of contrasting legacies was to be picked up by theorists of the baroque: in accordance with orthodox principles, the baroque should follow classicism; but in France, according to the learned scholars, it could come either before or after, unless, in trying to be everywhere at once, it reduces classicism to being sandwiched any which way into a continuous baroque. In 1929 Ramon Fernandez considered living classicism "the last phase of romantic development, not its negation, but rather the reshaping and crowning of it"—a concept straight out of the composite Gide-Valéry, which was to be

picked up by the exegetes of baroquism. Fernandez stressed the two factors involved in the process: "romanticism is a problem of supplies, classicism a problem of control." Leo Spitzer (whose 1928 essay on the style of Racine did not become known, more or less indirectly, until far later) had just replaced Gide's litotes by *die klassische Dämpfung*, at a time when Souday was speaking openly about mutes and pedals with regard to Racine's lines; and in 1948 Spitzer was to praise, in the same sense as Souday, "a continuous repression of the emotional by the intellectual," in the author of *Phèdre*.

With the translation into French of Eugenio d'Ors' book (1935), the debate began dealing rather with the relations of the baroque and classicism, but if we follow it through, we would realize that there has been no end to the use of Gide's formula. Quite recently Jacques Duron combined the Gide-Valéry theme with his baroque variation on it and an interpretation à la Saurat:

> Romanticism is classicism given free rein, a delayed classicism . . . Moderation is nothing without a previous élan, without something passionate or excessive to subjugate . . . Classicism is most certainly subdued exuberance, freedom yielding to the law, the temptation of the baroque overcome . . . Baudelaire . . . altogether classical in form, is at bottom baroque, indeed infernally baroque—and, by the same token, *modern*.

Who was the first to adapt Gide's "subdued romanticism" to the baroque? In any case, "subdued baroque" became a new key phrase. Henri Peyre refers to it at the end of the chapter he has added to his book on French classicism. Jean Rousset touches on it in his *Littérature de l'âge baroque:* "the baroque is left behind and overcome" in the early plays of Racine; and it is "present but subdued" in the last works of Le Vau. Marcel Raymond, in *Baroque et Renaissance poétique*, notes that by 1670 "the baroque had been clearly left behind and overcome." Mixing together the traces of Gide and Valéry with the tradition of the theorists of the baroque, he eloquently wrote:

> That type of classicism, which aims at integrating the poet's powers and at intellectually mastering the elements that go into the work, seems to demand, as a requisite condition, the previous presence of an effervescent nature, of a conflict that must be overcome, of a tension beyond which beauty may finally blossom forth.

Elsewhere he calls to mind

> . . . a kind of *Sturm und Drang*, an early enthusiasm, previous to any establishing of ideas or feelings . . . What happens is that this underlying dynamism is subjected to moderation. A process of breaking, of filtering, a concentration of human powers, a growing mastery of the mind, an increasing number of constraints [how Valerian!] opposed to psychic diffusion may progressively impose a classical style on a creation that seemed defiant [Gidian rebellion].

"The idea of classicism following romanticism was to become a cliché in criticism, and a rather paradoxical one when we realize that historically it was the other way round."

It would be hard to state it, or restate it, any better. René Huyghe, praising Delacroix's universality on the occasion of the centenary of his death, acclaimed "the classical order he brought to the baroque élan"; Delacroix may have "seemed to be torn between two tendencies—his romantic soul and his classical mind . . . But, in fact, he was not at all: reason, which he believed had to be at the heart of all things, even excess, had suggested a balance to him." His works are a crossroads "where baroque fire and classical mastery come together." And then we have Francis Ponge, who was only too pleased to find just the "admirable formula" he needed for his Malherbe, in a letter from his friend Henri Maldiney: "Classicism is merely the tautest string of the baroque."

Now that we have traced the lineage of Gide's formula, how nice it would be to have the time to seek out its ancestry. But two of its forefathers will have to suffice. Emile Montégut, writing in *La Revue des Deux Mondes* of February 15, 1858, apropos of Emile Augier's *La Ciguë*, ventured the opinion that "it is flamboyant classicism, chastened and better-behaved romanticism." Dr. Véron, in his *Mémoires*, recalled the painter Gros' comment about Delacroix's first paintings: "Chastened Rubens," and he said that all romantic painting could adopt that phrase.

To complicate the situation of criticism still more, we must not forget that one man's baroque is not necesarily another's. And trying to pin down

romanticism was not always all that easy either. "In 1820," if we are to believe Saintine, "the classical writers were represented by MM. Etienne, Jouy, and Arnault, and the romantics by MM. Soumet, Guiraud, and Lebrun. In 1830 the classical writers were MM. Lebrun, Guiraud, and Soumet." The relativity of the baroque was well brought out by Jean Rousset: A painting by Le Brun seems classical when compared to a Rubens or a Delacroix, but baroque when compared to a Raphael. And we must remember the fluctuating roles played by preciosity, burlesque, mannerism, and the rococo. According to Fidao-Justiniani, preciosity is, by its very nature, compatible with classicism (O Boileau! O Molière!). But then for Baumal and others Molière himself was *précieux*, while for Grubb and Brunello he was baroque. Pascal was considered baroque by Sister Mary Julie Maggioni in 1950, as he had been, along with La Bruyère, by Morris Croll back in 1929. Corneille, Rotrou, and Racine are sometimes altogether—sometimes only partly—baroque, or less they are baroque and classical, either simultaneously or successively, and why not alternatively. And I almost overlooked Bossuet. The baroque never stops spreading. It moves backward to d'Aubigné with Raymond, for whom he "exemplifies the concept of a baroque stylistics," and to Montaigne with Buffum, but its tentacles reach forward to poor Perrault and his fairy tales, and Pierre Mesnard proves unerringly that the true philosopher of the baroque must necessarily come rather late, having submitted that he will be characterized by "a certain tension which is active within, and profusely manifested outside, a too precisely defined given element." Mesnard has no trouble discovering his profuse philosopher in Leibnitz, who is "both the philosopher and the liquidator of baroque civilization, and indeed the one who announced the Enlightenment." And Helmut Hatzfeld will be remembered for having said, in 1959, that "from an international point of view, French classicism should be called baroque," thus remaining faithful to his old war-cry of 1935: "Klassik als barock."

But here one begins to get weary of it all. Abbé Bremond started by sighing: "There are as many romanticisms as there are romantics." As for the classical writers, I read somewhere that each one has his own form of classicism. Marcel Raymond ended by thinking that "once the idea of the baroque is assimilated, the term itself ... seems less useful—especially when one looks more closely at individual works." What exactly does that imply? That definitions wouldn't fit any more? That criteria would no longer be applicable? Jean Boorsch has noticed "a waning of interest in theoretical definitions of the baroque," mentioning their "abundance" and suggesting that the situation is "perfectly natural," although disturbing, given all the confusion it will create. "What becomes of French classicism in all this?" wonders Boorsch, and what becomes of its precise relations to this baroque that is on its way to becoming a dead letter? Even the most observant historian of the French literary baroque, Jean Rousset, has shown signs of annoyance at the impossibility of imposing on the specialists a coherent terminology. In 1963 he told them that their sin was to have picked up the order devised by Gide and Valéry (whom, as a matter of fact, he doesn't name) without modifying it in any real way—in other words, to have understood literally nothing of the baroque spirit. Actually, it is both instructive and amusing to note how Rousset himself sees that spirit as a disciplined phenomenon, with an order and a beauty of its own, an original taste, and a personal style—in short, as another kind of classicism:

> A "baroque" too often defined as irregular, excessive, grandiloquent, overloaded, and disordered, followed by a sudden turnabout or a "classical" transcendence, which many continue to see as a purification, a repentance, a conversion toward something better—in short, a victory of order over disorder! This successive and covertly progressive pattern would only seem to be different from its predecessor ... it remains successive because of an inadequate definition of the Baroque, considered as a form of disorder. There is a baroque order and a baroque taste. And so long as we refuse to accept that, we shan't change anything ... On the other hand, if we are willing to recognize in the Baroque an order and a style complementary to the "classical" order and style, we may then conceive of a complex and simultaneous development, a mixture of parallel or intertwining tendencies, now antagonistic, now fused, throughout the century.

Even more recently, in 1965, Rousset came to believe that "the systematic opposition of the baroque and the classical is perhaps a dogma that should be revised, as should the successive pattern according to which classicism, in France, would always follow the baroque."

We know that Henri Peyre has just come to the conclusion that "the idea of the baroque has but little to contribute to our understanding of French classicism," and he remarked that "the examples cited by Jean Rousset are very rarely taken from writers whom today we would consider great"; for example, "the few baroque characteristics of

Corneille are . . . a really small part of a huge and essentially classical body of work."

To define classicism, it is perhaps not absolutely necessary to know what the baroque is, any more than we would need to know what existentialism is, or mannerism, symbolism, naturalism, realism, or romanticism. It might perhaps be wise to go back to the time when the expression *classical writer* was not yet all muddled up by new doctrines. A look at historical and critical writings reveals that there was an underlying disagreement as to its characteristics. Now up until the time when the phrase *French classical writers* became explicit and was commonly used, those who gradually made a name for the great writers of the seventeenth century, whether their contemporaries or their successors, were concerned not with determining trends, establishing a literary doctrine or a general philosophy, bringing out elements of civilization, contrasting religious or moral behavior patterns, or weighing the influence of economic and political factors, etc., but with appreciating the works themselves, understanding their value, admiring their craftsmanship—in short, with discovering not their physiognomy but their exemplary qualities. From that perspective, now that we are rid of all the pedantry, I think everyone just about agrees that those works which have certain undeniable merits are classical works.

Elsewhere I have said what these merits are. What remains to be shown is, on the one hand, that those of today's critics who continue to consider the classical works as classical works are—however divergent the formulas they use to express their points of view—in substantial agreement as to what constitutes the classical value of those works; and, on the other hand, that this value—however the terminology may differ from ours—has always been explicitly granted to the masterworks of a dozen French writers of the seventeenth century, from Malherbe to La Bruyère, by the few great writers who spoke of them, from Racine to Chateaubriand, and by numerous well-informed admirers as well as the influential critics who appreciated them, say from Godeau to La Harpe. But since quoting the observations of a mere fifty of them as supporting evidence would exceed the limits of this article, it will have to await another occasion.

Translated by June Guicharnaud

Source: Jean Hytier, "The Classicism of the Classics," translated by June Guicharnaud, in *Yale French Studies*, No. 38, May 1967, pp. 5–17.

Serge Doubrovsky

In the following essay, Doubrovsky examines why a new generation of literary critics is drawn to seventeenth-century classical writing when their ideologies appear to be in contrast.

Classicism as everyone knows is typically French; yet, while being typically French, it is at the same time, and by definition, universal. Its universality is due to the twin cardinal virtues of order and clarity. Order, whether for literary historians like Nisard and Doumic, or for theorists like Maurras and Valéry, means the salutary enforcement of an authoritarian government on the body politic and the imposition of a strict set of rules and precepts on literature. Clarity is that unique pellucid quality of the French language once the impurity of concrete reference and the dross of emotional and imaginative outbursts have been removed. Sully, in a well-known statement in his *Economies royales*, said that "ploughing and pasturing are the two udders that feed France"; in much the same way, order and clarity are the two founts of classicism and from them every thoroughbred Frenchman must drink. The result has been that traditional criticism of French literature of the seventeenth century has long been dominated by preconceptions and prejudices which, along with the cult of Joan of Arc and the veneration of Napoleon, have been elevated across the years to the status of national myth.

It is no surprise, therefore, that the defense of so-called "classical virtues" in the cultural field and the advocacy of reactionary views in politics have often gone hand in hand on the French scene. Of course, modern scholarship has done away with such misguiding simplifications. The real complexity and diversity of human attitudes in the areas of esthetic, morals and politics—even at the heart of the classical period—have been well established by critics like Daniel Mornet and Paul Bénichou; Henri Peyre has shown how subtle and flexible any genuine definition of classicism must be if it is to remain true to the facts. In this brief study, however, I am less concerned with a survey of positive achievements in the field of accurate literary history than with a peculiar and rather recent phenomenon: where, in the past, liberal thinkers were mostly content with ignoring the seventeenth century or with pitting against it the liberating virtues of other periods, today the wheel of criticism seems to have made a complete revolution. A constant, almost compulsive interest nowadays draws the various tenants of the so-called "nouvelle

For some reason, experimenters in novel critical methods and approaches seem, more often than not, to be irresistibly tempted to test their intellectual instruments on classical authors."

critique" in France to the old classics; the game preserve of the right has in fact become the favorite hunting ground of the left.

For some reason, experimenters in novel critical methods and approaches—whether they be those who work under the now respectable interest in Marx and Freud, or those influenced by the more recent attraction of Sartre and Bachelard, not to mention the growing influence by Claude Lévi-Strauss—seem, more often than not, to be irresistibly tempted to test their intellectual instruments on classical authors. Racine is the easy winner; in addition to articles or chapters devoted to his tragedies by Georges Poulet and Jean Starobinski, book-length analyses, written from the Marxist, Freudian, and structuralist points of view, have been devoted to him by Lucien Goldmann, Charles Mauron, and Roland Barthes. *La Princesse de Clèves* has also had its share of scrutinizing admirers; neither Molière nor Corneille has escaped a "new look." The question is: what is there about the Great Century that fascinates a new generation of critics whose personal ideology and private concerns appear, at first sight, to be poles apart from the classical tradition?

I do not believe that an impish desire to poach on the other fellow's territory is sufficient explanation for such a general phenomenon. As a journalist put it naively in the course of a recent controversy: "Can one build a new obscure system for judging and analyzing genius on Racine who is so clear?" (*Revue Parlementaire*, Nov. 1965). Like many childish questions, this one is very much to the point; we find an answer to it in an essay by Roland Barthes: "The reason is that 'transparency' is an ambiguous value: it is at once that about which there is nothing to say and that about which there is the most to say. Therefore, it is Racine's very 'transparency' which makes him, in the last analysis, the birthright of our literature, a kind of zero point of the critical object, an empty place which is forever open to meaning." And Barthes calls to witness the fact that it is Racine, "the French author most associated with the idea of 'transparency' who is the only one to have succeeded in having all the new critical approaches of this century focus on him." Thus modern criticism, like the medieval concept of nature, abhors a vacuum and hastens to fill the Racinian void with its own interpretations. Personally, I am not sure that I agree with this view of the matter, for, in my opinion, a work of art makes its appeal to us through the fullness—and even the brimfulness—of its presence rather than through the absence of any definite core of meaning. But I agree that it is precisely the limpidity of classical writing that solicits the attention of the modern critic, accustomed to the flamboyance of Rimbaud's or Claudel's speech, as the Nero of Racine's *Britannicus* was attracted by Junie's provoking virtue:

> Et c'est cette vertu, si nouvelle à la cour,
> Dont la persévérance irrite mon amour . . .

Modern reflection on language on both sides of the Atlantic has shown that a work of art always has an "ambiguous" meaning, that is, any true piece of literature gathers in the fabric of its language a multi-level structure of expression. No writing of any depth can be taken merely at its face value; it never quite says or means what it means to say. There is always in it an excess of significance (which it is the critic's task to explore) over the obvious or voluntary meanings which the author gives it at the moment of creation. What has been a banality in Anglo-American criticism since Empson, and even before him, apparently has just begun to strike the Cartesian mind of the French critics, who usually make straight for the "evident" in literature as well as in philosophy. Therefore the simplicity and directness of French classical prose and verse, its undeniable poetic quality which is all but devoid of symbolic imagery and verbal fireworks, constitute something of a puzzle to the modern mind, fed on altogether different modes of literary expression. Like their predecessors, though for opposite reasons, many of the "nouveaux critiques" are fascinated by the seeming "immobility," the apparent "eternity" of classical art. In Racine's theatre, Charles Mauron looks for the recurrence of the same archetypal patterns under the surface di-

versity of the plays; Roland Barthes' structural approach tries to reconstruct the complex life of Racinian humanity as though it were some sort of artifact resulting from the game-like combination of a certain set of figures and elements; in Lucien Goldmann's view, Racine's "tragical vision" is caught in the at once inevitable and insurmountable dilemma of a simultaneous "yes" and "no" to man's worldly condition; this inner conflict paralyzes the tragic consciousness with the result that the evolution of Racine's tragedies, according to Goldmann's thesis, is best explained by external factors—a traditional approach of French literary history. It is no coincidence that so many of today's ideologically motivated critics peer anxiously into the timeless essence of Racinian tragedy, while a Sartre, for instance, remains faithful to the century of Baudelaire and Flaubert, or while a Malraux or a Roger Vailland were drawn to the great adventurers of Laclos' era.

The situation of the contemporary writer has changed. In France, at least, the dream of helping to alter the world for the better with one's pen, the will to "commit" literature have generally yielded to a new feeling of withdrawal from reality in language, and to a new view of literature as remaining wholly circumscribed within the limits of the imaginary, as constituting a universe of discourse closed in upon itself. In Barthes' own terminology, today's authors (and critics are authors, too) have become convinced of the "intransitive" character of all literary writing, of its lack of any direct bearing on the real world. In brief, the same feeling of *powerlessness* is to be found in much of the writing of the late seventeenth and twentieth centuries in contradiction to the zestful and hopeful beginnings of each century. Where he had often been an active member of his community, as were Rabelais and Ronsard in the sixteenth century, where at times he had been an armed warrior like d'Aubigné and d'Urfé, where he had been at least a resolute partisan as in the case of the "libertin" or "frondeur" authors, the writer in the classical period becomes a domesticated scholar, a kept man in a princely retinue. From La Fontaine to Saint-Simon, from Pascal to La Bruyère, he develops a sense of disillusionment with society; the less able he is to influence its course, the more aloof and distant he becomes until he grows into a bitter and impotent spectator of the follies of his contemporaries. Molière hoped he could improve man with laughter; there is nothing left for La Bruyère to improve except his style.

Who does not see, to a large extent, a parallel situation in our times? Confronted with the crushing mechanisms of mass society in an industrial age, the contemporary writer experiences his utter passivity (as Lucien Goldmann has shown convincingly in his discussion of Robbe-Grillet's novels). His only kingdom becomes the magic of language, his sole province the promised land of his own imaginary creations. When all is said and done what the "new" novelists and playwrights are often trying to do is, avowedly, to show the pure workings of the mind, disengaged from all the fallacies of common sense or ideology. Even when preoccupied with the once colorful world of objects, today's literary style, having shed the picturesque ornamentation of adjectives, is not far from reminding a reader of classical abstraction. Our "blank" way of writing recalls, in its own peculiar way, the "clarity" of seventeenth-century prose. In both cases, though the historical and artistic circumstances are different, one can sense the same flight from reality, the same rejection of all concrete references to man's rootedness and participation in Nature and History, in favor of a supposedly "pure" description of an impersonal self. In both cases, language, we might say, comes full circle upon itself: it is no coincidence that the writers of the second half of the seventeenth century were so concerned with "genres" and "rules," and that present-day writers are so acutely aware of "form" and "structure." Whenever a writer considers writing as an end, a universe unto itself, a certain formalism always ensues. If today's authors do not attempt to "eliminate" the world, as their predecessors, the *précieux*, tried to do, they strive to recreate it altogether; in the end it all comes to the same, since they have become convinced once and for all that they cannot change it. It is only natural that the "clarity" and "immobility" of classical art should exert its fascination on *nouveaux critiques* who more often than not lean to the left. While most French intellectuals are leftists, most leftists in this day and age have lost all hope of a revolution in the West. "There is classicism," as Sartre put in once in *What Is Literature?*, "whenever a society has taken a relatively stable form and whenever it is imbued with the myth of its own durability . . ." I, for one, would venture the following hypothesis: if so many liberal, radical, and marxist thinkers are constantly and consistently concerned with classical literature today, in contrast to the preceding generation of "committed" writers, is it not because their fascination with the magic power of words and the inner rules of rhetoric both reveals

and conceals the practical impotence they share with classical authors of the second half of the seventeenth century?

Yet, personally, I disagree with this view of classical literature as eminently "transparent" and evidently "eternal," a modern view which strangely recalls the most traditional readings, even when a more subtle and up-to-date interpretation of the old stock virtues of Order and Clarity is now supplied. We should heed Valéry's words, whose patronage is often too readily invoked:

> Mais rendre la lumière
> Suppose d'ombre une morne moitié ...

That hidden half cannot and should not be forgotten. True understanding of classical literature cannot, in my opinion, stop at the sheer enjoyment of its superficial brilliance and openness. Nor is the concinnity and brevity of classical utterance to be attributed, as Barthes seems to imply, to some sort of semantic vacuum. In this respect, contemporary critics ought not to fall too easily into the trap laid for them by their elders. To equate classicism with clarity, that is, with an immediate, translucent meaning (or absence of meaning), is simply to forget that classical art is precisely the art of reticence and understatement, or, as Gide aptly put it, the art of saying the most by saying the least. My point is that rhetoric has always to be understood in a given human context. The shaping influence of *précieux* speech on classical style, for instance, has been amply underscored. But how could one truly comprehend *préciosité*, with its manners and mannerisms, without relating it to precisely the very type of reality which it purports to shroud in metaphor? The essence of *préciosité* is entirely in its negative relationship with the natural life of the body and the material objects created by work, which for many reasons an aristocratic civilization must hide or reject. Precious, and also classical, language is not a mere given; it is man-made. It is not the creation of the Holy Spirit, miraculously descended into seventeenth-century parlance and thus deserving to be held as the eternal model; it is the product of a parasite class, the French nobility, at a precise historical moment.

The vaunted clarity of the French classical style is no magical void. Its slow conquest of the proliferating inventiveness of the baroque spirit, the implacable and voluntary impoverishment of its discourse, the substitution of a strict, collectively elaborated rhetoric for free individual fancy—all these result from an historical process which has to be understood as such. It is no coincidence that literature then becomes wholly "psychological." Prevented from calling into question the fundamental ideology of his time, obliged to keep his hands, so to speak, away from religion and politics, operating within the precincts of an aristocratic culture that desires to see its own image mirrored in literature from inside, the classical writer, in Sartre's phrase, cannot help being relegated to an "eternal Cogito." Classical language rejects concrete terms, which are viewed as "low"; it takes on its unmistakably abstract and limpid quality because the nobleman cannot be shown in any direct relationship to Nature through work or even through the workings of his body. His own justification is that he is pure will, pure thought, in opposition to the coarse creatures who people the Third Estate and who, as La Bruyère justly points out, look like animals in the fields. The famed clarity of the classical style reflects the other and higher side of an alienated and reified order.

Traditional criticism was not wrong in assuming that there is an essential link between clarity and order, style and society, in the seventeenth century. It was mistaken about the true political and ethical significance of that order, and consequently about the esthetic and human quality of the literature which expresses it. Yet the marxist view of man's activity as necessarily inserted in a given social context and necessarily a response to it must be rounded off by the existentialist view that any authentic act of self-awareness transcends the limits of environment and goes on to uncover a fundamental aspect of human reality. To recognize that the writer, as well as any other man, can be historically alienated also implies the full consciousness that it is precisely the nature of a great work of art to surmount that alienation. Thus the very process of reflection in the purely "psychological" writings of our classical authors uncovers both man's historic and intrinsic contradictions and therefore constitutes ultimately a means of freeing man from himself. While classical literature is the intellectual instrument which an aristocratic society gave itself in order to negate historical change and eternalize its own image (and this is the deeper meaning of the "pastoral" vogue in novels and on the stage from *L'Astrée* to the beginnings of the Opera), it is, in the last analysis, a radical challenge of that very image which is often proposed to us. To my mind, at least, Corneille's theatre, intended to celebrate the triumph of will over Nature at the hands of the aristocratic hero, explores and finally explodes the intricate

fallacies of his quest. Racine, the perfect courtier, puts in an implacable light the powerlessness of the Prince to govern himself and the world, while Pascal takes a disillusioned look at royalty and society alike. *La Princesse de Clèves*, which purports to be a tale of self-mastery, is rather a study in self-deception. Although thoroughly steeped in the ideology of his time and never wishing to doubt it any more than Descartes would doubt the laws and religion of his country, the classical writer, through sheer lucidity, appears like a permanent, if discreet, challenger of the petrified and mystified values of his period and, for that matter, of any other period.

To overlook this questioning and self-questioning of classical art; to forget that its order derives its main significance from the disorder which it endeavors to suppress; to be oblivious to the fact that the blankness and perfection of form is a deceptive surface that often veils inner conflicts on the psychological, ethical, and political levels—all this, in my estimation, tends to miss altogether the nature—and the greatness—of a literature that does not simply reflect the polish of courtly life, but unmasks the face of the man underneath, our face. Behind the apparent negation of human becoming (our present laws are eternal and our king God-sent, true religious and literary models have already been given us in the ancient past, man will always be the same, etc.), there runs through the century a most acute and sometimes desperate sense of deep rootedness in history. This sense of history may at first have been buried in the recess of what one might metaphorically call the collective unconscious of the time, until it grew keener and keener and burst forth irrepressibly in La Bruyère's and Saint-Simon's writings. Instead of clinging to the dead myth of classical eternity and of mistaking transparency of style for some sort of magic void, I believe that the task of new criticism in the field of the seventeenth century consists in restoring this long immobile body of literature to its full life. The statues in their niches must be returned to the painful dynamics of human change. Like any manifestation of freedom, literary creation must be understood—and we have known this since Hegel—by the inner negativity of the spirit, by its power to challenge and transcend the given, both in it and around it; in brief it must be understood in terms of the process of self-deception, self-discovery, and self-accomplishment in historical man. In my opinion, therefore, attempts at understanding the old classics with modern intellectual tools lies in the effort to apply a *dialectical* type of comprehension to a traditionally *analytical* literature.

Source: Serge Doubrovsky, "New Critics and Old Myths," in *Yale French Studies*, No. 38, May 1967, pp. 18–26.

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Further Reading

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The Ancient Greeks is a reader-friendly, while historically accurate, book about the ancient Greeks. It covers the Greek classical period and includes discussions on Greek literature, science, philosophy, architecture, sculpture and painting.

Hytier, Jean, "The Classicism of the Classics," translated by June Guicharnaud, in *Yale French Studies*, No. 38, 1967, pp. 5–17.

"The Classicism of the Classics" is an interesting consideration of what defines a French classic. The authors look to the history of French literature to help them reach some rather interesting conclusions.

Livy, *The Early History of Rome*, translated by Aubrey De Sélincourt, Penguin Books, 1960.

Titus Livius (Livy) appears to have composed *The Early History of Rome* over a period of forty or more years during the last years of the Roman Republic and the early years of the Roman Empire. He has been praised for his vivid historical imagination and his ability to bring to life the great characters and scenes of Rome's past.

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, translated by Rex Warner, Viking Penguin, 1972.

History of the Peloponnesian War is a lucid translation of Thucydides' account of a defining period in Greek history and is a valuable resource on the rivalry between Athens and Sparta and the resultant twenty-seven-year conflict.

Colonialism

Movement Origin

c. 1875

The boundaries of Colonialism, like those of many literary eras, are difficult to draw. The history of Colonialism as a policy or practice goes back for centuries, and arguably the story of Colonialism is not over yet. Thus literature of several ages reflects concerns about Colonialism in depictions of encounters with native peoples and foreign landscapes and in vague allusions to distant plantations. As colonial activity gained momentum in the late nineteenth century, so the reflection of that activity—as a celebration of European might or as fears of what lay in the wilderness—grew in intensity. Thus rough boundaries for the literary movement of Colonialism would begin in 1875, when historians date the start of a "New Imperialism," through the waning empires of World War I and up to the beginning of World War II, around 1939, although the years after World War I reflect primarily nostalgia for an era that was rapidly coming to a close. Colonialism is primarily a feature of British literature, given that the British dominated the imperial age; even colonial writers of other nationalities often wrote in English or from an English setting. The literature of Colonialism is characterized by a strong sense of ambiguity: uncertainty about the morality of imperialism, about the nature of humanity, and about the continuing viability of European civilization. Perhaps the essential colonial critique is Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, though such works as Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm* and E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* similarly explore the paradoxes of Colonialism.

Colonial literature is also full of high adventure, romance, and excitement, as depicted in Rudyard Kipling's spy thriller *Kim* or the adventure tales of H. Rider Haggard. Isak Dinesen's memoirs, including *Out of Africa*, similarly romanticize the wildness of the colonial landscape and the heroism of adventurous colonizers.

Representative Authors

Joseph Conrad (1857–1924)

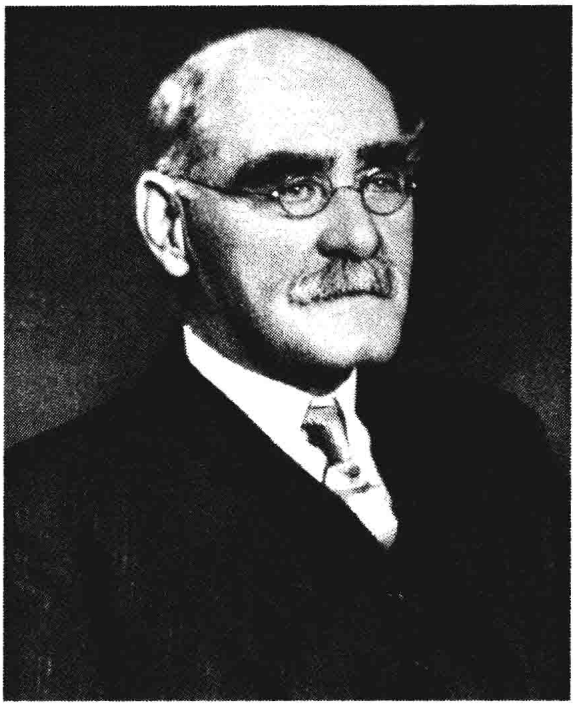
Though considered one of the masters of modern English literature, Conrad was ethnically Polish. He was born in the Ukraine as Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski on December 3, 1857, but he correctly presumed that Conrad would be a surname more easily pronounced by readers of the English language, in which he wrote. He lost his father at the age of four to Russian authorities, who arrested him for nationalist activities on behalf of Poland. His mother died when he was eight, leaving him in the care of his uncle. He joined the British navy in 1880 and became a British citizen in 1886. In 1890 he traveled to the Belgian Congo, a difficult trip that provided the background for Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness*, first published in serial form in 1899 and 1900. *Heart of Darkness* is a paradigmatic work not only of colonialist literature but also of modernist literature. Conrad wrote several major novels, including *The Nigger of Narcissus* (1897), *Lord Jim* (1900), *Nostromo* (1904), and *Under Western Eyes* (1911). Conrad's works are widely believed to be highly critical of the colonizers, especially when they are compared to the works of his contemporary Rudyard Kipling, the only other author who is as representative of colonialist literature as Conrad himself. Scholar William York Tindall, in *Forces in Modern British Literature, 1885–1956*, wrote that Conrad was distinct from Kipling in "producing many novels and stories that without being imperialistic are colonial." The postcolonial African writer Chinua Achebe, however, contended that Conrad was a racist who depicted Africans as "savages." Conrad turned down an offer of knighthood in 1924; he died of a heart attack that same year, in England.

Isak Dinesen (1885–1962)

Isak Dinesen is the pen name adopted by Karen Blixen, who was born Karen Christentze Dinesen on April 17, 1885. Dinesen was born in Denmark, fifteen miles north of Copenhagen. Her father, Wilhelm, committed suicide when Dinesen was ten. She nonetheless grew up on her family's comfortable estate as a member of the upper classes. She was schooled in painting and design and began writing stories as a young woman, publishing three ghost stories in Denmark before moving to British East Africa in 1914. That year, she married her cousin Baron Bror von Blixen-Finecke of Sweden and moved with him to a coffee farm in Kenya. She was married only seven years before divorcing her husband, who had infected her with syphilis. She kept the coffee farm, preferring the relative freedom of life in Africa. She stayed for ten more years before returning to Denmark in 1931, where she began writing about her life as an early colonist. Her major works about Africa include *Out of Africa* (1937) and *Shadows on the Grass* (1960), which depict in detail her view of Africa and, in particular, the Africans who worked for her on her coffee farm. One of her short stories on a non-colonial theme, "Babette's Feast" (1958), was made into a major motion picture by Gabriel Axel in 1986 and won an Academy Award for Best Foreign Film. Sydney Pollack directed a film version of *Out of Africa* in 1985, with Meryl Streep portraying Dinesen. The film won an Academy Award for Best Picture that year along with six other Academy Awards. Dinesen died of emaciation on September 7, 1962, in Denmark and is remembered by modern readers as either a white colonizer with a patronizing view of Africans or a sympathetic advocate of the colonized. She was twice nominated for a Nobel Prize in literature.

E. M. Forster (1879–1970)

Edward Morgan Forster was born January 1, 1879, to Edward Forster, a painter and architect, and Alice (Lily) Whichelo Forster. His father died when he turned two years old; afterwards, he was cared for by his mother and his paternal great-aunt Marianne Thornton, who focused almost solely on his health and development. He attended several prep schools, then entered Cambridge in 1897. He was already publishing books while at Cambridge, in addition to studying literature. However, his first real success did not come until 1910, with the publication of *Howard's End*, a critique of both class structure and cultural taste in Edwardian England. Forster first visited India for pleasure in 1912 and began writing about it in 1914. He visited again in 1921, when India was much changed by the rise in nationalism following a 1919 attack by the British military on Indian civilians. There



Rudyard Kipling

he worked as a personal secretary for a maharajah. *A Passage to India* (1924), Forster's last novel, is often thought to be influenced by the Hindu and nationalist views of India. The novel was such a success that Forster feared he could not live up to it, and though he continued writing for many years, he never again wrote a full-length novel. He was a member of the Bloomsbury Group, an informal collective of writers, artists, and intellectuals, all of whom are associated with Modernism, including Virginia Woolf. He was homosexual but not openly so; his novel *Maurice*, which addressed homosexual themes, was not published until after his death. He died January 7, 1970, in Coventry, England.

H. Rider Haggard (1856–1925)

Henry Rider Haggard was born on June 22, 1856, in Bradenham, Norfolk, England, and moved to South Africa at the age of nineteen. He worked in the colonial service for at least five years before returning to London and pursuing a career in law. Inspired by the success of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, Haggard began writing adventure novels of his own, eventually penning over thirty. Among the most well known is *King Solomon's Mines* (1886), which was an immediate commercial success. Its popularity may have been enhanced by the multiple anonymous reviews Haggard wrote with his friend Andrew Lang to promote the book. *King Solomon's Mines* began a series of South African adventures featuring the white hunter Allan Quatermain. Perhaps Haggard's best-known novel is *She* (1887), which features the character She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed, a catch phrase still in use. "She" is a beautiful but deadly Arab goddess who presents an obstacle to a white adventurer sometimes considered a prototype of Indiana Jones of the *Raiders of the Lost Ark* films. Haggard was a friend of Rudyard Kipling and shared many of Kipling's views about native peoples. His books depict white heroes as brave adventurers and black men and women as exotic and mysterious. He died May 14, 1925; his autobiography, *The Days of My Life*, was published in 1926.

Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936)

Rudyard Kipling was born in Bombay, India, on December 30, 1865. His father was the curator of the Lahore Museum, the setting for the first scene of his novel *Kim* (1901). Kipling lived with his parents, British natives, for five years until he went to England for schooling. He came back to India in 1882 as a journalist and worked seven years in the northern part of India. He left India to travel throughout the British colonies, including South Africa, Rhodesia, Australia, and New Zealand. He married an American, Caroline Balestier, and lived for a short time in the United States. During those years, he also began publishing short fiction to great success. Soon he returned to England, where he was already well known as a writer. Two of his major works are generally considered children's literature: *The Jungle Book* (1894–1895) and *Kim*. He also published several collections of stories and an autobiography, *Something of Myself* (1934). Much of his earlier work, including *Kim*, was written during very difficult times in Kipling's life; he nearly died from influenza, and he lost his seven-year-old daughter Josephine to the disease. Kipling coined the phrase "the white man's burden" as a description of Colonialism in the 1899 poem of the same name. The poem echoes the beliefs about race and imperialism that are reflected in most of Kipling's works, which suggest that it is the obligation of white Westerners to bring the "primitives" of other races into the fold of civilization. Kipling died following an intestinal hemorrhage, January 18, 1936, in London, England, and is buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.

Representative Works

Heart of Darkness

Heart of Darkness, by Conrad, is, in the eyes of many scholars, an essential literary expression of Colonialism. In his important work on Colonialism, *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said wrote that *Heart of Darkness* "beautifully captured" the "imperial attitude" in its depiction of Europeans dominating Africans and African resources and in its sense that there is no alternative to imperialism and thus to Colonialism. The novella was first published in serial form in 1899–1900 and in book form in 1902, as British imperialism was peaking. The book is generally understood as an important critique of the evil done in the name of empire. The empire challenged in *Heart of Darkness* is not the British Empire specifically; however, set in the Belgian Congo, the story seems to condemn European oppressors, most notably Leopold II of Belgium. Whether doing so was Conrad's intent, this interpretation seems to resonate with the popular British belief that British colonization was benevolent and morally superior to European colonization. The story of *Heart of Darkness* is told by Marlow, who is sent into "darkest Africa" to find Kurtz, an exceptional agent and head of the inner station who is reported to have abandoned every pretense of morality or civilization. The "heart of darkness" in the title is thus not strictly Africa, as readers might initially expect, but the heart of a white man, who proves capable of incomparable evil. *Heart of Darkness* is also considered an example of Modernism, with its sometimes unaware narrator, its departure from chronological order, and its questions about the so-called civilized human nature when it remains beyond the constraints of social and civic order.

Kim

Like *Heart of Darkness*, Kipling's *Kim* was published at the height of the British Empire, in 1901, though it is a very different kind of story. *Kim* is often considered children's literature, a spy thriller and coming-of-age story about a young Irish orphan known as "Little Friend to All the World." Kim, or Kimball O'Hara, meets and travels with a Buddhist holy man on his spiritual quest, unaware that the British government is using him to obtain important information. The book thus explores one aspect of Indian spirituality (Indian Buddhism is a relative of one of the dominant Indian religions, Hinduism) as well as the political struggles of the Indian colony. Kipling was not particularly critical

H. Rider Haggard

of imperialism, and *Kim* reflects the belief, widely held particularly prior to World War I, that the colonization of India was a politically sound act for England as well as a moral obligation for a superior race. If *Kim* reveals a more optimistic view of the aims of empire than *Heart of Darkness*, it also belongs to a different type of literature. Though both works are representative of Colonialism, Kipling's *Kim* looks back to the more traditional form of the late-Victorian era, which Modernist writers vigorously rejected.

Lord Jim

Conrad's *Lord Jim* was published as a serial novel in 1900. Like *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim* is largely told from the perspective of the narrator Marlow, who follows the story of a wandering English sailor named Jim, in part to help him, and in part to determine the truth of his life, especially regarding one important event. Jim stands trial for abandoning his ship and leaving the passengers behind to die, an act of moral cowardice he does not deny but also cannot explain. Eventually, he comes to live in the East Indies among the natives in an attempt to redeem himself, but when the native chief's son is murdered by a British looter, Jim feels responsible and accepts a death sentence from the chief, who shoots him in the chest. In Marlow's eyes, Jim's death is a heroic act that serves as his

redemption, but the novel itself offers several other possible interpretations, concluding with a moral ambiguity that is a hallmark both of Conrad's work and of Modernist fiction in general. The style of the novel is also modern, characterized by chronological jumps forwards and backwards, shifts in point of view and narrative style, and a lack of closure. Though it is now considered an exemplary modern novel, early readers did not respond favorably to Conrad's innovations.

Out of Africa

Dinesen's memoir *Out of Africa* was published in English in 1937. British Colonialism was waning when the book was released, but the stories recalled by Dinesen capture a wide swath of colonial history, from 1914 to 1931, and reflect the ambiguous perspective on British colonial practices that is characteristic of much colonialist literature. Dinesen tells of her failed marriage, her difficulty in making her Kenyan coffee farm economically viable, and her relationships with African natives. As it covers the period that marks the decline of the British Empire, which began with World War I in 1914, the book reflects a sense of nostalgia for a lost time and place that infused much late colonial writing. The book was not an immediate success in England; Dinesen's publisher informed her that the book was popular among intellectuals, if not the general public, though he also stated his belief that *Out of Africa* would "take its place in the permanent great literature of the world," according to Olga A. Pelensky in *Isak Dinesen: The Life and Imagination of a Seducer*. Dinesen cited as one of her inspirations Olive Schreiner, a novelist born in South Africa.

A Passage to India

Published in 1925, *A Passage to India* hints at the end of the colonial era in British India and the rise of Indian nationalism. Its author, E. M. Forster, used his experiences in India to depict the tense relationship between the British and Indians, suggesting that even among friends, a truly friendly relationship is difficult to sustain. The title of the novel comes from a Walt Whitman poem of the same name in which Whitman questions the value of the British presence in India but also hopes for unity between East and West. The novel tells a complex story of two English women visiting India in the 1920s, a volatile time after the galvanizing massacre at Amritsar in 1919 that sparked the steady increase of Indian nationalism and inspired the political career of Mohandas Gandhi. One of the women accuses one of her Indian companions of attacking her, fueling the hostility of both local British and Indians, though she later recants. The book is also a story of friendship between an English professor and his Muslim friend, perhaps inspired by Forster's friendship with his Muslim student Syed Ross Masood, to whom he dedicated *A Passage to India*. The book was well received at its publication and was adapted to film in 1984.

She

She is the story of the monstrous goddess Ayesha, known only as She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed, and the adventuring hero Leo Vincy. First published by Haggard in 1887, the novel broke sales records with its immense popularity, especially among men, possibly because of the strong sexual overtones and the mysterious heroine. She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed rules over a society where male and female roles have been reversed. Vincy is shipwrecked on the African coast and journeys through a mysterious landscape to the people ruled by She, a journey that critics, including Sandra Gilbert in "Rider Haggard's Heart of Darkness," have said resembles "a symbolic return to the womb." The ruler She is both exotically sexual and darkly threatening, not unlike colonial depictions of Africa itself. *She* also evokes fears of a growing feminist consciousness at the close of the Victorian era; Sigmund Freud wrote that *She* captured some of his fears of "the eternal feminine" as a castrating threat.

The Story of an African Farm

Olive Schreiner's novel *The Story of an African Farm*, first published in 1883, was among the first major novels of the colonialist era. Schreiner was the daughter of missionaries in South Africa, though after her father was found guilty of violating trading regulations she was largely left to fend for herself. She worked as a governess on African farms, educating herself with the works of Charles Darwin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Thomas Carlyle while working on her novel. She went to England in 1881 and worked two years to find a publisher for *The Story of an African Farm*. The novel was a great success, though it was the last one she published in her lifetime; her later writings were works of political nonfiction. In *The Story of an African Farm*, Schreiner states rather modern views about women's roles in colonial society, a theme that was also common to the writings of women missionaries during the colonial era.

"The White Man's Burden"

Kipling first published his poem "The White Man's Burden" in *McClure's Magazine* in 1899, and throughout that year the poem was republished in several British and U. S. magazines and newspapers. In it, Kipling encourages white people to go out to their colonies and establish civilization there for the benefit of "sullen" natives living in darkness. Kipling repeatedly emphasizes the lack of gratitude white colonizers must accept as part of their burden, claiming that native "sloth and heathen folly" will often counteract European works of civilization and that colonizers can expect to be hated by those they free from the "bondage" of their "loved Egyptian night." The poem was especially influential in the United States, where it appeared as the country was about to enter its own imperialist period by taking control of Puerto Rico, Guam, the Philippines, and Cuba. Anti-imperialists also latched onto the poem, publishing immediate parodies suggesting the hypocrisy of the notion of a "white man's burden." The phrase became a slogan for those on each side of the imperialist debate.

"The Woman at the Store"

"The Woman at the Store" is a short story by Katherine Mansfield, a New Zealand native who is considered a master of the genre. Mansfield spent little time in colonial New Zealand, preferring even as a young woman to live in London. Her stories reflect her wide travels, including her visits to her family's estate in New Zealand. Her New Zealand stories, which include "The Woman at the Store" and "The Garden Party," depict British colonists doing their best to stay connected to their homeland by maintaining their old social practices and pretensions on foreign soil. These standards are in marked contrast to the conditions of native inhabitants and the poverty forced upon them by colonial practices. First published in 1911, "The Woman at the Store" describes the encounter between a party of traveling colonists and a lonely, crude woman with whom they are forced to stay overnight. The hopelessness of the woman and her child and the limited sympathy and understanding of the travelers, one of whom narrates the story, combine to paint a very bleak picture of colonial life.

Themes

Imperialism and Empire

Attention to the aims and ends of imperialism is a repeating theme of colonialist literature. As a political term, *imperialism* refers to the policy of an outside power acquiring colonies—whether settled or not—for its own political and economic advantage. Though Europeans had participated in imperialist activity for centuries, in the late nineteenth century imperial powers, including England, France, Belgium, and Germany, began competing fiercely to increase their colonies, resulting in a high level of aggressiveness and a greater degree of intrusion into previously independent areas. In addition to economic motives, imperialism was fueled by a widely held, self-justifying belief that the "superior" white race of Europe should bring civilization to the "less developed" peoples of color living on other continents. Colonialist literature both affirms and critiques this belief, often at the same time, in keeping with the ambivalence of even the most sympathetic Europeans. Dinesen's *Out of Africa*, for example, has been praised for its positive portrayal of Africans even as it has been condemned as the work of a racist. Such conflicting readings can exist because the book, like many other works of Colonialism, contains both ideas.

National Identity

Colonial practices redefined national boundaries. As the British Empire grew, it came to draw its boundaries over a larger and larger portion of the globe, and at its greatest it controlled one-fourth of the globe. While this control was a source of English pride, it was also a threat to British national identity: if Indians, Africans, and inhabitants of the West and East Indies were British subjects, were they also British? And if not, what constituted British national identity? Colonial authors sometimes depict British colonists clinging to British mores, as in Mansfield's short fiction or Forster's *A Passage to India*. Others, like Kipling, appear more confident, using exotic portrayals of "primitives" and their customs to suggest an inherent, unbridgeable difference between the colonizers and the colonized. Some authors also explored the possibility of "going native," which was sometimes considered an abasement, sometimes a mark of increased nobility. This theme is hinted at in *Kim*, *Lord Jim*, and *Heart of Darkness*, among other works.

Gender and Sexuality

Ideas of the masculine and feminine underlie much of colonialist literature. The very act of colonization is often seen and described as a form of penetration, and such disparate works as *Heart of*

Media Adaptations

- Sydney Pollack directed the film adaptation of Dinesen's *Out of Africa*, released in 1985. The film starred Meryl Streep as Dinesen and Robert Redford as Denys Finch Hatton and focused on their relationship. In addition to Academy Awards for Best Picture, Best Director, Best Cinematography, and Best Art Direction, the film won the award for best adapted screenplay.
- The film version of Forster's *A Passage to India* was directed by David Lean, who also directed *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Dr. Zhivago*, and was released in 1984. The film was nominated for a host of Academy Awards, including Best Director and Best Picture. Dame Peggy Ashcroft, who played Mrs. Moore, won for Best Supporting Actress. In a review of the film that appeared in the *New Yorker*, noted critic Pauline Kael wrote, "Like the book, the movie is a lament for British sins; the big difference is in tone. The movie is informed by a spirit of magisterial self-hatred. That's its oddity: Lean's grand 'objective' manner . . . seems to have developed out of the values he attacks."
- The epic film *Apocalypse Now* is loosely based on Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, though set in Vietnam in the 1960s. The film, released in 1979, is considered one of the masterpieces of director Francis Ford Coppola and was rereleased in August 2001. The film starred Laurence Fishburne, Dennis Hopper, Harrison Ford, Robert Duvall, and Marlon Brando. A more literal adaptation of *Heart of Darkness* was directed by Nicolas Roeg in 1994. The film stars John Malkovich as Kurtz and Tim Roth as Marlowe.
- Richard Attenborough's biographical epic *Gandhi* won nine Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Original Screenplay, and Best Actor for Ben Kingsley, who played Gandhi. Released in 1982, the three-hour film also starred Candace Bergen, the playwright Athol Fugard, Sir John Gielgud, Nigel Hawthorne, and Martin Sheen.

Darkness and *She* portray the white male journeys into a feminized dark landscape. Depicting the colonizer as masculine and the colonized as feminine creates an essential difference between the two and implies the latter needs to be mastered and possessed. Yet for white women authors, Colonialism offered a kind of freedom unavailable to women remaining behind in developed countries, especially in Victorian Britain. Dinesen frequently commented on the freedom afforded her by living in Africa. Single women could travel unaccompanied as missionaries, and many women took the opportunity to advance the cause of women's education through missionary work. The daughter of missionaries, Schreiner takes on some of these issues in *The Story of an African Farm*. As she decries the treatment of native women, she makes the argument that all women have inherent human rights and deserve the same advantages men enjoy.

Race

No white colonial author has escaped the charge of racism, in large part because of the totalizing nature of the imperialist worldview that maintained white European superiority—whether biological or cultural in nature. Even Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, which is widely believed to be highly critical of imperialist policies and practices, cannot envision a worldview outside imperialism, and one of the foundations of imperialism is an abiding belief in racial difference. Kipling provided a straightforward articulation of these beliefs in his poem "The White Man's Burden," which suggests that whites were under a moral obligation to educate, civilize, and Christianize the darker races, or even to care for them as their stronger "protectors." By contrast, Forster's *A Passage to India* depicts Indians as professionals and intellectuals, although the novel closes by suggesting that the differences

between Indians and Europeans are too great to be bridged even by the most well-meaning individuals in either culture.

Human Nature

Questions about racial difference and national identity reflect narrower aspects of larger concerns about the nature of humanity. The benevolent paternalism of some literature relies on an optimistic view of human nature: progress is the natural course of human evolution, the wealth of the imperial powers is evidence of their progress along this course, and the "backward" societies of tribal peoples reflect their need for assistance toward higher evolution. Here again is the attitude of "The White Man's Burden." At the peak of the colonial movement, however, this view became suspect. Conrad's novels perhaps reflect the bleakest view of progress, civilization, and human nature, although Forster's work also expresses grave doubts about civilization's advancement.

Adventure

Although works such as *She* and *Kim* are the most straightforward celebrations of Colonialism as an exotic adventure, the romantic ideal of the wanderer appears in colonial writing of several varieties. In *Out of Africa*, Dinesen writes of her affair with the pilot Denys Finch Hatton, who is depicted as an exciting, independent adventurer who bravely faces danger on safari. *Lord Jim* is a darker tale of adventure, which casts its wanderers as morally ambiguous at best, ruthless thieves and murderers at worst. Mansfield's story "The Woman at the Store" deflates the romantic image of adventure travelers by contrasting the wealth and privilege that allows Europeans to travel by choice with the poverty and hopelessness that entrap those who inhabit the tourist destinations.

Style

Setting

Colonialist literature was consistently set in the colonies. From a European point of view, colonial territory was singular: colonized land and people all fell in the category of "other," even for the Europeans living in the colonies. Politically, geographically, and culturally, however, the colonies were widely different. For example, England's relationship with India began with the spice trade in the sixteenth century, but England did not venture into the African interior until the nineteenth century. India built sophisticated cities that would have been unfamiliar to tribal Africans in rural areas, as would the ports of Cape Town. Thus Conrad's view of Colonialism from the Belgian Congo would necessarily be different from that of Kipling or Forster, not only because of their philosophical differences but because of the different geographical backgrounds from which they drew.

Narration

Though there is not a particular narrative style for colonialist literature, the perspective of the narrator and the mode of narration is an important aspect of style in fiction written during the colonialist movement. To some extent, this feature is relevant to the literary movement of Modernism (see below), which broke up seemingly stable functions of literature such as point of view, narrator, and even plot. Thus the narrators of Conrad's novels are not necessarily reliable sources of information, nor are they the central focus of the novel or a center for interpreting the action of the novel. The fragmented narration of characters such as Marlow highlights the political and ethical morass of European colonization. More broadly, however, the narrative perspective of much colonialist literature gives "subject" status only to white colonizers, as if it were impossible to relate to the colonized as anything but "object." Fundamental to imperialism, this perspective reflects the tacit belief that Europe is central and dominant, and the rest of the world is peripheral and dominated.

Autobiography

The colonial experience brought forth a flood of memoirs and autobiographies of colonists eager to share their experiences and observations with friends and family at home. In particular, this was a way that many women were able to publish respectably, and several women produced memoirs, journals, and collections of correspondence from their travels or missionary work. Many of these were widely and eagerly read at the time, though modern readers mostly value them as historical documents. *Out of Africa* is a notable exception, though it shares several qualities of travel and missionary writing. With such works, the authority given to the writer's observations and opinions, as part of a "true story," was high; Victorian and Edwardian readers admired missionaries and adventuring colonists and formed their opinions about colonized peoples through these texts. Yet as many

Topics for Further Study

- Images can be more powerful than words in swaying public opinion. Locate editorial cartoons, book illustrations, or other visual art that depicts colonized peoples. Sources might include illustrated versions of *Kim* or *The Jungle Book*, newspapers in which "The White Man's Burden" appeared, or books about English history. What does the physical appearance of colonized peoples seem to imply about their intelligence or temperament? Which details of the images give you some insight into the political position of the artists? Do any details of the images give you some insight into the date each was published (e.g., published before or after the start of World War I)?
- Economics played an important role in colonization. Choose a colony and describe the production and trade of a commodity it produced (e.g., tea, spice, coffee). Consider whether the resource could have been grown or manufactured in Europe, what kind of labor was required for production (e.g., skilled or unskilled), and who consumed the resource. What insight does this give you into the acquisition of this particular colony?
- The belief that darker races were not as far advanced along the continuum of civilization is sometimes referred to as "Social Darwinism." In addition, Darwin's theory of the "survival of the fittest" justified for some Europeans the use of force to take the resources of "weaker" societies. In your own words, summarize the scientific theories of Darwin in regard to evolution and natural selection. Do these ideas transfer from biology to sociology? What about economics? Support your opinion with examples and analysis.
- Jean Rhys's novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* attempts to correct the colonialist history of *Jane Eyre* by offering an alternative perspective. Read a colonial work such as *Kim*, *She*, or *Out of Africa* and try to imagine the events from the perspective of one of the native characters, such as the Buddhist holy man Teshoo or the African tribal leader Kinanjui. Choose one event from the novel and write a short story from that character's perspective, using what you are learning about imperialism to illuminate where a native perspective might differ from that of the original novel.
- The charisma and reputation of the British Queen Victoria were central to the symbolism of imperialism, while the actions of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli and Lord Lytton were its teeth. Choose one of these individuals—or another government official of your own finding—and research his or her individual role in the history of Colonialism. Summarize your findings, giving an overview of your subject's actions while addressing such topics as public opinion and opposition within the government.

readers of her works have remarked, Dinesen portrayed the African landscape and people in terms of her memory and nostalgia as well as her necessarily limited European perspective. In writing a book of literature, she crafts a story out of events that may or may not have a direct relation to each other. Though not autobiographical works, the same could be said of Mansfield's New Zealand stories, drawn as they were from distant childhood memories.

Modernism

Literary historians have sometimes maintained that the rise of Modernism as an aesthetic is directly related to a growing European crisis of confidence in imperialist policy. Doubts about the progress of civilization, the benevolent nature of humanity, and even the existence of truth are conveyed artistically not only in the theme and tone of Modernist literature but in some cases in the disjointed, ambiguous style of the language itself. Both Conrad and Forster

belong as much to the history of Modernism as to the history of Colonialism. Yet Colonialism is not simply a thematic subset of Modernism, in part because it is also represented by more traditionalist authors, such as Kipling and Haggard.

Movement Variations

Missionary Writing

The work of Christianizing the "heathens" of the Third World was an important focus of Colonialism; some historians have suggested that the seemingly "compassionate" purpose of "saving" the darker races put a positive face on the aggression of imperialist policy. Some missionaries, however, felt that the blessings of "Christianity and commerce" were necessarily linked; the famous missionary and researcher David Livingstone was an advocate of this position. Missionary writing was very popular with readers back home, since it gave moral support to the work of colonizing and provided "true-life" adventure stories and in some instances added substance to discussions about the role of women by depicting the exploitation of native women in non-Christian countries. Some missionaries were also among the earliest ethnographers; they depicted the physical and cultural features of native societies with a semi-scientific tone. This too added weight to the authority of missionaries' tales, and the writings of missionaries helped shape ideas about biological and social relationships among the races. Particularly after the start of the antislavery movement in Europe, missionaries were inclined to conceive of natives as possessing the potential to evolve into civilized individuals resembling Europeans—which they understood as a natural and desirable progression. Thus, while most missionaries clearly thought of the darker races as "other," they also argued for their common humanity. Publishing a missionary memoir was also a ready way for women to get into print, and the form was generally thought more respectable than fiction.

Travel Writing

Both men and women wrote travelogues, but as with the literature of missionaries, the greater mobility of women in the late nineteenth century meant an increase in the publication of women's writing, which made women's colonialist travel writing a significant genre in its own right. Many women writing during the era of high imperialism reflect the paradox of the times: they are simultaneously writing against the oppressive strictures of Victorianism and reinforcing the oppressive policies of the colonial powers. Yet, as Sara Mills argues in *Discourses of Difference* (1991), "women travel writers were unable to adopt the imperialist voice with the ease with which male writers did." As a result, Mills claims, "their writing exposes the unsteady foundations on which [imperialism] is based."

Colonial Themes in Nineteenth-Century Literature

Several works of nineteenth-century literature that might not be classified under Colonialism in a strict definition nonetheless exhibit colonialist concerns. Examples often mentioned by scholars of Colonialism and post-Colonialism include Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814) and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847). In these novels, the colonial themes recede to the background, though some critics suggest that the marginal nature of the colonial elements is itself indicative of the ethos of imperialism, concealing the extent to which the exploitation of other peoples supports the privilege of the English gentry. In *Mansfield Park*, for example, the Bertram family acquires its wealth in part through its plantations in Antigua and the work of its slaves, though most of the Bertrams never set foot in the colony. Many readers have seen in the character of Sir Thomas Bertram Austen's conservative defense of British plantation owners. In *Jane Eyre*, Rochester's first wife Bertha is a white Creole from the West Indies, a secret locked in his attic after she goes mad. In Brontë's novel, Bertha's final act of madness is burning down Rochester's family home; however, apart from three violent acts perpetrated at night (in only one of which is she observed), Bertha is seen only once in the novel. As in *Mansfield Park*, the silence of the colonial presence in *Jane Eyre* is thought by some to speak louder than words. In fact, the imprisonment of Bertha has inspired several groundbreaking books, including Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's central work of feminist criticism, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979, reissued 2000), and Jean Rhys's postcolonial novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), which tells the West Indies story of Bertha and Rochester preceding the action of *Jane Eyre*.

Historical Context

Early History

The history of European expansionism goes back at least as far as the fifteenth century. Much

European exploration was related to trade, particularly in tea, spice, silk, and other goods not readily available in Europe. The long relationship between England and India is a good example: in competition with its long-standing enemies the Dutch, the English began trading with India in 1600 and soon formed the East India Company (EIC). Throughout the seventeenth century, the EIC strengthened its presence in India by acquiring territory, and by the eighteenth century, with little organized resistance from Indians, who lacked a centralized government, England controlled most of India through the EIC. As the power and territory of the English increased, the rights of Indians decreased; by the close of the eighteenth century, Indians were not allowed in high government positions and the English had cut Indian wages. The resentment of Indians, reaching a peak with the Mutiny of 1857, demonstrated to Queen Victoria the need for the English government to relieve the EIC of its rule in India in order to protect its trade interests there. She named herself "Viceroy of India" in 1859. It was in part a public relations move intended to convey England's concern for India, though official and unofficial acts of racial exclusion increased in scope. The domination of Africa did not begin until the mid to late nineteenth century as it moved southward from the full possession of Egypt in 1882 to the military victory in the South African (Boer) War (1899–1902) and the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910.

Global Conflicts

Though England was the dominant colonial power in the era, several other countries were aggressively seeking to add to their land holdings, sometimes leading to violent conflict among European nations in addition to force used against the native peoples. Spain, France, and Russia had long been colonizers, and the New Imperialism countries, including Germany, Japan, Belgium, Italy, and the United States, also sought colonies to protect their economic and military interests. The increasing number of colonizers and the limited amount of territory sparked a virtual feeding frenzy, particularly among the newer colonizers. Between 1875 and 1914, the rate of colonization was three times that of the rest of the nineteenth century. That period also saw a flurry of conflicts between colonial powers, including the South African (Boer) War (with the Dutch Afrikaners), the Sino-Japanese War, the Spanish-American War, and the Russo-Japanese War. The race for land in Africa produced a number of confrontations among European forces; France and England nearly went to war for control of territories of the Congo, Ethiopia, and the Sudan. Such conflicts were sometimes resolved through diplomatic means, as competing colonial states bargained for control and defined new boundaries for contested territories. The result, especially in the case of the African continent, was national boundaries drawn with no regard to geography, ethnic groups, or economic relationships. Thus, even after the colonial powers withdrew, the native peoples of Africa were left to struggle with the results of colonial deal-making.

British Imperialism

The era during which Colonialism as a literary movement peaked coincides with a period historians sometimes call the second British Empire, or, more generally, the New Imperialism, from 1875 to 1914. England's defeat of France in the Seven Years' War compelled France to give up most of its foreign colonies and granted England free passage throughout the seas. To some extent, the loss of the American colonies also motivated the pursuit of additional territory and the consolidation of power in existing colonies. In England itself, one of the chief crafters of imperialist policy as the second British Empire opened was Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, who was said to be Victoria's favorite prime minister. Disraeli sought to consolidate Britain's colonial holdings, and he was also skilled in swaying public opinion by emphasizing the glory and stature that global expansion brought to the crown, represented by the figure of Queen Victoria. The death of Victoria in 1901, bringing a sixty-four-year reign to an end, thus shook the imperialist enterprise, and soon so did a worsening economy. As the first decade of the twentieth century continued, England found the need to align with its former colonial rivals France and Russia to face an increasing threat from Germany, Italy, and Austria-Hungary. When Germany invaded Belgium on August 4, 1914, England declared war, thus entering the conflict later to be known as World War I. That conflict permanently transformed international politics, marking the decline of the colonial era and England's dominance in international affairs.

Rebellion and Independence

Native people were not unwilling to defend their territory, though for much of the colonial period the lack of an organized leadership in lands previously inhabited by various tribal groups or loosely knit principalities made successful resis-

Compare & Contrast

- **1900s:** Australia, Canada, and New Zealand are British colonies, though nationalist movements have begun to argue for independence. Australia develops its own constitution in 1901 but is still subject to the laws of England; Canada must send troops to the British war in South Africa.

  Today: Australia, Canada, and New Zealand remain members of the fifty-four nation British Commonwealth, headed symbolically by Queen Elizabeth II and officially by the Commonwealth Secretary-General. In 2000, Don McKinnon of New Zealand is installed as the Secretary-General, following the term of Chief Eemeka Anyaoku of Nigeria.

- **1900s:** The British fight the South African War, or Boer War, struggling for control of the South African Boer Republics against the white Afrikaners (early Dutch settlers) who also claim the area. The decade closes with the creation of the Union of South Africa under British rule.

  Today: While under the leadership of the African National Congress and Nelson Mandela, its former president, the nation of South Africa is represented by its black African majority, though race relations between Africans and Afrikaners remain tense and sometimes violent. After leaving the Commonwealth in 1961, South Africa rejoins in 1994.

- **1900s:** Responding to violence against British officials in Bengal, India, the British partition the province in 1905. The decision is also motivated by a desire to place Indian Muslims and Hindus into separate areas. Indian nationalists use nonviolence and noncooperation, including strikes and boycotts, to compel the British to rescind the division.

  Today: A separate nation exists for the former Muslims of India: Pakistan, created as part of the Indian Independence Act of 1947. Hostility between the nations continues, and in January 2002 United States Secretary of State Colin Powell urges talks between Pakistan and India to ward off a threat of nuclear war. Both India and Pakistan are members of the Commonwealth, though Pakistan withdrew between 1972 and 1989.

- **1900s:** Literature taught in colonial schools emphasizes the greatness of European authors. Native students study Homer, Shakespeare, and Dickens in education systems guided by beliefs such as those of Thomas B. Macaulay: "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect."

  Today: Students in British and U.S. classrooms study authors including Buchi Emecheta, Jamaica Kincaid, and Chinua Achebe, whose works reflect non-European perspectives on colonization.

tance difficult. In some ways, however, defeats could be as powerful as victories. The defeat of the Indian Mutiny of 1857 was partly responsible for the growth of Indian nationalism. The arrest of two nationalist leaders in Amritsar in April of 1919 sparked a series of events that culminated in the British army opening fire, without warning, on a public gathering, killing 379 Indians and wounding 1,200. The Amritsar massacre gave new momentum to the nationalist movement in India and inspired protestor Mohandas Gandhi to a career of nonviolent protests, urging "noncooperation" with British policies that eventually led to the withdrawal of Britain from India in 1947.

Colonial Education and Patronage

The role of literature and language in colonial activity was a matter of government regulation. Colonial education systems and colonial literature bureaus sought to increase literacy and develop

written communications as part of their "civilizing" process, but in so doing they created a hierarchy of language, making the written European languages and histories superior to the oral languages and histories of many native cultures. Arts such as literature were patronized, while native arts including weaving and carving were devalued and considered evidence of unevolved cultures. In countries where several native languages were spoken, colonial governments often encouraged the dominance of one language, directly or indirectly suppressing languages or verbal traditions that were connected with indigenous religious practices.

The Science of Imperialism

Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) in an effort to describe his theories of evolution by the principle of natural selection. According to this theory, desirable traits for survival dominate in a species while undesirable traits recede, by a natural course of progress. Darwin's ideas were adapted from biology to sociology by Benjamin Kidd, whose *Social Evolution* (1894) was published in the United States and England to immediate popular acceptance. He followed this work with *The Control of the Tropics* (1898), in which he depicted colonization as a moral obligation of the "Anglo-Saxon" empires of Britain and the United States, in part to save the "lower races" from the crueler practices of other European colonizers and in part to "elevate" them to a higher level of social evolution. Such arguments played an important part in maintaining public support for imperialist policy.

Critical Overview

A coherent study of the body of the literature of Colonialism arose in the latter half of the twentieth century. A precursor to this work was Susanna Howe's 1949 study *Novels of Empire*, which reviewed a body of literature in colonial settings. Critics from the late 1960s and early 1970s began raising questions about the morality of imperialism and the resistance of the colonized. Scholars began discussing imperialism not merely as a political policy but as a mythology, a system of symbols, narratives, and beliefs supporting imperialist action. But not until the release of Edward Said's landmark work of cultural scholarship *Orientalism* in 1978 was there a theory of Colonialism that encompassed the full range of colonial discourse and its uses in legitimizing and maintaining colonialist practices. Orientalism as a cultural practice entails a web of beliefs about biology, culture, race, and religion that fix the "oriental" as "other," thus necessarily "less than," justifying the West's dominance of the East. It was Said, in fact, who began the common usage of the phrase "colonial discourse" to describe the wide scope of textual practices related to Colonialism. Another of Said's major studies is *Culture and Imperialism* (1993).

After Said, perhaps the other most influential scholar of Colonialism is Homi K. Bhabha. Bhabha emphasized the ambiguity of colonial discourse, introducing to colonialist studies the idea of *hybridization*, a theory first developed by the Russian scholar of the novel Mikhail Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination*. Bakhtin defined hybridization as "a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by epoch, by social differentiation, or by some other factor." Bhabha supported the work of Said but also offered a corrective by stressing the continual presence of those two languages and two consciousnesses, which create the ambivalence that characterizes the body of colonialist literature. Among Bhabha's most influential works are the essay "The Other Question: Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism" (1986) and *The Location of Culture* (1994).

Though racial difference was always a central factor in the study of the literature of Colonialism, feminist scholars insisted that gender was a missing term in the equation. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak pointed to an apparent feminist blindness to colonial discourse in texts such as *Jane Eyre* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in her widely quoted essay, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" (1985). Studies that grew out of this argument include Laura Donaldson's *Decolonizing Feminisms: Race, Gender, and Empire-Building* (1992) and Jenny Sharpe's *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Women in the Colonial Text* (1993), which further explore the complex relationship between feminism and Colonialism. As Sharpe observed, many nineteenth-century feminists used the ideology of racial difference to advance their own cause. In his 1995 book *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture, and Race*, Robert Young added the term *colonial desire* to the vocabulary of Colonialism. Young wrote that sexuality and commerce were closely bound together in colonial dis-

course, arguing that "it was therefore wholly appropriate that sexual exchange . . . should become the dominant paradigm through which the passionate economic and political trafficking of Colonialism was conceived."

Criticism

Shaun Strohmer

Strohmer holds a Ph.D. in English from the University of Michigan and is an independent scholar, freelance writer, and editor. In this essay, Strohmer discusses empowerment and disintegration as central themes in the literature of Colonialism.

The literature of Colonialism is often unpleasant, or at least challenging, to read. Even after most European countries had abandoned the practice of slavery, which eventually was deemed barbaric by public opinion, the taking of territory and the imposition of new governments were considered jewels in the crown of the second British Empire. Yet the era of "New Imperialism" was short-lived. In practical terms it ended with the start of World War I, but the imperial age also waned as public support for colonization declined. As the literature of Colonialism demonstrates, ambiguity and paradox characterize colonial discourse. What forces underlie that paradox?

It is perhaps no accident that the increasing momentum in imperialist history is echoed in the rapid developments in the history of psychology and psychiatry during the nineteenth century. Though no historian has proven a connection, it is not much of a stretch to imagine that increased encounters with other peoples would give rise to questions about the nature of humanity. The discipline of anthropology emerged from these questions—the Royal Anthropological Institute was founded in 1871—but the existing sciences of mankind also grew. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, scholars including Alexander Bain, Franz Brentano, William James, and John Dewey began defining their discipline, seeking to describe in scientific terms the relationship between emotion and the will, states of consciousness and unconsciousness, and human mental development. In the field of psychiatry, Freud began developing his theories of the unconscious, where humans are ruled by animal instincts that must be tempered by reason or punishment. Concurrently, Darwin began publishing his

Queen Victoria, British monarch and Empress of India

series of works on evolution and natural selection. Indeed, to some extent the notion of the "survival of the fittest" grew out of the travels of his friend Alfred Wallace through Malaysia. Darwin too wrote about the emotions in scientific terms, publishing *The Expression of Emotion* in 1872. In that work he discussed the communication of animals and how their various signals reveal the foundations of the human expression of emotion.

Such discoveries were cause for optimism. As the Industrial Revolution surged forward, it seemed that science and technology held the keys to ever greater wealth and progress. Outmoded superstitions and needless self-repression could be cast aside. The dawn of a new century and the death of Queen Victoria contributed to the sense of a bold new era dominated by the power of man. At the same time, however, the new science of human nature seemed to create as many questions as it purported to answer. Not surprisingly, the notion of *agnosticism*, or the belief that ultimate reality, or God, is unknown and unknowable, sprang from the followers of Darwin. The scientific search for man's origin led only to a clouded mystery, far more ambiguous than traditional notions of humankind's place in the universe. Thought and emotion, even action, appeared to be ruled by forces even more remote than a heavenly deity—at best,

What Do I Study Next?

- Shakespeare's late play *The Tempest* is thought by many contemporary literary scholars to be a meditation on England's early imperialist activities, particularly in the relationships among Caliban, Miranda, and Prospero.
- Modernist author Henry James wrote during the same years as Conrad but with a different focus. From an American perspective, James wrote novels that critiqued what he saw as the failing aristocracy of Europe, a subject closely related to the rise and fall of imperialism. James had strong sympathies with England, however, and became a British subject in 1914 in order to fight in World War I. Among James's major novels is *The Wings of the Dove*, an aristocratic tragedy set in London and Venice.
- One of the more important figures to emerge from the Indian colonial era is Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, later known as Mahatma (meaning "Great Soul") Gandhi. His nonviolent efforts to persuade the British to leave India drew the attention of the rest of the world; he was *Time* magazine's Man of the Year in 1930, and the *Christian Century* proposed his name for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1934—all before his crusade for Indian independence showed a hope of success. Gandhi published his views on nonviolence in several books, including *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* and *Nonviolent Resistance*. The well-known monk Thomas Merton published a study of Gandhi's beliefs in *Gandhi on Nonviolence*.
- Chinua Achebe was born in colonial Nigeria and in the postcolonial era became one of its most important writers. Achebe has also become an important novelist and postcolonial critic. Though Achebe has adopted a European form, his works represent an African aesthetic. Among his most widely read works are *Things Fall Apart* and *Anthills of the Savannah*.
- Another writer of postcolonial significance is Salman Rushdie, who was born in Bombay, India, in the first year of India's independence. Among his classic novels is *Midnight's Children*, which tells the story of India from 1910 through 1976, through the eyes of its young hero Saleem, born like Rushdie in 1947. Rushdie's fiction explores the power of memory as well as history and the lingering impact of colonization.

the nervous system, at worst, the murky recesses of the unconscious.

An obvious literary response to and reflection of this paradox is Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, long celebrated as a mirror for the fragmented modern man. But Conrad's antiheroes are not the only characters of colonialist literature who experience that joint pull toward both power and disintegration. Arguably, that contradictory movement is an essential part of much of the literature of Colonialism. Haggard's *She* and Kipling's *Kim*, not examples of Conrad's Modernism, nonetheless similarly reveal aspects of the paradoxical modern self. As in *Heart of Darkness*, in these novels contact or confrontation of man's animal nature, represented by untamed wilderness or untamed "primitives," draws the protagonist in conflicting directions.

In *She* both Leo Vincy and the narrator Holly find themselves tempted by the goddess Ayesha even as they loathe her and her highly sensual and barbaric brand of paganism. After receiving a chilling tour of her tombs, Holly readily succumbs to her temptations anyway, though she tells Leo frankly that a kiss from her would undo him forever. Yet somehow Holly senses something that he says "chilled me back to common sense, and a knowledge of propriety and the domestic virtues." In the unconscious of Holly, instinct and civilization struggle mightily. Likewise, Leo confronts Ayesha but staggers back, "as if all the manhood had been taken out of him." When Ayesha successfully seduces Leo after killing his wife before his eyes, Holly reports:

> Leo groaned in shame and misery for though he was overcome and stricken down, he was not so lost as to be unaware of the depth of the degradation to which he had sunk. On the contrary, his better nature rose up in arms against his fallen self, as I saw clearly later on.

In Holly's terms, Leo's struggle is a struggle of those two aspects of his nature: the power of the will and the devolutionary force of instinct and desire. This struggle looks quite different in *Kim*, a novel with a very different tone and audience. Nonetheless, as both a spy novel and a coming-of-age story, *Kim* touches on issues of identity and development. In the closing chapter, Kim's final battle is between the Body and the Soul. In this case, the Body is tied to reason and reality, solid things that are known to exist and be useful. The Soul, particularly as it is described by the lama, is mystical and irrational. Yet it is never made clear how the battle ends. Shortly before the novel ends, Kim cries out, "I am Kim. I am Kim. And what is Kim?" Though the overall ethos of the novel appears to privilege Western empiricist knowledge over Eastern mysticism, the answer to Kim's question remains ambiguous.

Though *Kim*, *She*, and *Heart of Darkness* are written from a strongly masculine perspective, the paradox of human nature is not a question limited to men. The combination of Colonialism and rising early feminism was a potent mixture for women seeking to understand their place in the world. Women did not have the same claim to the sense of power and entitlement with which white male Europeans rang in the twentieth century, yet the symbol of empire was a woman—Victoria—and individual women played major roles in the project of colonization. The writing of many women who ventured into the colonies does not display a fear of losing one's self but a sense of finding one's self. This is perhaps a reductive dichotomy—women move between oppression and integration, while men move between power and disintegration—but if we keep its limitations in mind it can help highlight some interesting aspects of colonialist texts by women. Adjacent to this difference in women's writing is the role the narrator/heroine of women's texts plays. While the men's texts discussed above depict men as dominant heroes (or antiheroes), the heroines of works such as Mansfield's New Zealand stories or even the autobiographical *Out of Africa* stand to the side of such figures. The narrator of "The Woman at the Store" is led by a party of men, and the external action and conflicts of the story take place between the men and the shopkeeper, as the unnamed female narrator stands by. Even in *Out of Africa*, where Dinesen is the subject of her own story, the hero is "played" by Denys Finch Hatton. These women write themselves into the history of Colonialism, yet the force of patriarchy does not allow them to imagine themselves as real subjects.

"Conrad's antiheroes are not the only characters of colonialist literature who experience that joint pull toward both power and disintegration. Arguably, that contradictory movement is an essential part of much of the literature of Colonialism."

Such texts thus reflect the workings of colonial discourse. As Mills writes in *Discourses of Difference*, "Females play an important part in the colonial enterprise as signifiers, but not as producers of signification." In other words, women are not actors or subjects, but symbols, or objects. This is a difficult position from which to write, and a difficult position from which to imagine a self. The development of psychology, as discussed above, was not a great help. The normative self was naturally male simply because that was the cultural standard of the time, but in some cases the development of the human sciences rendered this cultural practice as a scientific axiom. Freud's understanding of "the eternal feminine" construed it as part of the dangerous unconscious that needed to be mastered by male will and reason. In her essay on Haggard's *She*, Gilbert quotes Freud's description of the novel, which he says depicts that eternal feminine as "the immorality of our emotions." Thus as symbols of empire and symbols of irrationality, women were not masters but the embodiment of that which needed to be mastered, doubly so.

Postcolonial critic Gayatri Spivak suggests this in her "Three Women's Tests and a Critique of Imperialism," on Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Spivak

writes, "Bertha's function in *Jane Eyre* is to render indeterminate the boundary between human and animal and thereby to weaken her entitlement under the spirit if not the letter of the Law." In the context of our discussion, the Law can be understood as analogous to Freud's "Law of the Father," the masculine control of the illicit instincts of the unconscious. Bertha, as white Creole and female, demonstrates the need to subordinate the feminine. It is this Law, this sense of being mastered, that Schreiner writes about through the character of Lyndall in *The Story of an African Farm.* After visiting a Boer wedding, Lyndall reflects on her feelings of restriction and freedom and their relationship to imperialism. Her monologue is worth quoting at length:

> I like to feel that strange life beating up against me. I like to realize forms of life utterly unlike mine.... When my own life feels small, and I am oppressed with it, I like to crush together, and see it in a picture, in an instant, a multitude of disconnected unlike phases of human life—medieval monk with his string of beads pacing the quiet orchard . . .; little Malay boys playing naked on a shining sea-beach; a Hindoo philosopher alone under his banyan tree, thinking, thinking, thinking, so that in the thought of God he may lose himself .... a Kaffir witch-doctor seeking for herbs by moonlight, while from the huts on the hillside come the sound of dogs barking, and the voices of women and children; a mother giving bread and milk to her children in little wooden basins and singing the evening song, I like to see it all; I feel it run through me—that life belongs to me; it makes my little life larger; it breaks down the narrow walls that shut me in.

Schreiner describes in detail the wildness that Haggard and Conrad describe as threatening, that Kipling portrays as tamable, and constructs it as liberating. This liberation is not complete—Lyndall is very much a radical whose dreams are unlikely to be realized, as in *Out of Africa* Dinesen's sense of freedom is countered by the force of patriarchy that does not allow her to claim the role of the hero for herself. Moreover, that liberation appears to come at the cost of the continued oppression of the colonized. Africa, after all, did not exist solely for the self-realization of white European women. Nonetheless, perhaps what has made works such as Dinesen's and Schreiner's compelling to successive generations of readers is that they can envision that liberation at all. Like Conrad, they do not escape paradox and ambiguity but instead write it out where it can be viewed and acknowledged. In the contemporary climate of neo-Colonialism, where the history of humanity will go from there remains to be seen.

Source: Shaun Strohmer, Critical Essay on Colonialism, in *Literary Movements for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Ania Loomba

In the following essay, Loomba explores literature as a vehicle for complex examinations of Colonialism.

Objectivity is not the only ground on which claims for ideological and political innocence can be made. Humanist literary studies have long been resistant to the idea that literature (or at least good literature) has anything to do with politics, on the grounds that the former is either too subjective, individual and personal or else too universal and transcendent to be thus tainted. Accordingly, the relationship between Colonialism and literature was not, until recently, dealt with by literary criticism. Today, the situation seems to be rapidly reversing itself, with many, if not a majority, of analysts of colonial discourse coming from a training in, or professional affiliation with, literary studies. This does not mean that the orthodoxies within literary studies have simply evaporated: often analyses of Colonialism, or race, like those of gender, are still regarded as 'special interest' topics which do not seriously alter teaching and research in the rest of the discipline. Still, recent attention to the relationship between literature and Colonialism has provoked serious reconsiderations of each of these terms.

Firstly, literature's pivotal role in both colonial and anti-colonial discourses has begun to be explored. Ever since Plato, it has been acknowledged that literature mediates between the real and the imaginary. Marxist and post-structuralist debates on ideology increasingly try to define the nature of this mediation. If, as we suggested earlier, language and 'signs' are the sites where different ideologies intersect and clash with one another, then literary texts, being complex clusters of languages and signs, can be identified as extremely fecund sites for such ideological interactions. Moreover, they also show the complex articulation between a single individual, social contexts and the play of language. Literary texts circulate in society not just because of their intrinsic merit, but because they are part of other institutions such as the market, or the education system. Via these institutions, they play a crucial role in constructing a cultural authority for the colonisers, both in the metropolis and in the colonies. However, literary texts do not simply reflect dominant ideologies, but encode the tensions, complexities and nuances within colonial

cultures. Literature is an important 'contact zone', to use Mary Louise Pratt's term, where 'transculturation' takes place in all its complexity. Literature written on both sides of the colonial divide often absorbs, appropriates and inscribes aspects of the 'other' culture, creating new genres, ideas and identities in the process. Finally, literature is also an important means of appropriating, inverting or challenging dominant means of representation and colonial ideologies. Let us examine some of these interactions between literature and Colonialism.

We have already seen how travellers tales in the European Renaissance were an amalgam of fiction, attitudes received from earlier times, and new observations. Encounters with what lies outside its own boundaries are central to the formation of any culture: the line that separates inside and outside, the 'self' and the 'other' is not fixed but always shifting. The vast new worlds encountered by European travellers were interpreted by them through ideological filters, or ways of seeing, provided by their own cultures and societies. But the impetus to trade, plunder and conquer these new lands also provided a new and crucial framework through which they would interpret other lands and peoples. Hence, black Africans were considered bestial both because of the medieval and religious associations of blackness with filth and dirt, and also because this provided a justification for colonising and enslaving them. This dialectic shaped attitudes to outsiders as well as to 'European' culture itself, for example, the centrality of whiteness to beauty was not an age-old idea that now cast black people as ugly, rather it was the actual contact with black people, based on conquest and exploitation, which also shaped English Renaissance notions of beauty. English nationalism relied upon cultural distinctions which demarcated Europeans from blacks, or even the English from Italians or Irish people; conversely, these cultural distinctions rationalised an aggressive nationalism that fuelled England's overseas expansion.

It is not just travel tales which are shaped by cross-cultural encounters but even those pieces of writing which appear to be inward looking, or deal with private rather than public concerns. The lovers in John Donne's poems, for example, explicitly demarcate their private space from the fast expanding outer world. In 'The Sunne Rising', even the sun becomes a peeping Tom, a 'busy olde fool'. Such a retreat both testifies to the growing ideology of coupledom in this period and challenges (via its blatant sexuality and extra-marital connotations)

Literature written on both sides of the colonial divide often absorbs, appropriates and inscribes aspects of the 'other' culture, creating new genres, ideas and identities in the process."

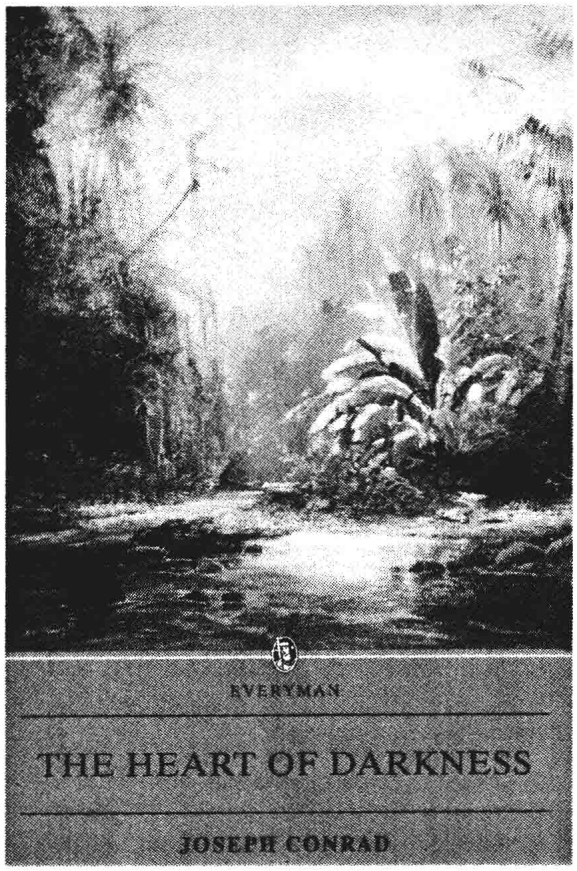
its Protestant version. But the withdrawal into privacy and the celebration of sexuality can only be expressed by images culled from contemporary geographical expansion. The female body is described in terms of the new geography, as in Donne's 'Love's Progress':

> The Nose (like to the first Meridian) runs
> Not 'twixt an East and West, but 'twixt two suns:
> It leaves a Cheek, a rosie Hemisphere
> On either side, and then directs us where
> Upon islands fortunate we fall,
> Not faynte Canaries, but Ambrosiall,
> Her swelling lips . . . and the streight Hellespont betweene
> The Sestos and Abydos of her breasts . . .
> And Sailing towards her India, in that way
> Shall at her fair Atlantick Navell stay . . .

The lovers' relationship is worked out in terms of the colonialists' interaction with the lands they 'discover', as in 'To his Mistris going to Bed':

> Licence my roaving hands, and let them go,
> Before, behind, between, above, below.
> O my America! my new-found-land,
> My kingdome, safeliest when with one man man'd
> My Myne of precious stones: My Emperie,
> How blest am I in this discovering thee.

The colonial contact is not just 'reflected' in the language or imagery of literary texts, it is not just a backdrop or 'context' against which human dramas are enacted, but a central aspect of what these texts have to say about identity, relationships and culture. Moreover, in the second poem by Donne, sexual and colonial relationships become analogous to each other. Donne's male lover is the active discoverer of the female body, and desires to explore it in the same way as the European 'adventurer' who penetrates and takes possession of lands which are seen as passive, or awaiting discovery. Here, the sexual



Cover of Joseph Conrad's The Heart of Darkness

promise of the woman's body indicates the wealth promised by the colonies—hence, in the first poem the lover/colonist traverses her body/the globe to reach her 'India', the seat of riches. But the woman/land analogy also employs a reverse logic as the riches promised by the colonies signify both the joys of the female body as well as its status as a legitimate object for male possession.

Language and literature are together implicated in constructing the binary of a European self and a non-European other, which, as Said's *Orientalism* suggested, is a part of the creation of colonial authority. Peter Hulme's work on the formation of a colonial discourse in sixteenth-century America is extremely illuminating in this regard. Hulme shows how two words—'cannibal' and 'hurricane'—were lifted from Native American tongues and adopted as new words into all major European languages in order to strengthen an ideological discourse'. Both words came to connote not just the specific natural and social phenomenon they appear to describe but the boundary between Europe and America, civility and wildness. 'Hurricane' began to mean not simply a particular kind of a tempest but something peculiar to the Caribbean. Thus, it indicated the violence and savagery of the place itself. Similarly, 'cannibalism' is not simply the practice of human beings eating their own kind, not just another synonym for the older term anthropophagy. The latter term referred to savages eating their own kind, but cannibalism indicated the threat that these savages could turn against and devour Europeans. Hulme further shows that there was a blurring of boundaries between these two terms, although hurricane supposedly referred to a natural phenomenon and cannibalism to a cultural practice, they both came to designate whatever lay outside Europe. Moreover, 'cannibal' was etymologically connected to the Latin word *canis* (dog), reinforcing the view that 'the native cannibals of the West Indies hunted like dogs and treated their victims in the ferocious manner of all predators'. Hulme discusses how a play like Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (far from being a romantic fable removed from the real world) is implicated in these discursive developments, and in the formation of colonial discourse in general, how its tempests are hurricanes in this new sense, and why Caliban's name is an anagram for cannibal, and why also Prospero turns a dog called Fury on to the rebels. Literature, in such a reading, both reflects and creates ways of seeing and modes of articulation that are central to the colonial process.

Literary texts are crucial to the formation of colonial discourses precisely because they work imaginatively and upon people as individuals. But literary texts do not simply reflect dominant ideologies; they also militate against them, or contain elements which cannot be reconciled to them. Such complexity is not necessarily a matter of authorial intention. Plays such as *Othello* and *The Tempest* thus evoke contemporary ideas about the bestiality or incivility of non-Europeans. But we can differ about whether they do so in order to endorse dominant attitudes to 'race' and culture or to question them. Does *Othello* serve as a warning against inter-racial love, or an indictment of the society which does not allow it? Does *The Tempest* endorse Prospero's view of Caliban as a bestial savage, or does it depict the dehumanisation of colonial rule? It is difficult to establish Shakespeare's intentions, but we can certainly see how these plays have been read differently by people over time and in different places. *The Tempest*, for example, has been staged, interpreted and appropriated as a romance that has nothing to do with Colonialism, as an imperial fable depicting the victory of the white man's

knowledge over both nature and the savage, and as an anti-colonial text that depicts the struggle of the enslaved Caliban.

Literary and cultural practices also embody cultural interactions. Morris dancing, which might be regarded as quintessentially English, evolved from Moorish dances brought back to Europe through the Crusades. In fact, throughout the medieval and early modern periods we can see the European appropriation of non-European texts and traditions, especially Arabic texts, so that European literature is not simply literature written in Europe or by Europeans but is produced in the crucible of a history of interactions going back to antiquity. The syncretic nature of literary texts or their ideological complexities should not lead to the conclusion that they are somehow 'above' historical and political processes. Rather, we can see how literary texts, both through what they say, and in the process of their writing, are central to colonial history, and in fact can help us towards a nuanced analysis of that history. Even a discipline like comparative literature which acknowledged the profound interaction of various literatures and cultures, was hierarchically organised, and its central assumption was that 'Europe and the United States together were the centre of the world, not simply by virtue of their political positions, but also because their literatures were the ones most worth studying'. Instead, Said suggests that Western cultural forms be placed 'in the dynamic global environment created by imperialism.'

But what about non-Western forms of writing? These too did not develop in isolation but were shaped by foreign, including colonial, encounters. For example, O. Chandu Menon's *Indulekha* (1889); one of the earliest novels written in Malayalam, was, its author claims, an attempt to fulfil his wife's 'oft-expressed desire to read in her own language a novel written after the English fashion' and to see if he could create a taste for that kind of writing 'among my Malayalam readers not conversant in English.' This novel documents the transformation of marital relations in the Malabar region and articulates some of the tensions and desires of the new middle classes in the region through what was initially an alien literary form. In another part of the world, George Lamming, in his famous essay 'The Occasion for Speaking', claimed that there were 'for me, just three important events in British Caribbean history'—Columbus's journey, 'the abolition of slavery and the arrival of the East—India and China—in the Caribbean Sea' and 'the discovery of the novel by West Indians as a way of investigating and projecting the inner experiences of the West Indian community.' Published in 1960, Lamming's essay was one of the earlier attempts to understand how important literature can be in devaluing and controlling colonial subjects but also in challenging Colonialism.

This may be a good place to ask ourselves how exactly we would demarcate literary texts from other forms of representation. If we go back to a period when European colonial discourse is in its formative stages, we can see the fairly dramatic overlaps between literary texts, visual representations and other writings. Let me begin with a picture that has become, following a seminal essay by Peter Hulme, central to the discussion of the place of women and gender in colonial discourse—it is *Vespucci discovering America*, engraved in the late sixteenth century by Stradanus. In this picture, Vespucci holds a banner with the Southern cross in one hand and a mariner's astrolabe in the other. He stands looking at America, who is a naked woman half rising from a hammock. Hulme analyses this picture to show how it encodes aspects of the colonial drama: America as a naked woman 'lies there, very definitely discovered.' The cannibals in the background signify the supposed savagery and violence of New World natives, which the colonisers used to 'justify' their taking over of American lands. Vespucci is a historical individual, America a whole continent, their 'meeting' enacts a colonial paradigm whereby the European subject achieves individuation precisely in opposition to colonised peoples who represent land (as in this picture), or nature, ideas (commerce, labour, or pain) or a group (Zulu warriors, or Hindu women).

The first of the great sixteenth-century atlases, the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, drawn up by Abraham Ortelius in 1570 (published in English in 1606 as *The Theatre of the Whole World*) encodes the colonial encounter in similar ways. Its frontispiece depicts the figure of America and the accompanying lines tell us:

> The one you see on the lower ground is called
> AMERICA, whom bold Vespucci recently voyaging across the sea seized by force, holding
> the nymph in the embrace of gentle love.
> Unmindful of herself, unmindful of her pure
> chastity, she sits with her body all naked, except that a feather headdress
> binds her hair, a jewel adorns the forehead,
> and bells are around her shapely calves.
> She has in her right hand a wooden club, with
> which she sacrifices\
> fattened and glutted men, prisoners taken in war.

She cuts them up into quivering pieces, and either
roasts them over a slow fire or boils them in a
steaming cauldron,
or, if ever the rudeness of hunger is more pressing,
she eats their flesh raw and freshly killed . . .
a deed horrible to see, and horrible to tell . . .
At length . . . wearied with hunting men and want-
ing to lie down
to sleep, she climbs into a bed woven in a wide
mesh like a net which she ties at either end to a
pair of stakes. In its weave,
she lays herself down, head and body, to rest.

The lines seem virtually a commentary on the Stradanus picture and other visual representations showing America. The birth of a new cartography in the early seventeenth century was made possible and imperative by travels to the new lands. Maps claim to be objective and scientific, but in fact they select what they record and present it in specific ways, which are historically tied in with colonial enterprises. During the Renaissance, the new artwork and the new geography together promised the 'new' land to European men as if it were a woman; not to mention the women of the new land who were regarded as literally up for grabs.

Not surprisingly then, Sir Walter Ralegh who led the first English voyages to Guiana described the latter as a country that 'hath her maidenhead yet'. America was ready to be deflowered by Europe. Attached to Ralegh's narrative was a poem by George Chapman, 'De Guiana' in which Guiana is an enormous Amazonian female who defers to England, also personified as a woman:

Guiana, whose rich feet are mines of golde,
Whose forehead knocks against the roofe of Starres,
Stands on her tip-toes at fair England looking,
Kissing her hand, bowing her mightie breast,
And every signe of all submission making.

But if England is also female, and if the imperial project is carried out in the name of a female monarch (in this case Elizabeth I), colonial relations cannot be projected always or straightforwardly in terms of patriarchal or heterosexual domination. These tensions between the female monarch, the male colonists and colonised people were to be revisited and reworked during the heyday of British imperialism when Victoria was Empress. These different kinds of 'texts'—poetry, travelogues, atlases—use different languages and codes to project overlapping images, create a common vocabulary and construct America as an attractive land ripe for colonisation.

The interrelatedness of literary with non-literary texts, and the relation of both to colonial discourses and practices that we have glimpsed in these early colonial times can be unravelled in later periods too, often even more sharply. We have seen how a wide spectrum of representations encode the rape and plunder of colonised countries by figuring the latter as naked women and placing colonisers as masters/rapists. But the threat of native rebellion produces a very different kind of colonial stereotype which represents the colonised as a (usually dark-skinned) rapist who comes to ravish the white woman who in turn comes to symbolise European culture. One of the earliest such figures is Caliban in *The Tempest*, who, Prospero alleges, threatens to rape his daughter Miranda. This stereotype reverses the trope of Colonialism-as-rape and thus, it can be argued, deflects the violence of the colonial encounter from the coloniser to the colonised. Understood variously as either a native reaction to imperial rape, or as a pathology of the darker races, or even as a European effort to rationalise colonial guilt, the figure of the 'black' rapist is commonplace enough to be seen as a necessary/permanent feature of the colonial landscape.

In the very different context of nineteenth-century colonial India, Jenny Sharpe demonstrates that the dark-skinned rapist is not an essential feature at all but discursively produced within a set of historically specific conditions. Sharpe shows that though such a figure comes to be a commonplace during and after what the British called 'The Mutiny' of 1857 (a revolt which spread from the Sepoys of the army and involved local rulers as well as peasants, and which nationalist historiography was to call the First War of Indian Independence). This event inaugurated the transformation of an existing colonial stereotype, that of the 'mild Hindoo', into another, that of the savage rapist of British women. Before the revolt, there were no stories of rape. The imperialists had for long scripted Indians as mild and ripe for colonial education. Through a reading of various reports, memoirs and other Mutiny narratives written by men as well as women, Sharpe suggests that the rebellion shook the British and left them 'without a script on which they could rely'. Sharpe demonstrates what she calls 'the truth effects' of stories about white women's violation and mutilation. Even though there was no evidence of systematic violence of this sort, she suggests that the 'fear-provoking stories have the same effect as an actual rape, which is to say, they violently reproduce gender roles in the demonstration that women's bodies can be sexually appropriated.' This idea of 'truth-effects' where discourses can produce the same effects as

actual events is Foucaultian in origin and it is useful in expressing the material effects of ideology without conflating the two. Sharpe discusses how these rape stories allowed a shaken British administration not only to consolidate its authority but to project itself as part of a civilising mission. Thus 'a crisis in British authority is managed through the circulation of the violated bodies of English women as a sign for the violation of Colonialism.'

A whole range of English novels about India play with this history: E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, in which an Indian man is wrongly accused of raping a British woman, evokes the same 'racial memory that echoes across the Mutiny novels as a horrific nightmare.' But the book was written much later in the 1920s during a period haunted by the massacre by the British of hundreds of defenseless Indians who had assembled for a non-violent public meeting at Jallianwallah Bagh at Amritsar in March 1919, an event which challenged the usual British claim to a civilising presence. Similarly Paul Scott's *The Jewel in the Crown*, most explicitly offers rape as a metaphor for imperialism by depicting how an Indian man accused of raping a British woman is in turn violated by the colonial machinery. This novel too was written during the height of the nationalist struggles, at which time there was no threat of inter-racial rape analogous to that which was evoked and circulated during the Mutiny. Thus, at a time when the crisis of colonial authority is at a fever pitch, both these books evoke an earlier discourse which had tried to establish the moral value of colonisation. According to Sharpe, this harking back in *The Jewel in the Crown* works to suggest that 'imperialism is a violation only at the moment of an organized opposition to British rule.' Thus, while 'exposing the British abuse of power in India, the novel also consolidates a colonial discourse of rape.' In this reading, specific texts are not always simply pro- or anti-colonial, but can be both at the same time.

Sharpe's book is part of the growing body of work that not only warns us against abstracting literary from other writings, but conversely, reminds us that non-literary texts such as newspaper stories, government records and reports, memoirs, journals, historical tracts or political writings are also open to an analysis of their rhetorical strategies, their narrative devices. They are not necessarily 'objective' but represent their version of reality for specific readers. So it is not just that literary texts are useful for analysing colonial discourse, but that the tools we use for their analysis can also be used for understanding the other 'texts' of empire. Gayatri Spivak endorses Foucault's suggestion that 'to make visible the unseen can also mean a change of level, addressing oneself to a layer of material which hitherto had no pertinence for history and which had not been recognized as having any moral, aesthetic or historical value.' In this sense, literary texts have become more widely recognised as materials that are essential for historical study.

Today, even those works where the imperial theme appears to be marginal are being reinterpreted in the context of European expansion. As Spivak pointed out in an early essay, 'It should not be possible to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism, understood as England's social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English.' Thus, no work of fiction written during that period, no matter how inward-looking, esoteric or apolitical it announces itself to be, can remain uninflected by colonial cadences. Although 'the Victorian novel turned its face from . . . unpalatable colonial details', such details cannot be excluded from our readings of these novels. In Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Sir Thomas Bertram's estate which seems so sheltered in its English provincialism is propped up by Antiguan sugar plantations which were run by slave labour. Of course, the colonies are not marginal in all European literature; on the contrary, English fiction becomes fairly obsessed with colonial travel, an obsession which resulted in bestsellers such as G.A. Henty's novels for young adults (*With Clive in Africa*, or *With Wolfe in Canada*), Rider Haggard's adventure stories or Kipling's fictions. But here let us examine, via recent discussions of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, how attention to the colonial dimension alters our understanding of European literature and culture.

Marxist critics such as Terry Eagleton read Jane's passage from an impoverished orphan and governess to the wife of wealthy Mr Rochester in terms of social mobility and the ambiguous class position of the governess; feminist critics such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar appropriated the novel as a landmark text about the birth of a female individualism and the rise of the female subject in English fiction. But this reading had already been disturbed in 1966 by Jean Rhys's novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*, which amplified a figure that is hauntingly marginal to *Jane Eyre*—that of Bertha Mason, Mr Rochester's 'mad' first wife who is burnt to death, clearing the way for Jane's marriage

to Mr Rochester. Rhys rewrote Bertha's 'madness' as the misery and oppression of a white Creole woman married for her plantation wealth, then dislocated from her island home in the Caribbean and locked up in an English manor. Going back to Rhys, Gayatri Spivak criticised feminist critics for reading 'Bertha Mason only in psychological terms, as Jane's dark double'; she suggested instead that nineteenth-century feminist individualism was necessarily inflected by the drama of imperialism, and that it marginalised and dehumanised the native woman even as it strove to assert the white woman as speaking and acting subject.

This position was criticised by Benita Parry, who pointed out that Bertha Mason, tormented Caribbean woman as she is, is not the real 'woman from the colonies' in Rhys's novel. Bertha, first called Antoinette, is the white mistress of Christophine, a black plantation slave who is exploited but not silenced or reduced to the margins as she articulates her critique of Rochester, and of race and class relations on the island. Of course Christophine is not present in an *Jane Eyre*, but we can see how the world she occupies is necessary to the construction of English domestic peace and prosperity. However, in a fine essay on *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Peter Hulme suggests that while such a move is enormously useful in re-reading the European canon, we need to pay simultaneous attention to the historical and political nuances of texts produced in the erstwhile colonies. Thus Jean Rhys's novel cannot be read simply alongside, and in opposition to *Jane Eyre*, and celebrated as 'postcolonial' in opposition to 'colonial'. For *Wide Sargasso Sea* was 'written by, in West Indian terms, a member of the white colonial elite, yet somebody who always defined herself in opposition to the norms of metropolitan "Englishness"; a novel which deals with issues of race and slavery, yet is fundamentally sympathetic to the planter class ruined by Emancipation.' Hulme makes the important point that returning this novel to its local context complicates the term 'postcolonial' which is in some danger of being homogenised and flattened if simply pitted against the 'colonial'. Instead, he suggests, 'postcolonial theory, if it is to develop, must produce "native" terminology', by which he means terms of reference that are local, rooted in specific histories. In this particular case, it would mean returning Rhys's novel not just to a generalised 'West Indian' context but teasing out its Dominican and Jamaican strands as well. In this series of critical exchanges, we can see that a focus on Colonialism productively re-opens Marxist and feminist readings of canonical English fiction to a new debate, but also demands that we widen our understanding of the terms colonial and postcolonial.

This brings us to yet another aspect of the relation between literature and Colonialism which has to do not with what texts mean but what they are made to mean by dominant critical views, which are then enshrined within educational systems. We can easily grasp this from a play such as Shakespeare's *Othello*, a standard text in schools and colleges in many parts of the world. For years critics refused to acknowledge that Othello is meant to be black—they argued endlessly that he was actually some shade of brown, not really 'Negroid', or was 'white' inside. The play could then be read as making a statement about masculine jealousy as a 'universal' attribute, provoked by the real or potential transgression of women. If Othello's blackness was acknowledged, it was to suggest that his 'race' explained his jealousy, his emotional outbursts and his irrationality. These readings may be contradictory, but they can and were reconciled within racist readings of the play which needed to argue that Shakespeare's hero was white, and simultaneously read blackness in terms of certain stereotypes. But if we seriously consider the race relations in the play, the theme of sexual jealousy cannot be seen as a universal statement about human relations in general, but is a crucial aspect of the racist context in which Othello and Desdemona live and love. Iago's machinations then are not 'motiveless malignity' (Samuel Taylor Coleridge's phrase endorsed by generations of literary critics) but born out of racial hatred and insecurity. Of course, we can read Shakespeare's play either as a passionate defence of, or as a warning against, inter-racial love, but the crucial point is that on the stage, in critical evaluations and within classrooms all over the world, its racial theme was read to *bolster* racist ideologies existing in different contexts—in Britain, in South Africa and in India among other places. In all these places, Shakespeare's play worked to reinforce the cultural authority of not just Shakespeare, but 'Englishness'.

Even those literary texts that are, arguably, distant from or even critical of colonial ideologies can be made to serve colonial interests through educational systems that devalue native literatures, and by Euro-centric critical practices which insist on certain Western texts being the markers of superior culture and value. The rise of literary studies as a 'discipline' of study in British universities was in fact linked to the perceived needs of colonial ad-

ministrators: English literature was instituted as a formal discipline in London and Oxford only after the Indian Civil Service examination began to include a 1000 mark paper in it, on the assumption that knowledge of English literature was necessary for those who would be administering British interests. Soon after, it was also deemed important that the natives themselves be instructed in Western literatures. Thomas Babington Macaulay, the architect of English education in India put the case succinctly in his famous 'Minute on Indian Education' written in 1835: English education, he suggested, would train natives who were 'Indian in blood and colour' to become 'English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect'. These people would constitute a class who would in fact protect British interests and help them rule a vast and potentially unruly land.

Literary studies were to play a key role in attempting to impart Western values to the natives, constructing European culture as superior and as a measure of human values, and thereby in maintaining colonial rule. Gauri Viswanathan's book, *Masks of Conquest*, argues this by examining British parliamentary papers and debates on English education in India. The book (like its title) suggests that English literary studies became a mask for economic and material exploitation, and were an effective form of political control. Not only was the colonial classroom one of the testing grounds for developing attitudes and strategies which became a fundamental part of the discipline itself, but

> certain humanistic functions traditionally associated with literature—for example, the shaping of character or the development of the aesthetic sense or the disciplines of ethical thinking—were considered essential to the processes of sociopolitical control by the guardians of the same tradition.

Far from being antithetical to the political sphere, then, literature and culture are central to it. Like Said, Viswanathan has been criticised on the grounds that she does not take into account the role of Indians in either resisting or facilitating such literary studies. In fact, many Indians themselves *demanded* English education, including reformers and nationalists who were opposed to British rule in India. The making of British colonial policy thus played upon and was moulded by indigenous politics, and was not simply exported from England.

One of the ideologies underpinning literary education was the assumption that there was an insurmountable cultural gap between those who had 'natural' access to literary culture, and these others who needed to be taught it. Far from bridging this gap, literary education would reinforce inferiority; in the words of one H.G. Robinson

> As a clown will instinctively tread lightly and feel ashamed of his hob-nailed shoes in a lady's boudoir, so a vulgar mind may, by converse with minds of high culture, be brought to see and deplore the contrast between itself and them.

Such cultural control necessarily meant a suppression of the creativity and intellectual traditions of those who were to be schooled in English literature. Macaulay's remark that a single shelf of European literature was worth all the books of India and Arabia is notorious but not unique. It is true of course that Orientalists defended some indigenous works, such as the ancient cultural artefacts and literary texts of India, but they too did so at the explicit expense of contemporary works of art—thus indigenous intellectual production was either completely disparaged (as in Africa) or seen as an attribute of a hoary past (as in India). Whether or not they were granted a cultural heritage of their own, colonised societies were seen as unworthy of developing on independent lines.

What *was* this culture that was constructed as the authoritative measure of human values? As the Scottish writer James Kelman puts it:

> when we talk about the hegemony of English culture we aren't referring to the culture you find down the Old Kent Road in London, we aren't talking about the literary or oral traditions of Yorkshire or Somerset: we are speaking about the dominant culture within England; the culture that dominates all other English-language based cultures, the one that obtains within the tiny elite community that has total control of the social, economic and political power-bases of Great Britain ... There is simply no question that by the criteria of the ruling elite of Great Britain so-called Scottish culture, for example, is inferior, just as *ipso facto* the Scottish people are also inferior. The logic of this argument cannot work in any other way. And the people who hold the highest positions in Scotland do so on that assumption. Who cares what their background is, whether they were born and bred in Scotland or not, that's irrelevant, they still assume its inferiority. If they are native Scottish then they've assimilated the criteria of English ruling authority ...

Kelman is here making the important point that neither the colonisers nor the colonised are homogeneous categories. The process of devaluation was not confined to colonies far away but also drew upon and attempted to calcify divisions of gender, class and ethnicity at or nearer home: thus, for example, as Robert Crawford has shown, the marginalisation of the Scottish language and literatures

was an important feature of the 'invention of English literature'. And although racial and cultural boundaries were drawn with different degrees of rigidity in various parts of the world, and in Africa it may not have been so easy to forget the 'background' or race even of those natives who were co-opted by their colonial masters, still we do need to acknowledge that colonial domination implicated sections of the local population.

Various accounts of the colonial ideologies of English literary studies extend Althusser's point that educational systems are important means for the dissemination of dominant ideologies. But did such a process of control work? Countless colonial intellectuals certainly parroted the lines of their masters; here is an extract from a prize winning essay written in 1841 by an Indian student at Hindu College, Calcutta titled 'The Influence of Sound General Knowledge on Hinduism':

> With the Hindus everything and all things are incorporated in their religion. Their sciences, their arts are all revealed from heaven. If, therefore, their science is overthrown, their religion is also overthrown with it . . . The citadel of Hinduism is the religion of the country. Attack, capture that citadel, the system of Hinduism lies a conquered territory. And it is the science and religion of Christendom which have now encompassed round about that citadel. Several of its walls are beaten down, but still it is not surrendered: but we hope ere long the faith and science of Christendom shall fully be established in India . . . But, alas, alas our countrymen are still asleep—still sleeping the sleep of death. Rise up, ye sons of India, arise, see the glory of the Sun of Righteousness! . . . And we who have drunk in that beauty, we who have seen that life—shall we not awake our poor countrymen?

I have quoted at some length from this essay because it closely echoes Macaulay's opinion that in India, literature, science and religion were intermixed (while each was distinct in the West) and also because the author explicitly takes on the role of Macaulay's English educated Indian who acts as a surrogate Englishman and awakens the native masses.

But is mimicry an act of straightforward homage? In a series of essays, Homi Bhabha suggests that it is possible to think of it as a way of eluding control. He draws upon recent theories of language, enunciation and subjectivity which point out that communication is a process that is never perfectly achieved and that there is always a slippage, a gap, between what is said and what is heard. As we have been discussing, in the colonial context 'the English book' (the Western text, whether religious like the Bible, or literary like Shakespeare) is made to symbolise English authority itself. But this process whereby a text or a book stands in for an entire culture is a complex, and ultimately fraught exercise. The process of replication is never complete or perfect, and what it produces is not simply a perfect image of the original but something changed because of the context in which it is being reproduced. Bhabha suggests that colonial authority is rendered 'hybrid' and 'ambivalent' by this process of replication, thus opening up spaces for the colonised to subvert the master-discourse. This is a complex argument, and one that we will return to when we discuss colonial identities and anti-colonial rebellion. For now, let us look at mimicry and the study of literature in the colonies.

The process by which Christianity is made available to heathens, or indeed Shakespeare made available to the uncultured, is designed to assert the authority of these books, and through these books, the authority of European (or English) culture and to make the latter feel like clowns in the boudoir. Thus the intention is to assert an unbridgeable gap or difference between colonisers and colonised peoples. But the effort to convert the natives also assumes that the latter can be transformed by the religious or cultural truths enshrined in the colonial texts. Here the assumption is that the gap between cultures and people can be bridged. Thus there is a fundamental contradiction at the heart of the attempt to educate, 'civilise' or co-opt the colonial 'other'. We can certainly see how such a contradiction is seized upon and used by colonised peoples. Lala Hardayal, a founder of the anti-colonial Ghadder Association, used Shylock's speech in *The Merchant of Venice*, which begins 'I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes?' to argue that Shakespeare stood for human equality and that we should remember Shylock if we are 'ever tempted to scorn or wrong a brother man of another race or creed'. Now, at one level, such an invocation of Shakespeare might be seen to prop up the authority of the Bard. But at another level, it certainly challenges rather than accepts colonialist views of racial difference. Thus Hardayal mimics the English uses of Shakespeare in order to contest the legitimacy of English rule in India.

We can also trace a wider pattern here. Hindu College, to take the very institution which produced the essay quoted above, was also the hotbed of Indian nationalism, and many of the early nationalists were English educated, and even used English literature to argue for independence. One form of

this argument had been put forward by imperial historians who claimed that English literature (especially Shakespeare) and English education in general, had fostered ideas of liberty and freedom in native populations. It took Western Enlightenment notions of democracy and fraternity to make Indians or Africans demand equality for themselves! This dynamic is perhaps best symbolised by Shakespeare's Caliban, who tells Prospero and Miranda:

> You gave me language, and my profit on't
> Is, I know how to curse. The red-plague rid you
> For learning me your language!

Caliban can curse because he has been given language by his captors. But one problem with such a line of reasoning is that subversion, or rebellion, is seen to be produced entirely by the malfunctioning of colonial authority itself. In Bhabha's view, too, it is the *failure* of colonial authority to reproduce itself that allows for anti-colonial subversion. As a result, he does not consider the indigenous sources of anti-colonial intellectual and political activity.

This question, whether the dominant language, literature, culture and philosophic ideas can be turned around and used for subversive purposes, has been central to postcolonial, feminist, and other oppositional discourses. Within literary studies, one of the best known exchanges on the subject is the one between Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe. Achebe suggests that given the multilingual nature of most African states as well as the colonially generated presence of the English language there, 'the national literature of Nigeria and of many other countries of Africa is, or will be, written in English'. Achebe invokes the creative hybridity of African writers who moulded English to their experience rather than the other way round, and concludes that

> for me there is no other choice. I have been given this language and I intend to use it . . . I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit its new African surroundings.

A similar position has been taken by writers and critics of African origin or ancestry who live within metropolitan cultures such as James Baldwin or David Dabydeen. In reply to Achebe, and explaining his own decision to write in Gikuyu rather than English, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o invokes the multiple connections between language and culture, and argues that Colonialism made inroads into the latter through control of the former. For him, the 'literature by Africans in European languages was specifically that of the nationalistic bourgeoisie in its creators, its thematic concerns and its consumption'. This literature was part of the 'great anti-colonial and anti-imperialist upheaval' all over the globe, but became increasingly cynical and disillusioned with those who came to power in once-colonised countries, and then bedevilled by its own contradictions because it wanted to address 'the people' who were not schooled in European languages. Ngũgĩ casts a division between writers who were part of these people and wrote in indigenous languages, and those who clung to foreign languages, thus suggesting an organic overlap between political and cultural identities and the medium of literary expression.

How can we unravel these issues? Powerful anti-colonial writings have adopted both these perspectives. Further, choice of language does not always neatly represent ideological or political positions. Solomon T. Plaatje, founder member of the ANC wrote a novel in English called *Mhudi* (1930) which he said would be 'just like the style of Rider Haggard when he writes about the Zulus'. Plaatje's raises his voice against colonial dispossession of Africans in vocabularies inspired by Shakespeare, African oral forms, and the Bible. Similarly George Lamming's writing of a novel seizes a colonial form of writing and uses it to challenge the coloniser's claim to culture. On the other hand, writers who express themselves in indigenous tongues are not necessarily anticolonial or revolutionary, and they may be 'contaminated' by Western forms and ideas in any case, as is the case with the writer of the Malayalam novel *Indulekha*, discussed earlier. Nevertheless, turning away from colonial culture is often a necessary precondition for paying serious attention to the literatures and cultures devalued under Colonialism.

Literary studies also evoke a range of strategies. Historically, Shakespeare was used in South Africa to contest as well as foster racism. The contestations took place both from within and outside the education system, with African political leaders and intellectuals often using Shakespeare either to express their own psychological and political conflicts, or to challenge divisive ideologies. But how effective is such a strategy—do we need to use Joseph Conrad, whom Achebe called a 'bloody racist' to challenge Colonialism? To the extent that Shakespeare and Conrad are still taught and still read in the postcolonial world, why not?

Thus, Martin Orkin argues that Shakespeare can be progressively used within the South African context. But at the same time, it is also necessary to challenge the Euro-centric canons that are still taught in many parts of the once-colonised world (and schools and universities within Europe and the United States). So for David Johnson, the effort to appropriate Shakespeare will only retard the move towards a fresh, more meaningful curriculum. Of course, simply reshuffling texts does not entail a shift of political or theoretical perspective, and decolonisation will demand more than teaching African or Asian or Latin American texts. These texts are also written across a huge political spectrum and can be taught from a variety of perspectives. Still, it is significant that many recent books on 'postcolonial literature' only consider literatures written in English, or widely available in translation, or those that have made the best-seller lists in Europe and the United States. We certainly need to widen our perspective on postcoloniality. For Edward Said, it is as crucial to read outside Western culture, to become comparative in a new sense: 'to read Austen without also reading Fanon and Cabral . . . is to disaffiliate modern culture from its engagements and attachments'. For many third world intellectuals and artists, however, such an exercise is not enough. Non-Western literatures need to be recovered, celebrated, re-circulated, reinterpreted not just in order to revise our view of European culture but as part of the process of decolonisation.

The study of Colonialism in relation to literature and of literature in relation to Colonialism has thus opened up important new ways of looking at both. Even more important perhaps is the way in which recent literary and critical theory has influenced social analysis. Developments in literary and cultural criticism have not only demanded that literary texts be read in fuller, more contextualised ways, but conversely, have also suggested that social and historical processes are textual because they can only be recuperated through their representation, and these representations involve ideological and rhetorical strategies as much as do fictional texts. The analogy of text and textile may be useful here: critical analysis teases out the warp and woof of any text, literary or historical, in order to see how it was put together in the first place. Colonialism, according to these ways of reading, should be analysed as if it were a text, composed of representational as well as material practices and available to us via a range of discourses such as scientific, economic, literary and historical writings, official papers, art and music, cultural traditions, popular narratives, and even rumours.

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Elizabethan Drama

Movement Origin

c. 1558

From the Elizabethan Age come some of the most highly-respected plays in Western drama. Although it is generally agreed that the period began at the commencement of Queen Elizabeth I's reign in 1558, the ending date is not as definitive. Some consider the age to have ended at the queen's death in 1603, while others place the end of Elizabethan Drama at the closing of the theatres in 1642. Elizabeth I was a strong, resolute monarch who returned England to Protestantism, quelled a great deal of internal turmoil, and unified the nation. She was also a strong supporter of the arts, and this sparked a surge of activity in the theatre. During her reign, some playwrights were able to make a comfortable living by receiving royal patronage. There was a great deal of theatrical activity at Court, and many public theatres were also built on the outskirts of London. Theatre was a popular pastime, and people of all walks of life attended. Although women were not allowed onstage, they did attend performances and often made up a substantial part of the audience. The theatre also drew many unsavory characters, including pickpockets, cutpurses, and prostitutes. Because of the perceived bad influence of the theatres, the Puritans were vocally opposed to them and succeeded in shutting them down in 1642. Some of the most important playwrights come from the Elizabethan era, including William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and Christopher Marlowe. These playwrights wrote plays that were patterned on numerous previous sources including the Greek tragedy, Seneca's

plays, Attic drama, English miracle plays, morality plays, and interludes. Elizabethan tragedy dealt with heroic themes, usually centering on a great personality who is destroyed by his own passion and ambition. The comedies often satirized the fops and gallants of society.

Representative Authors

George Chapman (1559–1634)

George Chapman was born in 1559 in the town of Hertfordshire, near London. He was the second son of Thomas and Joan Chapman. Little is known of his early life except that he attended Oxford in 1574 but left before completing his degree. From 1583 through 1585, he was in the household of Sir Ralph Sadler, although his exact position there is somewhat unclear. It seems that Chapman served in the military in 1591 and 1592 but returned to London prior to 1594. Chapman's earliest drama, *The Blind Beggar of Alexandria*, was produced in 1596, and he quickly gained a reputation as a talented playwright. Chapman wrote approximately twenty-one plays between 1596 and 1613, but his output was very sporadic. Some years he wrote no plays, instead concentrating his efforts on translating the poetry of Homer. Chapman experienced financial troubles throughout his life and spent some time in debtor's prison. His fortune changed for a brief time in 1603, when he was given a position in the household of the young Prince Henry. Henry undertook sponsorship of the Homer project. During this time, Chapman also wrote plays for the Children of the Chapel, and the company produced Chapman's most famous tragedies: *Bussy D'Ambois* (1604) and two plays on Byron (1608). When Henry died in 1612, Chapman once again found himself in financial trouble. Very little is known about the last twenty years of his life. He died on May 12, 1634.

Thomas Dekker (c. 1572–1632)

The exact date of Thomas Dekker's birth is unknown. In a document from 1632, he speaks of his "three-score years," and this is the basis for the assumption that he was born in or around the year 1572. He is thought to have been born and raised in London, but little is known about his life prior to January 1598, when his name begins to appear on the payment books of Philip Henslowe, theatre owner and financier of two London theatre companies. From 1598 to 1600, Dekker wrote eight plays for The Lord Admiral's Men and collaborated on twenty-four others. In 1600, his most famous play, *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, was produced. The play is notable for its realistic depiction of everyday life in seventeenth-century London as well as for Dekker's strong use of romantic fantasy in his depiction of characters. The play was extremely popular with London audiences. Around 1606, Dekker turned to writing pamphlets. His most notable works of this genre are *The Seven Deadly Sins of London* (1606) and *The Gull's Hornbook* (1609). In 1610, he returned to writing plays, but many of his later works have been lost. Even though Dekker was a talented playwright, he was never able to make a comfortable living. As Diane Yancey notes in *Life in the Elizabethan Theater*, "Thomas Dekker was a talented and overworked man who spent his life in hopeless poverty." He served several prison terms for debt, with the longest being the six-year period from 1613 to 1619. Dekker was last heard from in 1632. It is assumed that this was also the year of his death, as there is a record of one "Thomas Decker householder" being buried on August 25th.

Thomas Heywood (c. 1573–1641)

Thomas Heywood was a prolific writer who claimed to have written and collaborated on more than two hundred plays. He is most famous for his plays dealing with contemporary English life. Heywood was born in Lincolnshire to the Reverend Robert and Elizabeth Heywood. His family was fairly well off, and he is believed to have studied at Cambridge University. However, he did not complete his degree. On June 13, 1603, Heywood married Anne Butler. It is uncertain how many children the couple had. There are baptismal records for eight Heywood children, but there is no way to verify if these were all sons and daughters of the dramatist or children of another Heywood family. By 1598, Heywood was gaining recognition as a comic writer, although most of his significant literary activity was done between 1600 and 1620. His best-known play, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, was produced during this period, in 1603. After the death of his first wife, Heywood married his second wife, Jane Span, on January 18, 1633. In his later years, Heywood served as City Poet and produced several pageants for the Lord Mayor. He was buried on August 16, 1641, in Clerkenwell.

Ben Jonson (1572–1637)

Ben Jonson was born in 1572 in Westminster. His stepfather was a master bricklayer, and Jonson

Ben Jonson

briefly took up this trade in his youth. He also spent a brief time as a soldier, returning to England and marrying sometime prior to 1592. Upon his return to England, Jonson became an actor and by 1597 was working as a dramatist for the theatrical entrepreneur Phillip Henslowe. Jonson's first play, co-written with Thomas Nashe in 1597, was *The Isle of Dogs*. It was deemed offensive and landed Jonson in jail for a brief time. Then, in 1598, Jonson was arrested for killing a fellow actor in a duel. In that same year, however, Jonson also gained his first dramatic success with the play *Every Man in His Humour*. This play was the first instance of a new comic form known as "the comedy of humours," and it turned him into a celebrity. Jonson became a favorite of King James I and wrote over thirty masques for court performance. In 1616, King James I made him poet laureate, the official poet of the court. This position also came with an annual pension, allowing Jonson to live out his life comfortably. Jonson suffered a severe stroke in 1628 and died in Westminster on August 6, 1637.

Thomas Kyd (1558–1594)

Thomas Kyd was born in London in November 1558, the son of Thomas Kyd, a scrivener, and his wife, Anna. Kyd went to Merchant Taylors' school but did not enter a university. From about 1587 to 1593, Kyd was in the service of a lord. He began to write plays, and it was during this time that Kyd had his greatest theatrical success, with the production of *The Spanish Tragedy*. It was wildly popular with Elizabethan audiences and established Kyd as the founder of a new genre of Elizabethan Drama known as "blood tragedy." The exact date of the very first production of *The Spanish Tragedy* is unknown. Things seemed to go along fairly smoothly until 1591, when Kyd ran into some very serious trouble due to his earlier acquaintance with the dramatist Christopher Marlowe. During a government search, some antireligious papers were seized in Kyd's home, and he was accused of atheism. He was arrested and tortured but was freed after maintaining that the papers belonged to Marlowe and had become inadvertently mixed with his own belongings when the two shared a room for a brief time. Kyd was eventually freed, but the lord he served was not convinced of his innocence. He released Kyd from service in 1593. Kyd was unable to obtain other financial assistance and died in August 1594 in great poverty.

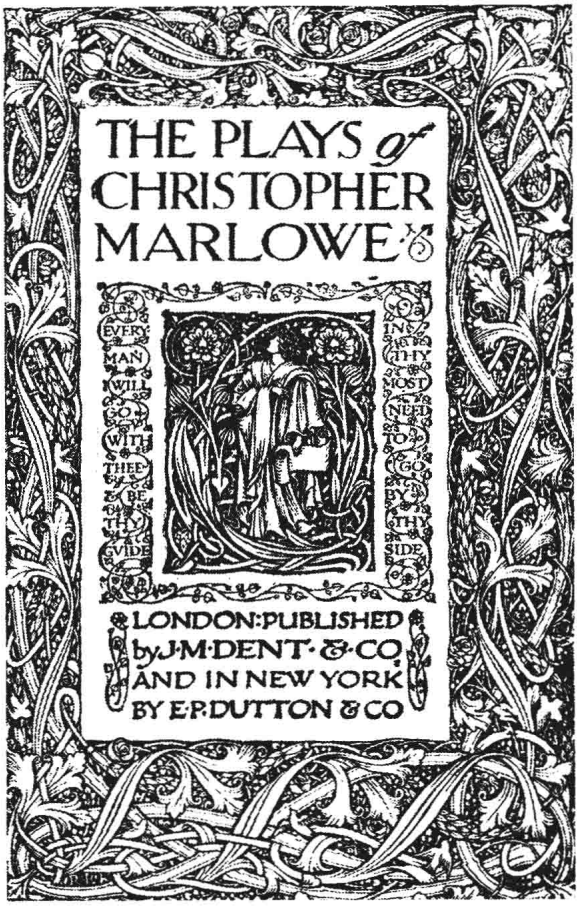
Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593)

Christopher Marlowe was born in Canterbury in 1564, the eldest son of master shoemaker John Marlowe and Katherine Arthur. Marlowe attended Cambridge, quickly distinguishing himself as a brilliant university student. During his time at Cambridge, Marlowe became part of Queen Elizabeth's secret service and carried out several secret missions for the crown. After receiving his degree in July 1587, he went to London, where he became an actor and dramatist for the Lord Admiral's Company. During that same year, both parts of *Tamburlaine the Great* were performed on the London stages, catapulting Marlowe into celebrity status. Marlowe lived a reckless life and had several scrapes with the law. In 1591, Marlowe's former roommate, playwright Thomas Kyd, was imprisoned and tortured after authorities found heretical writings in Kyd's room. Kyd, who was also taken in for questioning, insisted that the writings belonged to Marlowe. Marlowe was released without incident, however, possibly due to his earlier ties with the secret service. Marlowe's life ended when he was only twenty-nine years old. On the night of May 30, 1593, he was stabbed in the head during a barroom brawl. He died instantly.

William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

William Shakespeare was born on April 23, 1564, to John and Mary Shakespeare in Stratford-

upon-Avon. He was the third of eight children. At age eighteen, Shakespeare married the already-pregnant Anne Hathaway. They would eventually have three children. Very little is known about Shakespeare's life from 1583 to 1592. By 1594, however, he had joined the Lord Chamberlain's Men, serving as both an actor and a playwright. By the end of that year, six of his plays had already been performed. In 1599, Shakespeare and other members of the Lord Chamberlain's Men financed the building of the Globe Theatre, and The Lord Chamberlain's Men continued to mount popular performances there, including many of Shakespeare's plays. The Lord Chamberlain's Men became the foremost London company, performing at Court on thirty-two occasions between 1594 and 1603. After his ascension to the throne, James I granted the Lord Chamberlain's Men a royal patent, and the company's name was changed to the King's Men. Shakespeare's talent as a playwright was widely recognized. He became one of the wealthiest dramatists of his day and lived a comfortable life. He retired to Stratford in 1610 and died on April 23, 1616. In 1623, actors Henry Condell and John Heminge published his plays as a collection known as the First Folio.



Title page from The Plays of Christopher Marlowe

Representative Works

Everyman in His Humour

Ben Jonson's *Everyman in His Humour* was first produced in 1598 by Shakespeare's company, The Lord Chamberlain's Men. It is Jonson's first important play and is also the first play to be labeled a "comedy of humours." Humours were bodily fluids that were believed to control a person's temperament. If an individual had too much of any one humour, he would exhibit that characteristic to excess. In the play, Jonson emphasizes these "humours" and achieves his comic effect by exaggerating each character's quirks, almost to the point of caricature. The play was extremely popular and raised Jonson to the position of a celebrity. Because of its popularity, other playwrights also began to copy the style. *Everyman in His Humour* was originally published in 1601, and a revised version appeared as one of the plays in Jonson's folio of 1616.

Hamlet

Perhaps Shakespeare's most well-loved play, *Hamlet* was first produced around 1600 with Richard Burbage, the leading actor of Shakespeare's company, in the title role. It is believed that Shakespeare himself played the ghost of Hamlet's father. *Hamlet* is a revenge tragedy that tells the story of the melancholy Prince of Denmark, who vows to avenge his father's murder by killing his uncle, the king. It was well received by Elizabethan audiences who were probably already somewhat familiar with the story. *Hamlet* was first published as a quarto in 1603. *Hamlet* has been the subject of much discussion and writing and is still considered, by many, to be the finest play Shakespeare ever wrote.

The Jew of Malta

The Jew of Malta, first produced in 1592, is Christopher Marlowe's play of Machiavellian policy. Though it is described on the title page of the 1633 edition as a tragedy, it is really a dark, satirical comedy. The play recounts how Barabas, a rich Jew, is deprived of his wealth by Farnese, the Christian governor of Malta, in order that some long-overdue tribute money is paid. Farnese justifies this extortion by saying that Malta is accursed

for harboring Jews at all, and he gives Barabas the choice of becoming a Christian and giving up only half his wealth or remaining a Jew and losing it all. Barabas chooses the latter. This was a very important play for Marlowe. As Robert E. Knoll notes in his article presented in *Christopher Marlowe* of the *Twayne's Authors Series*, "Written in the chronological middle of his career, *The Jew of Malta* is a benchmark in Marlowe's development and is an important play for several reasons; it exhibits the direction of his growth, and, in addition, it had a notable influence on Marlowe's greatest contemporaries." Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* is said to have been directly influenced by this play. While popular with audiences from the beginning, the success of *The Jew of Malta* was increased in 1594 when Queen Elizabeth's Jewish doctor was executed on the charge of trying to poison her. This inflamed anti-Semitism among the Elizabethan people, and they flocked to the theatre to see the evil Barabas get his due. The play was first published in a quarto edition in 1633.

The Shoemaker's Holiday

Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* is based upon three tales about shoemakers from Thomas Deloney's book, *The Gentle Craft* (1598). It is a delightful domestic comedy that depicts the pleasant, simple lives of apprentices and tradesmen. In it, a young nobleman courts the daughter of the Lord Mayor of London, disguised as a Dutch shoemaker. Elizabethan audiences were delighted by the depiction of the everyday lives of contemporary Londoners. This was Dekker's best play and remained a favorite among Londoners for many years. The first published edition appeared in 1600, but the play was so popular that it was republished in 1610, 1618, 1624, 1637, and 1657.

The Spanish Tragedy

Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* was wildly successful and propelled Kyd into fame. The story deals with a father's desire to avenge his son's death. Although this was not a new story in Elizabethan Drama, the style of *The Spanish Tragedy* was something that was relatively new to London. Instead of having the violence narrated in the traditional fashion, Kyd moves it onstage; most of the carnage and brutality take place right in front of the audience. This was an innovation that sparked an entirely new genre in England that came to be known as "blood tragedy." As William Green notes in his essay "Elizabethan Drama," Kyd "set a pattern for playwrights who invigorated the drama with their 'unclassical' shows of violence on the stage." It was not only the violence, however, that made Kyd's play unique and popular. The piece also contains skillful rhetoric that serves to sustain the tension. The rhetoric actually functions as action within the play and is an example of Kyd's great skill with language and poetry. References by other playwrights and parodies of *The Spanish Tragedy* indicate that the play was popular from its first staged edition in 1586 through about 1615. The earliest published edition available to us is from 1592. It claims, however, to be a corrected edition of an earlier published version.

Tamburlaine the Great

Part one of Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great* was produced circa 1587. The play was so successful that Marlowe immediately wrote a sequel. Both parts were published in 1590. These were the only published works of Marlowe during his brief lifetime. The story is based upon the career of the Mongolian conqueror Timur the Lame, or Tamerlane, who overthrew the Turkish Empire in 1402. Tamburlaine is an ambitious character who overcomes all resistance through the use of both arms and rhetoric. Throughout the course of the play, he gains allies, conquers kings, and succeeds in winning the affection of the woman of his dreams. While the Elizabethan audiences appreciated the story of *Tamburlaine*, it was the poetry that really set this play apart from other plays. Previous drama had often been halting and didactic in its speech, but with this production, Marlowe took Elizabethan Drama to a higher level of eloquence and sophistication. As R. C. Bald notes in his introduction to *Six Elizabethan Plays*, "Before his time dramatic verse had usually been rhymed, but Marlowe's sense of style gave the new measure a strength and dignity previously lacking in dramatic verse."

A Woman Killed with Kindness

Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* was first produced in 1603. The play dealt with contemporary English life and is recognized as one of the finest examples of domestic tragedy in English drama. English audiences appreciated stories that depicted elements of their everyday lives and thus were charmed by Heywood's play. In it, a devout husband, Frankford, is betrayed by his wife when she is unfaithful to him by surrendering her honor to a house guest. She repents, however, and confesses her evil deed. Instead of seeking vengeance and retribution,

Frankford continues to treat her with kindness. She is eventually so overcome by guilt and sorrow that she punishes herself and dies of remorse. Therefore, instead of being killed by her husband's wrath, she is ultimately killed by his kindness. The play is considered Heywood's masterpiece, due to his skillful handling of a story that has a unique twist. Heywood preserves sympathy for his heroine throughout the play while still delivering the proper moral message. The first known printed edition of the play appeared in 1607.

Themes

Anti-Semitism

Hatred of Jews prevailed in Elizabethan society, and this is reflected in plays of the period. Two of the strongest examples of plays containing strong anti-Semitism are Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. In Marlowe's play, Barabas, the Jew of Malta, is a cruel, egotistic, and greedy man. In Elizabethan times, he was played in a confrontational and somewhat comic manner, with the actor wearing a red wig and a long hooked nose. Shylock, the Jewish merchant in *The Merchant of Venice*, is also presented as a greedy, vindictive man. Shakespeare tempers his character, however, with a bit more humanity than is found in Barabas. Elizabethan anti-Semitism was fueled in 1594 when Queen Elizabeth's Jewish doctor was executed on the charge of trying to poison her.

Disguise

Disguise is a device that is used frequently by the characters in Elizabethan Drama. It is a way in which characters gain information that would be otherwise withheld from them. For example, in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, Rosalind discovers that her true love, Orlando, is indeed in love with her while she is disguised as a boy. Some critics also believe that disguising female characters in male garb afforded the men and boys who were playing these roles to spend part of the play in costumes that were more comfortable and familiar.

Humours

Elizabethan psychology was based on the theory of four bodily humours—blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile. Proper physical and mental health supposedly depended upon a proper balance among these humours. A particular emotion or mood was associated with each, and it was believed that if a person had too much of one humour in his body, that particular emotion would be emphasized. With the production of Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour*, a new species of comedy devoted solely to the interplay of these elements was created, known as the "comedy of humours." The humours were prevalent forces in the tragedies as well. Hamlet is described as the "melancholy Dane," thus implying that he has a slight mental imbalance.

Revenge

Revenge is one of the most prominent themes in Elizabethan drama. In the plays, it is often motivated by the visitation of a ghost who delivers the story of his murder to the character who must now become the avenger. Such is the case in Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, as the Ghost of Don Andrea recounts his death, calls for revenge, and

Media Adaptations

- *Hamlet* was adapted to film by Laurence Olivier in 1948. Many still consider this the best version of the play ever recorded. Olivier gives a stunning performance in the title role. The film was released by Universal-International and is now available on home video.
- The British Broadcasting Company has produced several excellent audio book versions of Shakespearean plays. Their version of *Hamlet* is performed by Kenneth Branagh and features Derek Jacobi. It is published by Bantam Doubleday Dell. This audio book contains the full-length, unabridged version of the play.
- Christopher Marlowe's epic work *Tamburlaine the Great* has been recorded on audio cassette by The Center for Cassette Studies.
- The Marlowe Society maintains a website on Christopher Marlowe at http://www.marlowe-society.org with comprehensive information on Marlowe's life, a newsletter, and links to other interesting information.

then sits onstage to watch his enemies meet their fate. Revenge is also the motivator in *Hamlet*, as the Prince of Denmark vows to avenge his father's murder. In her article "Common Plots in Elizabethan Drama," Madeleine Doran reflects upon why the subject of revenge was so popular:

> Why the motive of revenge should enjoy such popularity from the early days of Elizabethan down to Caroline times naturally provokes speculation. That it had deeply sympathetic affinities with the conditions of actual life we must suppose. Yet its very endurance, even after it had lost its vitality, as the commonest counter-motive in tragedy, suggests something besides imitative Realism. Its persistence may have been to some extent owing to its great usefulness for play construction in furnishing so practicable a method of counteraction.

The Supernatural

In Elizabethan times, people were very superstitious, and many people believed in the supernatural. Queen Elizabeth had a personal astrologer whom she would consult regularly; and, as Diane Yancey notes, "Almost every village had an old woman who could be persuaded to cast a spell to protect cattle from illness or keep one's lover faithful and true." Given this context, it is not surprising that supernatural elements are found in many Elizabethan plays. Fairies, ghosts, and witches often figure prominently in the action. Ghosts are very important in revenge tragedies and are often used as a catalyst to spur the action. Several Elizabethan plays contain a ghost who recounts his own murder, thus beginning a cycle of revenge. Such is the case in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. Sprites and fairies were also popular characters of the time. One only needs to read Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to find a play that is populated with fantastical creatures.

Style

Asides

Asides are brief comments spoken privately to another character or directly to the audience. They are not heard or noticed by the rest of the characters onstage. The character would suddenly turn toward the audience and deliver the aside from behind his hand, thus hiding it from the rest of the players. This technique was used often by Elizabethan dramatists as it helped to let the audience in on the character's thoughts.

Blank Verse

Blank verse is unrhymed poetry that still contains a rhythm and meter. This was the primary form used by Elizabethan playwrights, although prose and many other forms of poetry are also found throughout their plays. Serious characters of high stature and nobility often speak in blank verse, especially when discussing important issues, while comic and lower class characters are less likely to do so.

Iambic Pentameter

Iambic pentameter is the rhythm used in Elizabethan blank verse. Each line has five two-syllable units, or "feet," with the second syllable of each unit receiving the heaviest stress. Iambic pentameter is relatively close to the natural form of spoken English. For example, "She WENT to SEE a PLAY a-BOUT a KING" is a line of iambic pentameter.

Insults

Name-calling was an art form during the Elizabethan Age, and this is reflected in the plays from that period. Characters often engage in "verbal dueling" by hurling creative slurs at one another, hoping to get the upper hand by delivering the best insult. Shakespeare was a master at creating these insults. Insults such as, "You ungrateful fox!" "You overweening slave!" and "Thou art a boil! A plague-sore!" are sprinkled liberally throughout his plays. He was not the only playwright to use this technique, however. The art of creating insults was common in Elizabethan times, and all of the playwrights used them to some extent.

Puns

Elizabethans were fond of word plays, and they especially appreciated puns; so, Elizabethan dramatists make great use of puns throughout their plays. One of the most skilled in the use of puns and wordplay was Shakespeare. One famous example occurs in *Romeo and Juliet*. As Mercutio lies dying from a sword wound, he says to his friend, Romeo, "Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a grave man."

Rhymed Couplets

Rhymed couplets are two lines of poetry that rhyme, as in, "Well, I will in, and do the best I can; To match my daughter to this gentleman" from Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*. Rhymed couplets often signal the end of a scene or act for the audience.

Scenery and Settings

Most Elizabethan Drama was performed on a bare stage with no scenery and no sets. Therefore, to let the audience know where and when the action was taking place, playwrights would begin scenes with lines that establish place and time. For example, the opening line of Act IV, Scene I of *The Shoemaker's Holiday* lets the audience know right away where they are: "Yonder's the shop, and there my fair love sits." Sometimes settings were conveyed by the use of placards that would be hung onstage immediately prior to the scene. These would tell the audience in what town or village the action was taking place.

Soliloquy

A soliloquy is a speech that narrates a character's thoughts. It tells the audience what is going on in a character's mind by allowing him to think out loud. The most famous soliloquy in all of drama is the "To be or not to be" speech from Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. In it, Hamlet ponders whether or not to kill himself and considers the consequences of each decision. The term "soliloquy" is sometimes confused with the term "monologue"; the two are different, however. In a monologue, the character is actually speaking directly to the audience as opposed to narrating his thoughts out loud. With a soliloquy, from the character's point of view, there is no one else present.

Violence

In most Elizabethan plays, the violent acts occur offstage. These acts are then reported by a character who narrates what happened for the audience and the others onstage. This convention allowed Elizabethan dramatists to include huge battles as part of the "action" of their plays without the theatres having to hire hundreds of actors to perform the plays. Also, horrific acts of brutality that are difficult to execute onstage are often more effective when described than when actually shown. The audience must use their imaginations to visualize the carnage, often creating a scene in their mind, much worse than ever could be created on the stage. The Elizabethan dramatists borrowed this tradition from Greek tragedy. The tradition changed, however, with the development of the "blood tragedy" (also known as "revenge tragedy"). In these plays, acts of violence are performed onstage, in full view of the audience. Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* is one of the best-known plays of this genre.

Topics for Further Study

- Research the various aspects of Elizabethan costume. If you were a nobleman or noblewoman of the time, how would your costume be different than those of the lower classes? What are some of the elements of your dress that would indicate your social status?
- What do you think a typical day was like for members of an Elizabethan acting troupe? What were some of the difficulties they might encounter in trying to prepare for a performance?
- Elizabethan Drama gives some clues into the remedies, medicines and herbs used to cure ailments during that time period. What were some of these treatments? Do we still use any of them today?

Movement Variations

Boys' Companies

Boys' companies were performing troupes that were made up entirely of young boys. The practice of using boys in the English theatre dates back to the early 1500s, when choirboys sang and performed at court for the king, and during Elizabethan times, these acting companies were still usually under the training and direction of a choirmaster. During the latter part of the 1500s, boys' companies were very popular. Their popularity faded around the turn of the century, however, due to several scandals that took place. In 1597, Nathaniel Giles, manager of the Chapel Children, was charged with kidnapping boys and forcing them into servitude as actors, and in 1600, Henry Evans, another manager of the Chapel Children, involved the boys in several politically controversial plays. Public support for the troupes waned, and boys' companies dissolved around 1608.

Court Masques

Masques were short entertainments that were held at Court as one part of a royal evening of entertainment. They were much shorter than regular

plays. Masques usually contained romantic and mythological themes and consisted of elaborate settings in which players posed, danced, and recited poetic lines of dialogue. Nobles and guests of the Court would often take part, and although women were banned from appearing on the public stage, they were allowed to participate in Court masques. Queen Elizabeth I held very few court masques during her reign, but when James I took the throne, masques were revived with increasing grandeur and magnificence. Ben Jonson was the primary writer of masques during James I's reign, but other playwrights also tried their hand at the form.

Inn Courtyards

Many acting troupes performed in the courtyards of English inns both before and after permanent theatres were built. The inns were usually multi-storied, U-shaped buildings, and they prefigured the design of the public playhouses. Players constructed a rough stage made of boards on trestles at one end of the courtyard, and audience members would stand in the yard to watch the performance. Well-to-do patrons brought their own chairs and watched from the balconies overlooking the courtyard. Playing at inn courtyards was sometimes difficult for acting troupes because their performances could be interrupted or even cancelled if the business at the inn was brisk.

Interludes

Interludes were short plays that were often performed during a break in a royal or noble banquet. They were typically nothing more than a small scene or conversation between two or more persons. Diane Yancey sees interludes as an important link to English secular drama: "By shying away from religious themes, the interludes made it acceptable for the later Elizabethan dramatists to write plays that had little, if anything, to do with the Bible."

Miracle plays

Miracle plays were also known as "mysteries," from the Latin word *ministerium*, which means "act." They were performed on Corpus Christi and other feast days, and they depicted biblical history. Residents of English towns would gather along the streets to watch the plays, which were performed on moveable stages known as "pageant wagons." Several miracle plays would make up an entire cycle; the first play was presented, and then its wagon would move along to the next stop on the street while another wagon moved in to take its place. The second part of the play was performed on this pageant wagon, and then it would move along, and so on. This would continue until the entire history of the Bible had been told. Because of this convention of staging, these productions were also known as "cycle plays." The structure of miracle plays had an important influence on English history plays. As Diane Yancey notes, "Histories borrow medieval techniques found in miracle plays, including rearranging historical events, using anachronisms, and writing a subplot that parallels the main plot."

Morality Plays

Morality plays were religious plays that first appeared in the fourteenth century. They most likely had their beginnings when popular outdoor preachers began telling stories that applied biblical teachings to the problems of daily living. They began as biblical allegories but gradually became more and more secularized. They were one of the major links between the religious and professional stages. Oscar Brockett observes, in "Theatre and Drama in the Late Middle Ages," that "Elements of the morality play persisted into Shakespeare's time. But as the morality play was increasingly secularized during the sixteenth century, the distinctions vanished between it and the type of play commonly labeled 'interlude.'"

Private Theatres

Indoor, roofed theatres were known as "private theatres" during Elizabethan times, even though the public could attend the performances. These playhouses catered to a more aristocratic audience and were different from the public theatres in many ways: they accommodated less than one-half as many spectators; they charged considerably higher admission prices; seats were provided for all spectators; and candles were used for illumination. The Blackfriars, the first private theatre, opened its doors in 1576. Coincidentally, this is the same year the first public theatre opened. It was built as part of a former monastery. Until 1610, private theatres were used exclusively by boys' companies. After that time, the popularity of the children faded, and the private theatres passed into the hands of adult troupes.

Public Playhouses

The first permanent theatre in England opened in 1576. It was called The Theatre and was built by James Burbage, who based its design upon the English inn courtyards. It formed a model for nu-

merous English playhouses that were to follow. It is not known exactly what Elizabethan playhouses looked like because no detailed drawings still exist, but some extant sketches from audience members in attendance do remain. From these drawings, along with some written reports and other documents, historians have concluded that most of the Elizabethan playhouses were similar in structure. They were many-sided, open-air structures, made of a timber frame covered with clay plaster or mortar. They had three tiers of galleries with a thatched roof covering only the gallery seating area and the rear, housed-in part of the stage. This stage-house was also called a "tiring house" because it was the area in which the actors *attired* themselves for the plays. The playing area was an open-air platform that jutted out into the middle of the yard, and the lower-class patrons would stand on the ground surrounding the stage; thus they were known by the term "groundlings." Aristocratic patrons would pay more to sit in the tiered galleries, and very wealthy patrons could pay to actually be seated onstage.

Historical Context

Master of Revels and Censorship

Every play had to be submitted to the Master of Revels for licensing before performance. He acted as the official censor and would often force the deletion of passages or references that were deemed offensive. Gerald Eades Bentley, in "Regulation and Censorship" from *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time, 1590–1642*, observes that

> most of the censoring activities were intended to eliminate from the stage five general types of lines or scenes: 1. Critical comments on the policies or conduct of government. 2. Unfavorable presentations of *friendly* foreign powers or their sovereigns, great nobles or subjects. 3. Comment of religious controversy. 4. Profanity (after 1606). 5. Personal satire of *influential* people.

The Office of Revels was originally established to select and supervise all entertainment of the sovereign, but as time progressed, its power grew. In 1581, a patent was issued that centralized the regulation of all plays and players with the Master of Revels. The man holding this position became quite powerful and prestigious, for he could significantly change the tone and intent of any production through censorship or could prevent the production from occurring altogether. The position was also very lucrative, as the Master of Revels received a tidy sum for each play that was licensed.

Puritans

The Puritans were extremely zealous Protestants who held strict views on matters of religion and morality. They shunned all forms of entertainment, including music and dancing, because they believed that these diversions turned a person's thoughts away from concentration upon the Bible and spiritual matters. Puritans considered the theatre to be an ungodly institution and vocally denounced it as "wicked" and "profane." Throughout the Elizabethan era, they actively campaigned against the public playhouses because they felt that such institutions threatened England's morality. Numerous Puritan writers produced pamphlets warning against the dangers of attending the theatre and attacked the actors as sinners and heretics. As John Addington Symonds notes in his essay "Theatres, Playwrights, Actors and Playgoers," "The voices of preachers and Puritan pamphleteers were daily raised against playhouses." The Puritan mindset eventually prevailed, and they succeeded in closing down all of the public theatres in 1642.

Plague

The bubonic plague, or "Black Death," which had begun in southern Europe, originally made its way to England around 1348. Although this was well before the Elizabethan era, the effects of the plague continued to be felt for centuries. Plague broke out frequently, and London was visited by the dreaded disease in 1563, 1578–1579, 1582, 1592–1593, and 1603. During the outbreak of 1603, over 30,000 people died. One reason the plague was so devastating was the overcrowded and unsanitary conditions in the city of London. Fleas carried by rats spread the plague, and the overcrowded conditions provided ample breeding grounds for the disease-carrying creatures. These conditions also caused the disease to spread quickly once someone had been infected. The term "plague-sore" is an insult that can be found in the drama of the time. This is a reference to the visible sores that would cover a person's body once he had contracted bubonic plague.

Royal Patronage

Actors were subject to the same laws as vagrants and were in danger of arrest if they could not prove that they had a permanent residence. In order to avoid persecution, they sought a noble patron to support and promote them. They became servants of the nobleman, thus providing him more prestige. In return, the nobleman would protect them if they got into trouble. He did not pay them regular wages

Compare & Contrast

- **1600s:** Women are not allowed to perform in plays, and all the female roles are played by boys or men.

  Today: Some of the most notable and highly respected performers are women.

- **1600s:** Names do not have a standard spelling. Shakespeare's name appears in several variations, including: Shakespeare, Shaksper, and Shakespere.

  Today: Names are spelled consistently, and, for legal purposes, each person's signature is consistent as well.

- **1600s:** Most plays are performed outdoors during the day to take advantage of the natural light. Plays performed indoors must be lit by candlelight.

  Today: Most plays are performed indoors in the evening. They are illuminated by electric lighting.

- **1600s:** One of the most common surgical procedures is bloodletting, done through an incision in a vein or the application of leeches.

  Today: Thousands of sophisticated surgical techniques are available that have been proven safe and effective.

- **1600s:** There are no sewers or drains, except for the gutter which runs down the middle of the street. Garbage is dumped into the gutters and accumulates there until the rain washes it away.

  Today: There are sophisticated sanitation systems that maintain the cleanliness of cities and help to prevent the spread of disease.

or allowances, however. In 1572, noble patronage became very significant because of a law that was passed allowing only registered servants of a nobleman to go on tour. Since touring was one of the main sources of income for theatre troupes, it was necessary for them to gain patronage to survive.

Machiavelli

Niccolo Machiavelli was a sixteenth-century Italian philosopher who was famous for the political theories put forth in his book, *The Prince*. Machiavelli believed in man's capacity for determining his own destiny, and in his book, he describes how it is possible for one to usurp power through treachery. *The Prince* is considered by some to be a "manual of tyrants," while others claim that Machiavelli was just describing the existing world as opposed to teaching people how things should be. Machiavelli's work was widely known throughout England, and his ideas inspired several Elizabethan playwrights. Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* has been described as a work of "Machiavellian policy," and the ghost of Machiavelli actually appears at the opening of the play.

Protestantism

Queen Elizabeth's half-sister, Mary, daughter of Katherine of Aragon and King Henry VII, was queen from 1553 to 1558, immediately prior to Elizabeth. She was a devout Catholic and gained the nickname "Bloody Mary" for her attempts to suppress Protestantism by executing many of its leading adherents. During Mary's reign, Elizabeth concealed the fact that she was Protestant, but when she ascended the throne, Elizabeth restored Protestantism to England. She was not so vicious a queen as her half-sister had been, however. As Dick Riley and Pam McAllister relate in *The Bedside, Bathtub and Armchair Companion to Shakespeare*, "As Queen, Elizabeth fined Catholics who refused to attend services of the official church, but there was no widespread persecution of those who clung to the old faith, and Elizabeth tried to ensure that services and prayers were conducted in a way that both Catholics and Protestants could in good conscience attend." Her moderate policies brought a stronger unity than England had enjoyed for several years.

Critical Overview

Attending the theatre was an extremely popular pastime during the Elizabethan era. One of the main reasons that the theatre was able to flourish during the sixteenth century was that Queen Elizabeth herself was a supporter of the arts. She enjoyed attending theatrical entertainments and that legitimized the activity for the rest of the citizens. Most of the populace loved going to the theatre, and as Jeffrey L. Singman notes in his book *Daily Life in Elizabethan England*, "There was a constant and insatiable demand for plays, and actors became very popular figures—the first 'stars.'" But not everyone was thrilled with the theatre's popularity. There were some who shunned it and others who actively campaigned against it. The Puritans were particularly vocal in their opposition to the English playhouses, and numerous treatises and pamphlets were written, warning citizens of the evil and immorality that could be found festering in these amusements. The first major assault came in 1577, in John Northbrooke's *A Treatise Against Dicing, Dancing, Plays and Interludes*. This was soon followed by Stephen Gosson's *School of Abuse* in 1579. As Oscar Brockett comments, "Both works railed in the harshest terms against the theatre as an instrument used by the Devil to encourage vice and to take people away from honest work and other useful pursuits." These attacks were answered by theatre supporters, with the most famous response being Sir Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poetry* in 1595. While Elizabethan audiences continued to enjoy theatre, the philosophical battle continued to rage, and the Puritans finally succeeded in closing the theatres in 1642.

Elizabethan drama did not disappear, however; the theatres were reopened in 1660, and the works of these fine playwrights were once again brought to the stage. The reputation of the great works of Elizabethan Drama grew steadily in England and throughout the rest of the world. They have consistently been performed and appreciated up to this day; people still look to this era as one that produced some of the finest drama in all of theatre history. In attesting to the significance of Elizabethan drama, John Gassner writes, "No one with even the slightest interest in English literature needs to be told that its greatest period is the Elizabethan Age, and no one familiar with that period is likely to depart from the consensus that its major literary achievement is the drama." R. C. Bald also weighs in with this superlative praise of the Elizabethan playwrights: "Even if Shakespeare had never lived, the last fifteen years of Queen Elizabeth's reign and the reign of King James I would still be the greatest period in the history of English drama." Plays from this period are still produced all over the world, and Shakespeare is recognized by many as the greatest playwright of all time. His works are considered timeless and universal, and they still resonate, even four hundred years after his death. Diane Yancey notes, "The number of Shakespearean acting companies and theater productions that exist today also bears witness to the continuing importance of Elizabethan drama." The Elizabethan playwrights created a body of work that has withstood the test of time. Their work has had a lasting influence on all succeeding generations of theatre artists and audiences.

Criticism

Beth Kattelman

Kattelman holds a Ph.D. in theatre from Ohio State University. In this essay, Kattelman discusses how Elizabethan plays can provide insight into that historical time period.

Works of theatre are always a reflection of the society in which they are created. By studying plays, one can learn a wealth of information about the beliefs, lifestyle, and politics of the time in which they were written and produced. Such is the case with Elizabethan Drama. If one looks carefully at the works of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson, and their fellow playwrights, many interesting and topical details come to light. Because the theatre shows human interaction, thus revealing manners and thoughts, it can provide insight into the nuances of a time that may not come to light by just studying names, dates, and facts. It can also shed light upon the important issues and topics of the day. It is a "barometer" of the times. Just as citizens of today might stand around the water cooler discussing last night's episode of a popular television show, so the Elizabethans would discuss the latest "hot" play by Heywood or Dekker. Just as future generations may learn something of the present day from current films and television programs, so too can historians learn a great deal about a time period by studying popular entertainments.

One of the things that can be learned by studying Elizabethan Drama is the way people celebrated holidays and special occasions. In Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, for example, the following lines reveal that the day before Lent

1647 illustration of Greater London showing the location of the Globe Theatre

[Shrove-Tuesday] was a holiday that was celebrated with feasts featuring pancakes: "Besides, I have procur'd that upon every Shrove-Tuesday, at the sound of the pancake bell, my fine dapper Assyrian lads shall clap up their shop window and away." Here, the phrase "pancake bell" provides a clue into the holiday celebration. While it may take some further study to completely understand this reference, it is an interesting bit of information that can lead to a deeper understanding of this particular holiday. Plays also reveal a great deal about what took place at common ceremonies. Thomas Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* opens with a wedding celebration where the guests, "With nosegays and bride-laces in their hats, dance all their country measures, rounds, and jigs." This line reveals a bit about the wedding guests' apparel and tells what kind of dances were popular at wedding receptions; thus, from just one line of dialogue, one can get a glimpse of the activities that took place at an Elizabethan wedding. Of course, seeing the play staged with historical accuracy would provide even more insight into the occasion. References in theatrical dialogue also point to other plays and entertainments that were popular at the time. The following lines from *The Shoemaker's Holiday* indicate that *Tamburlaine* was a recognizable name for Elizabethan audiences, probably due to the popularity of Christopher Marlowe's tragedy *Tamburlaine the Great* a few years prior: "Sim Eyre knows how to speak to a Pope, to Sultan Soliman, to Tamburlaine, an he were here, and shall I melt, shall I droop before my sovereign."

In addition to details about ceremonies and entertainments, an enormous amount of information about societal protocol can be gleaned from the dialogue of Elizabethan plays. Take, for example, another line from *The Shoemaker's Holiday*. Here, the Lord Mayor discusses his daughter's possible betrothal with a man of the Court. He comments that it is not a good idea because his daughter is not of the same class as her would-be husband, "Too mean is my poor girl for his high birth; poor citizens must not with courtiers wed." This brief line points to the strong class system that was present in England. The Lord Mayor's comment shows that it was improper for one to marry someone who was not his or her social equal. This was a common theme in Elizabethan Drama. Another example occurs in *A Woman Killed with Kindness* when Sir Charles notes what a good match Anne and Sir Francis are due to their equal positioning on the social ladder: "You both adorn each other, and your hands methinks are matches. There's equality in this fair combination; You are both scholars, both

What Do I Study Next?

- The bubonic plague, or "Black Death," was one of the worst natural disasters in history. Between 1347 and 1352, the plague swept through Europe causing widespread hysteria and death. One third of the population of Europe died from the outbreak. It affected many aspects of daily life and was also reflected in the art and literature of the time. Philip Ziegler's *The Black Death* (1969) provides an in-depth look at this horrific catastrophe.
- The Globe Theatre has been rebuilt in Bankside, London, just a few yards from the site where the original playhouse once stood. Theatrical entrepreneur Sam Wanamaker did extensive research in order to be as authentic as possible to the original. The story of the theatre's reconstruction and the research that went into this ambitious project makes for fascinating reading and also provides a great deal of information about the Elizabethan theatre in general. One book on the subject is *Shakespeare's Globe Rebuilt* (1997), edited by J. R. Mulryne, Margaret Shewring, Andrew Gurr, and Ronnie Mulryne.
- Will Kempe was one of the principal actors of Shakespeare's company. He was famous for his comic roles, and Shakespeare wrote many of the clown characters in his early plays specifically for Kempe. He originated the roles of Bottom and Falstaff. The other members of Shakespeare's company were interesting characters in their own right. There have also been many intriguing Shakespearean actors down through the ages, and their lives make for fascinating reading. Bernard D. N. Grebanier's *Then Came Each Actor: Shakespearean Actors, Great and Otherwise, Including Players and Princes, Rogues, Vagabonds, and Actors Motley, from Will Kempe to Olivier and Gielgud and After* (1975) provides a look at what went on behind the scenes during Shakespeare's time and also contains some insightful information about Shakespearean actors that were to follow.
- In the latter part of the sixteenth century, Spain was the major international power. Spain's leader, King Phillip II, was very disturbed that Elizabeth had converted England to Protestantism, and he pledged to conquer the heretics in England and convert them to the Church of Rome. To accomplish this aim, he sent his "Invincible Armada" of 125 ships sailing toward the English Channel in May of 1588. His fleet was met by English ships and soundly defeated. John Tincey's *The Spanish Armada* (2000) is a thoroughly researched look at this fascinating battle.

young, both being descended nobly." In fact, many Elizabethan comedies are based upon the predicament of youngsters falling in love with someone who is above or below their own station in life. People could relate to this topic and enjoyed the humorous complications that resulted from characters trying to overcome this hurdle.

Crime was also a popular topic with Elizabethan audiences, who loved to see plays based upon well-known criminal cases of the day. It seems that audiences have always been fascinated by accounts of macabre acts that they have heard about from their daily news sources, and Elizabethans were no different. They loved to see these cases acted out, often with much blood and gore. One of the most famous of this genre is a domestic tragedy published in 1592 by an anonymous author. Its full title is *The lamentable and true tragedy of Master Arden of Feversham in Kent, who was most wickedly murdered by the means of his disloyal and wanton wife, who for the love she bare to one Mosbie, hired two desperate ruffians, Black Will and Shakebag, to kill him.* For the sake of simplicity, this title is usually shortened to *Arden of Feversham*; the full title, however, gives a clue as to the draw these true crime stories had for an Elizabethan audience. By describing the story in a

"It seems that audiences have always been fascinated by accounts of macabre acts that they have heard about from their daily news sources, and Elizabethans were no different. They loved to see these cases acted out, often with much blood and gore."

lengthy title, the author let Elizabethans know that they were going to see something exciting, sordid, and possibly somewhat gory. Because the story was based on an actual incident, the audience would not only see the events dramatized but would also find out what eventually happened to the criminals. For example, in the epilogue to *Arden of Feversham*, the fate of each perpetrator is recounted:

> Thus have you seen the truth of Arden's death.
> As for the ruffians, Shakebag and Black Will,
> The one took sanctuary, and, being sent for out,
> Was murdered in Southwark as he passed
> To Greenwich, where the Lord Protector lay.
> Black Will was burned in Flushing on a stage;
> Greene was hanged at Osbridge in Kent;
> The painter fled and how he died we know not.

Evidence suggests that plays based on actual crimes were common throughout the Elizabethan period. Many of the play texts are lost to us, but their titles are still available. As John Addington Symonds notes, "Plays founded on these subjects of contemporary crime were popular throughout the flourishing age of the Drama, is abundantly proved by their dates and titles, and preserved in several records." Filmgoers of today, in fact, are not very different from Elizabethan audiences in regards to their enjoyment of the reenactment of famous crimes. Some of our most popular and enduring films and characters are based upon books inspired by real criminals and their heinous deeds. For example, both Norman Bates of *Psycho* and Buffalo Bill of *Silence of the Lambs* were inspired by the serial killer Ed Gein and the gruesome acts he committed in a Wisconsin farmhouse in 1957.

Plays can also illuminate the morality present during a particular time period. Ethics and religious beliefs have always been an important part of society, and thus, they are also an important part of that society's entertainments. Morality is a very strong factor in Elizabethan Drama because theatre was expected to teach the citizens a lesson in addition to entertaining them. The theatres became an important "school" for the Elizabethan people because citizens of all walks of life attended. It was one of the few activities that the nobility and the lower classes had in common. In his book, Symonds describes the wide array of people that could be found at the theatre: "the public to which these playwrights appealed was the English people from Elizabeth upon the throne down to the lowest ragamuffin of the streets; in the same wooden theatres met lords and ladies, citizens and prentices, common porters and working men, soldiers, sailors, pickpockets and country folk." He calls the Elizabethan theatre a "school of popular instruction." Since a large part of the populace attended the theatre, it was a great place to disseminate information and to teach moral lessons to a large cross-section of people. Sometimes these lessons were taught in a subtle manner, by the outcome of the action; at other times they were delivered to the audience in a very direct manner. An excellent example of this direct address occurs in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*. In the play, Anne has had an adulterous affair with one of her husband's friends. She has repented, however, and now deeply regrets her actions. She confesses her disgrace and shame and also warns the women in the audience with the following, very pointed lines:

> (*To the audience*) O women, women, you that have
> yet kept
> Your holy matrimonial vow unstained,
> Make me your instance. When you tread awry,
> Your sins like mine will on your conscience lie.

The lesson here is clear: women stay faithful to your husbands! It is not surprising that the theatre was expected to instruct as well as entertain during Elizabethan times. The drama had descended from religious mystery and morality plays, so playwrights had a long history of including moral lessons in their texts. Tragedies were particularly blatant in putting forth a moral message. In fact, historian D. J. Palmer conjectures, in "Elizabethan Tragic Heroes," that this is one of the reasons Elizabethan tragedies are so complex and contain so many characters:

> All Elizabethan tragedies in fact try to illustrate several lessons at once, by incorporating within their

> actions a whole series of tragic catastrophes, each with its own significance. From this point of view, therefore, the most appropriate kind of tragic hero for the Elizabethan dramatist was the figure whose progress through the play would involve as many other characters as possible, so providing opportunities for emphasizing a maximum number of moral lessons.

Tragedies also delivered some very pointed political messages as well. They were sometimes a rallying point for patriotism and served to remind the public that it was important to be loyal to the sovereign, as the following passage from Marlowe's *Edward II* indicates:

> Strike off their heads, and let them preach on poles!
> No doubt, such lessons they will teach the rest,
> As by their preachments they will profit much
> And learn obedience to their lawful king.

Here, heads that "preach on poles" refers to the common practice of placing traitors' severed heads on pikes around the city, after their beheading. They served as gruesome reminders of what might happen if one angered the monarch.

These are just a few examples of how dialogue in Elizabethan Drama can provide insight into that historical time. The plays educated the Elizabethan audience on proper morals, behavior, and customs, and they can also educate the modern reader. Plays are particularly fruitful places to find information about bygone eras because they recreate how people actually lived. As Symonds observes,

> At all periods of history the stage has been a mirror of the age and race in which it has arisen. Dramatic poets more than any other artists reproduce the life of men around them; exhibiting their aims, hopes, wishes, aspirations, passions, in an abstract more intensely coloured than the diffuse facts of daily experience.

Elizabethan Drama provides a window into a wide spectrum of that society because it appealed to all walks of life, and the plays dealt with citizens of all walks of life. They were part of the essential fabric of the times. Perhaps Laura K. Egendorf best sums it up in her introduction to *Elizabethan Drama* when she states, "Unlike modern times, when Shakespeare's plays are often considered high culture, the Elizabethans considered the theater to be essentially pop culture—the plays were the movies and television of the sixteenth century."

Source: Beth Kattelman, Critical Essay on Elizabethan Drama, in *Literary Movements for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

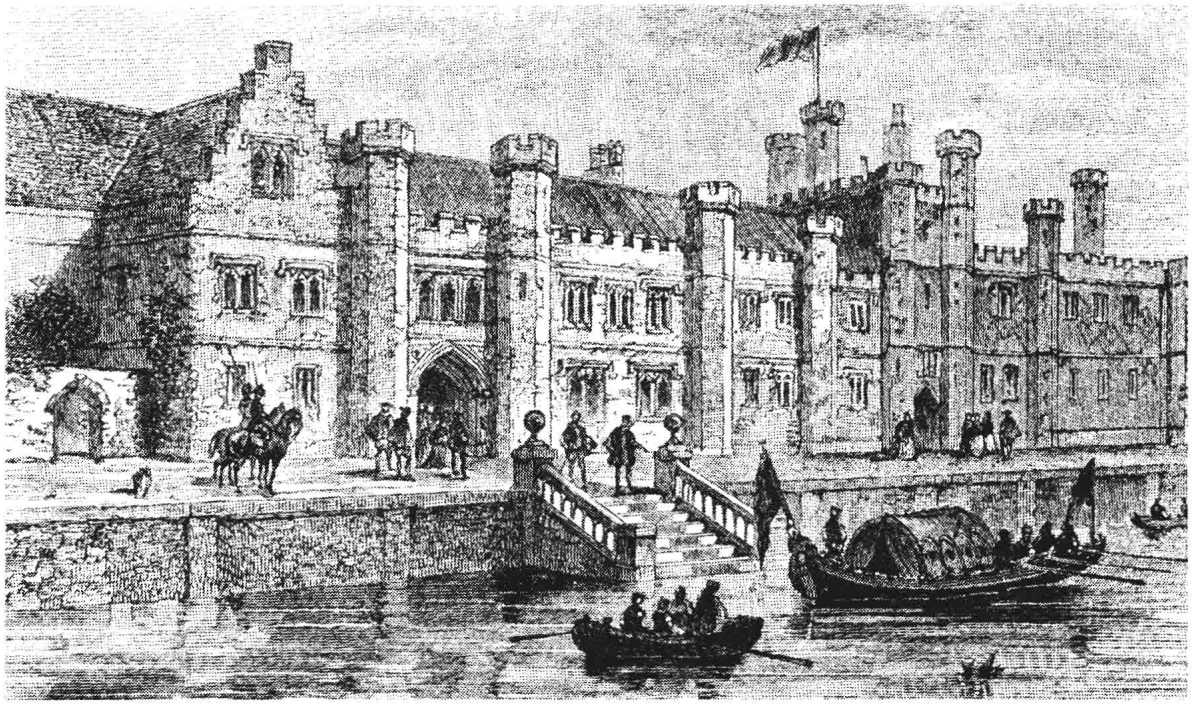
Molly Smith

In the following essay excerpt, Smith explores links between public punishment and drama in Elizabethan England.

The famous Triple Tree, the first permanent structure for public hangings, was erected at Tyburn in 1571 during the same decade which saw the construction of the first permanent structure for the performance of plays. At Tyburn seats were available for those who could pay and rooms could be hired in houses overlooking the scene; the majority of spectators stood in a semicircle around the event while hawkers sold fruits and pies and ballads and pamphlets detailing the various crimes committed by the man being hanged. Other kinds of peripheral entertainment also occurred simultaneously. In short, hangings functioned as spectacles not unlike tragedies staged in the public theatres. The organization of spectators in these two arenas and the official localization of these entertainments, despite their long and hitherto divergent histories, through the erection of permanent structures during Elizabeth's reign suggests the close alliance between these communal worlds in early modern England. Evidence also suggests that theatre and public punishment provided entertainment to upper and lower classes and that both events were generally well attended. Contemporary letters abound in accounts of executions and hangings, details of which are interspersed amid court gossip and descriptions of Parliament sessions. In a letter to Dudley Carleton, for example, John Chamberlain describes the hanging of four priests on Whitsun eve in 1612, noting with mild surprise the large number of people, among them 'divers ladies and gentlemen' who had gathered to witness the event which took place early in the morning between six and seven.

I am not alone in suggesting links between these modes of popular public spectacle. Greenblatt argues for the implicit presence of the scaffold in certain kinds of theatre when he writes

> the ratio between the theater and the world even at its most stable and unchallenged moments, was never *perfectly* taken for granted, that is, experienced as something wholly natural and self-evident. . . . similarly, the playwrights themselves frequently called attention in the midst of their plays to alternate theatrical practices. Thus, for example, the denouement of Massinger's *Roman Actor* (like that in *The Spanish Tragedy*) turns upon the staging as a mode of theater in which princes and nobles take part in plays in which the killing turns out to be real. It required no major act of imagination for a Renaissance



Greenwich Palace, where William Shakespeare presented plays to Queen Elizabeth I

> audience to conceive of either of these alternatives to the conventions of the public playhouse: both were fully operative in the period itself, in the form of masques and courtly entertainments, on the one hand, and public maimings and executions on the other.

Presumably the relationship between theatre and the scaffold worked both ways: if dramatic deaths could suggest public maimings and executions, the latter could as easily and as vividly evoke their theatrical counterparts.

Indeed contemporary narratives about public hangings and executions, whether fictional or documentary, frequently insist on the analogy. I would like to consider two such narratives, Dudley Carleton's documentary letter to John Chamberlain describing the near hangings of Cobham, Markham and Grey in 1604 and Thomas Nashe's fictional narrative about the execution of Cutwolf witnessed by Jack Wilton.

Carleton details in vividly theatrical terms the trial, hangings and near executions of several conspirators, including two priests, implicated in a plot to harm King James I shortly after his ascension to the throne in 1603. The letter moves from a casual narrative to a concentrated exposition of the drama as it unfolded. Carleton begins his account with the hangings of two papist priests: 'The two priests that led the way to the execution were very bloodily handled; for they were cut down alive; and Clark to whom more favour was intended, had the worse luck; for he both strove to help himself, and spake after he was cut down. . . Their quarters were set on Winchester gates, and their heads on the first tower of the castle.' This was followed by the execution of George Brooke whose death, Carleton points out, was 'witnessed by no greater an assembly than at ordinary executions', the only men of quality present being the Lord of Arundel and Lord Somerset. Three others, Markham, Grey and Cobham, were scheduled to be executed on Friday; Carleton narrates the sequence of events as they occurred retaining information about their narrow escape from the gallows until the very end:

> A fouler day could hardly have been picked out, or fitter for such a tragedy. Markham being brought to the scaffold, was much dismayed, and complained much of his hard hap, to be deluded with hopes, and brought to that place unprepared. . . . The sheriff in the mean time was secretly withdrawn by one John Gill, Scotch groom of the bedchamber . . . The sheriff, at his return, told him [Markham] that since he was so ill prepared, he should have two hours respite, so led him from the scaffold, without giving him any more comfort . . .

Lord Grey's turn followed and he spent considerable time repenting for his crimes and praying

to be forgiven, all of which, Carleton wryly remarks, 'held us in the rain more than half an hour'. As in the case of Markham, the execution was halted, the prisoner being told only that the sequence of executions had been altered by express orders from the King and that Cobham would die before him. Grey was also led to Prince Arthur's Hall and asked to await his turn with Markham. Lord Cobham then arrived on the scaffold but unlike the other two, came 'with good assurance and contempt of death'. The sheriff halted this execution as well, telling Cobham only that he had to first face a few other prisoners. Carleton then describes the arrival of Grey and Markham and the bewildered looks on the three prisoners who 'nothing acquainted with what had passed, no more than the lookers on with what should follow looked strange one upon another, like men beheaded, and met again in the other world'. 'Now' Carleton continues, 'all the actors being together on the stage, as use is at the end of the play', the sheriff announced that the King had pardoned all three. The last-minute pardon, always a possibility in executions, arrive in time to save at least three of the conspirators. Carleton concludes his account by noting that this happy play had very nearly been marred 'for the letter was closed, and delivered him unsigned; which the King remembered, and called for him back again. And at Winchester there was another cross adventure: for John Gill could not go so near the scaffold that he could speak to the sheriff, ... but was fain to call out to Sir James Hayes, or else Markham might have lost his neck.'

The initial hangings of the priests and George Brooke and the last-minute pardons to Cobham, Markham and Grey are invoked by the sheriff as examples of the 'justice and mercy' of the monarch. But Carleton's narrative, despite its support of this view, hints at the possibility of reading the King's final sentence as indecision rather than a calculated balancing of justice and mercy. The King resolved this issue 'without man's help, and no man can rob him of the praise of yesterday's action', Carleton tells us, but goes on to explain that

> ... the Lords knew no other but that execution was to go forward, till the very hour it should be performed: and then calling them before him, he [the King] told them how much he had been troubled to resolve in this business; for to execute Grey, who was a noble, young, spirited fellow, and save Cobham, who was as base and unworthy, were a manner o injustice. To save Grey, who was of a proud, insolent nature, and execute Cobham, who had shown great tokens of humility and repentance, were as great a solecism; and so went on with Plutarch's comparisons in the rest, till travelling in contrarieties, but holding the conclusion in so indifferent balance that the lords knew not what to look for till the end came out, 'and therefore I have saved them all.'

"Presumably the relationship between theatre and the scaffold worked both ways: if dramatic deaths could suggest public maimings and executions, the latter could as easily and as vividly evoke their theatrical counterparts."

Strikingly absent from the King's reasoning is any consideration of Markham, who we remember 'almost lost his neck' and who we have been told earlier was expressly ordered to go first to his death by the King. Did the manner of the last-minute pardon deliberately arrange for the possibility that if any hanging took place, Markham, who seemed in the king's disfavour, would be the only one to lose his neck? Remarkably Carleton himself mimics the power of abeyance in his method of narration, retaining the surprise of the outcome until the very end and keeping his reader confused even as the court had been.

The extended theatrical metaphor used by Carleton emerges also in Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller, or the Life of Jack Wilton* (1987) which concludes with Jack Wilton's narration of his experiences in Bologna where he witnesses the execution of Cutwolf, a notorious murderer. The promised account of Cutwolf's wrack upon the wheel proves to be tortuous and we are led to it through yet another narrative, this time by Cutwolf himself who, before he dies, provides an 'authentic' account of the villainy that has led him to the wheel. Jack reproduces Cutwolf's 'insulting narration' as he terms it because of its punitive value:

> Prepare your ears and your tears, for never, till this thrust I any tragical matter upon you. Strange and wonderful are God's judgements; here shine they in their glory... Murder is wide-mouthed, and will not let God rest till he grant revenge... Guiltless souls that live every hour subject to violence, and with your

> despairing fears do much impair God's providence, fasten your eyes on this spectacle that will add to your faith.

Several points in this exhortation are worth noting. Not by accident, this dramatic narrative has been reserved for the conclusion of the work. Jack here invites the reader to witness the spectacle of the execution, and as we shall see, the reader's role, initially analogous to Jack's, gradually merges with that of the crowd; that is, his role as witness gradually transforms into a more ambiguous one, somewhere between spectator of and participant in the torture. The incident, we are told, exemplifies God's glory and though we know that Jack refers here to the idea of divine retribution, the words suggest that he might be referring also to the nature of the execution itself as it dwells on torture rather than quick death. Jack insists that 'guiltless souls' who have not yet experienced violence but who live in constant fear of it can hope to strengthen their faith in the Almighty from this vision. In other words, this spectacle of torture should produce effects such as might follow a divine vision. Most importantly, the event on which we are expected to 'fasten' our eyes provides, according to Jack, a supreme example of the enactment of divine revenge. Like Carleton's narrative which purported to illustrate monarchical power even while it exposed its arbitrariness, Jack's account, despite its claim about illustrating divine authority, emphasizes instead its precarious similarity to mortal vengeance.

Cutwolf follows this dense exhortation with a long-winded narrative of the murder of Esdras of Granado. He prefaces his story with a strange assertion of his dignity: 'My body is little but my mind is as great as a giant's. The soul which is in me is the very soul of Julius Caesar by reversion. My name is Cutwolf, neither better nor worse by occupation than a poor cobbler of Verona—cobblers are men, and kings are no more.' The analogies between body and mind and body and soul seek to offset the ugliness of the speaker, 'a wearish, dwarfish, writhen-fac'd cobbler' as Jack describes him. But while they serve to dignify the speaker, they work in reverse as well: Cutwolf's insistence on the manhood of kings and his reminder about the public death of Julius Caesar suggest not a fantastic and unreal substitution of important figures for common villains, but a very *possible* replacement, whose reality would have been apparent to the spectators and to contemporary readers of this narrative (indeed, only some years earlier in 1587, Mary Queen of Scots had been beheaded on English soil). And as visitors to London such as Thomas Platter note, the heads of several traitors from noble families graced London Bridge and provided a constant source of tourist attraction. The thirty to thirty-five heads on display at any given time intended to provide a grim warning to those entering the city but descendants of the 'traitors' frequently regarded the heads of their forbears as trophies of past glories. The thin line that divided royalty from traitors who nearly managed to seize the throne was evident daily to travellers and residents in the city and Cutwolf's highly suggestive substitution of royal bodies for criminal ones was, as I hope to show, implicit in all executions, especially narrated or dramatized ones like that being described here by Nashe.

Cutwolf's mesmerizing narrative follows this bold preface detailing similarities between his death and that of royal traitors. Cutwolf tells the crowd that to revenge the murder of his elder brother he had hunted Esdras for twenty months across Europe. He describes his joy at finally chancing upon him on the streets of Bologna: 'O, so I was tickled in the spleen with that word; my heart hopped and danced, my elbows itched, my fingers frisked, I wist not what should become of my feet nor knew what I did for joy.' His emotions parallel the mirth of the crowds who have also 'made holiday' to view Cutwolf's torture. Cutwolf then describes how he visited Esdras at his lodgings the next morning and confronted him with the murder of his brother. Faced with Cutwolf's determination to bury a bullet in his breast, Esdras eloquently tries several arguments to stay Cutwolf's revenge. He first promises money, then eternal service, and proceeds to request that his arms and legs be cut off and he himself left to live a year in prayer and repentance. When this fails, he requests that he might be tortured: 'To dispatch me presently is no revenge; it will soon be forgotten. Let me die a lingering death—it will be remembered a great deal longer.' Is the narrator, himself to be tortured and allowed to die slowly, perhaps taunting his spectators into revising their sentence on him through this ambiguous request spoken by a similar murderer? Or is he suggesting his inevitable power as a lingering example for the future, as one who through this double narration will remain forever in memory and in print? After all, pamphlets and ballads enumerating various atrocities committed by criminals circulated during such executions and popularized the figures thus condemned. The ambiguous nature of the condemned man, both powerful and powerless, both mesmerizing the crowds and used by them as part

of their festivity, seems to have been an inherent element of execution rituals. A similar ambivalence becomes a central ingredient also in Charles's execution performed more than half a century later, an event treated in detail in Chapter 6.

Esdras continues to reason with Cutwolf, alternating between promises and pleas, but his murderer remains undeterred. Cutwolf relishes the moment to the fullest and seems to be offering Esdras what he asked for earlier, a lingering mental torture. He even presents himself as a divine avenger:

> There is no heaven but revenge. . . Divine revenge, of which (as of the joys above) there is no fullness or satiety! Look how my feet are blistered with following thee from place to place. I have riven my throat with overstraining it to curse thee. I have ground my teeth to powder with grating and grinding them together for anger when any hath named thee. My tongue with vain threats is bollen and waxen too big for my mouth. My eyes have broken their strings with staring and looking ghastly as I stood devising how to frame or set my countenance when I met thee. I have near spent my strength in imaginary acting on stone walls what I determined to execute on thee.

Cutwolf thus presents himself as the frightening figure of death himself, one who has rehearsed the drama of this encounter again and again. Esdras continues to plead for time, claiming that bodily torture would delay his death and provide him with an opportunity to save his soul. His assailant, however, determines to extend his power beyond the grave: 'My thoughts travel'd in quest of some notable new Italianism whose murderous platform might not only extend on his body, but his soul also.' In a spectacular *coup de theatre* he asks Esdras to renounce God and swear allegiance to the devil. The reader thus perceives a seemingly bewildering set of relationships: Esdras has requested that he be tortured rather than killed in order that he might have time to save his soul; Cutwolf, as if in response to this request, orders Esdras to give his soul to the devil and forswear all hope of salvation; and Esdras, in direct opposition to his earlier request and hoping to be saved from death, seizes the opportunity and gives Cutwolf more than he had hoped for by renouncing God and salvation completely. Does Cutwolf's request function as a test of the victim's authenticity in professing a desire to save his soul? At any rate Esdras's response actually takes Cutwolf by surprise:

> Scarce had I propounded these articles unto him but he was beginning his blasphemous abjurations. I wonder the earth opened not and swallowed us both, hearing the bold terms he blasted forth in contempt of Christianity . . . My joints trembled and quaked with attending them; my hair stood upright, and my heart was turned wholly to fire . . . The vein in his left hand that is derived from the heart, with no faint blow he pierced, and with the full blood that flowed from it writ a full obligation of his soul to the Devil.

Having thus forsworn salvation, Esdras expects to be spared. Thus when his assailant asks him to open his mouth and gape wide, he does so without demur. The entire event, described by Cutwolf as the enactment of a ceremony, parodies Catholic communion rites and Esdras seems to regard Cutwolf's request as another stage in this enactment. Cutwolf's description of what follows, Edsdras's murder, is significant in its choice of words: 'therewith made I no more ado, but shot him full into the throat with my pistol. No more spake he, *so did I shoot him that he might never speak after*, or repent him' (emphasis added). The revenge directs itself specifically against the spoken word for it alone, as the narrative strives to show throughout, retains the supreme power to create reality. To Cutwolf at least, not Esdras's actions but his sworn allegiance to the devil, which he has no time to retract, damns him to hell. His murderer in a final paean to revenge allies himself clearly with God and heaven: 'Revenge is whatsoever we call law or justice. The farther we wade in revenge the nearer come we to the throne of the Almighty. To His scepter it is properly ascribed, His scepter he lends unto man when He lets one man scourge another.' This appropriation of godly powers incenses the crowd who apparently reserve the honour for themselves: 'Herewith, all the people (outrageously incensed) with one conjoined outcry yelled mainly: "Away with him, away with him! Executioner, torture him, tear him, or we will tear thee in pieces if thou spare him."' Their desire to torture Cutwolf parallels Cutwolf's earlier treatment of Esdras and both actions mimic the Almighty's ever-vigilant vengeance invoked throughout this narrative.

We arrive thus to the centrepiece of Jack's story, the torture of Cutwolf, a festive communal celebration which both fascinates and unsettles Jack; presumably the reader too would find the culinary metaphors used to describe the occasion both fascinating and horrifying. I quote the passage in full:

> At the first chop with his wood-knife would he fish for a man's heart and fetch it out as easily as a plum from the bottom of a porridge pot. He would crack necks as fast as a cook cracks eggs. A fiddler cannot turn his pin so soon as he would turn a man off the ladder. Bravely did he drum on this Cutwolf's bones, not breaking them outright but, like a saddler

> knocking in of tacks, jarring on them quaveringly with his hammer a great while together. No joint about him but with a hatchet he had for the bones he disjointed half, and then with boiling lead soldered up the wounds from bleeding. His tongue he pulled out, lest he should blaspheme in his torment. Venomous stinging worms he thrust into his ears to keep his head ravingly occupied. With cankers scruzed to pieces he rubbed his mouth and his gums. No limb of his but was lingeringly splinter'd in shivers.

The analogies comparing the executioner to a fisherman, a cook, a fiddler, a drummer and a saddler present Jack's fascination with the scene, shared also by the crowd who have instigated the tortures. 'This truculent tragedy of Cutwolf and Esdras' produces its desired effect on Jack who, sobered by the scene, marries his courtesan and leaves 'the Sodom of Italy' to live an honest life thereafter in England.

Contrary to being a sharp contrast to England, the Italy of Jack's narrative provides an exaggerated version of events such as public executions witnessed around London. This 'truculent tragedy' might easily provide a narrative of staged public punishments in England, and the reaction of the crowds, though it disgusts Jack, differs hardly at all from similar reactions by English crowds to the deaths of personalities such as the Earl of Strafford and Archbishop Laud in the seventeenth century. Jack's disgust does, nevertheless, underscore the stance of many literary figures as they both exploit and criticize London's fascination with the spectacle of death. The author's ambivalent stance combining horror and fascination may be treated as typical of many Elizabethan depictions of punishment whether in popular narratives of travel or on the public stage. These accounts of public punishment exploit the reader's fascination with the spectacle of death but, by evoking horror and revulsion, they mock his reliance on spectacles of torment for entertainment. As Jonathan Bate describes it, the 'structure of the [Nashe's] story leaves the reader with more than a sneaking sympathy for what has been said on the scaffold, especially as the act of execution has a clinical cruelty which makes it in effect no different from the act for which it is a punishment. The narrative has made us discover the Italian within all of us.'

A series of questions may be raised about these documents, especially Nashe's detailed narrative. Is Cutwolf the devil's emissary who deceives Esdras into damning himself or a divine agent avenging an unjust murder? Is the executioner a victim of the people's desire to see some sport or an agent of vengeance? Does the text negate or authorize the power of the word? Do the events constitute 'a truculent tragedy' as Jack claims or do they enact a festive communal ritual? Some of these ambiguities and paradoxes, especially the ambivalent positions of the victim, the crowd and the executioner, so clearly dramatized in Nashe's fictional account, were inherent to the ritual of execution itself and occurred also at actual executions in the Elizabethan and Stuart periods.

Nashe's account also provides a prose analogy to numerous tragedies of revenge enacted on the Elizabethan and early Stuart stage; it incorporates many ingredients that have been identified with this dramatic genre: obsessive revenge pursued by a melancholy revenger who physically and mentally degenerates through his pursuit of the victim, inordinate delay characteristic of this pursuit, the ambivalent tension between revenge and justice that remains unresolved, the viciously circular nature of revenge that destroys many in its course, and the public death of the revenger himself often performed in the midst of communal celebration and festivity. Nashe's theatrical account incorporates all the major ingredients of the Elizabethan revenge tragedy.

This alliance between theatre and public punishment evident in Carleton's and Nashe's narratives and throughout the early modern period could be extended even farther: the masked and hooded dramatist, both present and absent from his production, invites comparison with the hangman. Like the hangman, the dramatist created spectacles and functioned as an entertainer whose efficiency was subject to the strictest scrutiny and criticism. Even his precarious position, as servant both to the Crown which sanctioned his activity and the populace who viewed his spectacle, compares with the hangman's. The hangman functioned as the most important instrument of the law; dramatists also repeatedly envisaged themselves as holding an analogous position. Thomas Heywood, for example, in *The Apology for Actors* (1612) insists on the moral efficacy of stage plays which could incite confessions from villains by the mere spectacle of horror and villainy. He cites three instances where spectators, moved by the dramatic events they witnessed, confessed to previous crimes and were thus brought to justice. One of his examples, a woman who at the end of a performance confessed to having poisoned her husband seven years earlier, also provides a remarkable instance of what Hamlet seems to expect from Claudius (and less directly

from Gertrude) after the staging of *The Murder of Gonzago* when he tells us

> I have heard
> That guilty creatures sitting at a play
> Have, by the very cunning of the scene,
> Been struck so to the soul that presently
> They have proclaimed their malefactions.
> For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
> With most miraculous organ.

The power of theatre to provoke transformation had become commonplace in the period and receives ironic treatment in a later tragedy, *The Roman Actor*, where Caesar tries to cure avarice in Philargus by staging a play. The comic resolution of the staged play in which a miser repents of his earlier folly finds little satisfaction in Philargus who would prefer a tragedy: 'had he died / As I resolue to doe, not to be alter'd, / It had gone off twanging.' Philargus thus resolves to guard himself against the possibility of transformation, only to contend with the frustration of Caesar who demands that he 'make good vse of what was now presented? / And imitate in thy suddaine change of life, / The miserable rich man, that expres'd / What thou art to the life?; when thwarted in this desire to see Philargus transformed by theatre, Caesar orders that he be hanged instead. Renaissance familiarity with the concept that theatre could provoke transformation may be gauged by the recurrence of this idea on the stage, whether it is invoked seriously as in *Hamlet* or treated ironically as in *The Roman Actor*.

Depictions of evil and tragedy on the stage, as Heywood argues, performed both punitive and psychological functions. And like tragedies in general, public executions and hangings served both as a negative example and a reminder that past villainies would not remain undiscovered or unpunished forever. The sentiment expressed by Samuel Johnson in the late eighteenth century, that there was no point in hanging a man if it was not going to be done in public, certainly prevailed in the earlier period and provided philosophical justification for the staging of both real and spectacle dismemberment, actual and theatrical tragedy, in early modern England. 'Cruelty,' Colin Burrow argues, 'is part of Shakespeare's world, and it generates a high proportion of the energy of his drama'; the attitude applies to Renaissance drama in general and perhaps even to the public execution of Charles I by Parliament in 1649, a theatrical spectacle which historically demarcates a boundary for this period.

I do not intend to collapse these modes of spectacle completely but to suggest that the close connection between these forms of popular public entertainment may be worth exploring in detail. The theatre and the scaffold provided occasions for communal festivities whose format and ends emerge as remarkably similar. More specifically, I would like to use the erection of the Triple Tree and the public execution of Charles I as events which frame a period remarkable for its vibrant, intense and highly competitive dramatic creativity. Both forms of festivity underwent radical scrutiny in later years, though the removal of hangings and executions from the public arena occurred only considerably later. Despite their divergent histories in later years, theatre and the scaffold merged in January 1649 to provide an unique and unprecedented spectacle of public tragedy and apparent political liberation. I trace the influence of the scaffold on the development of theatre in the late sixteenth century and the contribution of theatre to the staged political drama of the mid-seventeenth century.

The close alliance between these popular entertainments emerges most vividly in plays of the late sixteenth century such as Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*. But even plays such as Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, Jonson's *Sejanus* and Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* which do not stage hangings and executions invoke the format of public punishments, frequently to undermine the state's efficacy in staging deaths as a deterrent to further crimes and sometimes to mock the audience's reliance on the value of death as entertainment. Kyd's tragedy, which simultaneously invokes the spectacle of death and threatens to destroy the frame that separates theatre from the scaffold, more than any other early play insists on the precarious distance that separates staged dramas of death from public punitive events such as hangings.

Traditional criticism regards Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* as important primarily for its historical position at the head of the revenge tradition. Its violence has frequently been attributed to Senecan models and its dramatic deaths, including the spectacular *coup de theatre* in the closing scene, analysed primarily for their influence on Shakespeare's dramaturgy. And yet, though the Senecan influence has been well documented, critics have only recently drawn attention to contemporary cultural practices such as public hangings at Tyburn to explain the play's particular fascination with the hanged man and the mutilated and dismembered corpse. No other play of the Renaissance stage dwells on the spectacle of hanging as Kyd's does

and the Senecan influence will not in itself account for the spectacular on-stage hangings and near-hangings in the play.

During Elizabeth's reign 6160 victims were hanged at Tyburn and though this represents a somewhat smaller figure than those hanged during Henry VIII's reign, Elizabethans were certainly quite familiar with the spectacle of the hanged body and the disembowelled and quartered corpse. In Kyd's treatment of the body as spectacle, we witness most vividly the earliest coalescence of the theatrical and punitive modes in Elizabethan England. Kyd also heightens the ambivalence inherent in the public hanging as spectacle and deliberately weakens the frames that separated spectators from the spectacle.

Source: Molly Smith, "Theatre and Punishment: Spectacles of Death and Dying on the Stage," in *Breaking Boundaries: Politics and Play in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 1998, pp. 17–40.

G. K. Hunter

In the following essay excerpt, Hunter explores the roots of Elizabethan drama, arguing that "it was the perception of the individual voice as justified" that had the most impact on the fledgling movement.

A standard assumption of literary history is that a group of young men, born of "middle-class" parentage in the 1550s and 1560s and graduating from Oxford or Cambridge between 1575 (Lyly) and 1588 (Nashe) created between them the normal forms of Elizabethan Drama, casting behind them the primitive techniques and attitudes of preceding generations, designated "Tudor Drama," "Late Medieval Drama," or whatever other diminishing title distaste elects to supply. I call this assumption "standard" not because I seek to denigrate it (in the recurrent modern mode); there is much evidence that these young men perceived themselves, and were perceived by contemporaries, as constituting what would nowadays be called a radical movement and that the movement marked the beginning of something genuinely new. But the very obviousness of the general point leaves a number of supplementary questions unanswered because not asked. In particular I wish to ask the question *how* this group came to achieve their effect on drama. The question is a purely instrumental one that does not seek to go beyond the evidence generally available in the words they wrote. This leaves, of course, the further issue of the status we give to these words. If we are to understand what the "University Wits" say as a simple description of the facts of the case, then we must suppose that it was expertise in classical culture that led to the creation of the new drama. But this connection seems to be part of the rhetoric of their social situation rather than expressive of any vital link that joins university culture to popular drama. I shall argue that the link can be seen more clearly in terms of the central issue of Elizabethan intellectual life—the theological debate about the relation of individual conscience to the established hierarchies of the world. I shall argue that it was the perception of the individual voice as justified (in all senses of that word), even when socially isolated, that released the more obvious formal and literary powers we easily recognize. That the University Wits despised the popular theater they found when they came to London can hardly be disputed. The university milieu which had given them their claim to importance had anchored their sense of identity in the Humanist learning they had acquired there, their fluent command of a battery of Greco-Roman names, historical and fictional stories, self-conscious logical and rhetorical devices, tags and quotations, which provided the lingua franca of Humanist-educated Europe. In social terms these were, of course, means of defining an elite status, and they seem at first to offer only resistance to a demeaning function in popular entertainment, where (as Shakespeare was to point out) "nature is subdued / To what it works in, like the dyer's hand." Robert Greene more than once tells us how he suffered a sad decline into playwriting; and even though his narrative is more interesting as myth than as history it is worth pausing on. In *Francesco's Fortunes* (1590) we hear that Francesco (the Greene alternate) "fell in amongst a company of players, who persuaded him to try his wit in writing of comedies, tragedies, or pastorals, and if he could perform anything worthy of the stage, then they would largely reward him for his pains." And so Francesco "writ a comedy which so generally pleased all the audience that happy were those actors in short time that could get any of his works, he grew so exquisite in that faculty." In Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit* (1592) the story has become even more slanted. Roberto (the same hero, with another name) has come to an impasse in the Bohemian life he had thought to lead. He has been out-smarted and made penniless by the prostitute he planned to control. He is thrust out of doors, and sitting against a hedge he vents his wrath in English and Latin verses. On the other side of the hedge there happens to be a player, who now approaches Roberto:

> Gentleman, quoth he (for so you seem), I have by chance heard you discourse some part of your grief ... if you vouchsafe such simple comfort as my ability will yield, assure yourself that I will endeavour to do the best that either may procure your profit or bring you pleasure; the rather for that I suppose you are a scholar, and pity it is men of learning should live in lack.
>
> Roberto, wondering to hear such good words ... uttered his present grief, beseeching his advice how he might be employed. Why easily, quoth he, and greatly to your benefit; for men of my profession get by scholars their whole living. What is your profession, said Roberto. Truly sir, said he, I am a player. A player, quoth Roberto, I took you rather for a gentleman of great living, for if by outward habit men should be censured, I tell you you would be taken for a substantial man. So am I where I dwell (quoth the player) reputed able at my proper cost to build a windmill.
>
> The player goes on to indicate that he has greatly prospered by penning and playing folktales and moralities. "But now my almanac is out of date." He now needs a graduate, like Roberto, to catch the more sophisticated tastes of the present "in making plays ... for which you shall be well payed if you will take the pains."
>
> Roberto, perceiving no remedy, thought best to respect of his present necessity to try his wit and went with him willingly; who lodged him at the town's end [in a brothel].... Roberto, now famoused for an arch-playmaking poet, his purse like the sea sometime swelled, anon like the same sea fell to a low ebb; yet seldom he wanted, his labors were so well esteemed.

His new profession earns him the much-needed money, but money earned under these circumstances is seen to be incapable of securing moral stability. Roberto so despises those from whom he earns his money that he can only define his difference from them by cheating them: "It becomes me, saith he, to be contrary to the world, for commonly when vulgar men receive earnest they do perform; when I am paid anything aforehand I break my promise". His money is spent among criminals and debauchees to support a way of life which produces execution for some and repentance before death for Roberto. It is at this point that Greene can proceed to warn "those gentlemen his quondam acquaintance that spend their wits in making plays" (Marlowe, Peele, [?Lodge/Nashe] and "two more that both have writ against these buckram gentlemen") to "never more acquaint them [the players] with your admired inventions".

The story as thus told is a powerful one. But as far as the history of Elizabethan drama is concerned, the details leave much to be desired. There

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is no evidence that Greene's dramatic talents had the electrifying effect he describes. And we should note that he tells much the same story about his prose romances of love. In *The Repentance of Robert Greene* (1592) we hear not only that the "penning of plays" turned him into a swearer and a blasphemer, but that

> These vanities [plays] and other trifling pamphlets I penned of love and vain fantasies were my chiefest stay of living, and for those my vain discourses I was beloved of the vainer sort of people who, being my continual companions, came still to my lodgings, and there would continue quaffing, carousing and surfeiting with me all the day long.

Greene is much clearer about the status he is losing than about the skills he is acquiring. He implies that all he has to do to succeed is to turn his university-trained cleverness toward the writing of popular literature and lo! he will grow "exquisite in that faculty." The extant popular plays of Greene, Peele, and Lodge, however, do not at all support this idea; they are quite unlike any model the university could have provided from the works of Seneca, Plautus, or Terence. In their multitudes of characters, their wide range across space and time, their carelessness of plot consistency, their interest in romantic love, their reluctance to stay inside the boundaries of genre, their tendency to heavy moralizing, such plays fit almost exactly the terms of neoclassical scorn with which Sir Philip Sidney had greeted the English plays of the early 1580s. *James*

IV The Edward I, Battle of Alcazar, Alphonsus of Aragon, and *A Looking Glass for London and England* all fall easily under Sir Philip's rubric of "mongrel tragicomedy [with] some extreme show of doltishness" and are in fact much more like those warhorses of the popular stage, *Clyomon and Clamydes* or *The Famous Victories of Henry V*, than they are like anything in classical drama.

What, then, did the university contribute toward a new theatrical creation that was not provided by a professional knowledge of the stage? The evidence that contemporary comment provides is extraordinarily evasive. In the second part of the Cambridge play *The Return from Parnassus* (1601–03) the graduates Philomusus and Studioso seek to follow along the Greene path and try to secure employment as actors and scriptwriters from the leading actors of Shakespeare's company, Burbage and Kemp. The brush-off they receive indicates some of the impediments that still lay, even in the next decade, in the path of those who sought to travel from a Humanist education to a career in the popular theater. Kemp tells the graduates: "Few of the university men plays well; they smell too much of that writer Ovid and that writer Metamorphosis and talk too much of Proserpina and Jupiter."

Kemp's entirely plausible expression of what we can recognize as the recurrent tension between the stage and the academy seems to be confirmed on the other side of the same coin by the rhetoric of self-definition that the Wits themselves indulge in. Nashe, for example, relies entirely on attainments in the classical languages to make his distinction between authentic and merely imitative playwrights. In his preface to Greene's *Menaphon* (1589) entitled "To the gentlemen students of both universities" Nashe tries to draw an impassible line between authentically learned men and those hangers-on or pretenders that he refers to ironically as "deep read schoolmen or grammarians," students, that is, who have never passed from the grammar school to the university. These will, he assumes, display the superficialities of a classical education; but it will be easy to detect them as outsiders masquerading as insiders, for they are "at the mercy of their mother tongue, that feed on naught but the crumbs that fall from the translator's trencher." These are essentially lower-class persons whose incapacities betray them as existing only at the intellectual level of the "serving man" or of the dealer in "commodities" (that is, the merchant).

Nashe's attack on lower-class pretenders to learning becomes more specific in the famous following passage in which he deals with the kinds of plays that such grammar-school authors are capable of writing. Again, the central issue is ignorance of Latin: such men can "scarcely Latinize their neck-verse if they should have need"; they are the "famished followers" of "English Seneca" (often thought to refer to Thomas Newton's 1581 collection of Seneca's plays), because they are incapable of reading the original; and yet they "busy themselves with the endeavors of art"—where "art" has the sense of specialized knowledge that is found in such phrases as "Master of Arts." It looks, from much of the reference in this passage, as if Thomas Kyd is the playwright most particularly aimed at. And indeed if *The Spanish Tragedy* came out in 1588 (as is often supposed) then Kyd must have provided in 1588/89 an obvious example of a nonuniversity playwright with a great theatrical success on his hands. The obvious objection to such identification is that *The Spanish Tragedy* has few if any of the characteristics specified; indeed it is unusually full of Latin verse, some of it, apparently, of Kyd's own composition, and if the play within the play was actually performed in "sundry languages" then it also contained considerable dialogue in French, Italian, and Greek as well. Such evidence, however, tells us little about the intention that prompted Nashe's words. "Grub Street hacks," "outsiders" are clearly necessary to the self-definition of any group seeking to lay claim to the "inside" position, and Nashe is no more likely to have been in search of accuracy and justice, when he attached names to labels, than Pope was in *The Dunciad*. If a Kyd had not existed, Nashe would have had to invent him (as, in the passage in question he very nearly did).

If Thomas Kyd was in fact merely a famished follower of authentic graduate playwrights, then it is a great gap in nature that we do not know who these men were or what they wrote; there are not even plausible candidates. It seems more rational to suppose that there were no such model playwrights; and this probability is reinforced by the parallel case of Shakespeare. Greene's famous 1592 attack on Shakespeare as yet another despicable outsider, jumped-up actor, and jack-of-all-trades ("Johannes fac totum"), pranking himself in the "feathers" he has stolen from the graduates, has no more detail of evidence to support it than appears in the case of *The Spanish Tragedy*. *Titus Andronicus* and *Richard III* are indeed plays that draw on a considerable, even if only grammar-school,

acquaintance with the classics. If this derived from new work in drama by the University Wits, then once again one must note that the lines of filiation have disappeared. But it is more probable that the whole issue of "authentic" and "imitative" dramaturgy is only the fantasy of a socially insecure group of graduates, anxious to destabilize the opposition.

To deny the accuracy of such polemical rhetoric is not, however, to deny altogether the creative importance of this generation of University Wits in the history of Elizabethan drama, though it is certainly to deny their claim to tell the whole story in their own terms. One fact remains, which must not be underplayed or denied: the success of Marlowe's First Part of *Tamburlaine* (usually dated 1587) completely fulfilled the self-confidence of the group of graduates to which he belonged. Here at last we have a work of popular entertainment which openly claims classic status, whose presence visibly altered the landscape in which it appeared and charged its environment with new meanings. Of course, given the general lack of information, it is impossible to say that there were no popular plays like *Tamburlaine* written before *Tamburlaine;* but the self-consciousness of innovation which pervades its language, the comments of contemporaries, the immediate appearance of imitations, all combine to tell us that this was seen as an originating event, even if it was so only because it was so seen. The originality of *Tamburlaine* was not noted primarily, however, in terms of dramaturgy. His contemporaries spoke of Marlowe as above all a poet, and the Prologue to *Tamburlaine* shows that Marlowe agreed with them. But the point being made is not only about versification, narrowly conceived; it is rather a point about the spirit that speaks through a poetry which is (as Michael Drayton was later to remark) "all air and fire" or (to quote Marlowe himself) "Like his desire, lift upward and divine." And this is, it will be noticed, a return to dramaturgy by the back door. For the theatrical function of a poetry as distinctive and powerful as that of *Tamburlaine* is to require of the auditor that he follow the action inside a particular given focus. In crude terms one can say that in *Tamburlaine* Marlowe presented the history of the outsider, the man of talents rather than of background, not in the traditional terms of social marginality but locked into a system of values where energy and desire are everything and need the great outside only to secure the greatest resonance "like the fa-burden of Bow bell," as Greene remarked. Set against the hero's unfettered expression of individual will, the "insiders" of *Tamburlaine* are seen as passive, conformist, hesitant, as if only waiting to be taken over or destroyed by the individual whose force comes from believing in himself more than in anything outside.

It is time to ask the question how far the Marlovian vision and the Marlovian verse that conveys it are the product of a particular kind of education or representative of what we understand to have been the aspirations of the group of University Wits. Certainly there is little, if anything, in it that can be charged against imitation of classical authors read at university. But it is a mistake (as I have suggested above) to think that the focus of university education in this period was literary. The excitement of intellectual life in the sixteenth century came less from classical poetry than from the controversies of theology and from the techniques by which these could be conducted (see Kearney). From today's point of view the whole interest of such activities looks merely technical; but if we are to understand the excitement roused in the spirit of the times we can hardly afford to stop there. Clearly in such matters as the acceptance or rejection of sacraments, the belief or disbelief in the efficacy of works, the view taken on the mediation of the saints, the status of Purgatory, the function of vestments, we are dealing with the interlocking parts of total systems, where one false move can betray a whole understanding of the life of man, not only in eternity but in the daily life of earth as well. If the excitement of *Tamburlaine* can be seen to grow out of the intellectual energies generated in such disputes, then it becomes possible to argue that the play reflects its graduate generation at a deeper level than those we have so far considered.

Writing in 1588, Robert Greene spoke of the self-confident energy of Marlowe's verse as the expression of atheism: "daring God out of his heaven with that atheist Tamburlaine". Perhaps it is improper to make too much of the vocabulary used here. The context of the comment (Greene's jealousy of Marlowe's success) is not one likely to guarantee accuracy in the critical remark made. And "atheist" was in this period only a term of general abuse, with little necessary connection to specifc doctrine. On the other hand Marlowe was soon to acquire, and perhaps already had acquired, a considerable reputation as a freethinker. The idea that the power of *Tamburlaine* is directly connected to "atheism" may indeed point us toward more complex issues than are usually attached to Greene's scandals, for there are a number of

interesting connections, which are largely obscured by the archaic vocabulary.

The more modern image of Marlowe is often presented in terms of that largely fictional genus "the Renaissance man"—Burckhardt's creatively amoral egotist, whether seen as artist (Aretino, Michelangelo, Cellini) or as prince (Cesare Borgia, Julius II, Bernabo Visconti). But "Renaissance individualism," at least as it reached England, had rather different sources. And these take us back to the question of atheism once again. The key figures in such general growth of individualism as one can observe in England are neither artists nor the sacred monsters of royalty (egotism in the powerful is a characteristic so constant that it is hard to imagine it as having a history); they are rather the purveyors of reformed theology, Luther and Zwingli and Calvin and their native disseminators. The "Renaissance man" type of egotist who defines his individuality *against* orthodoxy is necessarily limited in the range of imitation he can inspire, for it is integral to his stance that he remain exceptional. Luther, however, and the other reformers, embodied individualism not against but inside orthodoxy, and indeed declared the sense of self to be the necessary basis of "true" orthodoxy. In this form the sense of the unique centrality of individual consciousness could penetrate throughout the culture of Europe to a degree not possible for the tyrants and exploiters of an older mode. And this was, as I say, the form in which "the Renaissance" pervaded England, so that, in England at any rate, the New Learning or Humanism inevitably explored classical forms and attitudes inside a world filled with the noise of challenge to intellectual conformity. In his search for justification by faith alone the individual could no longer hope to discover his identity by finding his place in any external system, for faith can only be felt and known inwardly. The doctrine of the slavery of the will (the *servum arbitrium*) required, paradoxically, that the individual remain in continued personal contact with the sources of God's Grace if he was to hope for eventual escape from the chains of Satan's power. The Reformed individual was thus continually caught up as protagonist in the largest and most terrifying drama that can be imagined, required to struggle and ask and decide and achieve, in a Satanic world, and without any external mediation. It would be surprising if this raw demand for extraordinary human capacity, marking the eventual irrelevance of external restraint, could be kept out of other areas of life, most significantly those where individual destiny must mean something more like secular fulfillment than loss of self in the Grace of God. Of course, even the states which endorsed the Reformation struggled continuously against its antinomian tendencies, especially as these manifested themselves in political contexts. In England the hundred years or so between the 1530s and the 1640s saw a continuous effort to maintain system, order, consensus, in loyalty to the nation, the sovereign, the church, the tradition (as reinterpreted). Not all the weapons available to the state were equally effective, however. Nationalist fervor, suspicion of and contempt for foreigners, was a powerful means of securing consensus against the Pope, the Spaniards, and the Jesuits, but these positions were most powerfully argued by radical believers in the unmediated presence of Christ in the individual life. The corrosive solution that dissolved the foreign threat also ate into the English hierarchy.

The political argument against individualism was weakened on yet another front. The language of intellectual argument for loyalty inherited, inevitably, the language of Erasmian Humanism, of persuasion to civil order by the civilized consent of an educated elite (such as is addressed in the ironic mode of More's *Utopia*, for example) of finely disputable interpretations of uncertain texts (as in Erasmus's New Testament), of specialized and technical knowledge allowed to develop its own pragmatic justification ("arts" of war, health, navigation, algebra were all published in English in the fifties and sixties). The English "Renaissance" book with probably the widest influence, Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* ("Foxe's Book of Martyrs") of 1563, was not only an epic of nationalism but also an epic of humble individualism (of widows, cooks, fishermen, brewers, and bricklayers, as well as scholars and clergymen) divinely justified in their rejection of the institutions of social control. The conflict depicted is not in the high romantic mode of *The Golden Legend*, set in exotic regions and the remote past. Foxe presents his readers with the recent and the local, describing lives rooted in the commonplaces of the ordinary and inculcating truth more by the evidence of shared experience than by any doctrinal argument. In all these cases, I would argue, a sense of the potential power of the unmediated individual, though disseminated primarily in religious terms, is bound to have created, in imagination at least, an idea that every self is capable of fulfillment and definition by resistance to conformity or convention. This is certainly the note in Elizabethan drama that we hear sounded clearly, for the first time, in *Tamburlaine*. The energetic individualism that appears in *Tamburlaine* has little or nothing to do with the

"Renaissance individualism" of the late Quattrocento princes. Tamburlaine starts from nowhere and his dizzying rise to power is entirely self-generated out of assumptions that have nothing to support them in the world outside. He is totally free of the complacency of power, turning his eyes, as soon as he has achieved any one thing, to further horizons where he can test himself still further. The attitude of mind that is depicted here seems to be one that it is not inappropriate to consider as an atheistic version of the Lutheran soul in its search for justification through faith—atheistic because in this case the believer has simply excluded God from the equation and concentrated his faith on himself, at once justifier and justified.

Source: G. K. Hunter, "The Beginnings of Elizabethan Drama: Revolution and Continuity," in *Renaissance Drama: Renaissance Drama and Cultural Change*, edited by Mary Beth Rose, Northwestern University Press, 1986, pp. 29–52.

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Enlightenment

Movement Origin

c. 1660

During the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment emerged as a social, philosophical, political, and literary movement that espoused rational thought and methodical observation of the world. The term "Enlightenment" refers to the belief by the movement's contributors that they were leaving behind the dark ignorance and blind belief that characterized the past. The freethinking writers of the period sought to evaluate and understand life by way of scientific observation and critical reasoning rather than through uncritically accepted religion, tradition, and social conventions. At the center of the Enlightenment were the *philosophes*, a group of intellectual deists who were centered in Paris. Deists believe in the existence of a creative but uninvolved God, and they believe in the basic goodness, rather than sinfulness, of humankind. Because this view of God contradicted the accepted religious views of the day, the *philosophes* were considered very dangerous. The church wielded considerable power at the time, so the *philosophes* were subjected to censorship and restrictive decrees carrying harsh punishments. Still, the *philosophes* continued to spread their views, and as the church's political power dwindled over the years, the Enlightenment gained momentum. In fact, by the 1770s, many *philosophes* collected government pensions and held important academic positions.

Scholars do not agree on the exact dates of the Enlightenment. Most literary historians support the claim that it ended with the onset of the French Revolution in 1789, and they place the beginning

somewhere between 1660 and 1685. Although it was centered in France, the Enlightenment had adherents all over the world. Contributors to the movement include France's Denis Diderot (who edited *Encyclopédie*), Voltaire (*Candide*), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (*The Social Contract*), Germany's Immanuel Kant (who is also associated with Transcendentalism), England's David Hume, Italy's Cesare Beccaria, and America's Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. Most of the major contributors knew one another and maintained contact despite the great distances. The Enlightenment's influence extended not only geographically but also chronologically, as reactions to it became evident in subsequent literary movements such as *Sturm und Drang* and Romanticism.

Representative Authors

Denis Diderot (1713–1784)

Denis Diderot was born in 1713 in Langres, France. His father was an artist and had a great influence on the technical craftsmanship of Diderot's masterpiece, the *Encyclopédie*, a compendium of knowledge on a wide variety of subjects of which he was the editor and a major contributor. Diderot distinguished himself as a student at the University of Paris, from which he graduated in 1732. As an adult, his personal life was often tumultuous and mysterious. He secretly married an uneducated woman named Antoinette, whose temper made his life difficult. In 1755, he carried on a secret love affair with Sophie Volland, and his love letters to her are ranked among the best ever written.

Diderot was able to establish himself professionally while in his twenties and enjoyed a fruitful career as a translator and encyclopedist. His greatest accomplishment is his work on the *Encyclopédie*, a multiple-volume (the number of volumes ranges from eleven to thirty-five in varying editions) work that took Diderot and the other contributors more than twenty years to complete (1750–1772). The success of this work earned Diderot notoriety and the respect of such high-profile figures as Catherine II of Russia.

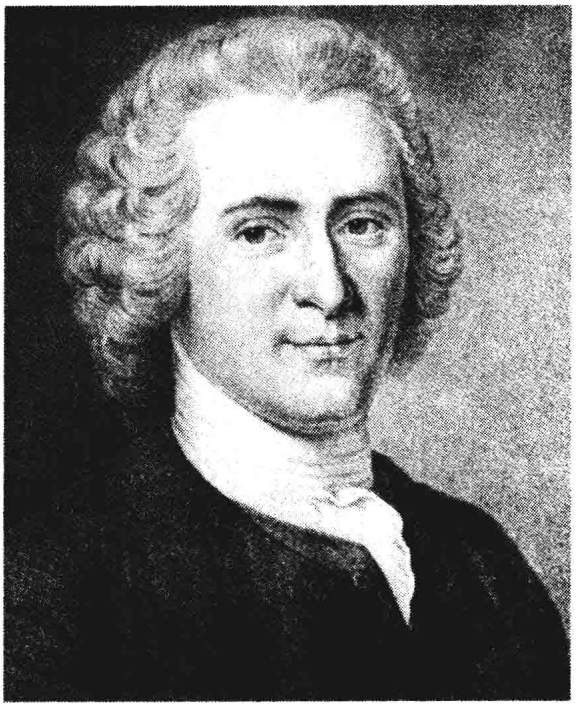
Diderot's other work includes fiction (most notably *The Nun*, 1782, and *Jacques the Fatalist*, 1784), drama, dialogues (simple theatrical presentations involving two characters discussing or debating issues and ideas), philosophical treatises, literary criticism, and essays. His particular concern was the rightful place of the artist in society, with attention to the difference between the appreciation for the artist by his contemporaries and by future generations. Diderot saw how the artist in eighteenth-century Europe endured the scrutiny of religious and political leaders and faced limitations imposed by censors. Despite a career subjected to such pressures, Diderot was respected by his peers because of his imagination, cleverness, and conversational ability.

Diderot often withheld his writing from publication to protect it from censorship and for fear that his contemporaries would not understand it. He preferred that it be preserved for posterity, and in fact much of his work has been more fully appreciated in the generations since his death. Sigmund Freud's Oedipal theory was influenced by one of Diderot's dialogues. Diderot himself offered early theories of psychology and evolution, and he predicted the inventions of Braille, the typewriter, and the cinema. Many scholars contend that Diderot was far ahead of his time.

Diderot died after a long illness in Paris in 1784. His work had a major impact on future writers, especially the German writers of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

David Hume (1711–1776)

David Hume was born on April 26, 1711, at his family's estate near Edinburgh, Scotland. His interest in philosophy began at an early age, and when he was eighteen, he abandoned his plans to study law in favor of pursuing philosophy. His first work, *A Treatise on Human Nature* (1739), was poorly received, but his next effort, *Essays, Moral and Political* (1741), was praised by critics and readers alike. *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) is among his most respected work. He wrote numerous philosophical and political treatises and enjoyed a varied career as a tutor, political secretary, and librarian. During the years he spent in Paris (1763–1766), he was acclaimed and invited to the most elite salons. Although Hume attracted his share of critics, his work was largely admired. Upon leaving Paris to go to London, he took French author Jean-Jacques Rousseau with him, but after a series of public quarrels, the two parted ways. He returned to Scotland in 1769, where he occupied a grand house in Edinburgh. It was there that he died peacefully on August 25, 1776.



Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Considered one of the most important philosophers of modern thought, Hume advocated a form of philosophical skepticism that claimed that all knowledge attained by experience is uncertain. His writings about perception and cause-and-effect reach into religion, politics, and ethics. Hume was particularly interested in the processes people use to secure knowledge and to deem it reliable.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778)

Born in Geneva, Switzerland, on June 8, 1712, Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a writer, botanist, social theorist, and musician. When his mother died a few days after his birth, an aunt and uncle agreed to rear him. Although Rousseau was an engraver's apprentice, he ran away at the age of sixteen to be the secretary and companion of a wealthy woman named Madame Louise de Warens, who was enormously influential in the young man's life. At the age of thirty, he left for Paris, where he was a music instructor and political secretary. His friend Diderot commissioned him to contribute music articles to *Encyclopédie*, and Rousseau's writing career began. He wrote social commentary and essays espousing the belief that science and rationalism offer the way to truth. Rousseau's social commentary drew fire from Voltaire, and the two became rivals.

In 1756, Rousseau left Paris and went to Montmorency, France, where he wrote *The Social Contract* and *Émile*, both published in 1762. *The Social Contract* is considered one of the formative documents of the ideology of the French Revolution. Rousseau believed that the will of the people should guide government and that individuals should be free of pressures from church and state. The novel *Émile* presents an unorthodox view of educational theory, couched in a novel about a tutored student. Rousseau's views made him unpopular with authorities in France and Switzerland, so he went first to Prussia (a kingdom comprising parts of present-day Germany and Poland; it ceased to exist after World War II) and then to England with Hume. A series of disagreements, however, led them to publicly denounce each other, and Rousseau returned to France in 1768. He died on July 2, 1778, in Ermenonville.

Rousseau's major contributions to the Enlightenment were *The Social Contract*, *Émile* (both 1762), and the autobiographical *Confessions* (published posthumously in 1782). These works are regarded as some of the most inspired and original of the Enlightenment era, and they had far-reaching effects on political theory and education. While early Enlightenment thinkers championed rationalism above all else, Rousseau introduced a note of emotion. His work represented the merging of the two approaches without weakening the Enlightenment stance that truth is revealed through individual inquiry rather than through blind adherence to tradition and authority.

Voltaire (1694–1778)

Born in Paris on November 21, 1694, François Marie Arouet wrote extensively using the name Voltaire. As a young man, he gravitated toward writing and was soon considered one of the most intelligent and witty Parisians to frequent the gatherings of distinguished guests, artists, and writers (held in private homes) called salons. Voltaire's sarcasm and irreverence toward authority earned him two jail sentences, after which he spent two years in London. In the ensuing years, he moved from one patron to another in France and Germany, as his critical and sarcastic writings alternately intrigued and enraged members of the ruling class. He finally settled in Ferney, France, in 1758, where he lived for the remaining twenty years of his life. There, he continued his literary career, completing such masterpieces as the novel *Candide*. His mature work criticized religion, politics, economics, and philos-

ophy, broadening and strengthening the Enlightenment spirit. He died in Paris on May 30, 1778.

Voltaire is considered one of the most influential of the Enlightenment writers, and scholars find it impossible to discuss the Enlightenment without reference to *Candide* (1759). A prolific writer, Voltaire wrote fiction, nonfiction, drama, poetry, history, satire, essays, and philosophical treatises. In these diverse genres, Voltaire explored science, philosophy, and the emerging consciousness of his day. Critics often cite the elegance, wit, and thoughtfulness of his work, but Voltaire is also criticized for being overly concerned with historical detail and philosophical persuasion.

Representative Works

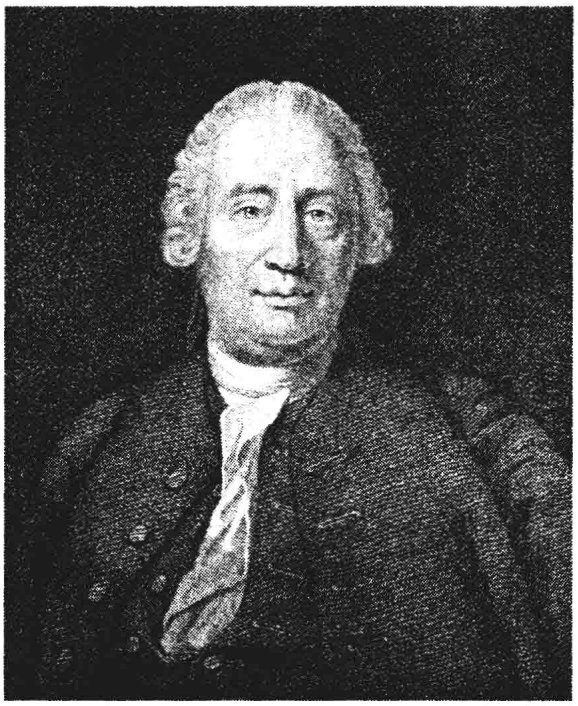
Candide

Voltaire's novel *Candide* (1759) is a satire attacking the philosophical leanings of his day. In the story, Candide and his traveling companions (Pangloss, an optimist; Cunégonde, his love; Martin the Pessimist; and Cacambo, his valet) endure hardships and witness the worst of humankind's cruelty and folly. In the end, Candide concludes that it is best to end the philosophical debates and simply cultivate one's own garden.

The winding plot of *Candide* includes incidents that Voltaire's contemporaries readily recognized as paralleling events of their time. Voltaire takes aim at philosophical optimism and pessimism, nobility, war, and religion. He reveals hypocrisy and abuse of power by the church and the state. Supporters of Enlightenment thinking praised Voltaire for his bold depictions of these social realities, while more conservative thinkers condemned him. Today, students of the Enlightenment look to *Candide* as an example of the type of fiction favored by the *philosophes* and for its presentation of Enlightenment ideology.

Declaration of Independence

With the signing of the *Declaration of Independence* in July 1776, the thirteen American colonies officially separated from England. The purposes of the *Declaration of Independence* were to establish the existence of a government separate from England's, to declare war against England (with whom the Americans were already fighting), and to solicit foreign aid for the war effort. In addition, the document outlines the colonists' grievances in light of the treatment they had received from England's monarchy. When the Continental Congress decided to pursue independence, it formed a committee to create a draft of the document declaring this intention. Thomas Jefferson, who loved France and was impressed by Enlightenment thinkers, undertook the job of drafting this important document. With the *Declaration of Independence*, Enlightenment ideas were put into political action. The concepts of self-rule, civil liberties, and a social contract that benefits the ruled and the rulers are all embodied in the *Declaration of Independence*. Although Jefferson's draft was edited by the Second Continental Congress, he is still considered the architect of the document.



David Hume

The *Declaration of Independence* opens with the Preamble, which states the purpose of the document and lists the goals of the emerging government. The Preamble asserts that citizens are entitled to basic rights, which the government has no authority to violate. Twenty-seven grievances against England's King George III are listed. These serve to demonstrate the type of government America will avoid, while explaining why the Americans feel compelled to create their own government system. The new nation of America asserts its right to wage war, collect taxes, carry on trade, be involved in international affairs, and otherwise function as an independent nation.

Émile

Rousseau's didactic *Émile* (1762) was published the same year as his political treatise *The Social Contract*. In *Émile*, Rousseau presents his innovative ideas about education. He follows the fictional title character from infancy to adolescence, demonstrating the ideal education for him as a tutor teaches him individually. Rousseau believed that the purpose of education is not to provide facts and information in an attempt to increase the student's knowledge but rather to approach each child individually with the goal of drawing out the abilities he or she possesses. Rousseau's student-centered approach is more focused on talent and innate intelligence than on uniform standards and requirements.

The year 1762 was a turning point for Rousseau. With his radical ideas on politics and education reaching the public, he was considered a scandalous figure. The controversy over *The Social Contract* was more heated, but some of the religious content of *Émile* caused it to be banned in France and Switzerland. Today, however, the book is considered a classic work on educational theory, and Rousseau is regarded as a man ahead of his time. Although his theories are not carried out intact, the ideas introduced in the novel do influence teaching methods. Some scholars go so far as to claim that Rousseau was a crucial figure in the development of child psychology.

Encyclopédie

The *Encyclopédie* is regarded as the embodiment of the spirit of the Enlightenment. Diderot and the other contributors spent more than twenty years working on it, and it is a masterpiece of compiled information in accessible but thought-provoking language. Although it was originally meant to be a translation of another work, Diderot envisioned a greater undertaking that would summarize the most important knowledge of the day. Its content ranges from technological and crafts processes to the history and topics of philosophy. Diderot's articles on the latter are among his most inspired writing. While encyclopedias today are objective, the *Encyclopédie* included point-of-view articles about science, politics, world cultures, religion, and philosophy. The *philosophes* spoke through these volumes to challenge existing theology and philosophy, while explaining Enlightenment ideals. Diderot shaped the *Encyclopédie* to be a source of information available to people who wanted to look beyond the traditional resource, the church.

The Social Contract

Rousseau's 1762 political treatise *The Social Contract* asserts that a government has a set of moral responsibilities to the people it governs. As Rousseau sees it, most governments violate these responsibilities—"man is born free, but he is everywhere in chains." Real authority arises from a just agreement between the government and the governed, and Rousseau terms this agreement "the social contract."

Diverse theorists and philosophers influenced *The Social Contract*, including John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, and the Greek philosophers. Upon its publication, *The Social Contract* was received with indignation and outrage. Rousseau was hated throughout France, and efforts were made to censor *The Social Contract* and suppress it altogether. Although Rousseau died in 1778 and therefore did not see the French Revolution (1789–1799), his theories were instrumental in its ideology. In 1794 (during the French Revolution), Rousseau's remains were transported to Paris for a hero's burial in the Pantheon.

Themes

Superiority of the Intellect

The *philosophes* claimed that humanity has the ability to perfect itself and society and that the state has the potential to be an instrument of that progress. Part of their criticism of the existing government was that it impeded such progress in its refusal to surrender power or resources to the people so that they could take control of their lives. The *philosophes* lamented the social conditions of contemporary France, but they remained confident that its people could attain happiness and improve living standards. Armed with these concepts and fortified by science and reason, the *philosophes* attacked Christian tradition and dogma, denouncing religious persecution and championing the idea of religious tolerance.

At the center of the belief in the superiority of the intellect was the Enlightenment reaction against traditional authority, namely the church and the ruling class. The *philosophes* claimed that rather than depend on these authorities for physical, spiritual, and intellectual needs, individuals could provide for themselves. By using their minds and demanding morality of themselves and others, people could actually change their realities for the better. This

idea is evident in Rousseau's *The Social Contract* and in the *Declaration of Independence*. It is expressed more subtly in *Émile* wherein a child's education is designed to draw upon his unique capabilities and to teach the child to be his own person in adulthood.

Basic Goodness of Humankind

The *philosophes* maintained that people were innately good and that society and civilization were to blame for their corruption. Because people are good, they are fully capable of ruling themselves and collectively working toward the welfare of all. Rousseau asserts this in *The Social Contract*, as he explains that despite individual differences and priorities, people as a whole will make decisions for the common good. In *Émile*, Rousseau applies this idea to the education of a child, demonstrating that the purpose of education is not to correct a child or mold the child to exhibit a certain set of characteristics but rather to draw out the child's unique gifts and goodness. Not all Enlightenment writers emphasized man's inherent goodness, however; in *Candide*, Voltaire provides numerous examples of humanity's cruelty and abuse of power. Once the characters are living peacefully on a farm (outside of civilization), they seem to be less violent, but the theme of humankind's goodness is diminished here.

Deism

Deism is a religious belief system that emphasizes morality, virtuous living, and the perception of a creative but uninvolved God. Deists believe in the existence of God but reject the supernatural, including the miracles and resurrection of Christ. They reject the idea that God is active in people's daily lives, instead claiming that God created the world but is now distant. This view of God directly contradicts the view of Catholic and Protestant churches. The *philosophes* were particularly incensed by the Roman Catholic Church, which they perceived as too restrictive and overpowering.

As deists, the *philosophes* were uninterested in life after death. They maintained that people should spend their time and energy improving this life, and they advocated pursuing worldly happiness and contentment. Diderot addresses these ideas in the *Encyclopédie*, and they are implied in the Preamble to the *Declaration of Independence*, which states that among a person's unalienable rights are "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Media Adaptations

- *Candide* was adapted to film in 1961 by the French companies Courts et Longs Métrages and Société Nouvelle Pathé Cinéma; it was then given English subtitles and distributed in the United States by Union Films.
- Television adaptations of *Candide* were made in 1973 by British Broadcasting Corporation and in 1986 by Public Broadcasting Service.
- In 1989, a musical version of *Candide* was produced by the German company Deutsche Grammophon and the American company Video Music Production, featuring the compositions of Leonard Bernstein.

Style

Rhetoric

Over the course of the Enlightenment, there existed two clearly opposing schools of thought concerning rhetoric. The traditions of the Renaissance, largely influenced by the works of Peter Ramus, held over into the early part of the movement. Ramus attacked Aristotle's view that rhetoric and dialect should be integrated, indicating that, though they may have been used in conjunction in the past, they should be disengaged. Ramus advocated a linear style, bereft of embellishment, so that scientific and philosophical writings might be better representations of truth. This straightforward approach adhered naturally to the rational thought and methodical observation promoted by the Enlightenment. However, while this rhetorical convention was becoming less popular, another was quickly gaining ground.

Near the end of the Enlightenment, the Belletristic Movement was in full swing. Works like *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), by Hugh Blair, and *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776), by George Campbell, were published. Both authors embraced the idea of using eloquence, beauty, and emotion to allow one to communicate, with the

Topics for Further Study

- A central tenet of Enlightenment thinkers was that humankind is innately good. Research the idea of the "noble savage" and see how it relates to Enlightenment thought. Prepare a well-organized essay explaining your findings, complete with examples from literature and/or history. Be sure to include any aspects of the "noble savage" that contradict the Enlightenment point of view.
- *Sturm und Drang* and Romanticism are two literary movements that are viewed, in part, as reactions against the Enlightenment. Choose one of these movements and prepare a web page that summarizes it and the Enlightenment, compares and contrasts the two, and explains why scholars interpret your movement as a reaction against the Enlightenment.
- During the latter part of the eighteenth century—when literature promoted and reflected Enlightenment ideas—Neoclassicism dominated the art world, and Romanticism followed in the early nineteenth century. Read about these art movements and examine their representative works. Consider the paintings of Jacques-Louis David (Neoclassicism) and see how they relate in style and/or subject to the work of Romantic artist Eugene Delacroix, whose *Liberty Leading the People* is among the most famous paintings to champion freedom.
- Read Victor Hugo's classic story of the French Revolution, *Les Misérables*, or watch a stage or screen adaptation of the novel. Select one of the main characters and compose a character sketch explaining how the Enlightenment did or did not affect the character's personality, emotional presence, and decision-making.

most advantage, to his or her audience. The word belletristic comes from *belles-lettres* (French for literature), which is literature that is appreciated not just for its content but for its beauty as well. Belletristic rhetoric resonated with Aristotle's ideals, a complete reversal from where rhetoric began at the outset of the movement.

Satire

Although there are few stylistic consistencies among Enlightenment works, the fiction of the period is almost always satirical. Satire is an indirect way of commenting on social or political issues. In satire, people and things are not what they seem on the surface, but readers can often identify what aspect of society is being ridiculed. Satire allowed the *philosophes* to get some of their writing past government censors despite its harsh criticism of the status quo. The number of censors increased in France during the Enlightenment because of the radical new ideas being put forth. When writers used satire, however, censors either missed the point of the writing or were unable to make a strong case for suppressing it.

Satire also served as a witty way to criticize. Enlightenment writers were often clever and sarcastic, and their work tended to attract an intelligent readership. A common satirical technique was to create a character that was a stranger to France. Because the character was naive and unfamiliar with this foreign society, it was not surprising to readers if the character was confused by French society or found fault with it. These characters were generally ignorant or silly, making their faultfinding seem equally ignorant or silly. The satiric irony, however, was that the character was the author's vehicle for pointing out the absurd and unjust in French society.

Movement Variations

United States

The Enlightenment had an important impact on the formative years of the United States as an independent nation. Although little Enlightenment literature came out of America, the *Declaration of*

Independence and the American Revolution embodied the principles espoused by the *philosophes*. Some of the central figures of early America (such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin) were admirers of Enlightenment writers, which influenced their decision-making and their political writing. In drafting the *Declaration of Independence*, Thomas Jefferson drew on some of the fundamental ideas of the Enlightenment, such as humanity's basic goodness and ability to rule itself, the injustices of corrupt governments, and the belief that all individuals should be free to pursue happiness. The Constitution, which lays out the American system of government, was drafted in 1787 and contains many ideas inspired by Enlightenment writers and theorists.

Scotland

Hume's philosophical writings about human rational processes and Adam Smith's revolutionary economic views added important dimensions to the Enlightenment. As a philosopher, Hume was unique because he was located in Great Britain, while most of the *philosophes* were in Paris. His ideologies supported Enlightenment claims of rationalism, although his work claimed that knowledge—especially knowledge gained through the senses—is not as reliable as many philosophers suggested. Hume was also unique in his generally widespread acceptance. While most of the *philosophes* endured censorship and outrage, Hume's work was published and deemed acceptable, mostly due to the fact that his work did not address volatile issues such as politics and religion but instead focused on explaining human thought processes and rational approaches to philosophical questions.

Hume was well known both at home and in France. When he spent two years in Paris, he was welcomed into the most distinguished salons and embraced by the public. When he left, he took Rousseau with him, although the two fell out of favor with each other once they arrived in London. Hume was not only influential with the *philosophes*, but he also played an important role in Transcendentalism. Kant, whose philosophical doctrines are major parts of the foundation of Transcendentalism, said that reading Hume was a pivotal awakening in his life.

Smith's 1776 economic treatise, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (often referred to as *The Wealth of Nations*), was the first attempt to analyze systems of trade, production, and commerce in Europe. Smith's friendship with Hume helped shape and encourage his innovative theories. Besides providing an in-depth look at economic scenarios, Smith included material addressing social ramifications of various aspects of economics. *The Wealth of Nations* demonstrated that Enlightenment ideals had applications in virtually every area of life, and its principles were put into action in America.

Historical Context

Seventeenth-Century Advances

Among the important influences of Enlightenment thinkers were seventeenth-century scientists and thinkers such as Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, René Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, Thomas Hobbes, and John Locke. Locke's theory of sensationalism (the belief that knowledge is solely derived through sensation and perception) was especially important to Voltaire and Rousseau, and Locke's views on the relationship between the individual and society laid the groundwork for the social contract theories of Rousseau.

Along with the writings of these influential figures, the seventeenth century provided other inspirational advances for the Enlightenment. Discoveries and inventions made by scientists supported the Enlightenment belief in the superiority of the intellect, and world exploration led to a sense of relativism with regard to non-European cultures. These advances served to reveal new realities, and thus Enlightenment writers encouraged open-mindedness and tolerance. Unfortunately, these opinions did not influence most leaders in European governments, who continued their mission to discover and conquer new lands and peoples at almost any cost. Isaac Newton's discovery of the law of gravity suggested that God's laws were accessible to the human mind. Enlightenment thinkers extended this notion and claimed that all of the laws and structures of nature and society could be discovered and known by applying reason. Locke had taught that knowledge comes from experience, which further supported the belief that the mind was the portal to all knowledge, both scientific and moral. The Enlightenment encouraged people to seek knowledge by observation rather than by reading what past authorities (such as the Bible or the Greek philosophers) taught.

Compare & Contrast

- **Late Eighteenth Century:** By the 1770s, significant growth in the printing industry means wider distribution of newspapers and books. This enables Enlightenment writers to reach a greater audience. Censorship is also waning, enabling Enlightenment thinkers to write more plainly about their views and theories.

  Today: The Internet enables anyone to reach a worldwide audience. Any information, theory, or ideology can be read by millions of people. Such communications are virtually unpoliced.

- **Late Eighteenth Century:** In 1762, Rousseau's *Émile* is published. In this world-famous novel presenting a new approach to education, the author expresses the typical view of the day that limited education is acceptable for women but that ultimately they should be prepared for domestic life.

  Today: Women are given the same access to higher education as men. Some well-educated women choose to stay home and rear their children, but this is a choice rather than an expectation.

- **Late Eighteenth Century:** World exploration and colonization by European nations affects the Enlightenment in two ways. First, exposure to new cultures brings about the *philosophes*' view that culture is relative and that tolerance is necessary. Second, colonization often leads to oppression (because governing bodies do not share the *philosophes*' appreciation for other cultures). In the case of the United States, this oppression leads to the application of many Enlightenment ideals. Americans, seeking self-rule and an improved society, take up arms against their oppressors.

  Today: The world has been explored and colonized. There are no new lands or peoples to conquer. As well, the ideas of the Enlightenment—most notably the principle of political freedom—have been so successful all over the world that the conquests and colonization of past centuries are repugnant to many modern people.

Censorship

Open expression of thought in eighteenth-century France was regularly curtailed by a stringent but often arbitrary censorship. Literary works were published only with the permission of the Director of Publications. Even when the censor granted permission, books could be suppressed by the clergy, the Parliament of Paris (the main judicial authority), the royal decree, or by other political and religious authorities. In 1754, a royal decree ordered the death penalty for "all those who shall be convicted of having composed, or caused to be composed and printed, writings intended to attack religion, to assail our authority, or to disturb the ordered tranquility of our realm." Despite its threatening tone, enforcement of the measure was often arbitrary. The *Encyclopédie*, for example, was published with royal sanction yet championed nearly all the radical doctrines of the century.

Salons

As a result of censorship, salons played an important role in the spread and discussion of Enlightenment thought. Salons were gatherings of distinguished and intellectual people and took place in the homes of society's elite. The women of the salons of the eighteenth century dictated the standards of taste and exerted considerable influence in matters of fame and fortune. Both men and women hosted Paris's renowned salons. Nearly all of the *philosophes* depended on the salons for the success of their literary endeavors. Many books of the day were subject to the receptions they received in salons, where guests would discuss and debate the books before applauding or condemning them. Intrigue and intense rivalry characterized the restrictive, elitist society of the salons. In such an atmosphere of a highly developed sense of wit, both in conversation and in writing, being clever was

one's sole saving grace and commonly ensured one's success.

American Revolution

The American Revolution (1775–1783) exemplified the ideals of Enlightenment thinkers, who, in the 1770s, began exploring political and social realms. Extolling the virtues of freedom and a government intent on better lives for all people, Enlightenment writers such as Rousseau claimed that there should be a fair agreement between government and the governed. When the Americans took up arms against their British rulers, they were putting Enlightenment ideas into action. Early American leaders such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin were adherents of Enlightenment ideologies, and their influence was important in the formative years of the country.

French Revolution

The onset of the French Revolution is considered the culmination of the Enlightenment. Among the revolution's causes were the incompetence of the ruling class, the dreadful living conditions and harsh taxation of the poor, and the ideology of the Enlightenment (especially Rousseau's doctrine of popular sovereignty). The American Revolution catalyzed the French Revolution in two ways: it was a real example of people fighting for self-rule, and France's financial backing of the Americans worsened the nation's own crumbling finances. Overwhelming economic and public pressure led King Louis XVI to authorize national elections in 1788. This enabled French citizens to vote for representatives in the Estates-General, a legislative assembly that had been adjourned since 1614.

With censorship temporarily suspended, political tracts were abundant. Many of these tracts expressed Enlightenment views. Shortly after the elections, the assembly convened to address France's finances, but numerous other grievances demanded attention. The divisive atmosphere and lack of progress exacerbated an already heated atmosphere, and on July 12, 1789, the French people began rioting. Two days later, they stormed and overtook the Bastille, a royal prison that symbolized the rule of the Bourbons, the ruling family from which Louis XVI came.

In 1791, a constitution was finally approved that created a legislature to work with a limited monarchy. Suspicion, unrest, and frustration continued to swell, however, and in 1792, distrust of the king led to his suspension and a new constitutional convention. After royalist sympathizers were arrested, angry mobs stormed jails and massacred thousands of prisoners. The convention installed a war dictatorship with Maximilien Robespierre at the helm. Known as the Reign of Terror, this period was marked by extreme economic and political injustice. Thousands of suspected insurgents were arrested, and many (including the former queen, Marie Antoinette) were executed. Robespierre's harsh actions forced the convention to have him and many of his staunch supporters arrested and guillotined. A short-lived system of government consisting of a five-man board and a legislature fell victim to a coup, and the military hero Napoleon Bonaparte took control of France in 1799. This ended the French Revolution.

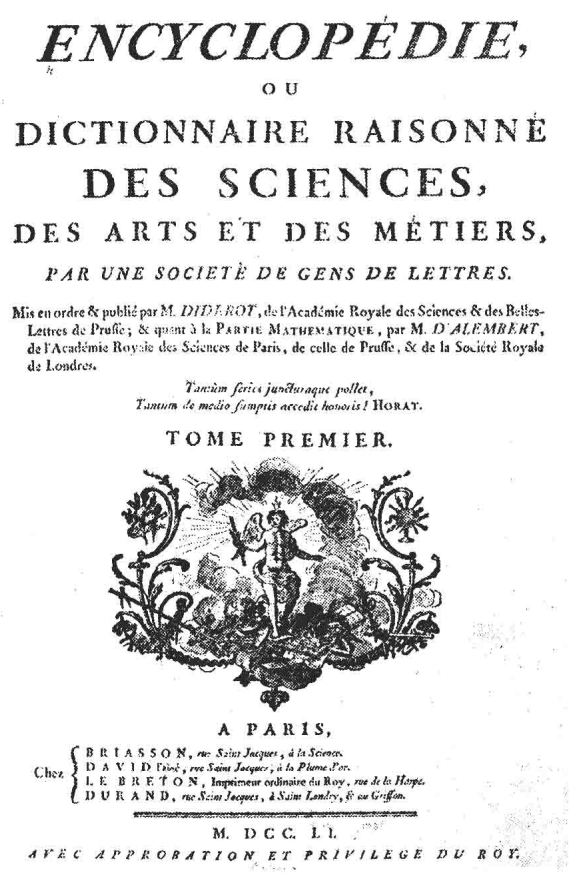
Ironically, the Revolution was partially inspired by Enlightenment thought, yet the violence that came out of this decade of fighting only tarnished its credibility among many Europeans.

Critical Overview

Literary historians describe the Enlightenment as a movement that profoundly affected not only literature but also science, philosophy, politics, and religion. Because it lasted for over one hundred years, it evolved and came to have many manifestations. In *The Enlightenment*, author Norman Hampson comments, "Within limits, the Enlightenment was what one thinks it was." He adds that "the Enlightenment was an attitude of mind rather than a course in science and philosophy." Critics almost universally applaud the Enlightenment for its insistence that the world should be analyzed and that authorities should be subject to questioning. In *The Party of Humanity: Essays in the French Enlightenment*, Peter Gay remarks:

> The *philosophes* were the enemies of myth.... Their rationalism was, one might say, programmatic: it called for debate of all issues, examination of all propositions, and penetration of all sacred precincts. But I cannot repeat often enough that this critical, scientific view of life was anything but frigid. The *philosophes* ... laid the foundation for a philosophy that would attempt to reconcile man's highest thinking with his deepest feeling.

The influence of the Enlightenment on the French Revolution is without question. Critics and historians agree that the revolution was built on the intellectual advances made by Enlightenment writers, especially Rousseau. Further, scholars often



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OU

DICTIONNAIRE RAISONNÉ

DES SCIENCES,

DES ARTS ET DES MÉTIERS,

PAR UNE SOCIETÉ DE GENS DE LETTRES.

Mis en ordre & publié par M. DIDEROT, de l'Académie Royale des Sciences & des Belles-Lettres de Prusse; & quant à la PARTIE MATHEMATIQUE, par M. D'ALEMBERT, de l'Académie Royale des Sciences de Paris, de celle de Prusse, & de la Société Royale de Londres.

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AVEC APPROBATION ET PRIVILEGE DU ROY.

Title page of Encyclopédie *by Denis Diderot*

credit the Enlightenment with bolstering the resolve of the Americans in the American Revolution and with shaping both the *Declaration of Independence* and the Constitution. In an essay entitled "The Age of Enlightenment," Whittaker Chambers sheds light on the spirit of freedom and rebellion that arose from the Enlightenment to inspire some of history's most passionate conflicts:

> The vision of the Enlightenment was freedom—freedom from superstition, freedom from intolerance, freedom to know (for knowledge was held to be the ultimate power), freedom from the arbitrary authority of church or state, freedom to trade or work without vestigial feudal restriction. . . . [The] Enlightenment finally reversed the whole trend of European culture.

Criticism

Jennifer Bussey

Bussey holds a master's degree in interdisciplinary studies and a bachelor's degree in English literature. She is an independent writer specializing in literature. In the following essay, Bussey compares the Grand Inquisitor in Voltaire's Candide *to literature's most famous Grand Inquisitor, who appears in Fyodor Dostoevsky's* The Brothers Karamazov. *By comparing these parallel characters from different literary movements, she sheds light on the Enlightenment as a whole.*

Among the many characters who wander in and out of the pages of Voltaire's *Candide* is the Grand Inquisitor, a character with historical roots in the Spanish Inquisition. In 1478, Ferdinand V and Isabella I of Spain secured the reluctant approval of the pope to initiate what has come to be known as the Spanish Inquisition. Its original intent was to seek out and punish Jews who had been coerced into converting to Christianity but whose conversion was insincere. Next, the inquisitors began seeking out Muslims who had insincerely converted. In 1520, Protestants became targets of the inquisitors. Soon, everyone feared the Inquisition authorities and the dreaded *auto-da-fé*. An *auto-da-fé* (which means "act of faith") was the ceremony at which a person's sentence (usually death) was handed down and then performed. The Spanish Inquisition finally came to an official close in 1834.

During the infamous Inquisition, Grand Inquisitors were members of clergy who were appointed to assume the highest positions in the effort. They were terrifying men who were responsible for thousands of deaths. The most famous Grand Inquisitor in literature appears in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. The similarities between Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor and Voltaire's Grand Inquisitor are based on the history of the Spanish Inquisition and its players, but the differences reveal a great deal about their respective literary movements. Voltaire's Grand Inquisitor directly and indirectly reflects Enlightenment ideas and attitudes, but Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor reflects existential ones. By comparing the two, students can learn more about the Enlightenment than might be expected given the Grand Inquisitor's brief appearance in *Candide*.

In *Candide*, the Grand Inquisitor is a man of impulse who pursues worldly satisfaction, not religious purity. Answering only to himself, he is either blind or apathetic to his own immorality. He uses his power to force a man to share his mistress with him, he thinks nothing of having people killed for any reason, and he indulges superstition by or-

What Do I Study Next?

- Written by Jean Le Rond D'Alembert and translated by Richard N. Schwab, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia of Diderot* (1995) presents the original preface to the *Encyclopédie*. In addition, this book contains an excerpt of Diderot's writing in the *Encyclopédie* along with a list of other contributors to it. It is considered an excellent introduction to the ideas of the Enlightenment.
- Edited by Isaac Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* (1995) is an anthology containing the most important writings to come out of the Enlightenment. To cast light on the movement as a whole, this book also contains historical, religious, and philosophical context.
- *The Portable Voltaire*, edited by Ben Ray Redman and originally published in 1949, is an excellent starting place for the student of Voltaire's work. Redman includes biographical information, philosophical overviews, and Voltaire's writings to demonstrate his importance to eighteenth-century thought.
- In *The Cambridge Companion to Rousseau* (2001), editor Patrick Riley compiles background and biographical information about Jean-Jacques Rousseau to illuminate the selected writing also presented in this volume. Riley includes chapters about Rousseau's best-known works, essays about his relationship to other Enlightenment writers, and commentary on his significance to literary history.
- Rousseau's *Confessions* (1782) is the autobiographical account of the Enlightenment writer's life and his experiences all over Europe. Besides its value as a firsthand account by a major figure in the Enlightenment, critics consider this an important work to come out of the period. There are numerous translations available.

dering that several people be burned to ward off additional earthquakes.

In many ways, the Grand Inquisitor in *Candide* is as much a philosophical figure as a religious one. He uses the power given to him by the Catholic Church to get what he wants. For example, the Grand Inquisitor desires Cunégonde, the mistress of the captain, and offers to buy her from him. When the captain refuses the offer, the Grand Inquisitor threatens him with an *auto-da-fé*, forcing the captain to bow to the Grand Inquisitor's will, and ends up sharing the woman. The captain fears the Inquisitor because he has the power to accuse him of an arbitrary charge and sentence him to death. In another example, Dr. Pangloss expresses philosophical optimism, so the Grand Inquisitor has him hanged for being a heretic. Pangloss's philosophical optimism is heretical because it implies that people—without God or the church—have the power to shape their own perceptions and destinies. Ultimately, however, the Grand Inquisitor is killed when he discovers Cunégonde and Candide plotting an escape. Candide kills the Grand Inquisitor, making him a victim of the same cruelty and impulse that defined his life. The irony is that if he had controlled his lust, he would not have put himself in a position to be killed.

Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor is presented very differently. He is deliberate and unemotional and exudes a powerful presence that is intimidating. He is also well educated and intelligent and is able to bend philosophy and theology to support his own wildly twisted ideas. Seeing Christ performing miracles during the Spanish Inquisition, he has him arrested and then chides him for returning to Earth. The Grand Inquisitor claims that Christ has no right to return and add anything to existing doctrine—once he left the Earth, the Church took over his work. The Grand Inquisitor sentences Christ to be burned the next day, and Christ's only response throughout the lengthy scene is a silent kiss at the end.

There are similarities between the two Grand Inquisitors. Both represent the belief that the

[The] fundamental philosophical differences between the Enlightenment and Existentialism are represented in the parallel characters of the Grand Inquisitors."

intellect is superior to the emotions or the spirit. Voltaire's Inquisitor represents the belief ironically because his decisions are reactionary, not thoughtful. Dostoevsky's Inquisitor, however, states directly that in the conflict between intellect and faith, intellect is superior.

Another important similarity is that both Inquisitors cling to their power and use it immorally, and they have no tolerance for anyone who challenges them in any way. Voltaire's Inquisitor has Pangloss hanged for declaring philosophical views the Inquisitor finds ridiculous. He justifies the hanging by labeling the philosophical claims heretical, but Pangloss is not a religious figure at all. Although his charge is to eradicate challenges to the church's authority, Voltaire's Inquisitor does not allow his personal authority to be challenged. He readily invokes his power to subject the captain to an *auto-da-fé* when the captain refuses to share his woman. Similarly, Dostoevsky's Inquisitor refuses to be challenged and is so arrogant that he exerts his authority over Christ. Dostoevsky's Inquisitor is a high-ranking person in the Catholic Church—a Cardinal—and his authority should rightly come from the Christ that the church worships. Yet when Christ appears, the Inquisitor responds with indignation. Without hesitation, he sentences Christ to be burned. Both Grand Inquisitors are powerful men. Because they often abuse their power, they also become extremely dangerous.

The differences between the two Grand Inquisitors reveal a great deal about the literary movements with which they are associated. Voltaire's Inquisitor is cartoonish and ridiculous. This characterization is in keeping with the Enlightenment's low estimation of the church and its clergy. He is a hypocrite who expects everyone else to follow the teachings of the Bible, while he thinks nothing of forcefully taking a mistress. His victims are foolish (like Dr. Pangloss), implying that the church has no real authority over anyone with intelligence. In contrast, Dostoevsky's Inquisitor is a fully formed character who seems real to the reader. He exudes an air of cruelty and dispassion. This is typical of Dostoevsky's writing, in which characters are realistic, and the reader is often given insight into the souls of his characters. Dostoevsky's Inquisitor has a sharp mind, while Voltaire's Inquisitor flippantly orders people to be killed. Dostoevsky's Inquisitor engages in lengthy, profound philosophical and theological commentary, which gives him the power to persuade others to buy into his twisted perspective. His arrogance is so great that facing Christ, he condemns him with no concern for his own salvation. This scene is representative of Existentialism because it demonstrates the emphasis of existence over meaning. Christ exists to the Inquisitor, but because the Inquisitor strips away the meaning of Christ's existence and appearance at this particular moment, Christ's sovereignty means nothing to the Inquisitor.

The Enlightenment writers denounced the church for its restrictions and hypocrisy. Voltaire's Grand Inquisitor personifies what the Enlightenment thinkers perceived as the worst of organized religion. Existential thinkers emphasized existence over meaning, and their belief that reason is ultimately inadequate to explain the great mysteries of life is depicted in Dostoevsky's character of the Grand Inquisitor. The reader can see that his arguments and logic appear to be sound, but at the same time, it is clear that the Inquisitor has missed the mark. Both Inquisitors are creatures of the material world, but Voltaire suggests that the world can be better because his Inquisitor, for all his power and ability to frighten, is conquerable. He is ultimately defeated when Candide kills him. Voltaire's presentation of him as foolish also allows the reader to see through him and realize that he is destructible. Dostoevsky's existentialist Inquisitor, however, offers little hope to the reader. He has the power to kill divinity itself. This is where the existential view of possibilities in faith is relevant. If the reader believes that there is a world beyond the material one in which the Inquisitor is so powerful, then there is hope. This is very different from the Enlightenment emphasis on worldly happiness. To Enlightenment thinkers, if there is no hope in this world, there is no hope at all. These fundamental philosophical differences between the Enlightenment and Existentialism are represented in

the parallel characters of the Grand Inquisitors. By comparing the brief appearance of Voltaire's Inquisitor in *Candide* with the lengthy appearance of Dostoevsky's Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov*, the reader can easily distinguish the fundamental differences between Enlightenment and Existentialist ideas.

Source: Jennifer Bussey, Critical Essay on the Enlightenment, in *Literary Movements for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Margaret Anne Doody

In the following essay, Doody examines the exploration and treatment of sensuousness, including that of the natural world, in poetry by women in the eighteenth century.

Women's poetry in the eighteenth century has been dealt with in terms of its political statement and its moral and social awareness. Much good work has been done in tracing themes and looking at social perspectives. Above all, some essential work has been done—the spade-work—of locating poets, finding their publications and manuscripts, and giving a coherent account of their individual lives. I can rest on the assurance that predecessors such as Roger Lonsdale and Donna Landry have given us a vision and knowledge that we didn't have before, so I can take a slightly different tack.

In recent years also there has been much concern about 'the Body'—it is still a fashionable topic. The Body has been poked and inspected, hung up for examination, and dissected by modern anatomists. Under all this treatment, 'the Body' has dwined and pined into an abstract conceptual framework, a notional entity. The Body, in short, has been done to death. I want to examine, but I need a better word than 'examine'. I want to accompany, to go with, the sensuousness of poetry by women in the mid and late eighteenth century—from, and including, the work of Mary or Molly Leapor (b. 1722, d. 1746) to that of Ann Yearsley (b. 1752, d. 1806).

It is probably no accident that my 'book-ends' as it were, the two poets who act as temporal poles in this project, are both working-class female poets. Doubly disadvantaged, they were unlikely candidates for publication, and it speaks for some of the best aspects of the eighteenth century that they were able to be published at all. With all their obvious disadvantages, including the sensation-seeking and condescension combined that promoted the work of 'The Bristol Milkwoman', Ann

Voltiare enjoyed holding literary and scientific discussions

Yearsley, or *'Lactilla'*, these particular poets perhaps had some advantages. They had reason not to write an abstract 'Poetry' but to connect their own experiences with the common literary language, even while remodelling that language. We feel the immediacy in lines such as Leapor's

> —but now the dish-kettle began
> The boil and bubble with the foaming bran.
> The greasy apron round her hip she ties
> And to each plate the scalding clout applies.
> ('Crumble Hall')

The comedy is fulfilled not only with an exact observation, but with a respect for the process described. This might be taken to be mere reportage, but the same qualities are found in poets who are imagining new scenes—such as the transformations satirically imagined by Yearsley, in a Pythagorean world where the famous ancients turn up in vulgar urban roles of the present day:

> Fair Julia sees Ovid, but passes him near,
> An old broom o'er her shoulder is thrown:
> ('Addressed to Ignorance, Occasioned by a Gentleman's desiring the Author never to assume a Knowledge of the Ancients')

Objects are treated with clarity, and the senses are explicit. So, too, are the activities not only of daily working life, but of bodily life, the impulses and receptions that make for sense-experience, as well as the realm of movement. The women poets

present us with a clearly sensuous world. The mind cannot divorce itself from the senses. This is a matter somewhat difficult of discussion because of our present disdain for the word 'Sensibility'. And indeed 'Sensibility' will not serve my meaning here. The women poets are participants in that pan-European philosophical movement which both outlined modes of bodily response to external stimuli (discovering 'nerves' in the process), and delineated forms of social relations and psychosocial interaction. As writers such as Barker-Benfield (1992) have shown, the anxiety about the newly 'feminized' and nervous human entity could lead to a desire for greater control. Woman as the excessively sensitive person is *too* responsive—in contrast to the brutishly uncivil who are not sensible or sensitive enough. The novelists argue about these issues with some openness (culminating in *Sense and Sensibility*), but the poets of the eighteenth century—men as well as women—were trying to set up their own terms for discussing human experience and relationships to the world without getting altogether caught up in what some philosophers wanted to make of 'Sensibility'.

The eighteenth century's confident interest in sense impressions, fortified by the first part of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, was balanced by some unease. After all, Locke's concluding position is surprisingly close to that of Descartes. We have no *contact* with the real world out there, we are merely recipients of sense *impressions* always mediated by our own sensorium. The world is all in our minds. We look at snow, we think, but there's a sense in which we do not see it—we only 'see' the impression in our mental equipment. This sense of being locked into a cell of the self can be particularly disturbing. English poets of the eighteenth century thus went out of their way to counteract such a potential isolation in writing a poetry that is far more concrete and sensuous, less abstract, than that of either their predecessors (the Metaphysical and Baroque writers) or their successors (the Romantics). It is arguable—I would certainly argue it—that eighteenth-century poetry is the most directly sensuous poetry England has ever had. The reference to the impact of self and object, the re-creation of the fascinating and insistent world of particulars, can be found in the poetry of Swift of course, and over and over again, as in 'A Description of the Morning':

> Now *Moll* had whirl'd her Mop with dext'rous Airs,
> Prepar'd to Scrub the Entry and the Stairs.
> The Youth with Broomy Stumps began to trace
> The Kennel-Edge, where Wheels had worn the Place.
> The Smallcoal-Man was heard with Cadence deep,
> Till drown'd in Shriller Notes of *Chimney-Sweep.*

We are made to observe what the refined reader usually overlooks, or finds boring. We are participants momentarily in the activity of the working people, and close enough to observe the 'Broomy Stumps' and the traces of wheels.

I think Pope was partly inspired by Swift to amplify the observation of common things in his own poetry; although, unlike Swift, Pope is a poet with pretensions to the 'grand style', he does keep a close watch on diurnal realities. He too can cause the snort of disgust at confronting us with the evocation of the sensation of disgust:

> To where Fleet-ditch with disemboguing streams
> Rolls the large tribute of dead dogs to Thames
> (*Dunciad*)

Pope is more hierarchical than Swift in his fine evocations of sensory experiences. Swift, arguably the strongest satirist, strikes one is curiously more broad-minded, that is, less inclined towards hierarchical arrangements of experience. I have written elsewhere of Swift's relation to the women poets, but I have been freshly struck by it, when, for instance, coming upon an open imitation of Swift's 'Morning' in Mary Robinson's 'London's Summer Morning' (written *c.* 1794, published 1804, according to Lonsdale):

> Who has not waked to list the busy sounds
> Of summer's morning, in the sultry smoke
> Of noisy London? On the pavement hot
> The sooty chimney-boy, with dingy face
> And tattered covering, shrilly bawls his trade,
> Rousing the sleepy housemaid. At the door
> The milk-pail rattles, and the tinkling bell
> Proclaims the dustman's office; while the street
> Is lost in clouds impervious. Now begins
> The din of hackney-coaches, waggons, carts;
> While tinmen's shops, and noisy trunk-makers,
> Knife-grinders, coopers, squeaking cork-cutters,
> Fruit-barrows, and the hunger-giving cries
> Of vegetable-vendors, fill the air.
> . . . At the private door
> The ruddy housemaid twirls the busy mop,
> Annoying the smart 'prentice, or neat girl,
> Tripping with band-box lightly. Now the sun
> Darts burning splendour on the glittering pane,
> Save where the canvas awning throws a shade
> On the gay merchandise. Now, spruce and trim,
> In shops (where beauty smiles with industry)
> Sits the smart damsel; while the passenger
> Peeps through the window, watching every charm.
> Now pastry dainties catch the eye minute
> Of humming insects, while the limy snare
> Waits to enthrall them. . .

Pope's excuse for regarding low-life objects and describing—or evoking—sense reactions to them is largely satiric. This is by no means always the case with Swift, and seldom truly the case with women poets. Mary Robinson ('Perdita'), once mistress of the prince Regent, gives as it were a townscape secularized, a new *paysage non moralisé*. We feel the fullness of life, the cacophony, without being called on to register some hierarchical forms of disapproval or desire to reorder. There is such a superabundance of detail that we may miss the subtle connection between 'merchandise' and the 'smart damsel', the milliner or seamstress seated in the shop window, and between 'damsel' and 'pastry dainties'. Shopowners (including female milliners) did put the prettiest girls to work in the window with the design of attracting customers, especially males—a matter gone into in Frances Burney's *The Wanderer*. The displayed pastries are displayed for appetite, like the girls. But the sly observation is not followed into overt moralizing.

Acknowledged throughout Robinson's poem is the multiple connectedness, the omnipresence of consumerism. The speaker poet, in the *persona* of the woman who awakens to the growing noise and activity of the day, is not given a position of peculiar privilege from which to look down and moralize. For one thing, she is part of the consuming need and the need to consume. This is what differentiates Robinson's narrator—persona from Swift's in his 'Morning'. Swift's speaker just sees all these phenomena. Robinson draws us in further into reaction and response. The mop is not only *twirled*, again, its whirling drops affect others unpleasantly. One of the most startling touches is her invented compound adjective 'hunger-giving'. Other writers (not to mention graphic artists and musicians) had illustrated the 'Cries of London', a minor motif in entertainment since at least the time of Purcell.

But the customary description invites us to look on in amusement, to hear with detachment, the criers and their cries. Robinson's participle adjective participates in an immediate response which is not immune to the activity of the advertisement. 'The hunger-giving cries/Of vegetable vendors'—the phrase acknowledges that hunger is roused, and is there to be roused, in all—including the speaker herself. We are not free to withdraw from the cycle of consuming. That gut reaction, that urgent sensory need, linked with the pleasure of taste, connects us with the flies, who are also gazers with the 'eye minute' upon the pastry 'dainties'—which become all the stickier in their immediate connection with the flypaper, the 'limy snare' waiting to *enthrall* the little bugs. 'Enthrall' is usually a grand word, a romantic and literary word—this use returns it to its origins in ideas of enslavement, entrapment, imprisonment and power.

Robinson shows here an acute awareness of the effects and nature of heat; a surrounding atmosphere of urban warmth lessens our dependence on vision as primary sense. The female poets of the eighteenth century customarily show an awareness of graduations of heat and of cold—and of what might be called the pressure of environmental temperature or atmosphere. So it is with Mary Leapor as 'Mira', describing her birthday under the sign of Pisces:

> 'Twas when the flocks on slabby hillocks lie,
> And the cold Fishes rule the wat'ry sky:
> ('An Epistle to a Lady')

The 'slabby hillocks' are cool, damp and muddy—a sense of discomfort is, as it were, transferred to, and also acknowledged in, the wordless sheep, the flocks who are waiting out the less than pleasing late winter—early spring of an ungracious countryside. Sky and earth, unhierarchically, are alike damp and cool. Such lines draw on a sense of feeling not usually on our minds when we talk about the 'sense of touch'—a phrase that serves us well when, for instance, dealing with a poet's description of the down of a peach. We do not have only the particular pointed sensation of voluntary touch where we poke or stroke another object, but general senses of 'touch', as with our skin's relation to the circumambient atmosphere. Our sensual circumstances are known to be shared with other creatures—like the flocks in Leapor's birthday description, or the cow and the flocks in Yearsley's invocation of harsh winter:

> The nymph, indifferent, mourns the freezing sky;
> Alike insensible to soft desire,
> She asks no warmth but from the kitchen fire.
> Love seeks a milder zone; half sunk in snow,
> LACTILLA, shivering, tends her fav'rite cow;
> The bleating flocks now ask the bounteous hand,
> And crystal streams in frozen fetters stand.
> ('Clifton Hill')

The cold can quell sexual desire in woman—an astonishing observation in Yearsley's piece, as with it comes the assumption that a woman *should* naturally have a libido, and that this is a temporary *dis*-location of sexual energy, transferred to the cause of survival. Yet love of a kind does survive,

because shivering Lactilla tends her 'fav'rite cow', and the cow remains a recipient of particular and individual favour even in the numbing cold. Human agency is of importance in helping the domestic animals in a crisis of sensation that still asks for activity—the 'bounteous hand' must move towards the 'bleating flocks' even while the streams are fettered and stand still, truly transformed into the conventional crystal. Sky, earth, and water share the cold, and there is no release into hierarchy of elements. The hierarchy subtly dismissed in an equation of sky and earth is also overthrown in the repeated emphasis in Yearsley's poem on the fellow-suffering of animals, and their importance. Here I think I have a new motif to discuss with you—and this is something that I have only just discovered myself in women's poetry of the eighteenth century.

I had intended to deal at large with sensuousness in general, and in particular with instances of sensuous evocation in women's poetry. I would have rambled through the jumble of Crumble Hall with Mary Leapor, alluded to champagne and chicken in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. I should have pointed to instances of the ability to use an unusual image, as Anna Seward does with her green star in 'The Anniversary':

> O! hast thou seen the star of eve on high,
> Through the soft dusk of summer's balmy sky
> Shed its green light, and in the glassy stream
> Eye the mild reflex of its trembling beam?

I would also have dwelt on the use of unusual images of taste and smell, and comic pungent images like Anna Seward's description of the Boston Tea Party:

> When Boston, with indignant thought,
> Saw poison in the perfum'd draught,
> And caus'd her troubled bay to be
> But one vast bowl of bitter Tea;
> ('Verses inviting Mrs. C—to Tea on a public Fast-Day, during the American War')

I should have done all this and more. . . But my attention was forcibly caught by something I had not fully seen, and certainly had not explored before, in dealing with women's writing and with eighteenth-century poetry. My topic is largely the relation of human to animal in poetic works by eighteenth-century women. These poets' exploration of sensuousness rests on a rediscovery and a reassertion of human relation to animal, bird, insect. The senses are validated in a new way through what I shall call (for short) the 'Pythagorean theme'. It has many important implications, and an understanding of it will illuminate women's poetry of the eighteenth century and later.

The Pythagorean Theme

In *The Daring Muse* I have already discussed Ann Yearsley's poem 'Addressed to Ignorance', which uses the conceit of Pythagorean metampsychosis to invent a comic world where ancient characters of history and legend turn up in vulgar and prosaic modern guises. The significance of this comic reversal lies in its rebuke to the 'Gentleman' who told Yearsley that as a poor woman she had no right 'to assume a knowledge of the Ancients'. Yearsley rebukes him, borrowing a set of ideas from the 'ancients': she shows that she can envisage a cosmos without stable hierarchies, in which the class differences (along with national and other differences) that seem so solid to 'the Gentleman' don't count for much:

> Here's Trojan, Athenian, Greek, Frenchman and I,
> Heav'n knows what I was long ago:
> No matter, thus shielded, this age I defy,
> And the next cannot hurt me, I know.

As I noted then, 'Her poem is a declaration of human equality.' What I did not realize then is the fact that there is a tradition (if we can call it by so grand a word), a history, of women's use of the Pythagorean idea that Yearsley uses in 'To Ignorance' to deal with human equality. But the women poets more often evoke the Pythagorean idea in relating human life to animal life. Yearsley herself does this in 'Clifton Hill'. She describes, as we have noted above, the effects of extreme cold on the nymph, Lactilla, the cow, the flocks. She goes from human to animal to birds in noting reactions to the cold, and kinship among those who suffer from it. But her ensuing description of the robin moves into the description of the murderous male with the gun, whose response to other creatures is a delight in the powers of destruction:

> The beauteous red-breast, tender in her frame
> Whose murder marks the fool with treble shame,
> Near the low cottage door, in pensive mood,
> Complains and mourns her brothers of the wood
> Her song oft waked the soul to tender joys,
> All but his restless soul whose gun destroys;

Yearsley imagines a fitting vengeance:

> For this, rough down, long pains on thee shall wait,
> And freezing want avenge their hapless fate;
> For these fell murders mayst thou change thy kind,
> In outward form as savage as in mind;
> Go be a bear of Pythagorean name,
> From man distinguished by thy hideous frame.
> ('Clifton Hill (Written in January 1785)')

An earlier female poet had used the Pythagorean idea. Anna Seward treats the motif several times, and it may be that Yearsley had come upon some of the poems that circulated in manuscript long before Seward's works were posthumously published, edited (at her request) by Walter Scott.

Like the other female poets in my discussion, Seward counts herself a Christian, but a Christian often vexed at what man made pronouncements and social structures and controls have made of religion. Most of these writers would have warmly assented to Anna Laetitia Barbauld's statement in her poem 'To the Poor', which declares that the rich and powerful not only make the present life of the poor painfully wretched, but seek to extend their own controlling image to God and the hereafter. The threats that the rich extend to the poor in the name of religion are something the poor have the God-given right to dismiss:

> Safe in the bosom of that love repose
> By whom the sun gives light, the ocean flows,
> Prepare to meet a father undismayed,
> Nor fear the God whom priests and kings have
> made.
> ('To the Poor')

Man-made laws and concepts not only set up great barriers between human beings, but also create an impassable divide between the human and the other living creatures of this earth—a divide that is used to justify those other intra-human divisions, in terms like 'brutish', and so on. To turn the human into animal, or relate a man strongly to animal or insect life, is a terrific insult, as it is repeatedly in Pope's *Dunciad*:

> Maggots half-form'd in rhyme exactly meet
> And learn to crawl upon poetic feet.
>
> How here he sipp'd, how there he plunder'd snug
> And suck'd all o'er, like an industrious Bug.
>
> As when a dab-chick waddles thro' the copse
> On feet and wings, and flies, and wades, and hops;
> So lab'ring on . . .
> . . . Bernard rows his state.

To connect man and animal (or bird or insect) is to breed *monsters*, as bad poets do. Fear of the monstrous curdles much Augustan thought and literature. The reign of Reason seemed to depend on getting rid of 'monsters' of all kinds, but the notion was there at the philosophical centre. Locke in the *Essay* admits that Nature is not interested in clear lines between species, which are, like the 'species' themselves, an invention of the human mind. This subversion of Aristotle is a scandal that the eighteenth century partly succeeds in hushing up, but fear of the *monstrous* may be found everywhere, including a sense of horror at the approach of categories of species to each other.

I would argue that the women writers do not share this fear or horror, and that they approach the matter differently. Theologically, they are antignostic in defence of creation and of matter. They are not reluctant to explore the activities of sensing and the sensed world as much more immediate (both as activity and object) than Locke allows. Locke emphasizes '*Human* Understand ing': the women want to see what we have in common with other life in a created world. There is a vindication of the senses and of that which actively senses. The Pythagorean theme, along with the strong interest in animals, birds and insects generally found in women's poetry, especially in this period, permits investigations and statements counter to a dangerously prevalent reduction of everything to the life of Mind—the proud Mind. The Pythagorean idea offers a philosophical theme opposed to much contemporary philosophy, but its stance is officially seen as so unquestionably out of the question as to arouse no very indignant reaction. The 'Pythagoreanism' we encounter in the women's writing is not, indeed, the classic Pythagorean ladder of progress towards purification. The women do not in the least want to emphasize a teleological objection of purity, freedom from the senses. Rather, they are fascinated by the imaginative idea that a conscious entity might have been a bird in the last incarnation and may be a beast in the next. A relatively early poem by Anna Seward, 'Ode on the Pythagorean System', picks up the theme in grand style, if a trifle gingerly. Seward is aware that the Pythagorean system of reincarnation conflicts with the Christian scheme, but she argues that there is a 'sacred sense' in the Pythagorean system, and a certain justice to the 'Spirit warm' has its appeal. Let persons express their moral nature by taking animal form in a new birth:

> Then while revenge meets his congenial lot,
> And howls the tiger of the desert plain;
> While sensual Love burns in the odious Goat,
> And in the Hog the Glutton feasts again;

For her part, Seward says, choosing the vegetable role, she would like to come back as a myrtle tended by her friend Laura. Except for its ending, this 'Ode' is conventional in its treatment of Pythagoreanism—faulty human beings become imprisoned in *bestial* expressive forms as punishment. But Seward won't leave it at that. She has a more unorthodox poem later which wrestles with

the Biblical statement regarding 'The beasts that perish'; Seward attributes complacent judgement to 'proud Man . . . as he were doom'd alone/To meet, for guiltless pains, supreme reward'. If, she argues, animals are not to have a life after death, that would meet the terms of Divine Justice *only* if their lives on earth had been happy, and they had been allowed to fulfil their animal nature while alive. But this often does not happen, because of man's cruelty:

> Alas! the dumb defenceless numbers, found
> The wretched subjects of a tyrant's sway,
> Who hourly feel his unresisted wound,
> And hungry pine through many a weary day;
>
> Or those, of lot more *barbarously* severe,
> Who strain their weak, lame limbs beneath the load
> Their fainting strength is basely doom'd to bear,
> While smites the lash, the steely torments goad;

Here we feel the eighteenth-century's sensory identification with pain, as the speaker moves towards close identification with a suffering sentient creature.

> Has GOD decreed this helpless, suffering train
> Shall groaning yield the vital breath he gave,
> Unrecompensed for years of want, and pain,
> And close on them the portals of the grave?
> ('On the Future Existence of Brutes',)

No, Seward argues, God will surely do better than that. There must be some 'Expiatory Plan', or God is not just. The tenor of this poem is almost entirely to close the gap between Human and Brute. The Dog, she says, illustrates the animal power of emotional refinement, intelligence, susceptibility to education, and moral virtue. Why imagine that the Dog has no afterlife?

> Ah, wretch ingrate, to liberal hope unknown!
> Does pride encrust thee with so dark a leaven,
> To deem this spirit, purer than thine own,
> Sinks, while thou soarest to the light of Heaven!

Thinking about the fate of animals after death occupies a fair amount of Seward's time. In 'An Old Cat's Dying Soliloquy' she combines the comic with her questioning of human notions of the afterlife. The old cat knows she is near her end:

> Fate of eight lives the forfeit gasp obtains,
> And e'en the ninth creeps languid through my veins.

But the cat is piously sure she has much to which to look forward:

> Much sure of good the future has in store,
> When on my master's hearth I bask no more,
> In those blest climes, where fishes oft forsake
> The winding and the glassy lake;
> There, as our silent-footed race behold
> The crimson spots and fins of lucid gold,
> Venturing without the shielding waves to play,
> They gasp on shelving banks, our easy prey;
> While birds unwinged hop careless o'er the ground,
> And the plump mouse incessant trots around,
> Near wells of cream that mortals never skim,
> Warm marum creeping round their shallow brim;
> Where green valerian tufts, luxuriant spread,
> Cleanse the sleek hide and form the fragrant bed.
> ('An Old Cat's Dying Soliloquy')

Now, it was certainly a truism that women poets think about pet birds and animals. Satire on women's involvement with their pets is fairly easy to find in this period. Richardson had a crack at women poets in his *Sir Charles Grandison*. Early in her sojourn in London, the heroine Harriet Byron meets a young lady, Miss Darlington, with 'a pretty taste in poetry', who is prevailed upon to show three of her performances.

> The third was on the death of a favourite Linet [*sic*]; a little too pathetic for the occasion; since were Miss Darlington to have lost her best and dearest friend, I imagine that she had in this piece, which is pretty long, exhausted the subject; and must borrow from it some of the images which she introduces to heighten her distress from the loss of the little songster.

Richardson indicates that women in general waste their emotion upon their pets, and that women poets may be expected to waste adjectives and images upon such a trite subject as well. As women have so little to occupy their minds, they will treat the mere death of a pet linnet as a major event. Richardson restores the hierarchies that female poets tend to rumple. Human beings must be kept distinct from birds. One should be able to distinguish with absolute clarity the distress caused by the death of a human friend from the feeling of loss relating to a mere animal.

The tendency of women to identify self and emotion with animal or bird is clearly marked, certainly from the time of Ann Finch. Perhaps partly inspired by her married surname, Finch identifies herself with a bird, most powerfully in one of her best poems 'The Bird in the Arras', where the bird exhibits panic, bewilderment, wild desire. In her best-known poem, 'A Nocturnal Reverie', Finch notices the relaxation and freedom of both vegetable and animal life as the sun sets:

> When freshen'd Grass now bears itself upright,
> And makes cool Banks to pleasing Rest invite.

Vision ceases to be so important, and creatures are known and know each other in darkness through various senses:

When the loos'd *Horse*, now as his pasture leads,
Comes slowly grazing through th'adjoining Meads,
Whose stealing Pace, and lengthened Shade we
fear,
Till torn-up Forage in his Teeth we hear;

The horse is identified not by vision (which creates an illusory monster) but by sound. The change in emphasis of sense reliance and sense instruction creates a connection between the human hearer's sense of the horse chomping on grass, and the horse's own touch-and-taste sense of the grass between its teeth. This is a time of pleasure, a sense-holiday from the ruling power of sunlight and the obsession with sight.

Their shortlived Jubilee the Creatures keep,
Which but endures while Tyrant-*Man* do's sleep:
When a sedate Content the Spirit feels
And no fierce Light disturbs, while it reveals

The sunlight of Enlightenment, of reason, is associated with the oppression of man's rule and the social order. While 'Tyrant-*Man*' here *may* be read as the tyrant *human*, the phrase obviously refers to the tyrant *male*. In the night season, in their ramble together, Ann Finch and the Lady Salusbury are at one with the plants and animals. In this highly sensuous poem, sense life comes to full life in the presence of animals who are briefly allowed to have their full sensory life not restricted, censured, surveyed or used. The female companions also have a 'shortliv'd Jubilee' of sense pleasure, and expansion, so that all the senses (touch, smell, hearing) may be used harmoniously, not governed hierarchically by vision nor held in place by convention.

Women have been traditionally held to be the larger partaker in the animal nature. Man is spirit, man is mind. Woman is animal, if a higher animal. Richardson's hero Sir Charles Grandison explains it all, as Enlightenment philosopher. Nature clearly makes a difference in qualities such as courage between male and female in the animal kingdom: 'The surly bull, the meek, the beneficent cow, for one instance?'. And, allowing that human souls may be equal, 'yet the very design of the different machines in which they are inclosed, is to superinduce a temporary difference on their original equality; a difference adapted to the different purposes for which they are designed by Providence in the present transitory state.' Women have to bear children and give suck—so *obviously* that makes them inferior in this life. Such an assumption rests on the assumption that the 'animal' functions, like those of the meek cow, take over the greater portion of a woman's personality and her life. And that further rests on the assumption that the 'animal' functions and attributes can be clearly distinguished from the 'human'. Eighteenth-century women poets, it is clear, look upon animals in a manner very different from the way Richardson and his Sir Charles look upon them. Sir Charles's world is one of clear boundaries, strong divisions, clear designs. There should not be effeminate men and masculine women. The line between man and woman, as between human and animal, must be held. Within Richardson's novels, the female characters do maintain something of the women's dialogue, as their view of animal life differs in part from that of Sir Charles'—Charlotte compares herself and her husband to blackbirds with eggs to hatch. But that sort of play is not appropriate to Sir Charles, who as governing man must hold the line clearly.

It can be seen that the women poets enjoy playing with those boundaries that Sir Charles is at such pains to delineate. They defiantly adopt the sensibility of animals, team up, as it were with animals against 'Tyrant-Man'. Seward's insight into the cruelty to 'the wretched subjects of a tyrant's sway' rests partly on that of Finch before her. She too is willing to assume (for play, for seriousness) the sensations of the animal creature. This might be called 'poetic Pythagoreanism'—the poet assumes the senses of an animal, thus transforming herself into the creature in a temporary transmogrification. The entrance into animal sensation is a kind of licence to give the sensory life its full due; that sensory life often denied in the cultural life of regulations and ideas.

Men are sometimes imagined (as in Yearsley's 'Clifton Hill') as being punished in a 'Pythagorean' manner by being made perforce to enter that animal nature that they have disdained. That would be a punishment because men think it so; they have this hectic urge to insist on their totally mental mode of being, their totally spiritual destiny. But the women poets show themselves as the true Pythagoreans, able to enter into the sensual life of animals—or even plants, as when Seward wishes to be a myrtle; to be a plant loved by a woman would be better than honour done her having her brows bound with myrtle. In 'An Old Cat's Dying Soliloquy' Seward makes us take comic pleasure in imagining the Elysium or Paradise of a cat—sharing sensations with the cat, in an access of new sensuousness. We are free to indulge it because it is partly parodic, but once we do indulge it, we cannot maintain the aloofness of parody. The poem is

'parodic' of human serious descriptions of forms of heaven seriously desired. It is thus an Enlightenment poem in that it implicitly questions the religious conventions, and shows how they are related to cultural expectations. But in this case the cultural difference (between cats and ourselves) is so extreme, and so hitherto unthought-of, that we can enjoy the play upon the idea of heaven without serious religious or moral twinges. What seems most striking to me about the 'Old Cat' poem is its immediacy. The poem obviously and overtly owes something to Gray's *Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes* (published in 1748). It owes *something*—not too much. Gray's poem is a mock-heroic fable. The cat is just an object; we are to laugh at the beast and her fate, even while we may reject the too-placid moral on vanity and avarice. Gray's Selima is almost entirely an object of sight. 'Her coat, that with the tortoise vies / Her ears of jet and emerald eyes' are not her own description of herself. We see the goldfish too:

> Still had she gaz'd; but 'midst the tide
> Two angel forms were seen to glide,
> The genii of the stream:
> Their scaly armour's Tyrian hue
> Thro' richest purple to the view
> Betray'd a golden gleam.

This is *almost* seeing from the cat's-eye view—but not really: 'angel' and 'Genii' carry no allusions to cat vocabulary. And the Popean touches regarding the fishes' colour carry us further into the realm of the literary and away from the cat—if the beginning of this stanza proposes the cat Selima as observer, by the end we have lost her. She remains fenced in by an Aesopic objectivity.

The descriptions of the fish in Seward's poem *do* remind us of Gray and, like Gray, Seward adapts the kind of language used in Pope:

> There, as our silent-footed race behold
> The crimson spots and fins of lucid gold.

But this is not, as it were, the main event. The by now conventionalized fish become much more what a cat would want—as they leave the water voluntarily. And they are overtaken by a host of other similarly amiable and catchable prey—products of a cat's imagination, not fitting any human aesthetic (in marked contrast to the fish):

> While birds unwinged hop careless o'er the ground,
> And the plump mouse incessant trots around.

The wells of cream offer another kind of sensory experience, and the piling up of sensuousness is achieved through the invocation of smell and touch simultaneously (and right after taste) in the 'Warm marum' (marjoram) and green valerian tufts. Yes, a cat's heaven would have cream, herbs and certainly catnip. We do not end the poem with these sensuous images so lovely to the cat. The last note is an elegiac regret at parting. Even in heaven she may miss her home and her human friend and the life she knew:

> O'er marum borders and valerian bed
> Thy Selima shall bend her moping head,
> Sigh that no more she climbs, with grateful glee
> Thy downy sofa and thy cradling knee;

The cat proves capable of loyalty and affection, her virtues thus making her implicitly worthy of cat heaven—or of human heaven too. There is a comic reversal, as Seward's Selima faces death in a style very unlike that of Gray's greedy and accident-prone Selima. Seward's Selima has conscious dignity and religious hope. The greater reversal lies in the cat's regret that her owner cannot be with her. Owners of animals in Christian (and other) cultures often express regret that their pets cannot be with them in an orthodox afterlife—here the tables are turned. And indeed, what would a human do with plump mice, wells of cream, and tufts of catnip? But the poem shows what arrogance we exhibit when we assume that there is a heaven fit for human purposes to which animals are not allowed. The sharing (imaginatively and comically) of the cat's sensations and desires is a liberation into a range of sense experience, and an expression of confidence in the value of what we term the 'animal' nature.

When women poets are being most serious about the importance of the animal nature, they often disguise the seriousness in some form of comedy that can induce us to participate in the Pythagorean festival of throwing off our usual identities and expectations. Anna Laetitia Barbauld's 'The Mouse's Petition' is a poem in the *persona* of the mouse that has been caught in a trap and awaits the experimentation of Dr Priestley. The poem was, naturally enough, taken up as a statement against animal experimentations, and Barbauld, not wishing to appear unscientific, pointed out that 'the poor animal would have suffered more as the victim of domestic economy, than of philosophic curiosity.' In her later explanation Barbauld claimed that all she meant was to express 'the petition of mercy against justice'—but that is *not* what the poem says, for of course from the mouse's point of view what is being done to him is an ex-

treme case of *in*justice—it is arbitrary tyrannical cruelty. The mouse uses contemporary political language to make its point:

Oh¡ hear a pensive prisoner's prayer,
For liberty that sighs;
And never let thine heart be shut
Against the wretch's cries.

For here forlorn and sad I sit,
Within the wiry grate;
And tremble at th' approaching morn,
Which brings impending fate.

If e'er thy breast with freedom glow'd,
And spurn'd a tyrant's chain,
Let not thy strong oppressive force
A free-born mouse detain.
('The Mouse's Petition')

From the language of political rights, the mouse turns to the rights of nature, which are physical rights. The great natural law is the right to exist.

The well taught philosophic mind
To all compassion gives;
Casts round the world an equal eye,
And feels for all that lives.

Not only should there be compassion, but empathy. To see the world with an *equal* eye is to feel the claims of all life. From this philosophical point there is but a short step to the Pythagorean theme, and the mouse takes it:

If mind, as ancient sages taught,
A never dying flame,
Still shifts through matter's varying forms,
In every form the same,

Beware, lest in the worm you crush
A brother's soul you find;
And tremble lest thy luckless hand
Dislodge a kindred mind.

This is a moral-philosophical and even religious point of view remote from Christianity but closely resembling Jainism, and certain branches of Buddhism. It may well be that our poets were affected, however indirectly, by the new contact with India brought about by colonial expansion in the eighteenth century. But the mouse also entertains the Epicurean idea that there is no life after death—that the bodily life of this existence is our all in all:

Or, if this transient gleam of day
Be *all* of life we share,
Let pity plead within thy breast
That little *all* to spare.

Ostensibly the mouse is talking *only* of the annihilation in death of mere animals. But by this point there is no felt difference between 'them' and 'us'—all is subsumed as 'we', so the possibility of 'one transient gleam of day' allotted to *all*, man and animal, as the only portion of their existence, is truly included. It scarcely matters, however, which group will perish eternally and which only temporarily—the urgency is so pressing, the life of here and now so immediate. It is hard not to see within this petition a plea for all sense-life, and for the powers of sensing as of the utmost importance, worthy of religious respect. The animal life of 'mere' sensuousness, of sense perception, is the real life. That modern point of view is of course going to clash with Priestley's modern point of view that regards animals as implements in technological expansion. Priestley contradicts nature in deliberately and slowly taking from nature's commoners the vital air. Breathing itself becomes one of the first great primary sensations and sense-pleasures as soon as its cutting-off is threatened.

"When women poets are being most serious about the importance of the animal nature, they often disguise the seriousness in some form of comedy . . ."

Barbauld's very popular poem is highly efficacious as verse—if not in stopping experimentation on animals. It is perhaps, however, slightly marred by a hint of self-conscious cuteness. Barbauld's best poem on animal life and animal claims is 'The Caterpillar'. The speaker is the human woman who admits without apology that she has been rasing hundreds of cocoons and caterpillars from the orchard tree. But then she looks at one caterpillar on her finger, and cannot kill it:

No, helpless thing, I cannot harm thee now;
Depart in peace, thy little life is safe,
For I have scanned thy form with curious eye,
Noted the silver line that streaks thy back,
The azure and the orange that divide
Thy velvet sides; thee, houseless wanderer,
My garment has enfolded, and my arm
Felt the light pressure of thy hairy feet;
Thou hast curled round my finger; from its tip
Precipitous descent¡ with stretched out neck,
Bending thy head in airy vacancy,
This way and that, inquiring, thou hast seemed
To ask protection; now, I cannot kill thee.

The caterpillar does not speak in a fabulous manner, but its presence is insisted on. It becomes more real and more active as the speaker progresses. The description of the appearance of the caterpillar is striking in its minute detail. We clarify the silver line, distinguish the azure and the orange.

Such detail combines the scientific interests of the period with its poetic interests. One finds details like this in Thomson's *Seasons*, and Erasmus Darwin's *The Loves of the Plants* (1789) is of course full of such detail. Darwin may himself have been influenced by Seward, the earlier poet; she knows and alludes to him, and his biology. His writing while in progress may have influenced her in turn; presumably his work was an influence on Barbauld's later work. We sometimes forget that the 1790s saw the first shoots of an evolutionary hypothesis which was to be formalized and turn into something else after the work of the later Darwin in the next century. Barbauld's description of how the caterpillar *looks* is still in keeping with the lines of what we may call 'male poetry'. But the continuation in intimate physical connection with the caterpillar strikes me as something that one would find only in female poetry—of any period. A subtle use of the Pythagorean motif whereby man and animal are equalized can be recognized in the equalizing of human and insect. 'My arm/Felt the light pressure of thy hairy feet'—'arm' and 'feet' are both words used of the human body. The woman and the caterpillar begin to share a body, as it were, to trade bodily sensations. The caterpillar is sensing the woman's hand while she senses him. If she is looking at it, so the caterpillar too is looking about. The individual caterpillar becomes a highly sensuous object, not only in its coloration (that kind of sensuous appeal can be captured in glass cases) but in the life that is in it that makes it an agent with impact on the world—the 'light pressure' of its 'hairy feet'. Both alien and homely, the caterpillar has the utmost reality. Its felt immediacy causes the woman to see it in a kind of religious sensation:

> Making me feel and clearly recognize
> Thine individual existence, life,
> And fellowship of sense with all that breathes

To recognize ones own sensuous power, to write sensuously, should entail breaking through to 'the fellowship of sense'.

The pleasure that we might find in this moral is shadowed and complicated by the end of the poem. The woman speaker compares her sparing of the caterpillar in her general 'persecuting zeal' against caterpillars to the act of a soldier who in the midst of war urges on 'the work of death and carnage', but spares one enemy:

> Yet should one
> A single sufferer from the field escaped,
> Panting and pale, and bleeding at his feet,
> Lift his imploring eyes—the hero weeps
> He is grown human, and capricious Pity,
> Which would not stir for thousands, melts for one
> With sympathy spontaneous—This not Virtue
> Yet 'tis the weakness of a virtuous mind.
> ('Caterpillar')

We are here at the end in a very male world of ruthless violence, so consistent that the act of mercy is felt as an anomaly, a whim, a weakness that cannot be described as 'Virtue', but is merely a reflex in favour of individuality. The speaker's own act becomes impossible to categorize. She is not a moral example. There seems no sure way back to 'humanity', save to take the unthinkable road of respecting all life—which might doom her apple tree, but would also put an end to the inhumanity of war. The 'fellowship of sense' opens a way to something more than a sentimental moment. This telling phrase 'fellowship of sense' points towards a feeling or intuition of what might be called 'one flesh' in a sense different from that of the Bible or the Prayer Book's marriage service. The caterpillar is like the human victim—one flesh with us in the 'fellowship of sense'. We have the frustrating glimpse of alternatives that cannot be clearly set out. Barbauld refuses to sentimentalize herself or her sparing of the creature. The momentary relation between herself and that creature, however, is a moment of sensory pleasure, and the living with the caterpillar, following its senses too, offers a route of escape from limitation.

What I have called the 'Pythagorean theme' in eighteenth-century poetry is a trope (or set of tropes) emphasizing the value of the animal existence, the body's own capacities and energies, the holy vitality of the senses. Eighteenth-century women poets keep trying to find ways to express the respect that should be given to the animal and sensory nature. Like Ann Finch in her 'Nocturnal Reverie', they provide moments of escape from a world where everything is known, the hierarchies are clearly measured, and where the senses (like woman herself) occupy a low place, along with mere 'brutishness'. When I find these eighteenth-century women poets dealing with the relation to animals, they are always trying to express some way of acknowledging equality, and relationship. The 'Pythagorean' poems (and now I know my

word has become a kind of shortland) question assumptions about spiritual and moral life, and try to point to other responsibilities. In doing this, the poets exhibit great versatility, and powers not only of sensory description but also of conceptual re-positioning. Some male poets heard them, as well as the other women poets who followed them; I see the influence of these writers on Blake, for example, and certainly on Cowper, who perhaps took aboard more than any other male poetic writer what the women were saying. Yet in Cowper there is, it seems to me, always still that distance between animal and man that is a distance between subject and object—when he describes his hares, for instance. The women poets seem to be bent on breaking down that barrier between subject and object, between 'Man' and animal which is a barrier parallel to the Lockean barrier betwixt mind and world.

The Fairy Way of Writing

There is another trope or device that I would wish to emphasize, partly because it provides a contrast to the Pythagorean motif, a contrast and complement within the women's poetry. Like writing about animals and birds, this subject lends itself to ridicule and dismissal. Women poets often write about elves and fairies. Some of them got quite good at it. Percy told Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi that in her (unacted) verse drama *The Two Fountains* she had written better about fairies than anyone since Shakespeare. This was not a dubious distinction in Percy's eyes, though it might be to others. Women repeatedly chose to deal with elves and fairies partly because, like the animals, these (imaginary) beings offer a reflecting screen where sensation and reflection can be played with, away from the world of man-made regulations and cultural pressures. Moreover, fairies have the distinct advantage over animals—as over humans—that they do not know death. Even more remarkable, they do not know *pain;* emotional suffering is not part of their scheme of life.

Fairies do not have to be moral—a great convenience, and an enviable one to women, who are always being told they must be moral, chaste and very careful, and should always put other people first. Fairies do none of these things. Frances Greville puts the case most clearly in her 'Prayer for Indifference' of 1759. She asks Oberon to find her a magic balm that will render her unloving and uncaring. The poem is really about the emotional torment of a wife who is not loved by her husband. The fairy power would remove from her the acuteness of emotion which is like veritable sensation. As with physical sensation, pain is stronger than pleasure:

> Far as distress the soul can wound,
> 'Tis pain in each degree;
> Bliss goes but to a certain bound,
> Beyond is agony.

There is a certain affinity with Emily Brontë's Gondal poetry in this style and this tone—one could guess that Brontë knew Greville's often-anthologized poem. Should Oberon grant the boon, she will be saved from moral sensations of empathy, saved from the responsibilities of pity as well as from her own sorrow: 'The heart, that throbbed at others' woe / Shall then scarce feel its own.' If Oberon will grant this, she in turn will wish him 'never-fading bliss':

> So may the glow-worm's glimmering light
> Thy tiny footsteps lead,
> To some new region of delight
> Unknown to mortal tread;
> ('A Prayer for Indifference')

The elf going blithely off to the new region of delight is closely associated with the speaker who would also be gaining a new 'region of delight' unknown to other mortals. Oberon's life is a life of sensations rather than of thoughts. Sensations, unencumbered by sorrow, guilt, or depression, become something most desirable. Such are the sense impressions that the poem ends with, having begun with the turmoil of inner emotional feeling and heart-sadness:

> And be thy acorn goblets filled
> With heaven's ambrosial dew,
> From sweetest, freshest flowers distilled
> That shed fresh sweets for you

Taste, physical taste, takes over from emotional-feeling—again, an overturning of the hierarchical values that say emotional feeling is much more important than physical taste.

When they write about fairies (and elves and nymphs), eighteenth-century women poets gain a release from moral pressure and cultural direction. They can imagine a life where sensation is honoured—and, as not the case with animals, honoured without pain. A number of writers wanted to take a moral holiday with the fairies, who can rejoice in pure sensation. So Anna Seward does, in her 'Song of the Fairies to the Sea-nymphs':

> Hasten, from your coral caves,
> Every nymph that sportive laves,
> In the green sea's oozy wells,
> And gilds the fins, and spots the shells!
> Hasten, and our morrice join,
> Ere the gaudy morning shine!

Surely this is imitated by Ann Radcliffe, in her heroine Emily's poem 'The Sea-nymph' in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), which might be called 'The Sea-nymph's Reply to Seward's Fairies'. Radcliffe's sea-nymph has the advantage over the fairies in being able to hide deep within the cool depths of the sea: 'Down, down a thousand fathom deep, / Among the sounding seas I go'. Sea-nymphs do not, like Ann Finch, need night to escape the heating sun: 'In cool arcades and glassy halls / We pass the sultry hours of noon,/ Beyond wherever sun-beam falls'. The sea-nymphs is not without moral responsibility—she tries to save ships, and to cheer ship wrecked mariners with song. But 'Emily's' poem (which has its disturbing elements, and even undersea acknowledges authority and control emanating from Neptune) ends in a hope of perpetual pleasure:

> Whoe'er ye are that love my lay,
> Come, when red sun-set tints the wave,
> To the still sands, where fairies play:
> There, in cool seas, I love to lave.

The harmony between land and sea, imaged in the dancing of sea-nymphs and land fairies, can take place only at night-time. Both poems, but especially Seward's, fall into the category of Finch's 'Nocturnal Reverie' in imagining an escape from daylight, a refuge from the hot glare of reason and certainty. The Enlightenment sun was certainly felt to have its negative side. Seward's fairies invite the sea-nymphs to join in the antique dance, the 'morrice' before 'gaudy morning'. The fairies and nymphs are somewhat timid creatures, it strikes us—they cannot be imagined as taking control, only as expressing elusiveness. They don't get pinned down—although it is hard to deal with fairy beings extensively without imagining their falling into pain and imprisonment too, as is the case with Mrs Piozzi's *Two Fountains*. At best, the idea of 'fairies' and other little supernatural beings like them permits the imagining of a fully pleasurable relation with nature. As the fairies are not encumbered with souls and responsibilities, they can love the natural world wholeheartedly and even take a share in its creation. Imagining such a love gives an imaginative release which yet is always known to be only evanescent, merely 'fancy'.

Emily, the author of the sea-nymph poem within Radcliffe's novel, is inspired by Renaissance public cultural images when she sees a water-pageant in Venice:

> Neptune, with Venice personified as his queen, came on the undulating waves, surrounded by tritons and sea-nymphs. The fantastic splendour of this spectacle, together with the grandeur of the surrounding palaces, appeared like the vision of a poet suddenly embodied, and the fanciful images, which it awakened in Emily's mind, lingered there... She indulged herself in imagining what might be the manners and delights of a sea-nymph, till she almost wished to throw off the habits of mortality, and plunge into the green wave to participate them.

Venice offers images of sensuous pleasure and escape, and the possibility that Venice itself momentarily represents of the 'embodiment' of poetry stimulates Emily to search for more freedom of manners and sensation. Such needs for freedom of manners and sensations of course have to be encoded; the very needs themselves are like the sea-nymphs, kept below, in the depths. Emily knows enough to categorize her reveries in a knowingly negative way: 'she could not forbear smiling at the fancies she had been indulging'. But she goes ahead and embodies her 'fanciful ideas' in her poem.

Customarily, in 'fairy' poems the relation to the fairy world is thought of in terms of relation to water and air—those two elusive elements. The relation to the animal world is harder, darker, more land-based. Accounts of this relation bulge with substance, abound in impacts and disconcerting consumptions and destructions. That is the truer world, and of course the harder to deal with. Much had been done to separate animal from human. Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in its latter parts, however, admits the great difficulty of setting up boundaries—Locke even admits that Nature is not interested. But few followers of Lockean politics and epistemology wanted to grapple with that. The women were living in a culture which asserted that their own 'lower' status was clearly known and naturally definable, just as was the arrangement of the species below them. In order to liberate the sensuousness in their own writing, they found ways to challenge the arrangements regarding species—including imagining the sensuous life in 'species' that didn't exist, or the harder task of imagining what it feels like to respect the sensuous life of other beings who really do indubitably share our planet, if often only at our will and sovereign pleasure. The sensuousness of the women's poetry seems all the more remarkable if one realizes how many cultural dictates militated against their taking note of their own sensations, and how surprising it is that (on the whole) they avoid that standby of Augustan appeal to the senses, the evocation of disgust. Women poets obviously suspect disgust as having ideological im-

plications. Disgust belongs to the power of the categorizers, who know what is good and what is bad. Disgust is the reaction of the gazers who look at the female poet in Leapor's Mira's picture. Disgust won't do. It turns off the senses that need to be turned on.

Source: Margaret Anne Doody, "Sensuousness in the Poetry of Eighteeth-Century Women Poets," in *Women's Poetry in the Enlightenment: The Making of a Canon, 1730–1820*, edited by Isobel Armstrong and Virginia Blain, Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1999, pp. 3–31.

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This collection of essays sheds light on the role of women during the Enlightenment. The essays explore the important contributions made by women in politics, society, culture, and science.

Gothic Literature

Movement Origin

c. 1764

Gothic literature, a movement that focused on ruin, decay, death, terror, and chaos, and privileged irrationality and passion over rationality and reason, grew in response to the historical, sociological, psychological, and political contexts of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Although Horace Walpole is credited with producing the first Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto*, in 1764, his work was built on a foundation of several elements. First, Walpole tapped a growing fascination with all things medieval; and medieval romance provided a generic framework for his novel. In addition, Edmund Burke's 1757 treatise, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, offered a philosophical foundation. Finally, the Graveyard School of poetry, so called because of the attention poets gave to ruins, graveyards, death, and human mortality, flourished in the mid-eighteenth century and provided a thematic and literary context for the Gothic.

Walpole's novel was wildly popular, and his novel introduced most of the stock conventions of the genre: an intricate plot; stock characters; subterranean labyrinths; ruined castles; and supernatural occurrences. *The Castle of Otranto* was soon followed by William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786); Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797); Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796); Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1797); Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818); and Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820).

While it may be comparatively easy to date the beginning of the Gothic movement, it is much harder to identify its close, if indeed the movement did come to a close at all. There are those such as David Punter in *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* and Fred Botting in *Gothic* who follow the transitions and transformations of the Gothic through the twentieth century. Certainly, any close examination of the works of Edgar Allan Poe, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, or Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in the nineteenth century demonstrates both the transformation and the influence of the Gothic. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the ongoing fascination with horror, terror, the supernatural, vampires, werewolves, and other things that go bump in the night evidences the power the Gothic continues to exert.

In its attention to the dark side of human nature and the chaos of irrationality, the Gothic provides for contemporary readers some insight into the social and intellectual climate of the time in which the literature was produced. A time of revolution and reason, madness and sanity, the 1750s through the 1850s provided the stuff that both dreams and nightmares were made of.

Representative Authors

William Beckford (1760–1844)

William Beckford, known as both the richest and most eccentric man of his time, was born September 29, 1760, in London, England. By all accounts, Beckford was brilliant, musically gifted, and highly artistic. He was also scandalous and hedonistic. He had no desire to follow in his father's political or business footprints, much to his father's dismay. Rather, young Beckford preferred to travel, write, spend money, and collect art. Because of improper relationships with his cousin's wife, Louisa, and a young man named William "Kitty" Courtenay, Beckford was sent by his mother to the Continent to give the scandal time to die down. Indeed, young Beckford's life followed this pattern repeatedly. He would remain in England until the scandals mounted and then would retreat to the Continent for a cooling-off period. He married in 1783 in a movement to save whatever was left of his reputation; however, his wife died in childbirth in 1785. During this time, Beckford built and rebuilt Fonthill Abbey, considered either the most amazing building or the greatest folly in England at the close of the eighteenth century. Like Horace Walpole, only much, much wealthier, Beckford indulged his passion for the Gothic and for collecting art with his domicile. Another important trait of Beckford's was his fascination with Oriental mysticism. At an early age, he read and reread *The Arabian Nights*. This passion led directly to his composition of *Vathek* in 1786. Beckford died on May 2, 1844, at Lansdowne Crescent, after battling fever and influenza.

Charles Brockden Brown (1771–1810)

The first American novelist, Charles Brockden Brown, was born into a Quaker family in Philadelphia on January 17, 1771. Although he began his education with the intent to become a lawyer, the law soon lost its appeal for him. Apparently, the task of the lawyer to defend a client whether the client was innocent or guilty bothered Brown's sense of morality. This sense of morality often led Brown to take socially radical stances. In this, he seems deeply connected to and influenced by William Godwin. For example, Brown's novel *Alcuin* (1798) explores the ambiguities of marriage and the rights of women. It is for *Wieland* (1798), however, that Brown earned his reputation as a Gothic writer. Considered Brown's best novel, *Wieland* explores the roles of religion and rationality. Clearly, Brown's insistence on a moral stance separates him from some of the earlier Gothic writers such as Beckford and Lewis. Nevertheless, Brown's intense fascination with the inner workings of a character's mind deeply influenced later writers such as Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Brown died in Philadelphia on February 19, 1810, from what was believed to be tuberculosis.

Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775–1818)

Born in London on July 9, 1775, M. G. Lewis attended school in Westminster and Oxford. He traveled to Germany in 1792, where he learned to speak German. While there, he became well-acquainted with German Gothic fiction. He stated to his mother that the reading of Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* inspired him to write his most famous work, *The Monk*, published in 1796. Tradition has it that he completed the work in ten weeks and that it instantly made him a literary star at the age of twenty. Indeed, for the rest of his life, Lewis was referred to by his contemporaries as Monk Lewis. Lewis introduced graphic horror into the Gothic genre, describing in great detail physical

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

torture and putrefaction, as well as steamy sexual encounters. Whereas Radcliffe relied on suspense, or the fear of violence, to motivate her readers, Lewis abandons the fear of violence for the violence itself. Unlike Radcliffe, Lewis used supernatural devices without feeling compelled to offer rational explanations for uncanny events. It was through such techniques that Lewis incorporated German popular literature into the mainstream of English literature. Lewis died of yellow fever on May 16, 1818, on the way home from Jamaica, where he was visiting his inherited holdings on the island.

Charles Robert Maturin (1780–1824)

Charles Robert Maturin was born in Dublin, Ireland, on September 25, 1780. Maturin attended Trinity College, Dublin. His family, noted Huguenot refugees active in the Anglo-Irish community, met with reversal when his father was dismissed from his civil service job. Maturin, who had taken orders in the Anglican church in 1803, attempted to augment his living by writing. Although his drama, *Bertram*, met with success on the London stage, Maturin's financial prospects continued to diminish. Some attribute his growing eccentricities to his attempts to deal with poverty. Certainly, both his nationalism and his criticism of the Anglican church did not endear him to the Anglo-Irish community. The author of several novels, Maturin is best known for *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). There are many historians and literary critics who call this both the last and the greatest of the Gothic novels. His work attracted admiration from such literary figures as Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Makepeace Thackeray. The French writer Honore de Balzac even wrote a sequel to *Melmoth the Wanderer*. Maturin died at the age of forty-four on October 30, 1824, in Dublin.

Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849)

Born on January 19, 1809, in Boston, Massachusetts, Edgar Allan Poe is one of the most well known of all American writers. He was orphaned at three and raised by John Allen, with whom he had an uneasy lifelong relationship. Poe was a victim of depression; he turned to alcohol for relief and eventually became an alcoholic. His marriage to his beloved cousin Virginia Clemm ended with her death in 1847. While many critics suggest that Poe is a post-Gothic writer, he nevertheless uses many of the conventions of the Gothic form in his own work, including medieval settings, supernatural occurrences, terror, and ruins. Certainly, "The Fall of the House of Usher"(1834) has all of the Gothic ingredients. Moreover, Poe is particularly important to the ongoing influence of the Gothic on contemporary literature, moving the genre from an external to an internal focus. Poe died in Baltimore on October 7, 1849, from complications related to a brain lesion.

Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823)

Ann Radcliffe, born Ann Ward in London on July 9, 1764, wrote a series of Gothic romances that set the course of the genre for years to come. Indeed, Radcliffe's name is nearly synonymous with a particular style of the Gothic, one that uses the supernatural but generally provides a rational explanation at the end. Young Ann Ward married William Radcliffe, a well-to-do Oxford graduate, in 1787. They had no children and traveled extensively. Radcliffe's diaries of her travels seem to have provided settings and detail for her novels. Unlike other more notorious Gothic writers, Radcliffe lived in relative obscurity, although she achieved immense success with her novels. In 1794, Radcliffe published what was to become the most popular of her novels, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Like other Gothic novels, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is set in rugged mountains. Radcliffe's novel, *The Italian* (1797), written in response to Lewis's *The Monk*, is generally regarded as the

superior novel, however. Alastair Fowler in *The Oxford Illustrated History of English Literature* credits Radcliffe with establishing "wild landscape as a standard feature of romance; even if, as she wrote, the full terror of landscape was already fading." Fowler further argues that Radcliffe's technique was deliberate: by interspersing elaborate description into her narrative, Radcliffe "keeps delaying the action and distancing it into perspective." Perhaps the most influential of all Gothic writers, Radcliffe retired from writing at the height of her career, unhappy with the uses to which her writings were put. Ann Radcliffe died suddenly in London on February 7, 1823.

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797–1851)

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, born in London on August 30, 1797, to feminist Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, moved in the most radical literary circles of her day. At sixteen, she became the mistress of the poet Percy Shelley and a close personal friend of George Gordon, Lord Byron. The death of her mother when she was ten days old haunted her all her life. Mary Godwin, as the daughter of two intellectuals, was well educated and self-taught, able to hold her own against some of the best minds of her time. In the summer of 1816, Mary Godwin, her lover Percy, and her stepsister Claire traveled to Switzerland, where they took up residence near Lord Byron on Lake Geneva. It was here that the well-known ghost story competition among the young literati produced Mary Shelley's best-known novel, *Frankenstein*. In December of 1816, Percy Shelley and Mary Godwin married. Six years later, Percy Shelley died by drowning in the Ligurian Sea. Mary Shelley died in London from a brain tumor on February 1, 1851. Her work continues to exert influence on contemporary fiction and criticism.

Horace Walpole (1717–1797)

Born September 24, 1717, in London, Horace Walpole was the Earl of Orford. Educated at Eaton and Cambridge, Walpole became friends with Thomas Gray, Richard West, and Thomas Ashton, early members of the so-called Graveyard School of poetry. Gray in particular influenced Walpole in his development of a Gothic imagination. In 1739, Walpole toured the Continent with Gray, crossing the Alps, another important influence on his development as a Gothic writer. In 1747, Walpole purchased Strawberry Hill, a home on the Thames River in Twickenham. For nearly thirty years, Walpole built and rebuilt the house, turning it into a "little Gothic castle," in his own words. Walpole also established a private press at Strawberry Hill, and it was from here that he published his most famous work, *The Castle of Otranto*, in December 1764. Initially, Walpole hid the fact that he was the author of the work, saying that it was a translation by William Marshall of a medieval Italian text. The book met with success, however, and in the second edition, Walpole revealed his own authorship. He told a friend in a letter that the idea for the novel had come to him in a dream. *The Castle of Otranto* is particularly significant because it was the first Gothic novel written. Indeed, the novel provided for later writers nearly every convention found in subsequent Gothic writing. After a long life of letters, politics, and architectural innovations, Walpole died at Berkeley Square, London, on March 2, 1797.

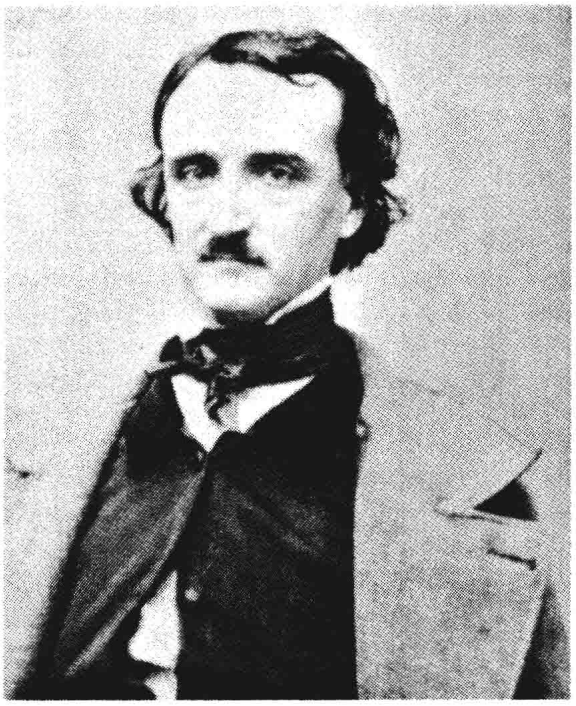
Representative Works

The Castle of Otranto

The Castle of Otranto, by Walpole, published in December 1764, is universally regarded as the first Gothic novel. Set in some undefined medieval past, the novel draws on heroic romance as well as legends and folklore. In this one novel, Walpole established virtually every convention of Gothic literature. These include the Gothic castle, a presence so real as to nearly be a character in and of itself. He also uses gloomy weather, clanking chains, midnight bells, and subterranean passageways. The story is a strange one: Manfred, Prince of Otranto, has one son, Conrad. On the eve of Conrad's marriage to the lovely Isabella, a huge antique helmet falls on Conrad and crushes him. Manfred decides to put away his wife and take Isabella as his wife in order to continue his line. This is not something Isabella wants and thus begins the chase and imprisonment. In due time, readers find that the peasant Isabella encounters in the passageways is really the true heir of Otranto; the death of Conrad was in repayment for the sins of his father. It is impossible to overestimate the influence this novel has had on the course of Gothic writing. Walpole's invention and imagination set the arc of the novel for years to come.

"The Fall of the House of Usher"

Edgar Allan Poe's most famous story was published in 1834, some years after the height of the



Edgar Allan Poe

Gothic movement. Nevertheless, the story is, as are many of Poe's stories, classically Gothic in setting, theme, and mood. Fred Botting, in *Gothic* writes, "The house is both a Gothic manifestation, an architectural ruin set in a desolate and gloomy landscape and a family equally in decay, dying from an unknown and incurable disease." The story also contains the element of claustrophobia in the premature burial of Roderick Usher's sister as well as the scent of incest in the intimately close relationship between Usher and his sister. Unlike earlier Gothic novels, however, the plot of "The Fall of the House of Usher" is not episodic, but rather builds steadily and intensely to its nearly excessive climax, when, just as Roderick Usher announces he has buried his sister alive, she bursts through the door, and the entire house collapses. Poe concentrates on "avoiding all impressions alien to his effect," thereby giving "his tales an extraordinary unity of tone and colour," according to Edith Birkhead in her seminal book, *The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance*. Poe's transformation of the Gothic in this and other works continues to heavily influence contemporary horror writing.

Frankenstein

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was published in 1818. The novel does not fit neatly into any generic designation, but many critics suggest that it is the first modern work of science fiction. However, Shelley's emphasis on isolation, wild landscapes, supernatural occurrences, and the haunting presence of the double places the novel within the context of the Gothic. The narrative of *Frankenstein* is complicated; it opens on a boat sailing in the Arctic, when the crew sees a large figure driving a sledge. The next day, they find another sledge, this one containing Victor Frankenstein, who then recounts to the captain of the vessel the story of his life and the creation of the monster. Shelley also includes some six chapters from the monster's point of view, in which he speaks of his own life. Ironically, it is through the pen of a woman that this novel transforms the Gothic from a feminine form of literature. That is, most earlier Gothic novels featured heroines fleeing for their lives and honor. In Shelley's novel, there are virtually no female characters, and Victor is a cold and hard scientist. Indeed, Shelley brings together both the rationality of science and the irrationality of the will to power. Victor is the model of a man seduced by the power of science, unable to see until it is much too late that there are some things, such as the creation of life, that belong to God alone.

Melmoth the Wanderer

Written by Charles Robert Maturin in 1820, *Melmoth the Wanderer* is often called the last Gothic novel. It is the story of a Melmoth, a Wanderer who has bargained his soul for a longer life. Regretting the choice he has made, he finds that if he can persuade someone to take his bargain on, he will be free. Most notable in *Melmoth the Wanderer* is Maturin's convoluted narrative style. While it hearkens back to the medieval frame story, it also looks forward to post-modern distortions of chronology and location. These dislocations create a supernatural story more closely related to dream sequences than the novels that had come before. Inside the frame is a series of tales that recount Melmoth's visits to the people he wants to take on his bargain. For example, in one story, he appears to a young woman whose lover has gone mad. The Wanderer offers to cure him if she will take on his bargain. She refuses. Indeed, although the Wanderer chooses to appear to people whose lives are utterly miserable, and although the Wanderer promises them that they can have the entire world, none of them will trade their immortal souls for what Melmoth offers. At the conclusion of the novel, Melmoth has been unable to

get out of his bargain and must sacrifice his soul. Edith Birkhead in *The Tale of Terror* suggests that the Wanderer is connected to the legend of The Wandering Jew, Dr. Faustus, and Milton's Lucifer. One might also add Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Ancient Mariner to this list. Certainly, in his deeply divided, alienated state, he resembles the hero/villains of other Gothic novels. It is in the unity of its human misery, however, that the novel makes its mark upon the genre.

The Monk

M. G. Lewis wrote *The Monk* in 1795, when he was just twenty-one years old. It took him all of ten weeks to complete the novel, and it appeared in print in 1796. Lewis wrote the book after reading Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Two different stories comprise *The Monk*. In one plot, two lovers, Agnes and Raymond, are separated by their parents and the Catholic Church. Agnes is pregnant and is sent to a convent where she is chained to a wall and tortured. She gives birth to her baby, who then dies in front of her. In the other plot, the monk Ambrosio breaks his vows of chastity through the machinations of the evil Matilda. Through a series of complicated plot twists, Ambrosio murders one woman and rapes another. He ends up in an Inquisition prison and then sells his soul to Satan. He dies a horrible and prolonged death. Critics of the day found the novel to be both obscene and blasphemous. Nevertheless, the novel was wildly popular. *The Monk* shifts the Gothic novel away from the explained supernatural of Ann Radcliffe; the supernatural in *The Monk* is truly supernatural. In addition, Lewis's prose is both graphic and intense; his descriptions of the putrefaction of the dead baby, for example, are particularly disturbing. Nevertheless, *The Monk* continued to expand the popularity of the Gothic novel in its heyday of the 1790s.

The Mysteries of Udolpho

Radcliffe's Gothic novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* built on the groundwork begun by Walpole. In this novel, Radcliffe draws on many of the conventional tactics of the Gothic novel but emphasizes the use of suspense. She sets *Udolpho* in the medieval past, 1584, and in France and Italy. Her novel is not the bloody, steamy affair of many of her contemporaries, like Lewis; she instead chooses to use long passages describing sublime landscapes. Her novel does, however, include chases through subterranean passages and considerable violence. The narrative structure of the story is complicated: the protagonist, Emily, finds herself in an apparently haunted castle, replete with shadows, footsteps, inexplicable noises and music, and veiled portraits, under the control of her aunt's evil husband. Radcliffe introduces many supernatural elements into the story but includes explanations for all of them by the time the novel concludes. *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, along with Radcliffe's later novel, *The Italian*, set the standard for Gothic literature in the 1790s.

Vathek

First written in French and then later translated into English, *Vathek*, written by William Beckford and published in 1786, is the story of a mad caliph's vices and his descent into hell. Beckford formulated the idea of *Vathek* at a Christmas Eve orgy at Fonthill. Many consider *Vathek* the best Oriental tale in English. Lord Byron, in particular, found Beckford's work to be powerful. Certainly, any reading of *Vathek* will acknowledge Beckford's infatuation with *The Arabian Nights*. Some critics have identifed Vathek's wild life as a reflection of Beckford's own; the author led a life of excess and eccentricity. For all that, *Vathek* moves the Gothic novel out of medieval Europe and into an exotic, Oriental setting. The novel exerted considerable influence on writers such as Hawthorne, Poe, and Stephane Mallarmé. Artists and musicians also engaged the fantastic world of *Vathek*.

Wieland

In 1798, Charles Brockden Brown, an American, published *Wieland*, the first Gothic novel written in the United States. The work is known for its psychological depth as well as for its Gothic excess. Brown explores deeply the role of religion in the lives of driven characters. For Brown, morality resides in the individual conscience, and revealed religion may produce horrific results. In *Wieland*, a ventriloquist's evil tricks, along with religious fervor, convince Wieland, the main character of the novel, that God wants him to kill his family. He does so, killing his wife and children. His sister narrowly escapes to narrate the tale. In the novel, Brown tries to negotiate between rational Enlightenment and religious fervor. By so doing, Brown shifts the Gothic tale away from supernatural events and superstition into the realm of human psychology. Is Weiland mad or deluded? Do his crimes spring from insanity, or has his "religious" calling merely rendered him irrational? A dark and brooding book, *Wieland* remains a masterpiece of American literature.

Media Adaptations

The Best of Gothic Horror is a collection of abridged novels and stories by Edgar Allan Poe, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Mary Shelley recorded on audio tape by Countertop Audio and released in June 2000.

- A film of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" was produced in 1928 and directed by Jean Epstein. A second film adaptation of the story starred Vincent Price and was directed by Roger Corman in 1960. Both versions are available on videotape.
- *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, a film directed by and starring Kenneth Branagh, was released in 1994. The film claims to be a much closer rendition of Shelley's novel than the earlier film *Frankenstein*, directed by James Whale and released in 1931, although this early version is very popular with viewers. Both are readily available on video.
- An audio tape of an abridged version of *The Castle of Otranto*, produced by Naxos Audio Books in 1995, provides a brief introduction to the famous work that started the Gothic movement.
- Professor Jack G. Voller maintains an impressive and comprehensive website at http://www.litgothic.com with research suggestions, a library of e-texts, extensive factual material, a large database, and critical articles. The site is easily navigable, reliable, and very useful for a student starting a study of the Gothic.
- Professor Douglass H. Thomson of Southern Georgia University maintains a site at http://www2.gasou.edu/facstaff/dougt/goth.html that offers a superb glossary of literary Gothic terms.

Themes

Terror and Horror

Terror and horror are the project of the Gothic novelist. Drawing on the work of Edmund Burke, Ann Radcliffe distinguished between the two terms, suggesting that terror grows out of suspense while horror produces disgust. In other words, a character experiences terror in the anticipation of some dreaded event; she experiences horror when the event really happens. Thus, in Radcliffe's novels, there is an emphasis on terror and the terrible, which she creates through her long descriptions of sublime landscapes and her intimations of the supernatural. Moreover, the agonizing suspense to which she subjects her characters produces terror in both the character and the reader. However, the eventual explanation of all things supernatural relieves her reader from the experience of horror. Lewis, on the other hand, chooses horror for his novels. His prose focuses on the details of the horrible, including torture and putrefaction. In Lewis's work, he describes in disturbing detail the physically revolting and morally decadent.

Appearance and Reality

Gothic literature often explores the muddy ground between appearance and reality. For example, in Radcliffe's works, events often appear to have supernatural causes. However, by the end of the book, Radcliffe offers realistic explanations. Thus, in the case of Radcliffe, it is possible for the reader to distinguish by the close of the novel what is real and what is apparent. On the other hand, writers such as Lewis do not always differentiate between appearance and reality. This ambiguity leads to a dreamlike (or nightmarish) atmosphere in the novel. Readers recognize the state: for all intents and purposes, a dream appears to be real until awakening. It is in the foggy fugue state, however, where the dreamer is unsure of what is the dream and what is the reality. In addition, other writers play with appearance and reality through the use of different narrative structures and voices.

Poe famously develops the unreliable narrator who appears initially to be sane but who, through the course of the novel or story, is revealed to be absolutely insane. The struggle to differentiate the reality from the appearance rests at the heart of much Gothic literature.

Confinement

Nearly every Gothic novel of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries contains some element of confinement. Indeed, many critics have commented on the sense of claustrophobia found in Gothic fiction. Often this occurs with the entrapment of the heroine in some ancient castle. When she finally escapes her room or cell, she finds herself within a subterranean passageway with no apparent way out. It is the lack of escape that causes the terrifying claustrophobia. Isabella's flight through Otranto is an example. Likewise, in *The Monk*, Agnes is chained to a wall to be tortured. The struggle against the confinement elicits both horror and terror in the reader. Perhaps the master of confinement, however, is Poe. In "The Fall of the House of Usher," Madeline Usher is confined prematurely to her coffin and buried alive. Such scenes hold considerable horror. Poe's *The Cask of Amontillado* is another tale of claustrophobic containment, as the narrator, Montresor, walls Fortunato in a crypt, where he has lured him to taste fine sherry. Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart* also uses this theme, but in this case it is the heart of the murdered victim that is confined but refuses to remain hidden. Whether it be prison cells, monastic cells, shackles, locked rooms, or dark tunnels, the space of the Gothic novel is claustrophobic and confining, tapping into a primal human fear.

Justice and Injustice

While the world of justice and injustice might seem to be absent from the world of the Gothic, on closer examination, it seems clear that guilt and reparation of sins stands firmly at the center of many stories. In Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, the death of Conrad, the heir to his father's estate, apparently takes place as a way of righting a wrong. That is, Conrad's ancestor comes back from his grave to assure that Otranto goes to the rightful heir. This is the case of the sins of the father being visited on the children; at no time does it seem that Conrad knows that his title is faulty. Likewise, Madeline and Roderick Usher pay for the sins of their family with their own decay and death. Their house collapses in on them, ending the line. Thus, the "fall of the house of Usher" has two meanings: the house itself literally falls down and the lineage of Usher also falls as a result of the sins of earlier generations. *Melmoth the Wanderer* also explores this theme. In the Gothic world, justice must ultimately triumph, even if the justice that is meted out is severe. Ambrosio, for example, in *The Monk*, deserves to be punished; however, his punishment is horrible. Because the Gothic is a literature of excess, it is little wonder that the justices and injustices are also excessive. Thus, the gloom that hangs over the heads of many characters is the knowledge that in their own day they will have to pay for the wrongs their ancestors have done.

Style

Setting

In Gothic literature, the setting may be the single most important device. Gothic writers generally set their novels in wild landscapes; in large, often ruined, castles; and/or in subterranean labyrinths. In Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, the castle itself plays a major role in the novel. As Robert Kiely writes in *The Romantic Novel in England*, "If anything gives this novel unity and animation, it is the castle. The place itself seems sufficiently charged with emotion to require little assistance from the characters. In fact, external conditions play a larger part in determining the behavior of the characters than do their own internal motivations." Thus, the setting itself provides as much suspense as does the plot or the characters.

In addition, Gothic writers as a rule set their novels in the distant, medieval past, in what they thought of as the "gothic period." However, their descriptions have little to do with the medieval period as it was; rather, the settings in Gothic novels reveal much more about what eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers believed about the Middle Ages than about the medieval past. For Gothic writers, the medieval past was a time of superstition and Catholicism, made exotic and eerie by monks, nuns, ghosts, and crumbling castles. Although most of the novels are set in some European landscape, others, most notably Beckford's *Vathek*, have foreign locations, such as the Middle East. Again, removing the setting of the novel from contemporary locations and time periods allowed Gothic writers to infuse their works with the fear of the unknown, mysterious occurrences, and strange, unusual customs.

Topics for Further Study

Many critics suggest that the Gothic continues to influence contemporary art and literature, primarily through the media of film and video. Consider Michael Jackson's *Thriller* video, various film adaptations of *Frankenstein*, and a selection of films based on Stephen King's books. How do these works reflect the basic characteristics of Gothic literature? How do twentieth- and twenty-first-century representations transform the idea of the Gothic prevalent in earlier centuries?

- Read selections from Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful*, and then connect Burke's ideas to one Gothic novel. How do Burke's ideas find expression in the novel you select? Be sure to use specific examples from the text to support your claim.
- Read about scientific, biological, psychological, and spiritual explanations for why humans dream. Sigmund Freud's *On Dreams* might also provide you with useful information. Connecting your reading about dreams with the interior landscapes of Gothic fiction may help you understand the imagery and narrative present in many Gothic novels.
- Through parody, writers reveal and mock standard conventions of a given genre. For example, the *Airplane* series of films renders the convention of the disaster film both visible and very funny. In her novel *Northanger Abbey*, eighteenth-century writer Jane Austen parodies the Gothic novels of her day. Read *Northanger Abbey* and identify the specific characteristics Austen is parodying.

Diction

Diction is the choice of words and the order of words a writer chooses for his or her literary creation. Diction may be on the continuum from very informal, or low diction, to very formal, or high diction. In Gothic novels, writers opted to use somewhat archaic and formal language, particularly in dialogue. Although the word choices are not accurate representations of the speech patterns of medieval people, the diction of a Gothic novel is reminiscent of a medieval romance. Further, the diction removes the novel from the present-day reality. Walpole, for example, writes the following for his heroine Isabella in *The Castle of Otranto*: "Sir, whoever you are, take pity on a wretched princess standing on the brink of destruction: assist me to escape from this fatal castle, or in a few moments I may be made miserable for ever."

Narrative

Narrative is an accounting of an event or sequence of events, real or invented. In literary criticism, the expression "narrative technique" usually refers to the way the author structures and presents his or her story. Gothic literature can be characterized by the complex and complicated narrative structures writers give their work. There are usually plots within plots, and there are episodes that seem to have little connection to the episodes immediately before and after. The episodic nature of the narrative perhaps can be attributed to the Gothic writers' attention to medieval romance. William Malory's early fifteenth century *Morte D'Arthur*, a compilation of medieval Arthurian romances circulating in Malory's day, for example, comprises episodes of knights, damsels, challenges, and castles. Likewise, Gothic writers often provide little transition or explanation for the arrangement of their episodes. The overall effect, both in medieval romance and Gothic novels, is to render the narrative strange and fragmented.

Gothic writers also often present an exceedingly complicated narrative, woven around some theme or idea. For example, in Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, there are stories within stories. Kiely describes the narrative of this book in his *The Ro-*

mantic Novel in England: "The structure of *Melmoth the Wanderer*, a series of narrations within narrations—often compared with a nest of Chinese boxes—defies conventional chronological sequence and replaces it with obsessive variations on the single theme of human misery." The overall effect of such construction is to distort the chronological and spatial development of the story and to give the overall work a dreamlike quality.

Mood

The mood of a literary work reveals the emotional content of a work. Mood arises in a work through the interaction of diction, setting, and narrative structure. In the case of Gothic novels, the mood is one of fear, anxiety, terror, and horror. Both the characters and the readers of Gothic novels experience these emotions to the fullest extent possible for human beings. The dark, dreary, and morbid settings as well as the sublime mountainous landscapes serve to invoke terror, while the suspense created by mistaken identities and long chase sequences through cellar passageways produce both fear and anxiety. Many critics speak of the claustrophobia of Gothic novels, created by coffins, prisons, dark halls, passages, and interior spaces. At its best, Gothic literature evokes the same kind of emotional response from its readers as do nightmares and night terrors. Just as the dreamers often find themselves fleeing from shadowy monsters or evildoers, characters in Gothic novels likewise flee from those who would do them harm. Readers of Gothic novels are able to experience these strong emotions vicariously, through the trials of the main characters. They are able to be deliciously, if safely, frightened out of their wits by the narrative twists and turns. That this is able to happen can largely be attributed to the prevailing mood Gothic writers develop.

Movement Variations

Architecture and Art

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the impulse toward the Gothic affected not only literature but also architecture. William Kent (1686–1748) was perhaps the best-known landscape designer and architect of the time, and he helped rich landowners design and build elaborate buildings and landscaping. These designs included mock towers, castles, and abbeys constructed to look as if they had been built in the Middle Ages and had since fallen into ruin. David Stevens, in *The Gothic Tradition*, reports that Kent "even went so far as suggest 'planting' dead trees to present an appropriately ghoulish effect."

Likewise, a number of artists of this time, including Spanish artist Francisco de Goya and English poet and engraver William Blake, produced works that visually represent the Gothic. In particular, Goya's "The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters," drawn in 1799, has been called by Richard Davenport-Hines in *Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil, and Ruin* "perhaps the most important single image for the historian of the gothic."

American Variations

In addition to the eighteenth-century Gothic writer Brown and nineteenth-century writer Poe, American writers have embraced the Gothic in a variety of forms. Hawthorne's "family romances" that include *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of Seven Gables* demonstrate that writer's fascination with the supernatural as well as the sins of the father. Herman Melville's great masterpiece *Moby Dick*, with its monstrous, uncanny whale also qualifies as an American transformation of the Gothic. Clearly, the works of writers like Ambrose Bierce and H. P. Lovecraft also demonstrate the continued influence of the Gothic with their strange and grotesque subjects. In yet another variation of the movement, a group of twentieth-century Southern writers came to be part of a movement called the Southern Gothic. Including William Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor, among others, the writers of the Southern Gothic used themes of decay, death, and dissolution as well as the grotesque. Most recently, writers like Stephen King, Anne Rice, and Peter Straub have tapped the Gothic as a source for their writing. Vampires, monsters, and ghoulish creatures figure prominently in the works of these writers.

The Gothic and Film

Perhaps the most notable variation on the Gothic movement, however, is not a literary movement at all but rather the introduction of film during the twentieth century. From the first silent movies, audiences have demonstrated their delight at being terrified. In the 1920s and 1930s, many movies were made about Frankenstein, Dracula, and werewolves. Later films drew on the work of Poe. Actors such as Bela Lugosi, Lon Chaney, and Vincent Price made their careers on their roles in

horror films. Furthermore, films like *The Shining*, released in 1980, starring Jack Nicholson and directed by Stanley Kubrick, featured many of the characteristic elements of the Gothic novel. Based on a novel of the same name by Stephen King, *The Shining* features a huge, vacant, old hotel that turns out to be haunted. There are supernatural events and chases through the corridors of the hotel. Madness and chaos reign. Nicholson's portrayal of the lead character, a down-on-his-luck writer, is both excessive and terrifying, as are the best of the Gothic novels. Many critics of the Gothic, including Punter, Davenport-Hines, and Botting, trace the twentieth-century horror film all the way back to *The Castle of Otranto*.

Historical Context

The Enlightenment

Many historians and scholars attribute the rise of the Gothic as a response to the prevailing mode of rational thought and reason. Indeed, eighteenth-century thought was dominated by an intellectual movement called the enlightenment by later historians. Enlightenment philosophers and writers privileged reason and human understanding above emotions and feelings. Furthermore, the rise of experimental science during this period offered an empirical model for how one could arrive at truth.

A secular movement, the Enlightenment strove to demonstrate that knowledge could only be derived from science and natural philosophy, not from religion. Indeed, religion and spirituality, particularly Catholicism, were relegated to the realm of the "irrational." Enlightenment philosophers steadfastly believed that only through attention to rationality, reason, and balance could humankind improve. The thinkers of the Enlightenment looked for their models to the classical period of Greece and Rome, rejecting what they saw as the "barbarism" of the medieval period.

As the eighteenth century waned, however, growing numbers of thinkers and writers began to rebel against the rationality of the Enlightenment and to produce works that privileged the irrational, emotional responses and feelings, and the uncanny. They argued that truth could not be derived from pure thought but rather could be approached through the senses. In particular, Gothic literature, art, and architecture revolted against the strict rationality of the Enlightenment. Gothic writers looked to the Middle Ages for their models. While some scholars see the rise of the Gothic as a response to the Enlightenment, there are others who argue that the Gothic is an essential part of the Enlightenment, with the Gothic providing the mirror image of the Enlightenment. In either regard, the two movements are inextricably linked in the study of the eighteenth century.

The Age of Revolutions

A second major influence on the rise of the Gothic was the military and political situation in North America and Europe. The late eighteenth century was a time of revolt and violence. In North America, the thirteen English colonies banded together and fought for independence from England. The first bloodshed of the war was at the battles of Concord and Lexington in April of 1775. In July 1776, the delegates of the First Continental Congress meeting in Philadelphia declared independence, naming their country the United States of America. This was the first colonial war in England's history and the first time a new country had come into being by a declaration of independence. The war ground on for some seven more years before the surrender of British General Cornwallis at Yorktown. This victory was largely made possible by assistance from the French, whose naval power prevented English ships from coming to the aid of their army. Although the founding fathers clearly were Enlightenment thinkers who depended on reason and rationality to justify their bid for independence, they were nonetheless radical thinkers who opened the door to a democratically governed as opposed to royally governed understanding of statehood.

If the outcome of the American Revolution came as a shock to Europeans, it was nonetheless a ripple compared to the tidal wave of the French Revolution, which began in 1789, just six years after the 1783 treaty that settled the American War. The French Revolution shook the foundations of European statehood and introduced long years of terror and cultural anxiety. Many critics see the foundation of the Gothic movement in the French Revolution. Ronald Paulson, for example, in his article "Gothic Fiction and the French Revolution," argues that "The Gothic did in fact serve as a metaphor with which some contemporaries in England tried to come to terms with what was happening across the Channel in the 1790s." Whereas many pre-Romantic and Romantic writers supported the French Revolution early on, as the vio-

Compare & Contrast

- **1770–1820:** Revolutions in North America and France cause changes in systems of government.

  Today: Breakup of the former Soviet Union in 1991 continues to cause widespread shifts and changes in government structures in Europe.

- **1770–1820:** The French Revolution produces the Reign of Terror, a period of great violence, bloodshed, and uncertainty.

  Today: Terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001, cause great loss of life, destruction, and uncertainty.

- **1770–1820:** Growing interest in the supernatural, the irrational, and the terrifying is evidenced by novels such as *The Castle of Otranto*, *The Monk*, and *Frankenstein*.

  Today: Growing interest in the supernatural, the irrational, and the terrifying is evidenced by the popularity of writers such as Stephen King, television programs such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *X–Files* and suspense films such as *The Sixth Sense*.

- **1770–1820:** Romantic writers and philosophers privilege feelings and emotions as legitimate ways of knowing; they also locate truth in beauty.

  Today: Postmodernist writers and philosophers suggest that all reality is no more than language and that ultimate truth is impossible to locate.

lence and bloodshed degenerated into what has become known as "The Reign of Terror," English writers and citizens became increasingly worried over the chaos and uncertainty taking place just across the Channel. The terror of the Gothic novel, along with its images of chase and capture and its threat of evil overcoming good, reflects how deeply anxious both writers and the reading public had become.

Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful

A final influence on the growth of the Gothic sprang from a philosophical treatise on aesthetics called *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, written and published by Edmund Burke in 1757. Burke's ideas had far-reaching implications. In this treatise, drawing on the classical philosopher Longinus, Burke distinguishes between beauty as a product of proportion and dimension and the sublime as a product of wild, irregular, and uncontrollable nature. For example, a perfectly groomed and well-designed garden could be beautiful, invoking pleasure in the eye of the beholder. On the other hand, a view of the Swiss Alps with its craggy cliffs and huge dimensions would be sublime, invoking a kind of terror or fear in the viewer. The sublime carries with it both elements of attraction and terror. According to David Punter in *The Literature of Terror*, as a result of Burke's treatise, "the excitation of fear becomes one of the most significant enterprises a writer can undertake; thus also fear is recognized as the primary means by which the dictates of reason can be bypassed." Punter continues with a discussion of Burke's contribution to Gothic literature:

> Many of the details of Burke's analysis have relevance to the Gothic writers—in particular his emphasis on obscurity, vastness, magnificence as constitutive elements of the sublime—but his most important contribution was to confer on terror a major and worthwhile literary role.

By the 1790s, Burke's ideas had become so widespread that Ann Radcliffe was able to write an essay distinguishing the differences between horror and terror. It is impossible to say whether Burke created his times, or the times created Burke. In any event, his writing proves to have continued significance in the field of horror writing up to the present day.

Critical Overview

Gothic literature has elicited spirited critical debate from its earliest days. According to Botting in his book, *The Gothic*:

> Between 1790 and 1810, critics were almost univocal in their condemnation of what was seem as an unending torrent of popular trashy novels. Intensified by fears of radicalism and revolution, the challenge to aesthetic values was framed in terms of social transgression: virtue, property and domestic order were considered to be under threat.

Such reactions from critics are not surprising. The aesthetic values of the eighteenth century included order, proportion, and decorum, based largely on classical models from the Greeks and Romans. Works of art (including literature and architecture) that flouted these conventions and took shape from the medieval past were looked upon as inferior, so much so that the term "Gothic" was applied to anything that seemed barbarous or hideous. However, while Gothic literature may have been scorned by the intelligentsia and literary critics of the day, it found rapid and overwhelming popularity with the reading public. That the reading public included growing numbers of women and middle-class readers may suggest a reason for the widespread popularity of the genre. It is also likely that the shift in readership offered a threat to established scholars and writers of the day, making their response to Gothic literature vitriolic in the extreme.

Contemporary criticism was not entirely negative, of course. No less a personage than the Marquis de Sade, in his book *Idee sur les Romans*, offered that "this kind of fiction, whatever one may think of it, is assuredly not without merit; twas the inevitable result of the revolutionary shocks which all Europe has suffered." The Marquis de Sade points particularly to Lewis's *The Monk* as a work of special merit.

More recent criticism has approached Gothic literature from a variety of directions. Punter in his *Literature of Terror* outlines a number of approaches critics often take. First, critics often see Gothic literature as a "recognisable movement in the history of culture, with recognisable sociopsychological causes." That is, events and ideas present in the culture find an outlet through Gothic literature. Punter, David Stevens in *The Gothic Tradition*, and Ronald Paulson in "Gothic Fiction and the French Revolution," an article appearing in the journal *English Language History*, among many other critics and historians, all comment on the connections between contemporary historical events and the rise of the Gothic.

Another critical track is the formalist approach. That is, critics examine the narrative structure of the Gothic novel to find those elements that bring unity to the work. Conversely, other formalist critics approach Gothic fiction, according to Punter, by revealing its "narrative complexity and its tendency to raise technical problems which it often fails to resolve."

Three important critical strategies prevalent in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century include psychoanalytical, Marxist, and feminist critiques. In the first place, the work of Sigmund Freud, particularly his 1919 essay, "The Uncanny," informs many critics, who use Freud's formulation of the death wish, the Oedipus complex, repression, and divided self as productive means of entry into the complexities of Gothic fiction. Likewise, Marxist critics examine the class structures of the novels. There are clearly upper- and lower-class characters in all the novels under discussion, and these characters reflect the class biases of the novelists themselves. Finally, feminist critics, such as Margaret Doody, concentrate either on an analysis of the female characters of Gothic literature or on the role played by female writers in the development of the Gothic.

Although the Gothic movement itself may have ended in about 1820, the Gothic continues to exert considerable influence on both literature and criticism. If anything, critical interest in the Gothic continues to grow at a remarkable rate, perhaps because of the renewed interest in monsters, the uncanny, the supernatural, and the unexplained evident in late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century culture.

Criticism

Diane Andrews Henningfeld

Andrews Henningfeld is a professor of English literature and composition who has written extensively for educational and academic publishers. In this essay, Andrews Henningfeld considers the device of the "double" in Gothic literature and connects the prevalence of this device to psychological, cultural, and historical causes.

Perhaps the single most interesting literary device used by Gothic writers is that of the "double."

Muckross House in Killarney, Ireland, an example of gothic architecture

Generally, the most common form of doubling in literature is the *doppelgänger*, a German term meaning "double-goer." A literary *doppelgänger* often takes the form of an alternate identity of the main character. Sometimes this can be in the physical form of a biological twin; sometimes writers create a demonic character that functions as a representation of another character's dark side. A famous example of this technique is Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Sharer*. In Gothic literature, the *doppelgänger* is often threatening and a cause for terror. Shelley's *Frankenstein* offers one of the best examples of the use of a *doppelgänger* in Gothic literature. As Aiga Ozolins points out in the article "Dreams and Doctrines: Dual Strands in *Frankenstein*," "There is ample evidence in the novel that the creature functions as the scientist's baser self." Further, Edgar Allan Poe makes use of the double in "The Fall of the House of Usher." In this case, Roderick Usher and his sister are biological twins, so closely connected that when the sister appears to die and is buried, Usher realizes too late that she has been buried alive. The horror of premature burial is doubled by this technique. The reader is first horrified by Usher's proclamation that they have buried her alive; and then even more horrified by Usher's horror. While the *doppelgänger* may be the most apparent form of the double in Gothic literature, there are many other, more subtle ways, that writers introduce notions of doubling in their fiction. Through mirrors, artwork, blurred characters, confusion between the dead and alive, the divided hero/villain, and *déjà vu*, doubles in Gothic literature proliferate like reflections in a funhouse mirror.

So prevalent is the notion of doubling in Gothic literature that it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify Gothic novels that do *not* use the device in some form. One way that Gothic writers often introduce a double is through the use of literal mirror images. A character gazes into a mirror, for example, and sees not only himself but also his darker side at the same time. Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll looks in his mirror to behold the demonic Mr. Hyde.

Less apparent, but no less effective, is the use of a figurative mirror image. In an essay in *The New Eighteenth Century* discussing Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, critic Terry Castle argues, "Characters in *Udolpho* mirror or blur into one another. Characters seem uncannily to resemble or replace previous characters." Castle also points out the inability in this novel for characters and readers to distinguish the dead from the living. Again, death is a mirror image of life; the confusion over who is dead and who is alive created by this mirroring is major point of terror. "The Fall of the

What Do I Study Next?

- *The Days of the French Revolution* (1999) by Christopher Hibbert offers an excellent and readable introduction to the important historical event. Hibbert often uses vignettes of people's lives and events to bring to life the historical detail.
- David Blayney Brown's *Romanticism* (2001) in the Art and Ideas series focuses on European artists during the years 1775–1830, connecting radical new ideas about art to the larger social and political scene of the day. An important consideration for any student is how the Gothic fits within the larger scope of the Romantic movement in art, literature, and music.
- A readable and thorough biography of Edgar Allan Poe is Jeffrey Meyer's *Edgar Allan Poe* (2000). This book concentrates on the events and details of Poe's life rather than offering a critical history of his works. As such, it is an important companion piece to studies of Poe's works.
- *Evil Image: The Literary Art of Terror from Daniel Defoe to Stephen King* (1981), edited and introduced by Patricia L. Skarda and Nora Crow Jaffe, is a compilation of Gothic short fiction and poetry from the past two hundred years. The book is an excellent start for students who want to read a wide variety of Gothic literature in a short period of time.
- *Three Gothic Novels* (1966), edited by E. F. Bleiler, contains the texts of *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole, *Vathek* by William Beckford, and *The Vampyre* by John Polidori as well as a fragment of a novel by Lord Byron. Bleiler also provides a short introduction to each of the novels included.

House of Usher" makes use of this device in the confusion of the burial of Usher's sister. Is she dead, or is she alive when placed in the tomb? Is she alive, or is she dead when she suddenly bursts into the room where Usher is in the process of revealing his doubts about her death to the narrator? "One sure sign of the double," argues critic Margaret Anne Doody in "Desert Ruins and Troubled Waters: Female Dreams in Fiction and the Development of the Gothic Novel," appearing in the journal *Genre*, "is his haunting presence."

Another way that Gothic writers introduce doubling into their work is through the use of artwork. It is a stock device in Gothic fiction that portraits and artwork can come alive at any moment. In Lewis's *The Monk*, the evil Matilda has a portrait of the Madonna painted for the monk Ambrosio. Unbeknownst to Ambrosio, however, Matilda has had her own image embedded in the picture of the Madonna. Thus, when Ambrosio adores the portrait of the holy Madonna, he also adores the satanic Matilda. This adoration of a doubled portrait leads to violently sexual dreams and Ambrosio's ultimate destruction.

A much less obvious, but nonetheless potent, use of the double is in the creation of the wanderer, a stock character in Gothic literature, represented by such characters as Maturin's Melmoth, Shelley's monster, and Coleridge's Ancient Mariner. These characters are outsiders, the mirror images of the "civilized" men or women. They are alienated from society, solitary, and estranged. In *The Adversary Literature: The English Novel in the Eighteenth Century—A Study in Genre*, Frederick Karl describes the wanderer as "truly countercultural, an alternate force, almost mystical in his embodiment of the burdens and sins of society." Thus, the wanderer stands as a double for the character enmeshed in the trappings of society. For example, the Ancient Mariner doubles the Wedding Guest in Coleridge's poem. The Mariner, a wanderer, is doomed to periodically accost a civilized person and share his story. The confrontation allows brief respite for the Mariner, as he shares his burden with his civilized double.

The self-divided hero/villain, found so often in Gothic fiction, offers yet another way to examine the notion of doubling. In this case, the character

is often brave and cowardly, strong and weak, moral and depraved. Certainly, Shelley's Dr. Frankenstein falls into this category. He is a brilliant scientist, so bent on overcoming death that he crosses the boundary that divides the moral from the immoral. He sees himself to be above such petty and bourgeois distinctions, a precursor of German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's *Ubermensch*, or "Overman." However, Frankenstein is both triumphant and repentant, a deeply troubled and deeply divided individual, so deeply divided that the warring sides of his psyche seem to belong to a set of mirror image twins.

Even time and experience become doubled in Gothic fiction through the use of *déjà vu*, the feeling that one has experienced an event before, and memory, the recollection of a real event. In many ways, this feeling is like a haunting; it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify why one has the feeling. By introducing the sense of *déjà vu* in their stories, Gothic writers bring both the past and the future into the present. Although a character may only experience an event once in reality, the twin devices of recollection and *déjà vu* allow the experience to happen again and again and again within the pages of the novel.

Finally, a number of critics identify an important theme in Gothic literature: that the sins of the father will be visited upon the son. In other words, the evil that someone does in his or her lifetime will be repaid in the lives of his or her offspring. Again, while this may not seem like an obvious use of doubling, it allows a Gothic writer to reintroduce the injustice perpetrated by a previous generation on the current generation, until the injustice is righted. Thus, sin is doubled and doubled until it is corrected.

Given that the use of doubling techniques features so heavily in so much Gothic literature, perhaps it is important to identify the roots of the double, as well as critical interpretations of its function in the literature. Most obviously, the use of the double in Gothic literature seems to spring from the duality of the Middle Ages, the era that Gothicists attempt to recreate in their writing. Certainly, medieval romance offers many models of the use of the double: Malory's story of the twins Balin and Balan who meet each other in combat, unknown to each other, is an excellent example, as is the Guinevere/false Guinevere motif of the Arthurian legend. G. R. Thompson's chapter, "A Dark Romanticism: In Quest of a Gothic Monomyth," in *Literature of the Occult* speaks to the duality of the Middle Ages made graphic by "the evocation of the transcendent, upward thrust of Gothic cathedrals" and "the vision of the dark night of the soul and the nightmare terrors of demons." That both are so present in the literature and the iconography of the Middle Ages demonstrates at least one channel through which notions of the double find their way to Gothic literature.

Likewise, the eighteenth century was also a time of extreme duality. The Enlightenment emphasis on reason and rationality, so dominant in this time, denies fully one half of human experience, that of passion and emotion. Writers of the eighteenth century were obsessed with distinguishing good from evil, truth from falsehood, and reason from passion. Perhaps the only way, then, for writers to account for both sides of this duality was to separate them in the creation of doubling experiences. And yet, throughout Gothic literature, it is as if what has been divided struggles mightily for reunion, a reunion that often results in death.

There are a variety of critical interpretations of how the double in Gothic literature functions as a response to the dualities discussed above. Frederick Frank in *The First Gothics* calls the Gothic "the literature of collapsing structures where even the narrative context itself is in a constant state of fall with no possibility of a visionary reordering." He further quotes Thompson, who argues that Gothic literature "begins with irreconcilable dualities." Thus, the attempted synthesis or reunion of the divided narrative, the divided psyche, and the divided culture ultimately and inevitably fails.

Botting in *The Gothic* identifies the use of the double in Gothic literature, along with other stock features, as the "principal embodiments and evocations of cultural anxieties." The growth of science, for example, with the decline of religion offers such an example of a cultural anxiety. Thus, Frankenstein and his monster are both embodiments of the anxiety caused by the replacement of ultimate meaning with science. Likewise, the French Revolution, with its violent upheaval of social structures, is yet another cultural anxiety.

Finally, many critics turn to psychology for an interpretation of the function of the double in Gothic literature. Freud, in his essay "The Uncanny," reviewed the work of Otto Rank, who studied "the connections which the 'double' has with reflections in mirrors, with shadows, with guardian spirits, with the belief in the soul and with the fear of death." Freud argues that although the double

Doubling, then, serves not only as a literary device designed to invoke terror in the reader, or as a complicated narrative maneuver, but also as an impetus for self-reflection and growth."

starts out as a form of ego protection in children, it becomes "the uncanny harbinger of death—a thing of terror." Certainly, readers in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century would find it difficult to even think about the notion of the double without referencing Freud and perhaps Carl Jung. The double can be seen as a representation of the divided self, personifying the pleasure seeking id, the self-aware ego, and the morality of the super-ego. Likewise, mirror images provide a way that the self can project its own darkness out of itself onto another.

Doubling, then, serves not only as a literary device designed to invoke terror in the reader, or as a complicated narrative maneuver, but also as an impetus for self-reflection and growth. Doody offers that "The most important point regarding the double is the necessity to confront and recognize the dark aspect of one's personality in order to transform it by an act of conscious choice." That is, the double allows a character to both confront his or her own darker self and reintegrate that self. Thus, the double, be it as *doppelgänger*, literal or figurative mirror image, artwork, or *déjà vu* functions as a means for self-confrontation and self-knowledge not only for the characters in the stories but for the reader of Gothic literature as well.

Source: Diane Andrews Henningfeld, Critical Essay on Gothic Literature, in *Literary Movements for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Elizabeth MacAndrew

In the following essay excerpt, MacAndrew examines Gothic conventions in use for over two hundred years, finding that "writers chose the Gothic tale as a vehicle for ideas about psychological evil."

Gothic fiction is a literature of nightmare. Among its conventions are found dream landscapes and figures of the subconscious imagination. Its fictional world gives form to amorphous fears and impulses common to all mankind, using an amalgam of materials, some torn from the author's own subconscious mind and some the stuff of myth, folklore, fairy tale, and romance. It conjures up beings—mad monks, vampires, and demons—and settings—forbidding cliffs and glowering buildings, stormy seas and the dizzying abyss—that have literary significance and the properties of dream symbolism as well. Gothic fiction gives shape to concepts of the place of evil in the human mind.

It was a new literary form in the late eighteenth century. At that time, the purpose of Gothic fiction, like that of the Sentimental novel, to which it was closely allied, was to educate the reader's feelings through his identification with the feelings of the characters; to arouse his "sympathy," as the aesthetics of Sensibility demanded, by evoking pity and fear; and to explore the mind of man and the causes of evil in it, so that evil might be avoided and virtue fostered. The earliest Gothic romances are literary fantasies embodying, for didactic purposes, ideas about man's psychology that were the culmination of a century of philosphical speculation on the subject. In them, good and evil are starkly differentiated absolutes, but as succeeding works delved deeper into the idea of evil as psychological, evil quickly began to be seen as relative and, in no time, its pleasures were being explored. All these works were based on accepted views about the human mind. Later authors, employing the same literary devices as the early works, introduced changes that both reflected and developed modifications of these views. As tales of the weird and horrid persisted through the nineteenth century, using the same stock characters and settings again and again, they gradually pieced together among them a picture of evil as a form of psychological monstrosity. The original querying into the origins of evil shifted to ambiguous presentations that questioned the nature of evil itself.

The highly conventionalized nature of the settings and characters, structures and imagery of Gothic fiction has always been recognized. All too frequently, however, these features have been dubbed "Gothic machinery" or "clap-trap" because, like other forms of popular literature, Gothic fiction has been seen as fare for a sensation-seeking audience and not, therefore, worth literary analysis. As a result, the course of the convention has

not been traced. Instead, Gothic fiction has been called escape literature, intended to inspire terror for terror's sake. Such descriptions have concealed the important ideas these tales contain. The view of the early Gothic romances as "just" a form of escape does not adequately explain why they appeared when they did or why their appeal was so immediate and so strong. Descriptions of the genre as a literature of violence reflecting a violent age, or as a literature of sensation needed to perk up a jaded age are circular as well as contradictory. Recent attempts to treat Gothic literature as an aspect of Romanticism also fail to see its significance as a convention. When we see that Gothic tales have continued to appear for two hundred years, and that the convention has been put to use by major writers as different from each other as Emily Brontë and Henry James, it is evident that something more is involved than a continuing taste for a ghoulish kind of bedside reading, and that these works are not confined to a single period of literature.

From Walpole's maddened and murderous princeling in *The Castle of Otranto* to the self-tormented scientist in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the same conventional features keep reappearing because ideas of the same kind lie behind these works. That is, these and other writers chose the Gothic tale as a vehicle for ideas about psychological evil—evil not as a force exterior to man, but as a distortion, a warping of his mind. Walpole's slight romance yields such an interpretation, so does Stevenson's novel, so do the Gothic tales that appeared in the long stretch of time between them.

This is not to say that Stevenson and Walpole held the same view of evil, or of man's psychology in general. Indeed, their ideas on the subject form a sharp contrast. The great interest in tracing this literary convention lies in the changes that take place within it, which correspond to the changes in thought on the subject that have occurred since Locke first set forth his theory of the workings of the mind. What seems to have happened is this: following Locke (who was to the eighteenth century what Freud has been to the twentieth), eighteenth-century thinkers had devoted a great deal of their energies to the study of the mind, the nature of perception, the means to knowledge, expanding, adapting, and modifying Locke's ideas. It was the first era in which the mind was studied inductively, and the changes in world view, especially in ideas about the moral nature of Man, that such thinking reflected and also helped bring about were given

When we see that Gothic tales have continued to appear for two hundred years, and that the convention has been put to use by major writers as different from each other as Emily Brontë and Henry James, it is evident that something more is involved than a continuing taste for a ghoulish kind of bedside reading. . . ."

literary expression in a number of different genres, but most directly in the Sentimental fiction of the time, of which Gothic literature is a part. Within this general literary development, Gothic fiction first made its appearance when Horace Walpole, his head full of a romanticized, eighteenth-century medievalism, awakened from a dream of which he could remember only a scrap and, under its influence, turned out *The Castle of Otranto*, at white heat. Though he himself felt the importance of this slight work, which, to the end of his life remained his favorite among his writings, he expected his fellow literati would scorn it as a "romance." Instead, his anonymous tale received high praise from literati and reading public alike. He had given fictional treatment to some of the major preoccupations of his time that were also his own concerns, and, after an interval, others began to copy his work—many a castle, many a tyrant, many a hero and heroine of perfect virtue and courage appeared. Naturally, however, Walpole's successors each took his devices and used them a little differently. Clara Reeve declared *Otranto* was too extravagant and confined herself wherever possible to the "Natural"; William Beckford, romping off into the Arabian Nights, introduced the grotesque into the genre; Matthew Lewis added the tormented monk who was immediately picked up by Ann Radcliffe, herself the chief among terror-mongers, whose villains had influenced Lewis in the first place.

An illustration from The Monk *written by Matthew Lewis*

In this rush of authors making use of and modifying one another's devices, there is more than a simple desire to share in the latest literary fad. Different though they were as personalities, these writers recognized the possibilities of the new genre for the expression of some of the prevailing views of their age, which they all shared, views not previously given fictional form. Each uncovered the implications of preceding works, recognizing the intuitions behind them. Thus, each delved deeper into the common subject, adding new devices to the convention as they were needed and producing works whose further implications could again be picked up by a successor to add a new round to the developing spiral of the genre. This process continued throughout the nineteenth century, as writers embodied the views of the later age in the same way. Thus, Mary Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, and Nathaniel Hawthorne added twisted scientists to the mad monks of Lewis and Radcliffe. Among distorted human shapes inherited from the eighteenth century, monsters and demonic animals appeared in the nineteenth. The ghosts and devils of Walpole, Reeve, Lewis, and Radcliffe reappeared considerably modified in Maturin, Le Fanu, Brontë, and James, and to them and Beckford's Giaour were added vampires and witches. Settings were changed from medieval to contemporary, a man's house turned out to be still his Gothic castle and his soul, already reflected in paintings and statues, began to look back at him from mirrors and, worse still, from his double, a living, breathing copy of himself.

Gradually, if we follow the course of the convention as it winds through the nineteenth century, feeding its weird tales into the mainstream of realistic fiction, we can trace changes in ideas about the place of evil in the mind. The moral absolutes of eighteenth-century thought crumble before a shifting, relative morality. Soon Edgar Allan Poe is playing with ideas of evil and madness. By mid-nineteenth century, Emily Brontë has evoked a primitive *spiritus loci* to confound earlier notions of evil as unnatural; by the 1890s Henry James is placing evil in the eye of the moral arbiter. In tracing the convention, we can see the developing ideas that preoccupied the late eighteenth century and obsessed the nineteenth. In Gothic literature of those years, with its monsters and madmen, we find suggested imaginatively writers intuitive understanding of human evil.

Thus, within this literary convention, as in any other, changes and developments have occurred while it has retained its basically stable and recognizable outlines. Individual works within the convention embody the particularlities of the author's thought in the devices common to the whole convention and thereby reveal both the ideas of the particular moment and the overall purpose of the convention itself. That common purpose, which ties these works together, emerges from the peculiar form of symbolism found in Gothic tales. In this literature, the entire tale is symbolic. In analyzing it, one has to speak of storms that "stand for" the villain's anger or heroines that more closely represent a concept of virtue than flesh-and-blood women. Unlike the artfully buried symbols customary to a realistic work, the flagrant, all-pervading symbolism of a Gothic tale is almost, though not quite, allegorical. This literature is not allegory because its referents are deliberately hazy. The surface fiction is full of vague, unexplained horrors designed, not to render a precise meaning, but to evoke the emotion of "terror." Yet, these effects of "terror" in Gothic tales refer to something beyond the fictional devices that produce them. The quasi-allegorical effect derives from what lies behind the terror-inspiring fictional devices. These tales make use of the realization that monsters in fiction

frighten because they are already the figments of our dreaming imaginations.

They are the shapes into which our fears are projected and so can be used in literature to explore the subterranean landscape of the mind. Terror is evoked when the ghost, the double, or the lurking assassin correspond to something that is actually feared, known or unknown. The fictional beings of Gothic fiction, whether they be human or animal, or manifestations from the "Beyond," whether they be universal archetypes or the pettiest of childhood bogies, symbolize real but vague fears that the reader recognizes as his own and all men's. Beneath the surface fiction there is a probing of humanity's basic psychological forces, an exploration of the misty realm of the subconscious, and the symbols correspond to psychological phenomena that yield to literary analysis. Yet it is probably this quasi-allegorical nature of Gothic symbolism, with its meaning lying almost entirely outside the fictional surface, that has caused this convention to be read only for its surface fiction, about which, it is true, little more can be said than that it evokes fear for fear's sake.

The authors of Gothic fiction, in writing their symbolic fantasies, necessarily chose a deliberately artificial form, for which they took their materials from earlier literature. *The Castle of Otranto* has several immediate antecedents—works that show an early use of historical setting, a ghost here and there, occasional sinister and supernatural happenings, and it has remote ancestors in Shakespeare and medieval romance. These and other predecessors have, of course, been traced. Thorough studies have been made of the relationship of Gothic fiction to the graveyard poets, to Shakespeare and Spenser, and to the combination of antiquarianism and the movement of Sentimentalism that swept the late eighteenth century. But all this is mere learned lumber unless it shows how Gothic fiction does something new. Since Gothic fiction was, as has been generally recognized, a new genre, it follows that it was doing something different with the materials of its predecessors. To discover what that is, it is necessary to uncover the ideas and aesthetic principles that gave rise to these works by analyzing them as symbolic constructs and to trace the convention with all its accretions through time and space. When this is done, the heritage on which Gothic authors drew throws further light on the meaning and purposes of their works.

The source and fountainhead of the entire Gothic tradition, Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, appeared in 1764, twelve years before its first important successor, Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1775), twenty-two years before William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786), and nearly thirty before the first works of Ann Radcliffe. It is a rather frothy little romance, so crammed with events and relationships that it reads like a plot summary of itself. If Walpole had set out to stock a warehouse of Gothic materials for his successors, he could hardly have done better. *Otranto* is peopled with two-dimensional characters embodying virtue and vice; its setting constitutes a representation of the villain's character; it is an indirect narration, a story mediated through two voices before it reaches the reader; and its imagery and supernatural events lead to an interpretation of its meaning as an eighteenth-century psychological tale. All these features reappear in later works. Thus, an examination of *Otranto* tells a great deal about the convention to which it gave rise.

The medieval setting, the thunderous villain, the sensitive hero and heroine, the ghosts and other wonders that identify *The Castle of Otranto* as a Gothic tale were at least supposed to have been adopted from medieval romance. Here and elsewhere the relationship is tenuous at best, as the eighteenth century probably knew. A Gothic novel is to a medieval romance what an artificial ruin in an eighteenth-century garden was to a genuine one, and Walpole's romance is like his house, consciously fanciful in its medievalism. He himself said of Strawberry Hill, the house he transformed into a "Gothic" mansion: "Every true Goth must perceive" that the early rooms "are more the works of fancy than of imitation." The medieval setting of *Otranto*, too, is largely a creation of its author's imagination. Walpole uses his medieval tale to make a fictional reality of evil as a psychological state; not for historical accuracy, but to appeal to eighteenth-century sensibilities. He employs it in accordance with the late eighteenth century's aesthetic concept of the sublime as evoking pity and terror to draw the reader out of himself.

The first Gothic characteristic of *Otranto* is its presentation as an ancient manuscript rediscovered. This produces an indirect, mediated narration that imparts an air of strangeness to the exotic setting. Medieval Italy is already distant from the reader in time and space and, when he is asked to suppose himself imaginatively to be reading a manuscript of shadowy authorship unearthed and presented to him by an unidentified "editor," a sense is imparted that he is about to delve into a world that will be

difficult to understand. In the preface to the first edition, Walpole's "editor" surmises that the story, the work of an unknown chronicler, is possibly by "an artful priest." He speculates about the date of composition, establishing a sense of obscurity by preventing the reader from pinpointing the origin of the manuscript and by remarking on the quality of the original Italian of which his "translation," he says, is a poor rendering. All this puts us on notice that a mysterious world is about to be revealed.

Sentimental and Gothic novelists frequently use fictitious editors of this sort. They are more than just a means for the author to conceal his identity. The statements these "editors" put into their "prefaces" must not be taken at face value. Rather, they are the first of many signals alerting us to the kind of reading required of us. For instance, by setting the "editor" between us and the "chronicler," who is himelf relaying the story and, besides, is presented as suspect, Walpole guards against our rejecting the story because of its blatant artificiality, by putting us on notice that we must follow it according to its own rules.

Thus alerted, we can see that the "translator" criticism of the writer's "moral" and his surmise that the suspect monk was attempting to "confirm the populace in their ancient errors and superstitions" is not a straightforward statement but a device of irony designed to attract our attention to that "moral." The "editor" remarks that the benighted medieval chronicler has erred in basing his work on so flimsy a precept as "that *the sins of fathers are visited on their children*" (Walpole's italics). Yet, in fact, the psychological aberration of incest—also a staple item in Gothic tales—is Walpole's central theme and he is using the editor's words to attract our attention to it. The plot is, in fact, an unravelling of the effect on children of their fathers' deeds, good and bad. From the crushing of Manfred's frail son Conrad under the giant helmet and Manfred's murder of his daughter to the hero Theodore's fulfillment of the prophecy, the children's lives are affected by their fathers' lives. And Manfred himself is driven by the demon of inherited evil. He is presented as not intrinsically wicked but as ruled by passions aroused by his obsession with the prophecy that his line will not retain its unlawful rule over the princedom. He was, we are told, naturally humane, "when his passion did not obscure his reason," but it does, in fact, obscure his reason throughout the novel. Like a medieval Oedipus, he tries to prevent the prophecy from coming true and his own evil deeds and his downfall are the result of his desparate effort to maintain the position he holds through his grandfather's crimes. Thus, the sins of the fathers are visited on the children in his case, too, but not in the sense that Manfred himself or his children have the divine wrath visited upon them. The awareness that his deeds are wrong and the sense that he is forced farther and farther down the path of evil maddens him and is actually the cause of his crimes. Thus, in this first of the Gothic novels, the problem of evil is already presented as a psychological problem created in the ambience of the family.

The characters who must carry the burden of this theme of inherited evil are also typically Gothic, being highly simplified figures useful for the embodiment of ideas. They are eighteenth-century, not medieval, figures, and, like the characters of Sentimental novels, their physical appearance corresponds to their spiritual state. The hero Theodore, his noble nature shining through his peasant's disguise, represents the Right and the Good. A handsome physical reincarnation of his grandfather Alfonso, the virtuous usurped prince whose giant ghost is haunting the castle, Theodore is nobility itself. The three women, all perfectly virtuous, are also perfectly beautiful. The son and heir is physically weak and puny, representing the weakness of Manfred's usurping claim in the face of just retribution. Manfred has more substance than they, because he is a figure torn by the conflict of good and evil within himself, but he is still a beetle-browed villain, also drawn without subtlety. These romance characters are like figures in a crowded tapestry. They talk in declamatory, set speeches that make the novel, crammed with action though it is, seem slow-moving, almost static. Hardly effective as a tale of adventure, it envelops the reader, as in a dream, a sort of symbolic nightmare.

Otranto has a considerable stock of stage effects that became typical of Gothic fiction, not just in themselves, but in the way they are used. The portrait of Manfred's grandfather is not a Gothic device just because it supernaturally steps out of its frame and disgustedly slams a door in Manfred's face. It is typical of Gothic fiction because its gesture of scorn shows us Manfred's degeneration. It reveals that he has slipped lower morally than his grandfather. His ancestor's sins weigh so heavily upon him that they torment him into evil greater than his grandfather's original usurpation. The portrait serves as a reflection of Manfred, just as the statue of Alfonso reflects Alfonso's grandson Theodore. Typically, the device that gives us the re-

flection of the villain is a distorting mirror, giving the wicked man a monstrous shape, while the hero is mirrored faithfully. The way the statue shows signs of life, bleeds when Manfred stabs Matilda, is an example, like the action of the portrait, of the way the quasi-allegorical aspect of Gothic fiction works. These supernatural happenings are "translatable"; for example, the significance of the statue's bleeding can be restated as: "the spirit of Goodness (Alfonso) bleeds metaphorically in compassion at the piteous sight of Virtue (Matilda) destroyed." (It is unfortunate, but beside the point, that Walpole chose to make it a nosebleed.) The other supernatural phenomena in the novel work in the same way.

The central device in *Otranto* became the most famous of all Gothic devices: the identity of the castle or house with its owner. The castle in Walpole's novel *is* Manfred. The wife and daughter he dominates so completely are confined to it almost entirely, as if they lived and breathed and had their being within his personality. The comings and goings of other characters, demanding entrance, fleeing secretively, appearing suddenly, directly reflect their relations with him. And finally, as the novel ends in Manfred's moral collapse, the castle, disobeying the laws of nature, collapses too, disintegrating into rubble as other such buildings would do in later novels.

The identification of castle and man make the castle a manifestation of Manfred's mind. In turn, this causes the giant ghost, with which Walpole again risks making the reader laugh, to render its meaning. Appearing in pieces though it does—first the enormous, sable-plumed helmet, then an arm, then a leg—it is the ghost of Alfonso, a manifestation of "the real owner . . . grown too large to inhabit [the castle]" mentioned in the prophecy. Haunting the castle of Manfred's mind, it is his own awareness of the right and the noble that have been usurped by evil. The animated pieces of the giant suit of armor, unintentionally comic though they are, have a signifiance in relation to the overall meaning of the novel. Thus: the helmet crushes the weakling Conrad; that is, the first sign that Manfred's unlawful claim is to be wrested from him—the helmet—kills the son through whom that claim was to be maintained. The helmet is too big for ordinary princelings, that is, Manfred's and Conrad's heads are figuratively too small to bear their responsibilities as princes. Conrad is too feeble physically to sustain even the first blow of retribution; that is, Manfred's claim to the castle is too weak to endure. The successive appearances of the giant mailed hand and the leg in armor and, finally, the full armored figure of Alfonso continue this theme.

Conrad's death renders Manfred more frantic than ever and so more villainous, showing how he continues to spin the web of evil out of himself. Because this event leaves him without an heir he sets in train the other dire events of the novel, all of which ultimately add pieces to the central portrait of Manfred himself. Other features of the tale also serve to characterize him. Theodore, the hero, for instance, embodies not merely nobility in the abstract but that noble sense of honor that Manfred has had to repress in himself to commit his evil deeds. It makes sense, consequently, that the villain should try to imprison the hero under the same giant helmet; that is, the threat of retribution makes Manfred aware of the unlawfulness of his position. This, in turn, awakens his sense of honor (Theodore speaks up from among the bystanders), which he immediately tries to repress. Theodore escapes temporarily through the hole the helmet has made in the paving of the courtyard, bringing him into the subterranean passages. That is, as Manfred's honor, he is confined in the dark recesses of the castle or Manfred's mind. And here he helps Isabella, the heroine, to escape from Manfred's lustful and incestuous pursuit, Manfred's sense of honor being, indeed, the only impulse that might lead him to spare her. The evil in Manfred, however, is more powerful than his honor, as we see when he angrily imprisons Theodore again, or in other words, again shuts up, represses, his sense of honor.

These correspondences between the characters and abstract qualities give this and other Gothic tales their quasi-allegorical air, but in the scenes that yield this kind of interpretation there is also a great deal of sexual symbolism that adds a rather different dimension, turning the interplay of abstract qualities into an exploration of Manfred's aberrant psychology. Much of the sexual symbolism revolves around Isabella. The daughter figure, who was to have married Conrad, becomes the object of Manfred's incestuous lust, and eventually marries the hero. When, fleeing Manfred, she comes upon Theodore in the subterranean passages, Isabella directs Theodore to open a secret lock in a trapdoor leading to a tunnel, although both are strangers to the place and the only light is a single moonbeam. Should we miss the sexual undertones to this scene, we later find her, in that incident frequently cited by critics, refusing out of maidenly modesty to follow Theodore into the depths of the

caves, where they may take refuge from imminent danger. This moment in the novel is often pointed out as an example of the ridiculous lengths to which the authors of Gothic tales go to emphasize the "purity" of their heroines. But the whole scene has sexual significance. Isabella's refusal to go deep into the caves with Theodore can be seen as a refusal of sexual advances rendered symbolically in a tale in which actual sexual advances by these embodiments of Virtue would be impossible.

As a result of her refusal, her father finds the two of them at the mouth of the cave and there is an immediate clash between him and Theodore, who almost kills him—with a sword. Thus, the handsome, youthful hero has been brought into direct conflict with both the father figures in the novel, Manfred and Isabella's father, who are contending for both Isabella and hegemony over the principality to which Theodore is, in fact, heir. The story reenacts the myth of power wrested from the old king by the young prince. In its association with the incest theme, the conflict over the daughter figure between the boyish hero and the two father figures suggests an Oedipal struggle between son and father for sexual possession of the woman. We should note here that the open conflict between the young and the old man is precipitated by the "overniceness" of the young woman in her relations with the young man. This sort of subtlety pervades the entire Gothic tradition. There are many other features of the novel that have distinct sexual overtones, such as the stabbing of the second daughter figure, Matilda, the giant sword, and more.

The rest of the novel also lends itself to this sort of interpretation. In summary, the cardboard characters of *Otranto*, moving through improbable supernatural events, tell us that Manfred, a good character at heart, has been driven and twisted into evil in his attempt to maintain his inheritance, which is the character (castle) passed on to him from his grandfather whose enthroned wickedness usurped the place of the Good (Alfonso) within him. Driven wild by his sense of his own impotence (his barren wife Hippolyta and his feeble son who is destroyed), Manfred descends to incest. This sin, which mirrors the self, is presented first explicitly in his attempt to marry Isabella then symbolically when he stabs his daughter Matilda. This is again a self-destructive impulse to repress all goodness within himself, for Matilda, an entirely spiritual being who wished to devote her life to God by entering a convent, represents goodness itself, divorced from the entanglements of worldly life. She recognizes Alfonso in Theodore, instantly loves him (the Good), and so releases him from the prison in which Manfred has confined him. Thus, Manfred's good daughter, whom he spurns when his evil is upon him, releases his sense of honor again, but it only plagues him the more. As a consequence, after many a complication, Theodore (Manfred's honor) again rescues Isabella (the object of Manfred's incestuous lust). Honor, however, is once more negated when Manfred kills Matilda, mistaking her for Isabella as she talks with Theodore before the statue of Alfonso. This murder of his own spiritual being brings about both the collapse and the regeneration of Manfred. When the enormity of the deed bursts upon his consciousness, Manfred and the castle collapse simultaneously. The spirit of Alfonso (Manfred's spirit of Goodness) is translated into heaven as Manfred recognizes his own evil and the destruction he has brought on himself, and retires to a spiritual life in a monastery.

As the successive generations of Manfred's line have become increasingly degenerate under the distorting pressure of evil, so the descendants of Alfonso have grown increasingly noble through suffering. The spirit of nobility bursts asunder the walls of the castle, the closed world of Manfred's evil, and Theodore stands forth, not as the inheritor of a crumbled ruin, but as the personification of triumphant nobility above and greater than the worldly power represented by the principality of Otranto.

Thus, the apparently tragic ending of the novel is symbolically optimistic. The view of good and evil it conveys is consonant with the deistic outlook of Walpole and many of his contemporaries and the otherwise incongruous comic resolution in the final paragraph, in which Theodore and Isabella decide on marriage to be sustained by contemplation of the beloved spirit of Matilda, makes sense as a symbolic rendering of moral order restored.

It may be objected that this sort of interpretation reads more into Walpole's tale than is really there. Eighteenth-century novelists are not usually thought of as dredging up subconscious sexual images, or writing dream fantasies, or fictionalizing psychological ideas. Yet what we know of the late eighteenth century and of Walpole himself provides evidence to support these possibilities. All Walpole remembered of his dream was the giant hand on the stair rail, but his own feeling that he wrote the novel under the pressure of that dream indicates that he was able to release his imagination and al-

low the story to well up in his mind, rather than starting with an idea and a conscious plan. That he should have chosen a medieval setting for it was, he said, natural to a mind afloat in the Gothic atmosphere of Strawberry Hill, and, indeed, he was just the person to invent the device of the identification of the villain and his castle, regarding his own house, as he did, as an expression of his personality, an indulgence of his fancy. At the same time, the sort of personal expression this suggests was quite naturally welded in Walpole's work with the fictionalization of ideas. His interests lay with the antiquarianism that was part of the Sentimentalist movement of the day, a movement that, in its many aspects, was bent on exploring the emotions. In literature, Sentimentalism was embodying ideas about human nature, and Walpole was part of that movement.

Thus, personal reasons account for Walpole's having been the one to produce the tale that began the whole tradition, while the age he lived in accounts for the genre's having appeared when it did. No such work, after all, appeared from the pens of authors under similar personal pressures in earlier times. The late eighteenth century was an era of interested inquiry into the nature of the human mind and of an interest in the inner self that was also manifested in other new genres appearing at the time which probe and reveal the psyche.

Although Walpole and his contemporaries cannot have known his work would establish a literary convention, they were aware of the nature of the work itself. We can already see in the preface to the second edition of *Otranto* what Walpole saw himself as having achieved in the novel. He states explicitly that when he blended "the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern," the ancient, which was fantasy, freed his imagination, while the modern, reflecting the real world, lent reality to his characters. The characters are not very convincingly real, of course, but they are recognizably eighteenth-century figures embodying current ideas about the human mind. By placing them in the world of dreams and fairy tales, Walpole was able to present his age's concept of human evil—pride, hatred, violence, cruelty, incest—as part of man's psychology. The one kind of romance enabled him to delve into his own subconscious, the other helped him to relate what he found there to the human condition in general.

Source: Elizabeth MacAndrew, "Introductory Gothic Literature—What It Is and Why," in *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction*, Columbia University Press, 1979, pp. 3–52.

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Austen, Jane, *Northanger Abbey*, edited by Elizabeth Mahoney, Everyman's Press, 1994.

This novel is a parody of the Gothic romance, popular in Jane Austen's own day. The student acquainted with the conventions of Gothic novels will find *Northanger Abbey*, originally published in 1818, an interesting and comical read.

Goddu, Teresa A., *Gothic America*, Columbia University Press, 1997.

Goddu examines the Gothic in American literature from the 1770s through the 1860s, looking particularly at African-American, southern, and female writing. The book would be of interest to anyone concerned with the way that oppression and social myth interact to produce the Gothic in literature.

Oates, Joyce Carol, ed., *American Gothic Tales*, Plume, 1997.

Oates selects forty-six American tales, ranging from some by Charles Brockden Brown in the eighteenth century to Nicholas Baker in the twentieth century. What the tales have in common is a "gothic-grotesque vision," according to Oates. Students of the Gothic should enjoy this influential collection.

Spark, Muriel, *Mary Shelley*, Constable, 1988.

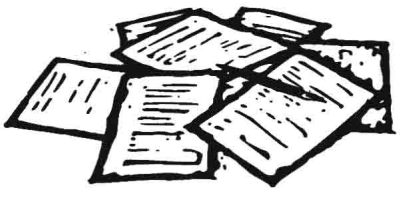
This book is a very well-written biography of the author of *Frankenstein* by a well-known British writer.

Greek Drama

Movement Origin

c. 550 B.C.

The art of drama developed in the ancient Greek city-state of Athens in the late sixth century B.C. From the religious chants honoring Dionysus arose the first tragedies, which centered on the gods and Greece's mythical past. In the fifth century, Greek audiences enjoyed the works of four master playwrights; of these, three—Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides—were tragedians. The early works focused on the good and evil that existed simultaneously in the world as well as the other contradictory forces of human nature and the outside world. All three tragic playwrights drew their material from Greek myths and legends; they each brought new developments to the art form. Aeschylus, whose *Oresteia* trilogy examines the common tragic themes of vengeance and justice, brought tragedy to the level of serious literature. Sophocles wrote perhaps the greatest tragic work of all time, *Oedipus the King*. The last great tragedian, Euripides, questioned traditional values and the ultimate power of the gods. In plays such as *Medea* and *Antigone*, Euripides explores the choices that humans make under difficult situations. C. M. Bowra pointed out in his book *Classical Greece* that "Greek tragedy provides no explicit answers for the sufferings of humanity, but it . . . shows how they happen and how they may be borne." Indeed, Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* expresses a truly sorrowful course of events and how one man, though his life is devastated, forges a new identity and learns to live with himself. The myth of Orestes, as seen in Aeschylus's *Oresteia* trilogy and Euripides'



Orestes introduces other major themes in Greek tragedy, namely justice (divine, personal, and communal) and vengeance.

Comedy most likely also developed out of the same religious rituals as tragedy. Aristophanes was the greatest writer of comedies in the early period known as Old Comedy. He used biting satire in plays such as *Birds* and *Lysistrata* to ridicule prominent Athenian figures and current events. Later comedy relied less on satire and mythology and more on human relations among the Greek common people.

Greek drama created an entirely new art form, and over the centuries, the works of these ancient Greek writers have influenced and inspired countless writers, philosophers, musicians, and other artists and thinkers. Greek drama, with its universal themes and situations, continues to hold relevance for modern audiences.

Representative Authors

Aeschylus (c. 525–456 B.C.)

Aeschylus was born about 525 B.C., probably in Eleusis. He was the first of the best-known ancient Greek tragic dramatists. He lifted the dramatic presentations from a choral performance to a work of art. He also is significant because he added a second actor on stage, allowing for dialogue, and reduced the number of the chorus from about fifty to about fifteen. With Aeschylus, tragic drama was presented through action, not through recitation. Aeschylus took part in the City Dionysia (a festival for the god Dionysus, involving a procession, a sacrifice of bulls with an accompanying feast, and dramatic competitions), probably for the first time in 499 B.C., and he won it for the first time fifteen years later. His masterpiece is the *Oresteia* trilogy, which was produced in 458 B.C. His plays are of lasting literary value because of their lyrical language, intricate plots, and universal themes. His language is marked by force, majesty, and emotional intensity as well as by metaphors and figurative speech. He wrote about ninety plays, of which seven have survived. Aeschylus died about 456 B.C. in Gela, Sicily.

Aristophanes (c. 450–385 B.C.)

Aristophanes was born about 450 B.C., possibly on the island Aegina in Greece. His plays are the only examples of Old Comedy (comedy that focuses largely on political satire rather than human relations, the focus of New Comedy) that have survived in their complete form. Aristophanes' themes and work generally reflected the social, literary, and philosophical life of Athens, and many of his plays were inspired by events of the Peloponnesian War. Eleven of his approximately forty plays survive. Among the most well-known are *Birds* and *Frogs*. His appeal lay in his witty dialogue, his satire, and the inventiveness of his comic scenes. Many of his plays are still produced on the modern stage. Aristophanes died about 385 B.C. in Athens, Greece.

Crates (fl. c. 470–450 B.C.)

Flourishing about 470 B.C. in Athens, Crates is considered to be the founder of Greek comedy. According to Aristotle, he abandoned traditional comedy—which centered on invective—and introduced more general stories that relied on well-developed plots.

Cratinus (?–c. 420 B.C.)

Cratinus was regarded in antiquity as one of the three great writers of the Old Comedy period. Only fragments of his twenty-seven known plays survive, but they are enough to show that his comedies, like those of Aristophanes, seem to have been a mixture of parodied mythology and reference to contemporary events. For example, Athenian leader Pericles was a frequent subject of Cratinus's ridicule. He died about 420 B.C.

Epicharmus (c. 530–440 B.C.)

Epicharmus was born about 530 B.C. He is seen as the originator of Sicilian, or Doric, comedy. He is credited with more than fifty plays, but few lines survive. Many of his plays were mythological burlesques: he even satirized the gods. His lively style made his work more akin to New Comedy than the Old Comedy of his time. He died about 440 B.C.

Eupolis (fl. c. 445–411 B.C.)

Along with Cratinus and Aristophanes, Eupolis was regarded in antiquity as one of the three great writers of the Old Comedy period. His first play was produced in 429 B.C., but only fragments of his plays survive. He focused his satire on Athenian demagogues, wealthy citizens, but also concerned himself with serious subjects, such as how Athens could turn the tables on Sparta in the ongoing Peloponnesian War. Eupolis died about 411 B.C. while he was still a young man.

Euripides (c. 485–406 B.C.)

Euripides was born about 485 B.C. in Attica (the region of central Greece that has Athens as its capital). One of the great three tragedians, he won his first victory at the City Dionysia, in which he competed twenty-two times, in 441. Nineteen (including one play of disputed authorship) of his ninety-two plays survive. His most famous plays include *Medea*, produced in 431 B.C.; *Hippolytus* (428 B.C.); *Electra* (417 B.C.); *Trojan Women* (415 B.C.); *Ion* (circa 411 B.C.); *Iphigenia at Aulis* (405 B.C., posthumously); and *Bacchae* (405 B.C., posthumously).

Euripides differed from Aeschylus and Sophocles in his characterization: Euripides' characters' tragic fates stem almost entirely from their own flawed natures and uncontrolled passions. The gods look upon their suffering with apparent indifference. His plays also differed structurally from those of the other two playwrights: Euripides' plays are usually introduced by prologues and often end with the providential appearance of a god, an action known as *deus ex machina*. The prologue usually is a monologue that explains the situation and the characters with which the action begins; the *deus ex machina* includes a god's epilogue that reveals the future fortunes of the characters. Euripides died in 406 B.C. in Macedonia.

Menander (c. 342–292 B.C.)

Menander was born about 342 B.C. Today, he is considered to be the supreme writer of New Comedy (comedy that focuses on human relations), but, during his lifetime, he was less successful. Of the more than one hundred plays that he wrote, only eight won prizes at Athens' dramatic festivals. He produced his first play in 321 B.C. The only one of his plays to survive intact is *Dyscolus*, which won a festival prize in 317. The Roman writers Plautus and Terence adapted many of Menander's works; thus he influenced the development of European comedy from the Renaissance on. Menander died about 292 B.C.

Phrynichus (fl. c. 420 B.C.)

Phrynichus was an Athenian poet of the Old Comedy period and a contemporary of Aristophanes and Eupolis. He began producing plays in 430 B.C. and won two victories in the City Dionysia.

Sophocles (c. 496–406 B.C.)

Sophocles was born about 496 B.C. in Colonus, near Athens. He is one of classical Athens' three great tragic playwrights. He first won the City Dionysia in 468 B.C., defeating Aeschylus. He went on to write a total of 123 tragedies for this annual festival, winning perhaps as many as twenty-four times and never receiving less than second prize. Of the seven of his plays that have survived, his most well-known drama is *Oedipus the King*, which was performed sometime between 430 B.C. and 426 B.C. Sophocles also made important dramatic innovations. He reduced the number of members of the chorus and added a third actor onstage. He is noted for his language, artistry, and vivid characterizations.

Sculpture of a Greek theater mask

Sophocles also was a prominent citizen of Athens in that he served as a treasurer in the Delian League (the confederation of Greek states with Athens as the leader that formed in 478 B.C., soon after the defeat of the Persian invasion under Xerxes in order to ensure continued freedom), was elected as one of ten military and naval commanders, and served as one of ten members of the advisory committee that organized Athens' financial and domestic recovery after its defeat during the Peloponnesian War at Syracuse in 413 B.C. Sophocles died in 406 B.C. in Athens.

Sophron (fl. c. 430 B.C.)

Sophron of Syracuse lived and wrote in the early to mid 400s B.C. He wrote rhythmical prose mimes that depicted scenes from daily life.

Thespis (fl. c. 534 B.C.)

Thespis came from the district of Icaria in Attica. He is the first recorded winner of the prize at the City Dionysia, which he won in about 534 B.C. Thespis is credited with the invention of the speaking actor (who "delivered prologues and conversed with the chorus-leader" and impersonated the heroes that his drama was about), thus becoming the world's first actor. He is considered to be the "inventor of tragedy."

Representative Works

Antigone

Sophocles' *Antigone* (441 B.C.) depicts the title character's defiance of the king of Thebes and his edicts. Antigone's brother has died in his rebellion against the king, Creon, who is also his uncle, and Creon has forbidden proper burial rites to be carried out for him. The play's clash is between Antigone and Creon, whose differences center on opposing attitudes toward authority; Antigone values the personal sphere and the laws of gods and religions, whereas Creon values authoritarian control and the subordination of personal feeling to the state.

Bacchae

Many critics regard the *Bacchae* (circa 405 B.C.) as Euripides' masterpiece. In this play, the god Dionysus arrives in Thebes to introduce his cult. King Pentheus resists, so Dionysus causes the women, including Pentheus's mother, to fall into a deluded, frenzied state. When the women come across Pentheus, they believe him to be a wild animal, and they kill and dismember him. Dionysus considers his terrible revenge justified, thus showing his own lack of morality. The play demonstrates how the ecstatic side of the Dionysiac religion needs reason and self-control for balance.

Birds

Along with *Frogs*, *Birds* (414 B.C.) is widely considered to be one of Aristophanes' masterpieces. It exemplifies the utopian theme in Greek literature. The ruler of Athens, Peisthetaerus, wants to escape the war that has engulfed Greece, and he has persuaded the birds to join him in building a new city that will hang in the sky, between the dominions of humankind and the gods. Peisthetaerus comes to rule over even the gods. *Birds* satirizes Athens' imperial goals, and some critics believe that it foretells the city's impending loss to Sparta in the Peloponnesian War and subsequent decline. *Birds* is longer than any other ancient Greek drama—comedy or tragedy—and demonstrates the prowess of Aristophanes.

Dyscolus

Dyscolus (The Grouch), Menander's prize-winning play, was first produced in 317 B.C. While the play tells about a young man's efforts to marry, it focuses on the curmudgeonly figure of the girl's father, Knemon, whose misanthropy has led him to abandon his parental responsibility. The play, an early work, is relatively simple, but it is the only one of Menander's plays for which a complete text exists today, and it shows his ability to create surprise in the final act.

Frogs

Many critics consider *Frogs* to be one of Aristophanes' masterpieces. It mixes humor and serious matters with contemporary politics, literary criticism, gods, and religion. It won first prize at the City Dionysia when it was first produced in 405 B.C. and was unusually honored by being given a repeat production. In *Frogs*, Dionysus, the god of drama, goes to the underworld to bring Euripides back to Athens. In Hades, Dionysus witnesses a drama competition between Euripides and Aeschylus; Euripides represents the modern age, while Aeschylus represents the elite and the glory days of the past. As a result of the competition, Dionysus decides to take Aeschylus back to the land of the living with him instead of Euripides, believing that Aeschylus is better able to restore moral, political, and martial strength in Athens' citizenry.

Lysistrata

Arisophanes' comedy *Lysistrata* was written in 411 B.C., a few years after Athenian warriors were defeated in Sicily in the Peloponnesian War. *Lysistrata* has the women of Athens, in conjunction with the rest of the women in Greece—including the Spartan enemies—go on a domestic and sexual strike in order to force their husbands to stop fighting. Aristophanes thus used women, who took no part in political or military life, to attack the long-lasting war. This play is the most often produced Greek Drama in modern times.

Medea

Medea (431 B.C.) is one of Euripides' most powerful and best-known plays. It focuses on Medea, who takes revenge on her unfaithful hus-

band by killing their sons. The play depicts her struggle between her sense of personal injury and her love for her children, and it raises an important theme of Greek tragedy, vengeance. Despite Medea's horrible actions, Euripides evokes sympathies for Medea, who, for most of the play, has the support of the women of Corinth.

Oedipus at Colonus

Oedipus at Colonus (produced circa 401 B.C., posthumously), Sophocles' final play, finds the old, blind Oedipus at the sacred grove at Colonus, a village near Athens. He has spent the past years in exile, rejected by his family with the exception of his two daughters. Now, however, his sons and his brother-in-law turn to him to help them protect the city of Thebes. The play is noted for its melancholy, beauty, and lyricism. Sophocles also invests in Oedipus spiritual and moral authority. Some critics have read the play biographically, as Sophocles' poetic last will and testament.

Oedipus the King

Also known as *Oedipus Rex*, *Oedipus the King*, first presented by Sophocles about 427 B.C., is one of the most important tragedies ever written. It concerns the downfall of Oedipus, the king of Thebes, who discovers that he unwittingly has killed his father and married his mother. When Oedipus realizes what he has done, he blinds himself and leaves Thebes. However, although Oedipus has fulfilled his preordained fate, his actions show integrity and powerful self-will. They also show an acceptance of his new and horrific existence. Aristotle used this play in his *Poetics* to define the qualities of all successful tragedies. Psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud made use of the story of Oedipus in coining the term *Oedipal complex* to express man's usually suppressed desire to get rid of his father in order to marry his mother and have her all to himself.

Oresteia

Aeschylus' *Oresteia* is the only trilogy that has survived from ancient Greece. First performed in 458 B.C., it consists of *Agamemnon*, *Choephoroi* (The Libation Bearers), and *Eumenides* (which refers to the "kindly ones," the avenging furies who seek vengeance on Orestes). It tells the story of the cycle of murder, vengeance, punishment, and justice acted out within the royal house of Atreus. The *Oresteia* is widely considered to be Aeschylus' masterpiece and one of the greatest works of world literature. It is remarkable for its brilliant union of poetry, song, dance, and music as well as its depiction of the development of the Athenian democratic jury system.

1736 copper engraving of Greek actors wearing masks

Prometheus Bound

Prometheus Bound was presented as one part of a trilogy in 472 B.C. In the play, Prometheus has defied Zeus and saved humankind by giving them fire, and Zeus has chained Prometheus to a peak as punishment. The struggle of the play derives from the clash of wills between the powerful king of the gods, Zeus, and Prometheus, who stubbornly refuses to share the secret knowledge concerning Zeus's ability to hold onto his power. Prometheus has come to stand for an archetypal figure of defiance against tyrannical power. Some scholars doubt Aeschylus's authorship of *Prometheus Bound*.

Themes

Tragedy

The first forms of Greek drama were tragedies. "The theme of all tragedy is the sadness of life and the universality of evil," wrote noted scholar Paul Roche in *The Orestes Plays of Aeschylus*. "The inference the Greeks drew from this was *not* that life

Media Adaptations

- *Oedipus Rex*, directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini, came out in 1967. It stars Silvana Mangano and Franco Citti and is in Italian with English subtitles.
- *Medea*, starring Judith Anderson and Colleen Dewhurst and directed by José Quintero, appeared in cinemas in 1959. It is available on Ivy Classics Video (1991).
- George Tzavellas's adaptation of *Antigone*, starring Irene Papas and Manos Katrakis, came out in 1962.
- The opera *Oedipus Rex* was completed in 1949. It features music by Igor Stravinsky and a libretto by Jean Cocteau. It is available on videodisk.

was not worth living, but that because it was worth living the obstacles to it were worth overcoming." Through suffering, the tragic hero is able to learn and grow.

Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides were the great Greek tragedians, and they brought distinctive themes and perspectives to their works. Aeschylus transformed tragic drama into great literature. His plays focused on the plights, decisions, and fates of individuals who were intrinsically intertwined with their community and their gods. In Aeschylus' works, gods controlled the actions of mortal men and women. Self-pride caused humans to defy the will of the gods, which led to punishment. A Sophoclean tragedy generally revolved around characters whose "tragic"—or personal—flaws caused them to suffer. The tragedy climaxed as the main character recognized his or her errors and accepted responsibility and its accompanying punishment. Of the three tragedians, the characters of Sophocles are generally considered to best reflect the true state of human experience. Euripides differed from the earlier playwrights both in his belief that the world operates by chance rather than by the will of gods and in his treatment of his mythic characters as if they were people of his own time. These characters, subject to the same political and social pressures as fifth-century Athenians, were in charge of their own destinies. Their tragic fate arises from their own inability to deal with the difficulties that the gods placed upon them or from their own passions. The tragedies of Euripides often questioned traditional and widely accepted social values.

Comedy

Comedy was the other major form of Greek drama. Greek comedies often made fun of people, particularly politicians, military leaders, and other prominent figures. Victor Ehrenberg noted in *The People of Aristophanes* that "In no other place or age were men of all classes attacked and ridiculed in public and by name with such freedom." Greek comedies were varied productions, ranging from the intellectual to the bawdy. Some comedies were satirical, some slapstick. They included such devices as verbal play, parody, metaphor, and allegory. Aristophanes, the most noted comic playwright, used satire to make fun of the leaders and institutions of his day. He often placed them in absurd situations, such as the one in the *Birds*, in which the heroes try to build "Cuckoo City," a peaceful community in the sky.

Greek comedy is divided into three periods. Old Comedy—the first phase of ancient Greek comedy—emerged during the fifth century B.C. Primarily known through the work of Aristophanes, it is sometimes referred to as Aristophanic comedy. The high-spirited satire of public figures and events characterize these plays. Though they are filled with songs, dances, and buffoonery, they also include blatant political criticism as well as commentary on literary and philosophical topics. The plays of Aristophanes parody tragedy. Middle Comedy, dating from the closing years of the fifth century B.C. to nearly the middle of the fourth century B.C., represents the transition from Old Comedy to New Comedy. Comedies from this period made good-humored attacks on classes or character types rather than individuals. The playwright Menander introduced the New Comedy in about 320 B.C. Like Old Comedy, it satirized contemporary Athenian society, but the ridicule was far milder. New Comedy also differed from Old Comedy because it parodied average citizens—fictitious characters from ordinary life—rather than public figures, and it had no supernatural or heroic overtones. The plays of New Comedy often focused on thwarted lovers and concealed identities, and playwrights presented a host of stock characters, such

as the cruel father, the clever slave, and the conceited cook.

Struggle and Rebellion

Greek tragedies all depicted struggles of some sort, most commonly between the state and individuals, between human law and natural law, or between human efforts and preordained fate. In many Greek tragedies, it is the person who rebels against the established order of things who becomes the hero or heroine. Sophocles' *Antigone* depicts some of these struggles. Antigone defies her uncle Creon, the king of Thebes, when she performs burial rites for her brother. In doing so, Antigone elevates the need to follow the laws of the gods, who decree that her brother must be buried, above the laws of Creon, who declared such burial illegal in the case of Antigone's brother, because he brought an army against his home city. As punishment for her disobedience, her uncle sentences her to death. At the end of the play, Creon, who has placed his decree above the command of the gods, is himself punished through the suicides of his wife and son. Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* demonstrates the human effort to escape preordained fate. Oedipus's parents—Laius and Jocasta—attempt to thwart the oracles that tell them their son will murder his father and marry his mother. As the myth and the play bears out, despite their efforts to change fate, Oedipus fulfills this prophecy.

The Common Man

Both tragedies and comedies dignify the common man. Members of Greek royalty and upper classes create a world filled with adultery, incest, madness, and murder, and it is the shepherds, craftspeople, yeomen farmers, and nurses who provide a stable environment amidst this debauchery. Sophocles and Euripides endowed these secondary characters with common sense and sensitivity. In Sophocles' *Antigone*, for example, the men serving in Creon's guard offer their king advice and even disagree with him. Comedy utilized the common man in a different way than tragedy did. Comic writers introduced regular characters, such as the orphan, the young lover, and the master of the house as protagonists instead of relying solely on imperial characters; their stories, too, were as worthy of being told. Menander's plays particularly emphasized a civilized world in which the rules of humanity prevail.

Mythology and the Gods

Early Greek drama, both tragedy and comedy, drew from the stories of mythology and legend. These myths illuminated universal problems, ones that could pertain to situations plaguing fifth-century Greece as well as to past events. The ancient Greeks believed that tragedy should deal with illustrious figures and significant events, thus the pantheon of gods is ever-present and, often, omniscient. Aeschylus' plays, for instance, often centered on the justification of the gods' ways in relation to humankind or the comprehension of the form of justice meted out by the gods. The gods might punish the characters, as Zeus punished Prometheus in *Prometheus Bound*, or they might settle the seemingly insurmountable conflicts the characters faced, as when Athena decreed that the Furies must give up their torment of Orestes in the *Oresteia*. The tragedians took the basic premise of their stories from mythology but transformed them for dramatic intent, infusing the heroes and heroines with human qualities and relating their themes to the present day. Mythology also lent the tragedians' plays a more universal quality, allowing them to comment on topical events without limiting their scope to contemporary events and figures.

Gods also played a prominent role in Old Comedy. Cratinus's *Dionysalexandrus* is a play of mythological burlesque. It retells the story of the judgment of Paris (Alexander), with variations. Aristophanes' work parodies tragedy; thus the Greek gods and goddesses take a central role in the lives of its characters. However, mythology in drama was on the wane. Athens' defeat in the Peloponnesian War contributed to the sense of disillusionment that the ancient Greeks felt with their legendary heroes and gods, and with the rise of the New Comedy, writers wer moving away from mythological subjects toward common subjects that centered on love and family life.

Love

Love as a dramatic theme was first introduced in the comedic plays. The New Comedy placed its major plot emphasis on romantic intrigue, such as a young man's efforts to win the bride of his choice. Plays of the New Comedy often end in marriage. Menander's plays might introduce perverse complications. In *The Arbitrators*, the problems arise when a newly married woman bears a child shortly after the wedding. The husband accuses her of being unfaithful; however, unbeknownst to him, her husband previously raped her at a festival. The play ends happily, with the husband's remorseful speech.

Style

Structure

As set out by Aristotle in his *Poetics* in 350 B.C., tragedy generally follows a set sequence of events. First, the *hamartia* takes place. This is the tragic error committed by the hero, and it usually is committed unwittingly. Oedipus' act of killing Laius and marrying Jocasta is the *hamartia* in *Oedipus the King*. The unexpected turn of events that brings this error to light is known as the *peripeteia*, and the hero's recognition of this error is the *anagnorisis*. According to Aristotle, the *peripeteia* and the *anagnorisis* are most effective when occurring at the same time. They often come about when the true identity of one of the characters becomes known. This is the case for Oedipus, whose discovery of who his real father is causes him to recognize that his wife is his mother, thereby leading to the reversal of his situation from happiness to misery. Lastly comes the catharsis, the release of the emotions of fear and pity that the tragedy has aroused in the audience.

Old Comedy also had a distinct structure. The first part is the introduction or prologue, in which the plot is explained and developed. The play proper begins with the *parados*, which is the entry of the chorus. This is followed by the *agon*, or contest, which is a ritualized debate between two main characters, a character and the chorus, or two halves of the chorus; and the *parabasis*, in which the chorus speaks to the audience about the political and social events of the day and also criticizes Athens' well-known citizens. Following a series of farcical scenes, the play concludes with a banquet or wedding. While Old Comedy followed a formal design, it had little conventional plot, instead presenting a series of episodes, which, when taken together, illustrated a serious political or social issue. New Comedy, however, articulated the plot much more clearly and featured characters who devised intrigues and tricks to achieve certain goals.

Chorus

The Greek chorus played a crucial role in Greek plays. Members of the chorus—twelve to fifteen actors—remained on stage throughout the entire play and periodically recited poetic songs in unison. Overall, the chorus observed and interpreted the actions of the play, reacted to characters and events, and even probed the characters with questions and gave advice. However, the chorus took on additional responsibilities in the hands of different playwrights. In some plays, the chorus helped move the plot along. In other plays, it introduced major themes. "The chorus complements, illustrates, universalizes, or dramatically justifies the course of events," writes Michael Grant in *Myths of the Greeks and Romans*, "it comments or moralizes or mythologizes upon what happens, and opens up the spiritual dimension of the theme or displays the reaction of public opinion."

However, the role of the chorus changed over time and in the hands of the three great tragedians. For Aeschylus, the chorus played a more central role. In the *Suppliants*, the chorus is actually the protagonist, while in *Agamemnon*, the play's themes find clearest expression in the vocalizations of the chorus. In Sophoclean drama, the chorus could be interpreted as a group of characters itself, with a distinct perception and point of view. In some of Sophocles's plays, as in *Ajax* and *Electra*, the chorus was most closely attached to the title character. In other plays, namely *Antigone* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, the choruses are made up of city elders who present their opinions on the events they are witnessing. By the time of Euripides, however, the chorus had taken on a far less crucial role. According to Rex Warner writing in *Three Great Plays of Euripides*, in the works of Euripides, "The chorus perform in the role of sympathetic listeners and commentators, or provide the audience with a kind of musical and poetic relief from the difficulties or horrors of the action."

Comedy also made use of the chorus. In Old Comedy, the chorus might take on a slightly different role. For instance, members of the chorus often stirred up trouble among characters. By contrast, the New Comedy used the chorus primarily as a small band of performers who served to entertain the audience or provide musical interludes between scenes.

Satyr Plays

Satyr plays were a blend of tragedy and comedy. The underlying themes of the plays were usually of a serious nature, but their plots and tone were absurd and designed for humor. They featured obscene visual and verbal humor as well as characters called satyrs, which were half-man, half-animal, and Silenus, a mythical horseman. Satyr plays were presented after the tragedies at the theatrical competitions and presented a humorous or farcical version of the tragedy that had just been witnessed. Satyr plays were shorter than tragedies, had their unique choral dance, and used more col-

Topics for Further Study

- Read or review the masterpieces of Greek tragedy and Greek comedy. How are these plays alike? How are they different? Which do you think most represents Greek culture in the fifth century B.C.?
- Compare and contrast the features of Old Comedy and New Comedy. Which of these forms seems more relevant to modern drama? Explain your answer.
- Read Aristotle's *Poetics* and apply his analysis of tragedy to a play of your choosing.
- Read Plato's *Republic*, in which he discusses his ideas about tragedy and its place in society. Out of what philosophical ideas does Plato's argument arise? How valid is his argument?
- Find out more about life in ancient Greece in the fifth century B.C. Based on your research, decide if Greek tragedies or comedies would have been more meaningful to fifth-century audiences.
- Trace the history of drama throughout the ages or in one specific period, such as the Elizabethan period or the French neoclassical period. How did the works and ideas of the Greek playwrights influence these later movements?
- Find out more about the Peloponnesian War, which Aristophanes took as the backdrop for most of his plays. How do you think the ongoing strife might have affected Athenian society, and how might this have been reflected in Aristophanes' comedies?
- Find out more about the rise of Athenian democracy. Then investigate one or more of the Greek plays to see how new ideas about government are referenced in these plays.

loquial speech. Like tragedies, satyr plays drew their themes and subjects from mythology. Because Euripides' *Cyclops* is the only satyr play that has survived in its entirety, little concrete information is known about them, however.

Deus Ex Machina

Literally meaning "god from the machine," *deus ex machina* was the entry of a god or gods at the end of the play to save the protagonist. The *machina*, a staging device, was a crane that flew in the gods or heroes at the end of the play. Euripides and Aristophanes both frequently employed a *deus ex machina* ending. Euripides' gods would explain in an epilogue what happened next or would remove the protagonist. For example, the *deus ex machina* was used in *Medea* to bring Helios, the sun god, to save Medea from the wrath of Jason, her husband, as well as to allow her to take the bodies of their sons, thus depriving her husband of even the solace of their proper burial.

Unity

Ancient Greek tragedies upheld what Aristotle later named the Unities of Time, Place, and Action. Unity of time required that the play take place in twenty-four hours or less; unity of place required that the play take place in a single location; and unity of action required that the play focus on only one central story or action and eliminate action or characters that were not relevant to the plot. However, some critics have pointed out that the unity of time was not strictly adhered to but more implied by the close focus on relevant action. For example, Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* opens on the morning that the Trojan War ends in Asia Minor, yet by the end of that day, Agamemnon has returned some five hundred miles from the conflict, to Greece, where he is murdered by his wife. Aristotle believed that observance of the unities contributed to the intensity of the audience's experience while viewing the play, particularly the cathartic response.

Movement Variations

Other Forms of Tragedy

Aside from the tragedy of the ancient Greeks, great tragedy has been created only in three other periods and places: England, from 1558 to 1625; seventeenth-century France; and Europe and America from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. Like Greek theater, Elizabethan drama arose out of religious ceremonies. *Gorboduc*, by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton, the first formal tragedy in English, was performed in 1561, but Christopher Marlowe, who wrote in the late 1500s, was the first tragedian worthy of the Greek tradition. Shakespeare produced his five greatest tragedies in the first years of the 1600s. However, tragedy as a drama form began to decline after Shakespeare. During the 1600s, however, dramatists in France were also attempting to bring back the ancient form of Greek tragedy. Pierre Corneille and Jean Racine represent the best of the French neoclassical period. These playwrights closely followed the Greek models and Aristotelian unities and drew characters and situations from ancient Greece. Modern tragedy began with Norway's Henrik Ibsen, Sweden's August Strindberg, and Russia's Anton Chekhov. In America, however, few plays presented the full dimensions of tragedy. Some critics have called Eugene O'Neill the first American to write tragedy for the American theater; he sought to accomplish the creation of true tragedy because he believed that the meaning of life—and its hope—lay in the tragic.

The Greek Theater and the Staging of Plays

The ancient Greek theater was an outdoor area consisting of a large circular dancing floor on which the action took place (called the orchestra); a "scene building" (*skene*, from which the modern word *scene* derives) facade behind the orchestra to which painted scenery could be attached; and a semicircular auditorium around the orchestra fitted with bleachers to seat anywhere from ten to twenty thousand spectators. People from all social classes attended the Greek plays.

Plays began with the entrance of the actors and the chorus, accompanied by musicians, through the two entrances on either side of the orchestra. The performers moved and gestured in unison, only breaking formation when they reached their assigned places in the orchestra. Then the story began to unfold, and the members of the chorus moved from place to place as they reacted to the play's events and characters. The actors who were distinct from the chorus wore elaborate masks that depicted recognizable types, for example, old men or young women. These masks allowed the same actor to play multiple roles in the different scenes of the play and also let men play women's parts. The theatrical costumes were brightly colored, which aided in character recognition as well. For example, royalty wore purple. All the action took place in outdoor settings, either natural or urban ones.

Opera

Opera developed out of the Greek tragedies. This musical form was created in Florence, Italy, at the end of the sixteenth century when a group of scholars, poets, and musicians, called the Camerata, discovered the important role that music had played in ancient tragedy. Members of the Camerata collaborated and performed two shows based on mythological stories of Daphne and Eurydice, in 1597 and 1600, respectively. Both performances combined drama, music, and spectacle into what they believed was a recreation of Greek tragedy. The operas were an immediate success, and, in the early 1600s, this new type of performance spread throughout Italy as well as to France, Austria, Germany, and England. By 1607, Claude Monteverdi's masterpiece, *Orfeo*, established the fundamental form of the European opera that would remain virtually unchanged for the next three hundred years.

Historical Context

The City Dionysia

Drama arose out of feasts held in honor of the Greek god Dionysus. By the eighth century B.C., the Greeks had developed elaborate rituals in his honor, which included poetry recitations and a ceremony called the *dithyramb*. Over time, the *dithyramb*, which was a special form of verse about Dionysus that was accompanied by song and dance, became the highlight of the festival, and it developed to include tales of other gods and heroes. Beginning about 535 B.C., Athens began to hold annual festivals known as City Dionysia. This festival included a dramatic competition of *dithyramb* and *rhapsodia*—Homeric recitation contests. The poet Thespis was the first winner of this contest. His play included *dithyramb* and *rhapsodia*, but he expanded these traditional presentations to include

Compare & Contrast

- **500s B.C.**: During this century, Athens becomes the dominant power of the Greek city-states and achieves its greatest economic prosperity and cultural flowering. The Golden Age of Greece sees Athens emerge as the center of the arts.

  Today: Athens dominates Greek political, cultural, and economic life. About four million people, some 40 percent of the population, live in the city's metropolitan area. Modern Athens is filled with ruins and reminders of the city's ancient glory.

- **500s B.C.**: The Greeks believe in a pantheon of twelve gods who live atop Mount Olympus. The gods are seen as powerful beings who do not readily overlook any slights to their honor. Some actions that most offend the gods include a lack of hospitality, lack of proper burial for family members, human arrogance, and murderous violence.

  Today: The ancient Greek religion held sway until about the fourth century A.D., when Christianity spread to the region. Today, all but a small minority of Greeks are members of the Church of Greece, or the Greek Orthodox Church. However, Greeks still maintain pride in the myths of the past.

- **500s B.C.**: Around 508 B.C., Cleisthenes overthrows the aristocrats who rule Athens and turns the city into a direct democracy. An assembly called the Council of Five Hundred—chosen from local government units—makes the laws, and a court system in which people are tried by a jury of citizens is implemented. In the mid-fifth century B.C., Pericles opens public offices to all male citizens and provides that office-holders be paid, thus making it possible for non-wealthy men to serve in government.

  Today: Greece is a parliamentary republic. Parliament consists of three hundred deputies, and its members are elected for four-year terms by direct, universal, and secret ballots. The prime minister holds extensive power but must be able to command the confidence of the parliament.

a chorus as well. Thespis thus developed a new art form that later became known as theatrical plays.

The performance began with a procession made up of the playwrights, wealthy citizens who funded the festival, choruses, actors, and important public officials. This parade wended its way through the streets of Athens on the first day of the competition. The procession entered the theater, and then the public sacrifice of a bull to Dionysus took place. The competition opened with the *dithyrambic* contests, and the three tragedies were performed in the ensuing days, each followed by a satyr play. Magistrates responsible for theatrical productions during the City Dionysia were given the responsibility of producing comedies about 487 B.C., though volunteers probably produced them there for some years before that. The comedies were presented at night, after the tragedies. A panel of ten judges selected the top winners.

The City Dionysia remained an integral part of Athens' culture throughout the city's Golden Age. Taking place at the end of March, it was a major holiday attraction. Greeks from other city-states were welcome to attend the competition or enter plays in it.

The Age of Pericles

Democracy was born in Athens in the late sixth century B.C., after a long period of dictatorship. To prevent a dictatorship from taking shape once again, the populace developed a set of strong laws. Athenian males, excluding slaves, voted on the city's political and economic affairs. The city's assembly made all legislative and electoral decisions.

The defence of the city was managed by ten generals, elected on an annual basis; Pericles was frequently elected as one of these generals and held the post almost every year from 443 to his death in

429. He first came to prominence in 463 and dominated Athenian politics from 447 B.C. until his death in 429. Pericles sought to increase the Athenian empire and bolster the city's power throughout Greece. His ambitions led Athens into the Peloponnesian War.

The rise of democracy plays prominent roles in the tragedies. The *Oresteia*, for example, reflects the transformation of Athens from the code of tribal vengeance to the rule of communal, or state, law. According to some critics, Creon, the king-tyrant of Thebes in *Antigone*, was modeled at least in part on Pericles and was intended to serve as a warning to Pericles and the Athenian people about the dangers of dictatorship and putting too much power in the hands of one person.

The Peloponnesian War

By the mid-fifth century B.C., Athens had built an empire that included many of the Greek city-states. However, it did not rule its empire as democratically as it did its own city-state. Other Greek cities within the Athenian Empire grew discontented and began to turn to Sparta, Athens' long-standing rival, for protection. In 431 B.C., Sparta and its allies declared war on Athens, a war which came to involve most of the city-states. The war lasted for an entire generation, bringing great loss of life, including the death of Pericles. In 404 B.C., Athens surrendered, and the ensuing years were ones of instability for Greece. Aristophanes used the backdrop of the Peloponnesian War in many of his plays. Though many of the scenes were very funny, he sought to convey the lesson of the absurdity of the war.

Greek Women

The Greek tragedies depict strong, independent women, but in ancient Athens, this was a rare role for women to play. Women were unable to participate in politics and government; they could not vote or hold office. They rarely were even seen outside the home, except at such events as festivals, marriages, and funerals. They could not marry without the sanction of their male guardian. Only men could initiate divorce, and this was relatively easy for them to accomplish.

However, the tragedians in their plays create women who defy such social standards and the laws that uphold them. Antigone is one such character, choosing to ignore the decree of the king when she decides to bury her brother. Antigone's sister, Ismene, reminds her of their subordinate status—"We must remember, first, that we were born women, who should not strive with men"—but Antigone ignores this warning and follows her own conscience. Medea is another character who flouts contemporary standards. At the beginning of *Medea*, she openly speaks out against the unfairness of this system to the women of Corinth. Throughout the drama, she emerges as a completely dominating figure.

Critical Overview

Greek drama has been very important for the ancient Greeks, later literary development, and modern audiences. Aeschylus, the earliest Greek tragedian, laid the foundation for an aesthetics of drama that would influence plays for well over two thousand years. As E. Christian Kopf stated in "Aeschylus" from *The Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Volume 176: *Ancient Greek Authors*, "In the twentieth century Aeschylus's plays, especially his trilogy known as the *Oresteia* (458 B.C.), are widely considered to be masterpieces containing some of the greatest poetry ever composed for the stage."

The artistic effects of Greek tragedy—the earliest form of drama created—were felt almost immediately. Aristophanes' *Frogs*, produced in 405 B.C., compares the work of Aeschylus and Euripides. Athenian philosophers began to analyze Greek drama as its period of greatness drew to an end. Plato initiated the history of criticism of tragedy with his speculation on the role of censorship in the *Republic*, written about 380 B.C. Fearing the power of tragedy's language to excite emotions that might be harmful to social order, he recommended that tragedians submit their works to a philosopher ruler for approval. John J. Keaney summarizes Plato's beliefs in *Ancient Writers*:

> Particularly repugnant to his own religious views are such literary statements as those stating that the gods are responsible for human evils, that they appear to men in various disguises, that they are untruthful.

Aristotle was one of the earliest known critics of Greek drama. In his *Poetics*, written about 334 B.C., Aristotle defined a perfect tragedy as imitating actions that excite "pity and fear," which ends in bringing about a cathartic effect. Aristotle also emphasized plot over character. "Most important of all," he said, "is the structure of the incidents. For tragedy is an imitation not of men but of an ac-

Ruins of a Greek ampitheater near Cyrene, Libya

tion and of life." In several chapters of his *Poetics*, Aristotle analyzed Greek tragedies, finding commonalties in structure, characterization, and plot devices. He also found Euripides to be the "most tragic of dramatists."

The Roman poet Horace discussed in his *Ars Poetics* (Art of Poetry) the Greek tradition of having dramatic and forbidding events, such as Medea's murder of her two children, take place offstage instead of being performed onstage. He transformed this tendency into a dictum on decorum. Horace believed that tragedy was a genre with its own style. For example, a theme for comedy may not be expressed in a tragedy. Such stylistic distinction lasted throughout the century, as noted in Italian writer Dante's "De Vulgari Eloquentia" ("Of Eloquence in the Vulgar"), written between 1304 and 1305.

Margarete Bieber wrote in *The History of the Greek and Roman Theater* that Greek theater was "so rich and many-sided that each later period of European civilization has found some aspect of it to use as an inspiration or model for its own time." Indeed, Greek plays enjoyed enormous popularity in the Roman Empire, and nearly all the plays performed there were imitations or loose translations

of Greek dramas. In the second century B.C., Plautus and Terence, the most important writers of Roman comedy, were influenced by the Greek New Comedy. When European writers returned to drama, after the medieval period ended, they, in turn, were influenced by Plautus and Terence. Thus the stock characters that were originally created by the Greek comedians continued to thrive.

In addition to experiencing a reawakening of an interest in Roman comedies, Renaissance audiences also began to stage Greek tragedies. From the 1500s on, plays by the three great tragedians were translated and performed in such countries as France, Italy, and Germany.

Contemporary drama is greatly influenced by Greek drama. Many playwrights, such as Eugene O'Neill, have reworked the ancient tragedies. Numerous tragedies as well as comedies continue to be presented on the modern stage. Jeffrey Henderson noted in *The Dictionary of Literary Biography* that audiences throughout the world enjoy Aristophanes' "memorable poetry, style, and fantasy." He also pointed out that these comedies "remain highly useful to historians of classical Athens for their power to illuminate the political vitality and intellectual richness of that extraordinary era."

Tragedies remain successful for different reasons, namely their universal themes, which render them relevant to audiences. Charles R. Walker stated in his 1966 study *Sophocles' "Oedipus the King" and "Oedipus at Colonus"* that "*Oedipus* and other Greek plays have begun to speak to the modern world with the authority of living theater." Toward the end of the twentieth century, Karelisa V. Hartigan, writing in *Greek Tragedy on the American Stage*, upheld this view:

> The theme or message of the plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides has consistently been deemed important, because the issues addressed by the writers of fifth-century B.C. Athens continue to be current, continue to have a relevance for twentieth-century America.

Criticism

Rena Korb

Korb has a master's degree in English literature and creative writing and has written for a wide variety of educational publishers. In the following essay, Korb discusses the themes of justice and vengeance in Greek tragedy.

Greek tragedies all raise questions about humankind's existence and its suffering. One of their most insistent concerns was the elusive nature of justice, particularly divine justice, and the intrinsically linked concept of the validity of revenge. The ancient Greeks believed that the gods begrudged human greatness and caused people who were too successful to make poor choices of action. Often, these actions revolved around excessive pride, or hubris. Thus the terrible undoings that befell these prideful people could be seen as just punishment. Each of the three great tragedians raised such issues, but as they held unique perceptions of the world and the way they wanted to portray it, they were also unique in the depiction of justice.

Aeschylus inherited a belief in a just Zeus and hereditary guilt. Both of these threads can be found in his surviving tragedies. His plays sought to justify the gods' ways to the Greek people. Aeschylus's *Persians* depicts how Xerxes and his invading Persians are punished for their own offenses. Xerxes has been driven by his desire for dominance to go beyond what the gods have fated for him—control of Persia, not of Greece as well. Thus he is punished for his attempts to disrupt the cosmic order, and his defeat transforms him from the godlike man seen at the play's beginning to a mere mortal, dressed in tatters instead of royal finery, seen at the end of the play.

Prometheus Bound, one play in a trilogy, depicts divine justice specifically, as Zeus punishes Prometheus, who has saved humankind by sharing fire with them. He is chained to a craggy peak, sent to the underworld, and fed upon by a vulture every day. Aeschylus's text demonstrates Prometheus's heroic status as he submits to his prolonged, and seemingly unjust, punishment. The text glorifies Prometheus, who emerges as a martyr. That he eventually reconciles with Zeus (in the last play of the *Promethiad* trilogy, *Prometheus Unbound*, now lost) seems to prove that his extreme punishment was undeserved.

In other plays, Aeschylus uses more complex relationships and events to investigate the theme of justice. The ancient Greeks believed in the idea of hereditary guilt, and Aeschylus's plays evince this theory. Often it is not the unjust who are punished, but their descendants. The *Oresteia* is an ideal play to study the themes of revenge and justice; in this trilogy, these themes are intrinsically linked together. The human desire for vengeance is what drives the need for a prevailing justice.

What Do I Study Next?

- Aristotle's *Poetics* is the first critical work focusing on tragedy as an art form. Written about 380 B.C., the *Poetics* provides an extensive analysis of the genre.
- Eugene O'Neill is considered to be one of the few modern American tragedians. His *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1932), a trilogy, is a reworking of the *Oresteia* trilogy. It is set in Puritan New England during the Civil War. O'Neill wanted to create a modern psychological tragedy that utilized the mythology and legend of ancient Greece.
- Several post–World War II French writers have attempted to revitalize the Greek tragedy through more contemporary plays. Jean-Paul Sartre's *Flies* (1943) is based on *Eumenides*, the final play of the *Oresteia* trilogy. Jean Anouilh's *Antigone* (1942) is based on Sophocles' play of the same name. In both plays, political ideals and rebellions are used instead of religious ideals and actions.
- Opera arose out of ancient Greek tragedy. Many of the greatest operas, such as Clause Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, are based on the plays and myths of ancient Greece.
- Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* (1872) argues that Greek tragedy arose out of a fusion of Apollonian and Dionysian elements. Apollonian elements represent measure, restraint, and harmony, and Dionysian elements represent unrestrained passion. Nietzsche also believes that Socratic rationalism and optimism brought about the end of Greek tragedy.

In the first play of the trilogy, *Agamemnon*, Clytemnestra murders her husband upon his return from the Trojan War. She kills Agamemnon in revenge for his sacrifice of their daughter at the beginning of the expedition against Troy, as well as to punish him for taking a mistress. After the deed is done, she stands over the body and insists to the chorus that justice has been accomplished. However, Apollo orders Orestes, the son of Clytemnestra and Agamemnon, to avenge his father's death and murder his mother. After he does so, the chorus sings a song of thanksgiving, celebrating the victory of justice. However, the third play of the trilogy finds Orestes pursued by the Furies, underworld avenging powers whom Clytemnestra has cursed upon him. Eventually, Orestes is brought to trial at the court of Athens, attended by the goddess Athena, who, when the vote of the jury is evenly split, votes to acquit him and provides a sanctuary where the furies may rest. Only then is the cycle of bloodshed and vengeance in the house of Atreus brought to an end. So, justice can now be found in the courts, aided by the intervention of Athena, rather than through the actions of family and tribal members seeking vengeance.

Sophocles was the next great tragedian. Charles Segal wrote of Sophocles in *Ancient Writers*, "While retaining Aeschylus' mood of deep religious seriousness, Sophocles deals with the question of divine justice and the problem of suffering in a more naturalistic way." Because his focus remains on the human world rather than the world of the gods, the issues of justice are more human-centered. Many critics and scholars believe that Sophocles most closely relates the truest state of human experience, thus the decisions made by Sophocles' characters rest more upon their mortal shoulders, not upon the shoulders of the gods.

Electra condenses the plot of the *Oresteia* into one play, which focuses on the daughter's desire for justice and vengeance for the death of Agamemnon. Isolated in the palace after her father's murder, Electra remains the sole voice raised against allowing the crime to go unpunished and unnoticed. She lives for only one thing—the return of Orestes so he can avenge the murder. When she learns the (false) news of his death, she attempts to enlist the help of her sister in the murder of Clytemnestra, but when her sister refuses, she resolves to carry

Euripides presents a very different picture of justice than his predecessors in the Greek tragic tradition. Justice is no longer a motivating theme but an ironic one."

out the matricide by herself. Although Orestes shows up at the last moment and carries out the murder while Electra waits outside the house with the chorus, Electra's single-minded purpose shows the consuming power of the desire for vengeance and a form—albeit a criminal one—of justice.

Sophocles's masterpiece, *Oedipus the King*, shows a different way that justice can be attained—through self-punishment. In this play, Oedipus has unknowingly killed his father and married his mother. Oedipus—left to die as a baby by his real father, rescued by a shepherd from a nearby kingdom, and adopted into the royal family of that kingdom—committed these crimes against the laws of nature without realizing what he was doing. Despite his lack of moral culpability, when Oedipus discovers what he has done, he blinds himself. While the play ends on a note of despair, Oedipus's action can be construed in a positive light, since he has administered punishment to himself and brought about justice for ill deeds. Instead of committing suicide, as his wife/mother does, Oedipus chooses a more extreme form of self-punishment, "For no one else of mortals except me can bear my sufferings."

Euripides presents a very different picture of justice than his predecessors in the Greek tragic tradition. Justice is no longer a motivating theme but an ironic one. In *Hippolytus*, the goddess Aphrodite takes revenge on Hippolytus because he refuses to worship her. She is not acting out of a respect for justice but out of spite. In the *Bacchae*, Dionysus, scorned by Pentheus, causes a group of women, including Pentheus's mother, to murder and dismember Pentheus, while they are in a state of frenzy. Unlike the gods in the plays or Aeschylus and Sophocles, the gods in Euripides' plays cannot be appealed to for justice, nor will they help promote it, as Athena did in the *Eumenides*. Instead, in these two plays, Euripides shows their personal injustice, which has been seen earlier but never caused by such pettiness and self-indulgence.

In Euripides' play *Medea*, justice and vengeance take a shocking form. To punish her husband for forsaking her, Medea raises the idea of murdering their children. Her passion for revenge is so strong that, despite a long monologue in which she questions this choice, Medea decides this is the right action to take. Medea's inner conflict is what raises her to the status of tragic heroine. She closes her inner debate with these words: "Though I understand what sort of evil I am going / to do, still, heart is stronger than what I have / thought out, this heart that causes humankind's / greatest evils." Medea thus recognizes that the action she is taking is governed by the need for human vengeance, not by the desire to correct injustice. Also interesting is that, though the children suffer for the wrongdoings of their parents, it is not because of inherent guilt, so Medea reverses the idea of hereditary guilt that was such a crucial part of the *Oresteia*.

Euripides also has his own rendition of the *Oresteia*, the play *Orestes*. Orestes' revenge is of a dual nature: it is sanctioned by Apollo, who commanded the murder of Clytemnestra, thus it represents divine vengeance; it is also vengeance of a personal and heroic nature, because he also kills Clytemnestra to recover his birthright. However, because Euripides places greater emphasis on the individual's own choice of action than on his or her preordained fate laid out by the gods, Orestes' actions are viewed more as revenge than as justice. As the play begins, it is Orestes who must face the demands of justice, the justice of the city. As Christian Wolff wrote in *Ancient Writers*, "It is as though the heroic and divinely sanctioned mode of revenge were being put on trial by the human community."

In *Greek Tragedy on the American Stage*, Karelisa V. Hartigan noted that part of the appeal of the plays *Medea* and *Electra* is the theme of revenge. "The theme of Euripides' text has not seemed to trouble either those onstage or those in the audience overly much," she wrote. Indeed, modern audiences bring their own points of view to these plays, and looking through the eyes of feminism, some critics see Medea's act of revenge as stemming from Jason's "victimization" of her. A play such as Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, according to Hartigan, is less attractive to modern audiences because the title character takes no personal revenge against those who cause his suffering. Greek

tragedy continues to be relevant to modern audiences because the themes it presents are universal, crossing boundaries of time and place.

Source: Rena Korb, Critical Essay on Greek Drama, in *Literary Movements for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Peter D. Arnott

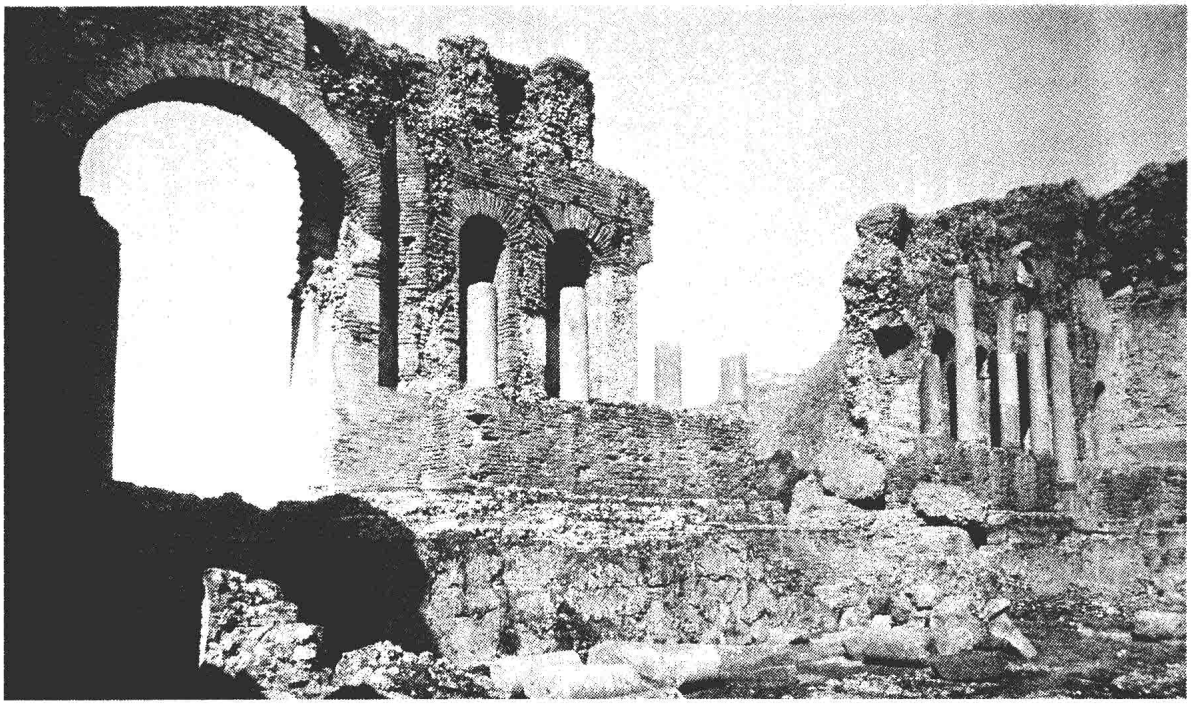
In the following introduction to his Public and Performance in the Greek Theatre, *Arnott explores the physical dimensions of the Greek stage, their significance, and their influence on drama written to be performed there.*

Plays are conditioned by their environment. Every age produces its handful of closet dramatists, who elect to write in dramatic form as a literary convenience, with no expectation of production; and there are always a few who write for some visionary theatre of the future, asking more than the state of the art can give. But practising playwrights work from a basis of practical stagecraft. They write for the kind of playhouse they know; for actors whose skills and training they are familiar with; and for an audience whose preconceptions are known, and whose responses are predictable. The design of the theatre building, the nature of the space available, the possibility of adapting and decorating this space; all these factors help to shape the play. We would have a very different *Hamlet* had it been written for a picture-frame stage rather than for an open platform. The same factors work upon the actor. The grammar of his art—the way in which he communicates with his audience—may be influenced by tradition or societal patterns, but is controlled in large part by the space in which he works. An actor in a large theatre works differently from an actor in a small one. Indoor and outdoor acting pose different problems, and invite different solutions.

In purpose-built structures, performance style and theatre architecture are often mutually influential. An actor accepts certain constraints upon his art because of the nature of the space available, or the quality of the acoustics; conversely, new buildings may be designed to capitalize on certain skills, or allow the actors to explore new dimensions of their art. In earlier dramatic cultures, however, the space comes first, and imposes its own rules on the performance. The art of the theatre did not spring fully born into the world. In all the manifestations that we know, drama emerged as a by-product of some other activity, usually some magico-religious activity. The first actors were priests, shamans, or sacred dancers, and the emergent dramas were first performed in spaces that had been designed for other purposes. Only after some time does drama establish itself as a separate and independent activity, and only then are buildings constructed specifically for the performance of plays. Almost invariably, these purpose-built theatres are influenced by the temporary spaces available before, to which the performers have now become accustomed. Plays, in other words, come before theatres; and when the theatres begin to appear, they illustrate the factors that brought the drama to birth.

"The small group of plays, survivors of a vastly larger number, that we know collectively and rather misleadingly as Greek drama, were written for theatres of a unique and distinctive shape whose like has never been seen again. This shape was dictated by the cultural patterns of Greek society and by the nature of the Greek terrain."

The small group of plays, survivors of a vastly larger number, that we know collectively and rather misleadingly as Greek drama, were written for theatres of a unique and distinctive shape whose like has never been seen again. This shape was dictated by the cultural patterns of Greek society and by the nature of the Greek terrain. Its general features are well known from ancient evidence and surviving examples, a number of them still in use. Scholars argue endlessly, and ultimately unprofitably, about the details. Many features of the theatres remain obscure to us for lack of information. We have no contemporary description of the structures that Aeschylus and Sophocles wrote for and acted in. Probably none was ever written. Why bother to describe something so familiar to everyone? The



Ruins of a Greek theater in Taormina, Italy

earliest written accounts date from centuries later, when much had changed and it was already too late. Surviving structures, still amply visible throughout Greece and the adjacent countries, are architectural palimpsests, obscured or obliterated by the successive rebuildings of subsequent generations. We know considerably less about them than we know about Shakespeare's Globe, in spite of the fact that the stonework is still there for us to see.

The general principles, however, are reasonably clear. In the Greek theatre complex the central and characteristic feature was the orchestra or dancing floor, a circle of flattened earth (later paved with stone), on which the chorus performed. In the theatre of Athens the orchestra is large enough to give ample room for a large chorus and complex dance patterns. The Greeks themselves traced the origin of drama from local festivals of song and dance, and the design of the theatre seems to bear this out. It is tempting to think that the earliest orchestras were the stone threshing floors still to be seen throughout the Greek countryside. These floors—in most places the only flat open space available—would lend themselves naturally to the rustic performances. When, in the course of time, a special orchestra was built for larger ceremonies, it would retain the shape of these remembered associations.

Round most of the orchestra, tiers of seats were built into the convenient hillside, so that spectators could look down on the performance. Such a structure, like a vast bowl set into the land, was a logical answer to the constraints of the Greek terrain. In a country where flat land is at a premium, the theatre grew organically out of its environment, opening the performance to the maximum number of spectators. On the far side of the circle stood the actors' place. This was the *skene*, literally hut or tent. In the early days of the theatre this was probably all it was: a rudimentary, temporary structure serving as a dressing room, a place from which the actors could make their entrances and, perhaps, a sounding board for their voices. An alternative theory suggests that the first *skene*, in Athens at least, was the façade of the Temple of Dionysus which abutted onto the orchestra. Even when, like the rest of the theatre, it became a structure of solid stone, the *skene* still retained its original name. On either side of the *skene* a processional entrance-way, the *parodos*, led into the orchestra.

This is all we can be sure of. Everything else is conjecture. Was there a raised stage for the actors, to give them prominence by elevating them above the chorus level? A case can be made for and against. We know that the fifth-century theatre had some machinery. Where exactly was it located,

how did it work, and what was it supposed to do? We have tantalizingly brief descriptions, mostly late and sometimes contradictory.

On one aspect of the productions, however, there is fairly general agreement. Although the Greek *skene* gives us, by way of Latin, the English word 'scenery', the fifth-century theatre seems to have had nothing like scenery in our sense of the word: no backdrops, no realistic stage pictures, no scenic illusion. The only background was the façade of the *skene* building, decorated perhaps in architectural perspective but ubiquitous and unchanging. Our first evidence for movable panels to create different sets comes from a century later. The orchestra was a blank surface against which the audience could watch the choral evolutions. Sufficient setting was provided—as in Shakespeare's theatre—by the audience's imagination, prompted by the language of the playwright. Song, dance, and the spoken word provided an ambiance for the play as well as carrying forward the action.

If we have such difficulty in picturing the theatre, how can we hope to reconstruct the actor's, necessarily transitory, performance? Once again, many details elude us. But, equally, certain dominant principles become dear, and we may assume certain imperatives from the nature of the space involved. The following chapters, by focusing on the nature of the Greek actors' art, will endeavour to show how closely intertwined the actions of author, actor, and theatre were, and illuminate some characteristic features of Greek playwriting that seem alien to us only because our conception of stage space and the actor's relationship to it has radically changed.

Source: Peter D. Arnott, "Introduction," in *Public and Performance in the Greek Theatre*, Routledge, 1989, pp. 1–4.

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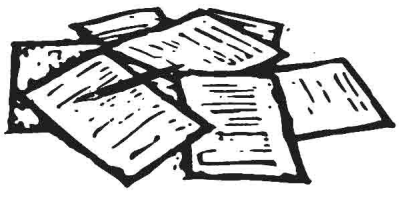
Humanism

Movement Origin

c. 1350

Humanism is an educational and cultural philosophy that began in the Renaissance when scholars rediscovered Greek and Roman classical philosophy and has as its guiding principle the essential dignity of man. Humanism was the intellectual movement that informed the Renaissance, although the term itself was not used to describe this discovery of man until the early nineteenth century. Humanist thinking came about as a response to the scholasticism of the universities. The Schoolmen, or scholastics, valued Aristotelian logic, which they used in their complicated method of defending the scriptures through disputation of isolated statements. Humanists accused the scholastics of sophistry and of distorting the truth by arguing philosophical phrases taken out of context. By contrast, humanists researched the historical context and lives of classical writers and focused on the moral and ethical content of the texts. Along with this shift came the concept that "Man is the measure of all things" (Pythagoras), which meant that now Man was the center of the universe in place of God. In turn, the study of man and human acts on Earth led humanists to feel justified in entering into the affairs of the world, rather than leading a life of monastic asceticism, as did the scholastics.



The first humanist, Francesco Petrarch coined the term "learned piety" (*docta pietas*) to indicate that a philosopher may love God and learning, too. The common thread between all Renaissance humanists was a love of Latin language and of classical (Roman and Greek) philosophy. The humanist

interest in authenticating classical texts would become the field of textual criticism that still thrives today. Humanism, too, thrives today, although it has been transformed to encompass humanitarian concerns such as providing aid to others who are suffering. Today's secular humanists actively reject religion and turn their attention to charitable works and an ethical, meaningful life on Earth.

Representative Authors

Baldassare Castiglione (1478–1529)

Baldassare Castiglione was born on December 6, 1478, at Casatico near Mantua, Italy. An Italian diplomat, knight, and courtier, Castiglione served in the court of Urbino for a good part of his life, observing and taking part in its elegance. He recorded a fictional dialogue to represent the best of court life in his *Book of the Courtier* (1528). This book was highly influential, setting the standard for the behavior of the elite, which was to comport oneself with a casual nonchalance, giving the impression that one's learning and grace are natural talents, effortlessly expressed. He explains, "Therfore that may be said to be a very art that appeereth not to be art, neyther ought a man to put more dilgence in any thing then in covering it: for in case it be open, it loseth credit cleane, and maketh a man litle set by" (as translated by Sir Thomas Hoby, 1561).

Castiglione died at the height of his fortune on February 7, 1529.

Desiderius Erasmus (c. 1466–1536)

Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam was born in October of 1466 or 1467, an illegitimate child whose parents died of the plague. He was put into a monastery, where he was ordained for priesthood. However, Erasmus became a scholar and one of the first humanists and did not join the priesthood. He initially supported the Reformation but abandoned the movement when it led to religious conflict. Influenced by Valla's *Book of Elegances*, a Latin grammar, Erasmus studied Latin classics of the pagan authors of ancient Greece and Rome. He also became interested in education, partly in reaction to his own brutal treatment at the hands of his early schoolteachers, and he wrote a collection of sayings, *Adages*, for use as a Latin textbook. Erasmus proposed that schools follow the education precepts of classical Roman Quintilian (c. 35–c. 99), to train orators by focusing first on their personal integrity,

Desiderius Erasmus

then on their persuasive skills. To this end, Erasmus suggested that students practice extemporaneous writing to encourage candidness, thus departing from the traditional school model in which the schoolmaster read from a single text while students copied the *lectura* (reading) word for word. With his great faith in the power of words, Erasmus considered religious feeling to stem from a direct reading of the scriptures, which he felt had a nearly magical ability to influence people to follow the example of Christ. Like Luther, whom he at first admired, Erasmus felt that the key to religious feeling was the change of heart that could occur when a person reads the scriptures, not from unthinking obedience to the rituals of a corrupt church. Erasmus was a humanist in his faith that humans can achieve piety through their own endeavors, as well as in his passion for Latin rhetoric. He combined humanist scholarship with reformist ideology.

Erasmus died July 12, 1536, in Basel, Switzerland.

Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499)

Marsilio Ficino was born in Florence, Italy, on October 19, 1433, and began his student life as a scholastic, studying the traditional Aristotelian philosophy. However, he underwent a religious

epiphany during which he decided that Plato's philosophy was a divine revelation designed to prepare the pagan world for the arrival of Christ. Ficino's somewhat antithetical beliefs were symbolized in two votive candles he kept in his room: one in front of a picture of Plato and another in front of an image of the Virgin Mary. He studied Greek and read and translated into Latin the complete works of Plato as well as the works of the Neoplatonists, Greek Platonic scholars (primarily Plotinus) of the third century A.D. The Neoplatonists expanded Plato's philosophy to describe a system in which humans live in a state of "sleep" in this world and must go through several phases to reach a state of hyperconsciousness, the final stage achieved by the soul, which is beyond the level of reasoning.

During the forty years that he was translating Plato and the Neoplatonists, Ficino held informal lectures for interested scholars at his home in Florence, which became known as the Platonic Academy. Ficino's gatherings and written works helped to spread Plato's ideas among the humanists. He himself, however, was not a true humanist, since his interests lay in the philosophy of Plato; he ignored the philological aspects that preoccupied most of the true humanists, and he did not pay scrupulous attention to authenticating his sources, as most of the other humanists did. Ficino also had an interest in the occult and magic. He also studied the Jewish mystical book called the Cabala (written in Hebrew) and the hermetic tracts of the Egyptians as well as the (lost) works of Pythagoras. His enthusiastic belief that these works held divinely inspired ancient secrets that passed through Plato proved infectious to his followers. Ficino has been accused of elitism because his brand of gnostic Christianity gave his followers a sense of superiority, since it required a great amount of study to become initiated into its secrets.

Ficino died in Corregio on October 1, 1499.

Sir Thomas More (c. 1478–1535)

Sir Thomas More was born around February 7, 1478, in England. He authored the satire *Utopia*, an imaginary state loosely based on ideas from Plato's *Republic*, among other classical sources. This work was written in the beginning of More's life, before he became Lord Chancellor and then became embroiled in the king's "great matter," wherein King Henry VIII granted himself sovereignty over the Church of England so that he could command that the Church condone his divorce of Catherine of Aragon, allowing him to marry Anne Boleyn and try to beget an heir with her. More foresaw that this crisis in English history would inevitably lead to a schism between church and state and so refused to provide the public support that Henry wanted. Henry charged More with treason and ultimately had him beheaded.

More was a strong proponent of humanist ideas, having befriended Erasmus on one of the latter's visits to England. More used his significant skills in Latin oratory to defend the study of classical Greek other secular literature against Scholasticism. He felt that studying the ancient classics better promoted knowledge and virtue than did the traditional fare of Scholasticism, with its emphasis on disputation of minor points of theology. Nevertheless, More remained very much a medieval thinker and scholar, steeped in scholastic learning, despite his liberal acceptance of the new humanist ideas. Even though, as befits a humanist, More eschewed monastic study and happily entered the world of politics, statesmanship, and law, he was a product of the scholastic form of education, since he relied upon the skills he learned in scholastic disputation. Convicted of treason on false evidence, More was beheaded on July 6, 1535. He was widely admired for his sincere religious piety, especially after his martyrdom.

Francesco Petrarch (1304–1374)

Francesco Petrarch was born July 20, 1304, in Arezzo, Italy. Known as the "Father of Humanism," Petrarch promoted the study of works by Cicero (106–43 B.C.) and Virgil (70–19 B.C.) as models of Latin eloquence. He actively sought new manuscripts of their work, along with those by other classical Roman writers such as Quintilian and Seneca, and his travels across Europe uncovered a number of hitherto lost works by Cicero and others. Petrarch valued Cicero for his ideas about morality, oration, and the purpose of education as a means to train good citizens. It was Petrarch who identified the decline of the Roman Empire as a historical event, and he defined the period of history after its fall as a "dark age," or a "Middle Age" between the golden era of antiquity and the current "rebirth" of antiquity in Petrarch's own time. By this it was meant that ancient texts were once again valued for their unique contribution to human history. Petrarch is perhaps best known for his sonnets of timeless beauty inspired by a mysterious woman he calls simply "Laura," who did not return his love.

Petrarch died on July 18, 1374, in Arqua, Italy.

Count Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494)

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola was born February 24, 1463. He was a brilliant student who gave up his share of the Mirandola ancestral property in order to pursue his education by traveling to the major universities of Europe. He, like Ficino, became enamored of the mystical Jewish Cabala, and he once bought a stash of fake Hebrew manuscripts purported to contain ancient secrets. He sought to construct a universal religion among Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, and he believed that Platonist philosophy could be reconciled to their main ideas. When he returned from his educational saga, he wrote nine hundred theses on a wide variety of topics and challenged any and all scholars to join him in Rome to dispute them. No one came, for the Church determined that some of his propositions were heretical. He had to flee to France for a time until it was safe to return. Pico della Mirandola says in his opening to the theses, which came to be known as *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1496), that "nothing in the world can be found that is more worthy of admiration than man." His work served as a manifesto for the humanist movement in that it promulgated the idea that man should take his rightful place as the center of the universe yet also exhorted man to give up worldly aspirations and physical pleasure to seek peace through the contemplation of God.

Pico della Mirandola died November 17, 1494.

Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498)

Girolamo Savonarola was born on September 21, 1452. He was a charismatic monk from Ferrara, Italy, who preached fiery sermons in Florence on the subject of proper piety. An accomplished orator and rhetorician, Savonarola quickly became famous for his sermons and drew large crowds. Even though Savonarola was not a humanist himself, he influenced the work of Pico della Mirandola and Marsilio Ficino, who were in Florence when he was preaching there. His sermons called for a "bonfire of the vanities" in which were burned all heretical books, images, and objects of vice. Savonarola was charged with heresy by the Church; he was excommunicated, then tortured, hanged, and burnt at the stake on May 23, 1498.

Lorenzo Valla (1405–1457)

Lorenzo Valla was born in Rome, Italy, in 1405. He was a philologist who disputed the validity of the claim that the Emperor Constantine (306–337), who converted to Christianity and made Constantinople into a haven of Christian ideology, had donated half of his empire to Pope Sylvester for curing his case of leprosy. Valla's argument rested on linguistic evidence, the first argument of its kind. Among other evidence, he proved the donation document a forgery by exposing anachronisms (words that did not exist in the fourth century) in the Latin text. Valla also wrote *Elegantiae* (or *Book of Elegances*), a Latin grammar book that sought to improve the quality of spoken and written Latin, with over three thousand examples of correct Latin usage (elegances). Valla, along with Petrarch, sought a revival of classical Latin in its purest form; Renaissance philologists considered the classical period as a golden age of the Latin language that was followed by a period of degeneration when vernacular languages flourished and Latinists lost their interest in the pure forms of the language. Valla's legacy to Humanism was to initiate the field of textual criticism, which studies the authenticity of texts and seeks to correct errors that creep into manuscripts when they are copied.

Valla died in Rome on August 1, 1457.

Representative Works

Adages

Published in 1500 by Erasmus of Rotterdam, the *Adages* (*Adagia*) initially comprised more than three thousand proverbs from Greek and Roman antiquity. Erasmus added to the collection in the 1508 and 1515 editions. This befits the spirit of the *Adages*, for in it Erasmus speaks of the importance of the richness (*copia*) of using the right number of adages in speaking. The introduction gives specific advice on how to polish these gems and use them to enhance speech. He says, "And so to interweave adages deftly and appropriately is to make the language as a whole glitter with sparkles from Antiquity, please us with the art of rhetoric, gleam with jewel-like words of wisdom, and charm us with titbits of wit and humour." The book became one of the most influential of the Renaissance period, since it both preserved the wisdom of the ancients and served as a how to book on oration.

Book of the Courtier

Published in 1528 by Italian knight, diplomat, and courtier Baldassare Castiglione, *Book of the*

Frontispiece of Sir Thomas More's Utopia *illustrating an imaginary island*

Courtier (*Il Cortegiano*) describes the perfect gentleman and lady. It consists of a dialogue among typical courtiers, discussing how to comport oneself with grace. A group of courtiers led by the Duchess of Urbina describes the perfect gentleman and his talents, which range from hunting, swimming, leaping, running, playing tennis, and playing music to avoiding envy. The perfect gentlewoman is also described. For both, looks are important, but the end result of one's toilet should give no hint of effort, such as excessive plucking of hairs or too much makeup. Grace consists of "a certain recklessness," or *sprezzatura*, which involves doing things gracefully without seeming to "mind it." It means that one avoids seeming curious or angry. Talent in speaking and writing is also paramount, and the group goes into a lengthy discussion about the use of oratorical figures of speech and the need to shun antiquated sayings. The final chapter describes courtly love. Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* was soon translated into other languages for use in courts across Europe and Japan.

Book of Elegances, or Elegances of the Latin Language

Begun circa 1435 by Lorenzo Valla (an Italian humanist, philosopher, and literary critic) and published in 1444, this anthology of three thousand exemplary Latin phrases became a standard text throughout Europe for training students in Latin philology (the study of words or language). Within one hundred years of its writing, the huge and costly *Book of Elegances* had been printed in sixty editions.

Familiar Letters

Francesco Petrarch, over a period of many years, wrote a series of letters addressed to writers from classical Greek and Roman antiquity, such as Cicero, admiring his oratorical qualities; Homer or imitators of Homer, including the talented Virgil; and Socrates. He speaks with these figures from the past about his own critics as if he were writing to living men, personal friends. Among the letters, too, is one "To Posterity" in which he describes himself and his life and works in an early version of informal autobiography. Speaking to posterity, he refers to himself in the past tense, as in this example: "I possessed a well-balanced rather than a keen intellect, one prone to all kinds of good and wholesome study, but especially inclined to moral philosophy and the art of poetry." Other letters were addressed to contemporaries: Giovanni Boccaccio, who was a friend; and Tomasso de Messina, a philosophical enemy and supporter of Scholasticism to whom Petrarch writes of his distaste for Artistotelian logic and preference for the works of Plato.

Oration on the Dignity of Man

In 1486, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola had completed seven years of classical education at various universities in Europe. He independently came up with the idea to formulate a universal religion comprising the essential elements of the major religions. He put together some of his ideas in nine hundred theses on a wide variety of topics that he wanted to dispute with other scholars in Rome, which did not occur because the Church claimed that some of his propositions were heretical, and Pico della Mirandola had to flee to France for safety. The opening oration to the theses, which came to be known as *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (published posthumously in 1496), describes man as not being constrained by the laws of nature, such

that man, through free will, may determine his own limits and nature. Further, it places mankind at the center of the universe; Pico della Mirandola says that "nothing in the world can be found that is more worthy of admiration than man." The opening oration has been called the manifesto of Humanism. Although Pico della Mirandola was not a true humanist, since he held on to the Aristotelian concept of forms, a scholastic ideology, his work galvanized humanist thinking in the way that it pulled together the best of Jewish, Christian, Zoroastrian, and Arabic philosophies, expressing the intellectual freedom and dignity of humankind.

Utopia

Sir Thomas More wrote *Utopia* while on an extended diplomatic mission to Bruges and published his work in 1516. It is the story of the mythical island called No Place (*Utopia*), where the people get along through their virtue, reason, and charity. The vices of greed and jealousy have been engineered out of the society by ordaining that everyone wear the same clothes and that houses be exchanged every ten years. More based his allegory of England on Plato's *Republic*, among other classical (and biblical) sources. More's *Utopia* is a celebration of the potential for human virtue and pleasure on Earth and thus a seminal work of humanist literature.

Themes

Education

Education is an important facet of Humanism. Not only did the humanists revere learning, but they disseminated their ideas through a radical change in educational methods. Humanism was primarily a movement in opposition to the traditional mode of education, called Scholasticism, of the medieval period. Scholasticism had been a new style of learning in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which accepted as a maxim that God existed and that God's Truth was a given that did not need to be proved. The Schoolmen (as the scholastics were called) merely had to refute attacks on the Truth, in a sort of legalistic argumentation style that derived from their understanding of Aristotelian logic. It took the form of splitting hairs (that is, arguing over minute details), according to seventeenth-century philosopher Francis Bacon. The flaw in scholastic thinking was that it relied too much on statements taken out of context and then disputed. Texts were treated as authorities, and each statement was disputed as either false or true, with no consideration for the context of the statement or the circumstances under which it was written. Instead, individual and unrelated statements were gathered into books of wise sayings. For example, a standard text was called the *Book of Sentences* (1472) by Peter Lombard, in which opinions by various writers were arranged by topic. St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* is another compilation of opinions removed from their original context. Because individuals and their complete theories were not as important as their individual statements, scholastic education had devolved into argumentation over minutiae, seriously considering such questions as how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. Scholars wanting to prove such a point would pick through the available statements in works like the *Book of Sentences* to find those that supported their own ideas. Rhetorical skill was disdained by scholastics as inclined to appeal through emotions, rather than the intellect.

Scholasticism came into being because of the recognition in the medieval period that people must be trained to understand and accept Christian theology. The scholastics believed that humans were lost and could only be redeemed through God's grace, not through their own efforts, and that they should revere God. Therefore, monasteries, schools, and itinerant teachers flourished during the so-called Dark Ages, spreading the word of Christianity using the scholastic method of education. This method consisted of the *trivium* of grammar, rhetoric, and logic, along with the *quadrivium*: arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. The goal of these studies was to support the study of theology. Of the few classical philosophers whose ideas supported Scholasticism, Aristotle is primary. Aristotle said that theoretical knowledge could be substantiated by beginning with core principles and deriving further truths from them, as one proceeds in mathematical reasoning. His form of syllogistic reasoning (deductive reasoning from established premises or principles) lies at the heart of Scholasticism.

On the other hand, the humanists, or as they were sometimes derogatorily called, the *Umanista* (little grammar teachers), chose the curriculum of the study of humanities, or the liberal arts. The humanists sought to understand a writer's complete theory. They also looked at ancient writings in their historical contexts, in order to discover the nature

of the writer as well as the historical import of his words. Humanists, too, studied grammar and rhetoric but did so in order to identify and master eloquence in Latin expression. In addition, they studied history, poetry, and moral philosophy. Humanists opposed Scholasticism because of its limited scope, since isolated statements taken out of context could be easily misunderstood and misrepresented. They also objected to the Aristotelian method of deductive logic, that is, inference from a general to a specific statement, on the same grounds, that it could easily be distorted. Humanists preferred Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy over scholastic logical disputation.

Revival of Classical Learning

The humanists of the early Renaissance initiated a revival in appreciation for ancient classical Greek writers. While the scholastics included the thoughts of Aristotle in their learning, the humanists leaned toward those of Plato. However, they transformed his ideas to fit with Christian ideology as well as with some of the ideas in Gnosticism and Judaism. In this, the humanists participated in a long tradition of philosophical thought known as Neoplatonism. In the third century A.D., Plotinus, perhaps the most well-known of synthesizer and proponent of Neoplatonic thought, merged Platonic ideas with the goal of personal salvation that came about through Christianity. In other words, Plotinus took an essentially philosophical idea and merges it with religious ideology. Neoplatonism started with Plato's doctrine of innate knowledge, the concept that the human soul has true knowledge that will be awakened through proper questioning. This idea fit well, according to some humanists, with the idea of personal salvation, a tenet of Christianity. Neoplatonism also adopted Plato's distinction between knowledge and opinion, as elucidated in his *Republic*. In Neoplatonic thought, the only way to find God (or the One) in the physical world is to shun worldly life through ascetic privation in order to contemplate pure ideas and thus rise to oneness with the divine mind. Neoplatonists were inclined toward mysticism, and they approached theology through analogy and metaphor rather than logic. The humanists adopted Neoplatonist thinking because it emphasized human intellect and contemplation and because it seemed to provide a spiritual link between the ancients and Christian theology. They believed that classical philosophers were divinely inspired to write their philosophies to pave the way for Christianity.

Style

Love of Language

As the humanists discovered neglected or lost classical manuscripts and distributed them through printing, they developed a discerning taste for those classical writers who expressed their thoughts in the most elegant forms of Latin. They also discovered errors in transcription as they compared different versions of the same text. Philology, the love or study of language, grew out of the humanist desire to perfect their translations of ancient texts and to write textual commentaries on their newly discovered texts. Writing in Latin themselves, they sought to express themselves in the most elegant forms of this language. Thus, ancient Roman writers such as Cicero and Caesar became models of Latin prose, replacing the medieval Latin of scholastic Latin grammar texts. In many ways, philology lies at the heart of the humanist movement, since it engendered a focus on the historical context in which ancient texts were written as well as on textual criticism. In fact, the early humanists invented the concept of textual criticism. Philology is central to historical study because it is a valid means of authenticating records of historical events and thinking.

Oratory

Rhetoric and oratory—in Latin—were important skills to the humanists. They disapproved of the scholastic style of disputation, which they considered a show of superficial knowledge as opposed to true wisdom or virtue. The scholastic method of disputation involved searching through texts to find statements to use as evidence to support a given opinion, even to the point of taking statements out of context. The scholastic method of teaching Latin and rhetoric was through rote memorization, with corporal punishment for poor performance. Students learned how to imitate the classical Latin writers but often had no idea of the meaning of the words they said. In contrast, the humanists wanted their students to follow Cicero's three duties of the orator: to teach, to please, and to move (appeal to emotions). Humanist oration was not a recitation but a speech that considered the audience as well as the choice of material. In addition, humanists wanted their students to learn the subjects so that they would speak with authority. They followed the adage to teach students to "Grasp the subject, the words will follow." To do so would lead students to acquire real understanding of subjects, and this knowledge would help them make good decisions

Topics for Further Study

- In many ways, the economic and social setting of fourteenth-century Florence, Italy, made it the perfect place for the birth of Humanism. Florence was a center of trade, and powerful families trained their sons to become ethical, successful merchants. What is the relationship between the society in Florence and the development of a new way of thinking about humanity and its role in the world?
- The early humanists were devout Christians, yet the humanist movement has evolved to one that is frankly opposed to religious ideology, and many of today's humanists are active atheists. Research the ideas of the Renaissance humanists as compared to those of modern Humanism. How do you account for this substantial change in philosophy?
- All religions play a role in reinforcing moral behavior and attempt to explain the purpose of human life. The major religions—Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam—share these goals. Study one or more of the major religions and compare the methods of approaching these goals with the methods proposed by humanists. What underlying principles are shared by all of these belief systems?
- The rise of Humanism accompanied exciting changes in art, such as the invention of perspective and the development of portraiture. In addition, artists studied human physiognomy in order to portray human figures more realistically. Did these artists subscribe to humanist thinking? How did humanist ideas find expression in art? What role did patronage play in the development of the new artistic style of the Renaissance or the new humanist way of thinking?

and become better citizens. This method is consistent with another of Cicero's rules, which proposes that students not try to master "absolute truth" but look to their own virtue instead. Thus the teaching of oratory was linked to character education. Erasmus wrote several works designed to help students acquire a mastery of Latin. His *Adages* contained thousands of worthy sentiments elegantly phrased in Latin. He also wrote a work called *Formulas for Friendly Conversation* (printed in 1518) to help students converse rather than simply repeat Latin sayings. Ultimately, advanced students of Latin would need to master skills of "oratorical abundance" or *copia*. By this was meant the ability to speak at length on a topic, to layer their speech with numerous pertinent sayings, and to choose adages that fit the occasion. The latter skill is referred to by Shakespeare's Hamlet when he tells the troupe of actors visiting his castle to "suit the action to the word, the word to the action." That Shakespeare echoed the humanist program of oratory is testimony to the extent to which their program of oratory and rhetoric had filtered down to public schools such as the one that Shakespeare attended in his small town of Stratford-upon-Avon in the sixteenth century.

Biography

The humanist interest in biography and autobiography stems from the father of Humanism, the Italian poet and scholar Francesco Petrarch. Petrarch deplored his own age and felt that classical Roman times and people were more virtuous than his. He became obsessed with reading works of ancient Roman writers in the original Latin. He also searched for lost manuscripts so that he could piece together a society that he felt was far superior to fourteenth-century Italian society. When he found collections of personal letters written by his favorite classical writer, Cicero, he pored over them, trying to get to know the man and the culture that produced him. Petrarch even wrote fictional letters to some of his best-loved Roman writers, in which he praised the classical period and talked about his dissatisfaction with his own time. Then Petrarch

wrote a set of biographies, which he called *Of Illustrious Men* (*De viris illustribus*) (1338). These twenty-four sketches are a model of classical scholarship and insight into human behavior. His friend Boccaccio wrote a parallel work on the lives of over one hundred women, called *Famous Women* (*De mulieribus claris*) (1362). Little did either of these two scholars and literary geniuses know what impact their obsession with classical Rome and Greece would have on posterity in fostering the genre of biography, which would remain popular for centuries.

Movement Variations

The Enlightenment Period

Some historians say that the humanist movement that began in the Renaissance did not fully flower until the Enlightenment period of the eighteenth century, also called the Age of Reason. During this period, human faith in science and rational thinking spread beyond the intellectual elite, who included most of those who espoused Humanism during the Renaissance. With a larger literate population and a booming middle class that could afford their books, the intellectual thinkers and philosophers of the eighteenth century influenced their societies with their ideas that human reason was supreme and that religion based on superstition and meaningless ritual should not dictate human behavior. Some Enlightenment thinkers were actually atheists; however, many simply eschewed formal religion in favor of the concept of a supreme being whom man could not prove definitively. A group of French thinkers known as the *philosophes*, including Denis Diderot (1713–1784), Charles Montesquieu (1689–1755), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), and Voltaire (1694–1778), among others, prepared an *Encyclopédie* (1751–1780) to contain all human knowledge, rationally arranged. Religion was notably missing and in fact was treated as superstition. In another of his essays, Voltaire made the scandalous proposition that religious differences should be tolerated: since God could not deny heaven to classical thinkers such as Socrates, Plato, and Solon, how could he deny it to men of other contemporary religions? Many of the contributors to the encyclopedia were imprisoned for their heretical views. Nevertheless, the massive *Encyclopédie* stood as a testimony to the doctrine of man's essential supremacy. The Enlightenment thinkers and philosophers were also fascinated by how humans acquire knowledge and, with religion losing its authority as a moral standard, morality. Many of them wrote treatises on the human mind, including David Hume (1711–1776), who considered human feeling as the source of ethical behavior. Hume also claimed that since God existed only as an idea in the mind, he did not exist. Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) proposed that humans make ethical decisions based upon the pleasure principle: that in seeking to avoid pain, each human's ethical decision would contribute to the common good. In Germany, Immanual Kant (1724–1804) proposed that all moral actions be measured against a kind of golden rule that said that an action was moral if it could be applied categorically to all, which was another form of locating morality in the human mind rather than in divine revelation. In America, Thomas Paine (1737–1809) accused religion of inspiring the worst moral behavior, saying that "The most detestable wickedness, the most horrid cruelties, and the greatest miseries that have afflicted the human race, have had their origin in this thing called revelation, or revealed religion." The role of the Enlightenment period, in regard to Humanism, consists in taking the humanist faith in humanity step further—toward questioning and even rejecting organized religion. It was a period of the triumph of intellectual reasoning over over religious belief, and it grounded the idea of virtue on Earth for the sake of pleasure on Earth. In this thinking lay the seeds of the humanist work of the next century, that of social consciousness and reform.

Modern Secular Humanism

The social reformist thinking of the nineteenth century was an outgrowth of Renaissance and then Enlightenment Humanism. Belief in the Great Chain of Being with humankind firmly at the top both legitimized imperialism through the idea of "civilizing" undeveloped nations abroad and contributed to the sense of social responsibility that developed into better living and employment conditions at home, where working-class people led "lives of quiet desperation" (Thoreau, 1854). Robert Green Ingersoll (1833–1899) wrote "A Humanist Credo," in which he defined this responsibility:

> We are satisfied that there can be but little liberty on earth while men worship a tyrant in heaven. We do not expect to accomplish everything in our day; but we want to do what good we can, and to render all the service possible in the holy cause of human progress. We know that doing away with gods and supernatural persons and powers is not an end. It is a means to an end—the real end being the happiness of man.

After the fall of imperialism, humanist ideology evolved from a program that focused on social reform to one that embraced humanitarianism in general, and this form of Humanism dominated the twentieth century. According to humanist Corliss Lamont, Humanism is "A philosophy of joyous service for the greater good of all humanity in this natural world and advocating the methods of reason, science, and democracy." Several manifestos have been written and signed by leading scholars, scientists, and writers indicating their support of a form of Humanism that eschews organized religion and embraces human responsibility for realizing human potential. This includes such ideas as opposing nuclear war, promoting pro-choice on the abortion question, promoting organ donation after death, and accepting euthanasia under certain circumstances. With such a wide range of issues to support, Humanism of the twentieth century, also called Ethical Humanism, does not advocate any particular combination of them but rather subscribes to the notion of situational ethics, of making moral decisions on a case-by-case basis following the underlying humanist principles of respect for human dignity, faith in science and technology, freedom, and respect for nature. These principles have no regard for religious mythology but instead focus on human life on Earth. Paul Kurtz explains in his *Humanist Manifesto I and II* that "Ethics is autonomous and situational, needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stem from human interest and need . . . we strive for the good life here and now." Secular humanists are those who are religiously devoted to the principles of Humanism. They are to be distinguished from religious humanists, such as the Quakers, who do not use this term but who are devoted to humanitarian concerns as an integral part of their religion and who eschew rituals, costumes, and dogma in their faith. There have been many notable people who claimed Humanism or Secular Humanism as their personal doctrine. These include the atheist American lawyer Clarence Darrow (1857–1938); the German-born American psychoanalyst Eric Fromm (1900–1980); British biologist and grandson of Aldous Huxley, Julian Sorrell Huxley (1887–1975); pacifist and leading English philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872–1970); scientist and Science Fiction writer Isaac Asimov (1920–1992); French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre (1905–1980); scientist Carl Sagan (1934–1996), German-born scientist Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965); Spanish-born philosopher George Santayana (1863–1952); Chinese-born writer Lin Ytang (1895–1976); philosopher Corliss Lamont (1902–1995); among many others. The challenges faced by humanists of the twenty–first century, who include philosopher Paul Kurtz, feminist historian Riane Eisler, social journalist Barbara Ehrenreich, feminist Betty Friedan, feminist writer Alice Walker, science fiction writer Kurt Vonnegut, United Nations secretary-general Kofi Annan, just to name a very few, will involve dealing with globalization and ecological concerns.

Historical Context

The Renaissance

The Renaissance constituted a major shift in focus from God to the human. It started in the middle of the fourteenth century, after the Black Death (plague, 1347–1377) killed almost one-third of the population of Europe. Although the economy suffered, the remaining population earned higher wages and quickly filled in the gaps in the market. A renewed interest in classical literature, language, and philosophy fed the intellectual movement of the Renaissance: Humanism. Humanism was responsible for raising man to a level of dignity and intellectual importance that actually threatened the viability of the Church. As humanists worked to integrate pagan classical philosophy with Christian, Jewish, and gnostic theology and mysticism, they developed the notion that man can achieve redemption through his faith, independent of the grace of God. This change accompanied a growing awareness of and discomfort about the extensive corruption of the clergy. The practice of selling indulgences began to be questioned by an emerging and somewhat educated middle class that did not share the traditional values of the ruling elite. Knowledge and ideas were more widely available due to the invention of the printing press (1457–1458) and a gradual urbanization of society. The Church still maintained its political, social, and economic power, but the Protestant Reformation was questioning its theology, and a new branch of Christianity was in its formative phase. A Counter Reformation helped to refine Church procedures and reduce corruption, but the schism between competing models of individual salvation led to the formation of Protestant denominations. Although the Church sanctioned persecution of witches and instituted the Spanish Inquisition as a backlash against the Protestant Reformation, Europe was divided along religious lines, and nations such as England went back and forth between Catholocism

Compare & Contrast

- **1100–1400:** The most devout Christians, the monks and nuns, lead lives of quiet piety, cloistered away from the cares of the world.

  1450–1600: Pious men begin to realize that piety can be practiced here on earth, so many humanist scholars, who are at the same time highly religious, invest themselves in making society a better place to be.

  Today: Religious men and women devote themselves to the betterment of the underprivileged here on earth as do the humanists.

- **1100–1400:** In the west, Christianity is a common aspect of life. People of other religions are sometimes treated as strangers, infidels, or unbelievers and are persecuted.

  1450–1600: As Christianity splits into Catholicism and Protestantism, religious persecution continues, now between the two branches. Persecution of Jews, Muslims, and people who practice neither Catholicism nor Protestantism is also rampant.

  Today: Religious tolerance is a hallmark of a liberal society. There are still places in the world that persecute people of religions other than their own, and their intolerance has become one of the key challenges of the twenty-first century.

- **1100–1400:** Both scholars and clergy accept Christian teachings as presented by the Catholic Church.

  1450–1600: Humanist scholars and clergy begin to feel skepticism about some Catholic teachings and therefore develop the ideology that people can seek revelation on their own. Their ideas are considered heretical.

  Today: Secular humanist scholars flatly deny any credence to religious belief. Secular Humanism itself serves as a kind of religious belief in human dignity.

and Protestantism until leaders were able to stabilize society and appoint a national religion or manage to incorporate a policy of religious toleration. In this hotbed of social and philosophical turbulence, a new mode of critical thinking allowed for significant discoveries in science. New respect for individual achievement, the scientific revolution that allowed open scientific inquiry, and an established wealth led to the revolutionary discoveries of Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton and set the stage for innovations in art such as the application of the golden mean in architecture, the portrayal of visual perspective in drawing and painting, and the realistic modeling of musculature in human sculpture. Niccolo Machiavelli explored human psychology to develop a theory about the role of power in politics that became the basis for modern political realism. In drama, playwrights such as Shakespeare portrayed intimate psychological studies of the human mind as it undergoes a crisis. In these and other ways, the Renaissance surpassed the achievements of classical Greece and Rome that it had rediscovered.

Italian City-States

The birth of Humanism occurred in the Italian city-states during the fourteenth century, when Francesco Petrarch decided to devote himself to the study of Latin (and later, Greek) and to search for ancient lost manuscripts of classical Rome and Greece. The Italian city-states were a perfect breeding ground for a new ideology because they were not as committed to Scholasticism as were the urban areas of the rest of Europe. Whereas universities in other parts of Europe taught theology, the universities in the Italian city-states taught law and medicine. In the rest of Europe, society depended upon the clergy at the universities to educate the sons of the elite in established Christian behavior, morality, and doctrine so that they would be able to compete for positions at court. However, the Italian city-states were either self-governing (Florence

and Venice) or run by a patriarchal family, like the Medicis, and so needed only to teach young men how to use language and writing to conduct business and city matters. Italy was a locus of trade, which required that merchants be conversant in law and the cultures of the many merchants from other kingdoms who traveled there to trade. In Florence, no university existed until an institution was chartered in 1321. Instead, young men of elite families were trained to their trade in schools that contracted annually with a teacher to present a prearranged curriculum. This fluidity made it easier for the city-states to shift to the new humanist way of thinking, since there was not a philosophically or theologically oriented university faculty devoted to the promotion of a particular philosophy or doctrine. The practicality of a merchant trade culture demanded that students acquire an ethical foundation that would make them good businessmen. Furthermore, the city-state schools taught their students skill in politics and rhetoric, so that they could serve in the republican form of government and also make good heads of their family households.

The fall of Constantinople in 1453 brought an influx of expatriate Greek scholars to Italy. These scholars found work teaching the young elite of the wealthy merchants in the city-states, spawning interest in the study of Greek language and literature, so that studies of ancient Greek literature in the original language contributed to humanist thought.

The Reformation

The Reformation was a reaction to the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church, which was raising money by selling "indulgences," pieces of paper promising that the purchaser would have all of his earthly sins excused in heaven. The Reformation was a theological movement, led by Martin Luther, who in 1517 attached ninety-five theses, criticisms against the Church, to the door of Castle Church in Wittenberg. He was promptly excommunicated. However, his ideal of religious revelation through personal experience of the Bible and God through faith rather than through religious works was an idea that took hold among the growing middle class. Although scholarly humanists eventually withdrew their support from what they could see was an attack on the Church itself and not just on its corruptions, the reformist movement succeeded in creating an alternate branch of Christianity known as Protestantism. The Reformation became a political conflict as nations began to emerge from the fiefdoms of the medieval period and the leaders of these nations, such as King Henry VIII of England, saw in the Reformation potential for making inroads into the formidable power of the Church. The Church's power to generate revenue exceeded that of the crown through money gained from services related to birth, first communion, marriage, and death. The Church also wielded authority equal to and greater than that of the crown, with its threat of excommunication, which was believed to guarantee condemnation to hell after death. The Reformation was questioning the validity of that power, in light of extensive corruption among the clergy and even within the Vatican itself. Henry VIII took advantage of the weakening of Church authority and in 1538 dissolved many of the wealthy monasteries, taking their treasuries into his own coffers. He further weakened Papal authority in England when, through his Act of Supremacy (1534), he assumed authority over the Church in England.

Printing

Johannes Gutenburg, German inventor of the printing press using movable type, produced a 1,282-page Latin Bible between 1453–1455. By 1465, two German printers had set up shop in Italy, where they produced a Latin grammar and a work of Cicero, in addition to the more popular fare of devotional books and the lives of the saints. By the middle of the fifteenth century, lost classical texts were being rediscovered by Petrarch and his disciples and Boccaccio and Salutati, among others. With the rapid proliferation of printing presses in major cities, the opportunity for a profitable business arose, and the cost of books dropped so that each student in a school could own his own Latin grammar and one or two important books instead of having to copy texts as the teacher recited them aloud. In addition, the professionalization of printing resulted in a greater reliability of the texts; not only were the texts amended by diligent humanist scholars being published, but large printing jobs reduced the number of text variants. The impact of printing on Renaissance culture was significant. New ideas spread more quickly to a populace whose literacy was increasing exponentially as schools multiplied and, due to the availability of new books, were increasingly effective.

Critical Overview

The early humanists were attacked by the Schoolmen (scholastics) and other clergy as lacking true faith. They were denounced as pagans and were

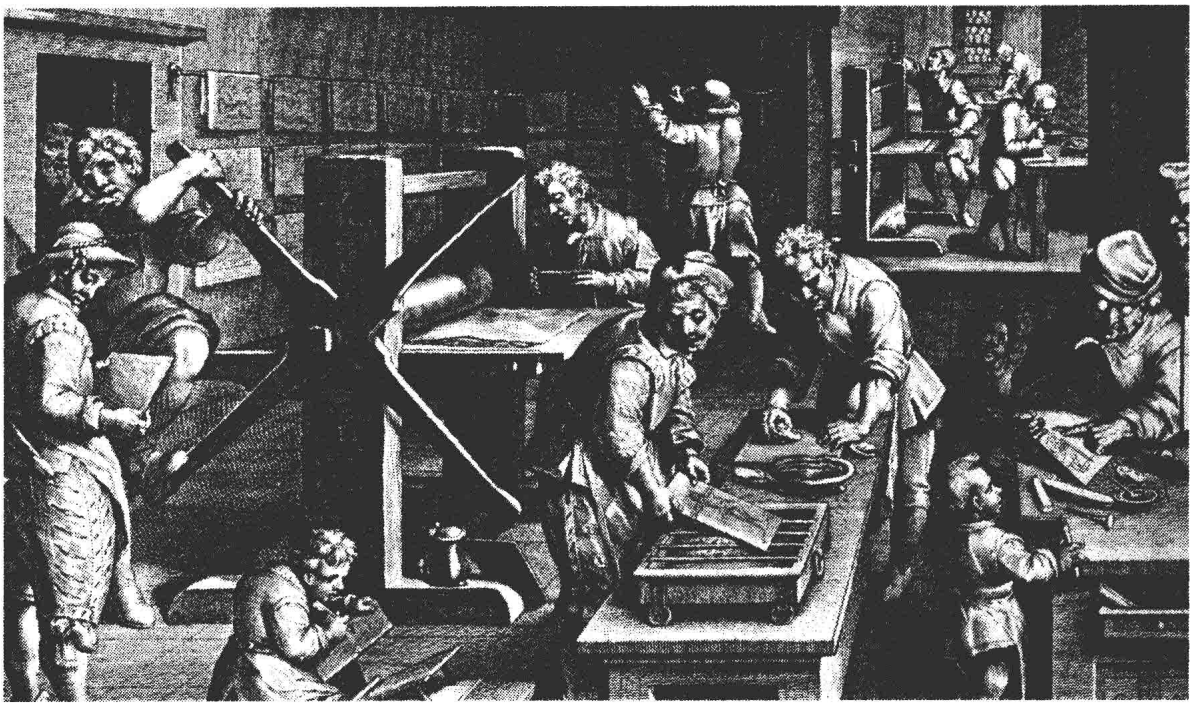


Illustration of a sixteenth-century print shop

considered heretical. However, the humanists in fact were quite devout. Indeed, leaders, such as Erasmus, never deviated from Catholicism, even though they disparaged Church corruption. These humanists are known as Christian humanists, for they did not question faith itself. Nevertheless, Erasmus was vilified by traditional churchmen throughout his life. Businessmen were skeptical of the humanist curriculum and did not want their sons to waste time studying nonessential topics such as poetry and philosophy. The humanist commitment to public service eventually won over those who feared that humanist study was impractical. Another means of defense happened accidentally. Many humanists found employment with the new print shops, setting type and proofreading copies. They soon discovered that they could carry out their disputes over points of philosophy quite effectively through this new medium instead of staging a formal public debate. Ultimately, their participation in the fledgling industry spurred its success, and in turn, the humanists benefited by reaching a wider audience through their printed essays, tracts, and letters.

During the eighteenth century, humanist thinkers tended to embrace the idea of empirical science developed during the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century. At the same time, scientists naturally gravitated toward a system of belief that could be developed by reason and produced measurable and predictable results. The combination led humanists further away from religious belief, and atheism became a part of Humanism. As Howard Radest explains in his book, *The Devil and Secular Humanism*, "The point of separation [between religion and Humanism] was the Enlightenment; the impulse to separation was modern empirical science." Radest sees the roots of modern secular Humanism as stemming primarily from the Enlightenment period, with its emphasis on the "Rights of Man," with only distant roots coming from the Renaissance. This is because modern Secular Humanism is openly atheistic (a concept foreign to Renaissance thinkers) and has been criticized for this by religious fundamentalists. When the first "Humanist Manifesto" was released to newspapers in 1933, it met a huge public outcry against its atheistic principles; Humanism was seen as a dangerous trend away from core religious values. In fact, many outspoken religious conservatives today blame humanists for modern consumerist culture because they see humanists as technocrats, quick to sacrifice nature for the sake

of human gain. They decry Humanism as a religion without a god and without a moral framework. Humanist Paul Kurtz defends his humanist beliefs in his book, *In Defense of Secular Humanism*, in which he reminds detractors that Humanism does rest upon a set of ethical principles. Whether or not a given humanist subscribes to Kurtz's particular view of Humanism, modern humanists take on today's most difficult ethical issues, such as the teaching of evolution in schools, abortion rights, and the right to euthanasia. As humanist Jeaneane Fowler declares, "Humanism has no creed, but many convictions."

Criticism

Carole Hamilton

Hamilton is an English teacher at Cary Academy in North Carolina. In this essay, Hamilton explores how Humanism continues to thrive as an attractive belief system in the postmodern world.

Postmodernism, the belief that reality is a social construct in which each person creates his or her own personal truth, has declared the "end of history" following Nietzsche's declaration of the "death of God." According to postmodernists, there is no possibility for a single, all-encompassing, objective belief. Everything is subjective, open to interpretation. This entails, according to postmodern French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, the "end of narrative," or explanatory stories, as well. Lyotard claims that the "grand narrative," or universalizing belief system, "has lost its credibility." This means that for postmodernists, neither religious nor scientific "stories" can be relied upon as Truth. Instead, they say, humans act as they want to act, according to self-interest, and then rationalize their actions by espousing the tenets of a handy belief system. Some point to fundamentalist beliefs, whereas others claim to be inspired by reason or science. These belief systems provide principles that justify their actions.

Humanists, too, have been rationalizing their position by attaching it to long-held values. Because it espouses popular principles, Humanism has survived and shows every sign of flourishing in the future. This is because the humanist grand narrative has shifted over the centuries, responding to changes in the market of human beliefs. In doing so, Humanism has maintained its viability in a way that can carry it into future generations.

A survey of three of the most influential manifestos of modern Humanism demonstrates how the grand narrative of Humanism has evolved, making it attractive to followers and allowing it to address the problems of the age, specifically those that threaten human life and dignity. The humanist manifesto of 1933 attaches its agenda to the value of science. In doing so, the modern humanists who signed the 1933 humanist manifesto rejected all forms of supernatural belief, making a clear break with religion that their Renaissance founders could neither envision nor support. The 1933 manifesto outlines in no uncertain terms that "the end of man's life [is to] seek development and fulfillment in the here and now." It is a manifesto that discourages sentimentalism and seeks "social and mental hygiene" instead. This manifesto was written after the end of World War I, during the time of military build-up between France and Germany. It was the period of the Lost Generation, who had lost faith in God as well as in human virtue. Many people were stunned by the loss of life and the devastation of the world war; they saw life on Earth as bleak and unfulfilling, yet they longed for a meaningful purpose for their lives. The 1933 manifesto served as a call to the social conscience of a disaffected populace. It had an appeal to a world inclined toward agnosticism, the belief that humans are not capable of proving whether God exists or not. In this it succeeded by suggesting that it was admissible to seek happiness here on Earth.

The "Humanist Manifesto II" of 1973 shows another shift in the phrasing of the grand narrative of Humanism, this time moving it closer to the realm of a scientific rather than a religious foundation. The new manifesto espouses complete faith in science as the dominant ideology, which now extends to technology. Humans not only understand the world better, they now have the means to control it. This concept is consistent with the Renaissance faith in man, and the Renaissance humanists also were comfortable with technology to the extent that they used the new printing press as a means to distribute their ideas. However, modern Humanism places technology in the center of its faith. The "Humanist Manifesto II" came on the heels of a successful space program and the sense that the Cold War could be evaded through nuclear deterrence. Ironically, this manifesto calls for an end to "the use of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons," while expressing a complete faith in technology as "a *vital key* to human progress." This manifesto also declares atheism as a definitional aspect of Humanism. Religious belief is not just a

What Do I Study Next?

- Renaissance art shows the ideals of the period. One important painting by Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio, 1483–1520), "The School of Athens" painted in 1510–1511, captures the spirit of Humanism, with its portrayal of humans learning from other humans. Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, and other classical scholars also appear in the painting.
- The idea of artistic perspective was growing during the time of the Renaissance humanists, too. Essentially a product of mathematical calculations to portray the illusion of depth on a flat, painted surface, perspective allowed painters and sculptors to integrate their subjects into the context or background of the painting more realistically. Painters of the Renaissance were almost obsessed with perspective. Notable pieces that show perspective are "The Holy Trinity" by Masaccio (Tommaso di Giovanni di Simone Guidi, 1401–1428) and "Dead Christ" by Andrea Mantegna (1431–1506). Portraits were another "invention" of the Renaissance, stemming from the humanist belief in the essential dignity of man.
- Of the many classical writers who laid the groundwork for Humanism, several are still pertinent today and also highly readable. Plato's *Republic*, which describes the ideal state, inspired many humanist thinkers. The *Republic* explores the facets of the ideal state through a dialogue conducted by Socrates.
- Besides researching classical writers and writing to them in fictional letters, Petrarch wrote lovely sonnets, consisting of fourteen lines, the first eight of which state a problem that the final six lines resolve. The Italian, or Petrarchan, sonnet rhymes a-b-b-a, a-b-b-a in the first portion. Most of his sonnets are written to "Laura," a real or fictional woman who did not return Petrarch's love.
- Robert Bolt's play *A Man for All Seasons* is thoroughly researched and captures the essence of early humanist Sir Thomas More as he struggles with his own conscience in opposing the king's subjection of the Catholic Church in England.
- For twentieth-century portrayals of humanist ideology, any episode of humanist Gene Roddenberry's television series *Star Trek* will provide two lessons based on humanist values: one personal and one societal.
- *African American Humanism: An Anthology* (1991), edited by Norm R. Allen, presents evidence that African-American writers such as Richard Wright and Zora Neale Hurston carry on the tradition of humanist ideals in their work. As an alternative, read Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) about a young girl's longing for independence, or Wright's *Native Son* (1940), or *Black Boy* (1945). Richard A. Wright proposes in his work *African Philosophy* (1979) that African Humanism stems from Greek sources.

point of skepticism but is vilified as dangerous because it does not partake of reason. The early humanists would have been shocked by this change in their beliefs. However, they would have been gratified by another change: the emphasis on social responsibility. And, they might have been intrigued by this manifesto's expression of hope for global governance, a new thought for Humanism. The only idea that remains consistent with early Humanism is the privileging of human dignity as a central belief.

Coming just seven years later, "A Secular Humanist Declaration" of 1980 contains sentiments quite similar to "Humanist Manifesto II." However, the demands for the future are more specific, and the underlying ideology has shifted, again. "A Secular Humanist Declaration" appeals to democracy as a necessary component of morality. This is the

first instance of a political agenda for Humanism. It specifically addresses current policies of secular politics, from allowing evolution to be taught in schools to the tax status of nonprofit secular human rights associations. No such political concerns appear in the earlier manifestos. Clearly, the political uncertainly of the late seventies had left its mark on humanist thinking.

The shift in Humanism from its Renaissance basis in Christianity to one that is atheistic and focused on secular politics is progressive because belief must be organic enough to adapt to the changing social environment. Instead of relying on dogmatic statements that must be defended against competing ideologies, Humanism has, over time, changed its course to stay consistent with human needs. The humanist rhetoric about reason and scientific method is really a way of saying that Humanism intends to adapt to what is empirically true. Although it appears to rely on claims to transcendent principles, the nature of its abiding principles is fluid. One of these abiding principles is the commitment to preserving human life and human dignity. Thus, despite the evolution in rhetorical appeals to God, and then to reason, science, and democracy, the real beliefs of Humanism still have not changed. They are expressed in Thomas Paine's statement, "All mankind are my brethren; to do good is my religion."

The looseness of the word "good" in Paine's statement is a necessary aspect of humanist thought, which allows humanists to participate in the situational or conditional ethics required by the twenty-first century. While fundamentalists attempt to coerce followers through attempts to limit access to or to discredit competing ideologies, Humanism holds onto the crucial little narratives and lets the grand narrative evolve as it may. Humanists today concern themselves with the ecosystem, with globalization, and with human rights, all issues that threaten human life, human worth, or human dignity. They also recognize and accept the postmodern distrust of consensus, seeing that universal consensus would be another form of absolutism. In this sense, most contemporary humanists partake of pragmatist philosophy, which says that ideas are measured not by their universal truth but by their practical results. In *Philosophy and Social Hope*, pragmatist Richard Rorty suggests that "we simply give up the philosophical search for commonality" because "moral progress might be accelerated if we focused instead on our ability to make the particular little things that divide us seem unimportant." Rorty advocates removal of all grand narratives from the humanist rhetoric. Another humanist, Frederick Edwords, in his essay "The Humanist Philosophy in Perspective," also acknowledges the necessity to stay flexible, saying that scientific knowledge, moral choices, and social policies "are subject to continual revision in the light of both the fallible and tentative nature of our knowledge and constant shifts in social conditions." Edwords admits that giving up the hope for a universal truth is risky, but he asserts that today's humanists

> have willingly sacrificed the lure of an easy security offered by simplistic systems in order to take an active part in the painstaking effort to build our understanding of the world and thereby contribute to the solutions of the problems that have plagued humanity through the ages.

These and other forward-thinking humanists realize that an ideology needs nothing more than the sense that an action is right and good because it benefits humanity, and that making these choices is not thereby made simple or formulaic.

Although they oppose indoctrination of any form, humanists today push for educational reforms that emphasize character education, moral virtues, and critical thinking skills. They want students to learn about evolution and other hotly contested subjects and then to decide for themselves. In this, humanists face opposition from fundamentalist religious groups. It appears that once again Humanism is facing off against organized religion in the arena of education. To do so, according to Rorty, is both inevitable and a necessary function of humanist educators, since, "the real function of the humanist intellectuals is to instill doubts in the students about the students' own self-images, and

"Instead of relying on dogmatic statements that must be defended against competing ideologies, Humanism has, over time, changed its course to stay consistent with human needs."

about the society to which they belong." The destabilizing effect of teaching a humanist curriculum is also necessary for the evolution of humanist thought, for, as Rorty continues, teachers "help ensure that the moral consciousness is slightly different from that of the previous generation." Allowing for change and adaptation in the future makes an idea viable and strong, and it accommodates the human need to express free will by making a choice among a competing market of ideas.

The reason that today's humanists accept the need for an evolving agenda and a changing source of authentication is that they recognize the postmodern truth that humans make decisions and then justify them through theology and philosophy. Michael Werner confirms this view in his article "Humanism and Beyond the Truth" when he says

> we are not so much rational animals as much as we are rationalizing ones. Our overdeveloped powers of cognition are more often used to confirm our prejudices, maintain our power and control, and shield us from confronting our own irrational inconsistencies.

It seems clear that taking away the scaffolding of Humanism's grand narrative has had no effect on the ultimate objective of humanist thinking. Humanists continue to strive, as Felix Adler declared, to "Act so as to encourage the best in others, and by so doing you will develop the best in yourself." For today's humanists, faith takes the form of trusting that the philosophy of Humanism will evolve. As Annette Baier explains in her book, *Postures of the Mind*, "the secular equivalent of faith in God is faith in the human community and its evolving procedures." This trust amounts to faith in the postmodern condition to change and evolve. Today's postmodern humanists practice a "faith" that doing good for other humans now and in the future has its own value, one that does not require further justification. Bertrand Russell said that "The great use of a life is to spend it for something that outlasts it." Moral progress, as practiced by postmodern humanists, is a matter of gradually increasing the good of human worth, through acts that look beyond self-interest. Today's humanists know that the "death of God" and the "end of narrative" do not have to lead to the end of man.

Source: Carole Hamilton, Critical Essay on Humanism, in *Literary Movements for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Joanna Martindale

In the following introduction excerpt, Martindale explores the concepts of education, wisdom, and elegance in humanist works.

Education: theory and practice

Education was one of the chief humanist interests; from the time of Vittorino da Feltre and Guarino, who had schools at Mantua (1423–46) and at Ferrara (1429–36) respectively, humanists were often involved in the teaching of children, and they wrote many educational treatises. These stress the supreme importance of education: man cannot live by the promptings of nature alone, 'doctrine' (knowledge, teaching) must be added to experience, and the mind should be formed early. Three classical works in particular influenced humanist educational ideas: the pseudo-Plutarchan essay *The education of children*, from the *Moralia*, Cicero's *On the orator* and above all Quintilian's *The education of an orator*.

Humanist treatises frequently stress the special importance of sound education for the ruler and the governing class: the *studia humanitatis* lead to knowledge and virtue, and hence to good government. The English educational writers, Elyot and Ascham, both take this up, echoing the arguments of Erasmus and Castiglione. The standard example used to demonstrate the efficacy of education for the ruler was that of Alexander the Great, whose tutor was Aristotle and whose favourite author was Homer. Humanists do seem to have contributed to bringing about a change of attitude here; the medieval idea of a different education for nobles and 'clerks' (ecclesiastics, who often held bureaucratic posts) fell into disfavour, and the upper classes began to send their sons to the grammar schools, the universities and the Inns of Court; education came to be seen as essential for public life.

Complaints about the state of education and attacks on medieval teaching methods are common in humanist authors; Batt, in *The antibarbarians*, lavishes scorn on the ignorance of schoolteachers and on the stupidity of medieval grammars. Of course, there had been schools in the Middle Ages where classical authors were studied, for example the celebrated school of Chartres where Bernard taught the classics to John of Salisbury in the twelfth century. But by Erasmus' day, there had been a decline. Classes were often very large. Generally only the master was provided with a textbook, and so everything had to be dictated and then learnt by heart. (Renaissance schooling benefited both from the invention of printing and from the spread of cheap paper, which meant that the boy could preserve copious notes on the authors he was studying.) Logic was the dominant discipline; logical disputation was begun early in the schools and

Detail of Raphael's The School of Athens *showing Plato, Aristotle, and other classical scholars*

even the teaching of grammar was affected by it, so that the boys learnt complex definitions of grammatical cases. This kind of thing was anathema to the humanists, as was the Latin usage taught:

> All Latin adulterate, which ignorant blind fools brought into this world and with the same hath distained and poisoned the old Latin speech and the very Roman tongue which in the time of Tully and Sallust and Virgil and Terence was used, which also Saint Jerome and Saint Ambrose and Saint Austin and many holy doctors learned in their times—I say that filthiness and all such abusion which the later blind world brought in, which more rather may be called blotterature than literature, I utterly abanish and exclude out of this school.

Viewed by modern educational ideas, the education provided in the English grammar school of the Renaissance, which put into practice humanist ideas, was extraordinarily single-minded, perhaps even narrow-minded. The whole tenor was literary. Boys learnt to read and to write English, Latin and Greek, generally in that order and with the greatest attention being paid to Latin. Humanist educators believed that Latin grammar should be learnt not by rote but by observing and copying the practice of 'good authors.' In his influential *Elegancies of the Latin language* (1471), a study of classical usage, Lorenzo Valla had said, 'I accept for law whatever has pleased great authors.' The sentiment is echoed by English educationalists; 'without doubt,' writes Ascham in *The schoolmaster*, 'grammatica itself is sooner and surer learned by examples of good authors than by the naked rules of grammarians.' Latin literature was always read with an eye to imitating; particular authors were studied at the same time as particular kinds of composition were being mastered: for example, the relevant parts of Cicero were read while orations and epistles were being composed. The closest attention was paid to details of expression; the boy kept a notebook in which he jotted down phrases which he could employ in his own compositions. The aim of the system was rhetorical expertise, the ability to express oneself fluently on any topic. Hence all the innumerable exercises in translating from one language into another (it is worth noting that boys sometimes translated into English verse), in varying one thought in different words, in composing themes and orations.

It can hardly be chance that an educational programme of this kind coincided with a tremendous outburst of literary activity. Not only professional writers but men immersed in practical affairs could turn their hand to a poem and sometimes produce a masterpiece, as Sir Henry Wotton did in 'Ye meaner beauties of the night.' The emphasis on the cultivation of stylistic fluency had its effect. Shake-

Humanists had what may seem an excessive faith in the power of word and the persuasive force of language."

speare may laugh at pedantic schoolmasters in Holofernes (in *Love's labour's lost*), a trick of whose speech is *variatio*, the production of strings of synonyms:

> *Hol.* The deer was, as you know, *sanguis*, in blood; ripe as the pomewater, who now hangeth like a jewel in the ear of *coelo*, the sky, the welkin, the heaven; and anon falleth like a crab on the face of *terra*, the soil, the land, the earth.
>
> *Nath.* Truly, Master Holofernes, the epithets are sweetly varied, like a scholar at the least: but, sir, I assure ye, it was a buck of the first head,

but he is the supreme example in English literature of Erasmian *copia*, stylistic abundance. Reading habits learnt at school persisted in later life; Ben Jonson marked phrases in his books with an eye to redeployment in his own poetry. The teaching methods of the period may seem to us soul-destroying and Latin compositions sometimes schoolboyish, but when the poets came to compose in English, they could draw on a large stock of ideas and phrases. By the time the boy had left school, he had read very widely in classical literature and learnt a good part by heart; it is therefore not surprising if we find so many reminiscences of the classics in English Renaissance literature. . .

Wisdom and eloquence

In the dedication of *The garden of eloquence* (1577), Henry Peacham speaks of 'wisdom and eloquence, the only ornaments whereby man's life is beautified.' The coupling is significant; wisdom and eloquence are two parts of one ideal. Wisdom cannot express itself properly without eloquence; eloquence is so much empty verbiage without wisdom. It should be stressed again that the emphasis on style in Renaissance literary theory is not formalism. The intimate connection between style and thought is often reiterated; in the *Apophthegms*, Erasmus recounts an anecdote about Socrates, who said to a youth who had been sent by his father to be seen by the philosopher, 'Speak that I may see you,' signifying that the mind of man is manifested less in his face than in his speech (*oratio*), because this is the surest and least lying mirror of the soul.

Diseases of the mind issue in diseased speech; the idea is expressed in *Discoveries* and exemplified by the characters in Jonson's plays, in the bombast of Sir Epicure Mammon, for example.

Wisdom and eloquence are the properties of the true orator. Humanists revived the classical ideal of the orator, whose aim was not just to know the good but, through eloquence, to move others to the good; passages from Cicero and Quintilian expressed this ideal eloquently. *Humanists had what may seem an excessive faith in the power of word and the persuasive force of language.*

> How much eloquence can accomplish in the shaping of human life is known both from reading in many authors and from the experience of everyday life. How great is the number of those we recognise in our own day, to whom even examples were of no help, who have been aroused and turned suddenly from a most wicked manner of life to a perfectly ordered one simply by the sound of others' voices,

wrote Petrarch. 'Nothing among humans is more powerful at stirring all motions of the soul than speech (*oratio*),' said Erasmus. Such faith pervades Daniel's *Musophilus*. It is important to note that ideas about oratory were transferred to poetry; the argument of Sidney's *Defence of poesy* centres on the moving power of literature:

> Truly, I have known men, that even with reading *Amadis de Gaule* (which God knoweth wanteth much of a perfect poesy) have found their hearts moved to the exercise of courtesy, liberality, and especially courage. Who readeth Aeneas carrying old Anchises on his back, that wisheth not it were his fortune to perform so excellent an act?

and Ben Jonson adapts Quintilian's definition of the orator to the poet in *Discoveries*. English poets made high claims for their art as a moral and cultural force: Spenser declared that the aim of *The fairy queen* was 'to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline,' and Milton thought Spenser 'a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas.'

To define what the humanists meant by wisdom is a delicate matter. If I may simplify a complex issue, they turned away from the Metaphysical ideal of the Middle Ages, when theology was queen of the sciences and its study was guided by logic, towards an ethical ideal, often with a bias towards the active life (the Neo-Platonism of Ficino and Pico della Mirandola in its advocacy of contem-

plation looks back to scholasticism; but many humanists did still feel the attraction of the life of contemplation). Such an ideal was in harmony with Cicero's ideas of wisdom. In hundreds of passages of Renaissance literature, we find pictures of wisdom as self-knowledge, self-rule, moderation, superiority to circumstance, constancy, rationality, which are thoroughly classical in spirit. Plutarch and Ben Jonson share a similar belief in reason. The humanist idea of wisdom tended to emphasise the part played by natural reason, with the caveat that such reason is implanted in us by God. 'I call nature an aptness to be taught and a readiness that is grafted within us to honesty,' wrote Erasmus, whose belief in the co-operation of nature and grace (here, he was in harmony with Aquinas) and in the natural tendency of men to the good ('Now doth every man's mind incline unto that which is wholesome and expedient for his nature') was one of the issues in which he clashed with Luther, who viewed the will as corrupt and who accused Erasmus of paganism. Erasmus thought that the virtuous pagans might have been saved because of their behaviour (here, he was in harmony with Dante); Luther thought they were damned because they had no faith in Christ. Luther was, like St. Augustine, ambivalent in his attitude to pagan wisdom; both felt that it was in opposition to Christian wisdom and that it might be used but not enjoyed. Erasmus believed rather that it was in a continuum with the Christian revelation and that it must be used. As far as English literature is concerned, it was Erasmus' view which was on the whole victorious (though there were sometimes tensions, as in the famous passage in *Paradise lost*, where Milton turns the pagan gods into devils, and there were attacks on pagan literature by both Catholics and Puritans throughout the Renaissance).

Humanists have sometimes been accused of anti-intellectualism, because of their attacks on the scholastic metaphysicians. There is certainly a trace of this in Petrarch's essay *On his own ignorance and that of many others*, with its attack on Aristotle and the atheism of some of his modern followers, and the famous declaration that it is better to will the good than know the truth. However, in rejecting abstract philosophical speculation and also sometimes scientific enquiry, humanists did not come down on the side of simple innocence. Philosophy was replaced by scholarship and erudition. Elsewhere, Petrarch writes, 'Ignorance, however devout, is by no means to be put on a plane with the enlightened devoutness of one familiar with literature.' Erasmus speaks of 'good letters, without which what is human life?' and his *Antibarbarians* is a defence of learning against those who felt that it had no part in the Christian life; in it, he defines wisdom as 'virtus cum eruditione liberali,' virtue joined to liberal learning. Many passages from Erasmus praising cultivation of mind and making the Socratic connection between knowledge and virtue could be collected. *'What is most pernicious to man? Stupidity'*, he writes in *On giving children and early and a liberal education*, and in *The education of a Christian prince* he stresses the need of the ruler for knowledge:

> How can anyone who does not know what is best direct it? Or even worse, if he considers the wickedest things the most desirable, being utterly misled by his ignorance or personal feelings? ... There is only one means of deliberating on a question, and that is wisdom. If the prince lacks that, he can no more be of material assistance to the state than an eye can see when sight is destroyed.

Similar ideas are expressed by English writers. 'Oh no, he cannot be good that knows not why he is good,' says the wise councillor, Philanax, in the *Arcadia*, whose heroine, Pamela, is described as 'she in whose mind virtue governed with the sceptre of knowledge.' In an aside in *The defence of poesy*, Sidney writes, 'it is manifest that all government of action is to be gotten by knowledge, and knowledge best by gathering many knowledges, which is reading.' In Spenser's poem, *The tears of the Muses*, Urania praises knowledge:

> What difference twixt man and beast is left,
> When th'heavenly light of knowledge is put out,
> And th'ornaments of wisdom are bereft?

'Men have been great, but never good by chance,' wrote Jonson, whose poems are full of praises of action joined to knowledge, the man 'that does both act and know' (Marvell's phrase from the *Horatian ode*), and attacks on the ignorant barbarians who oppose him (see the three odes to himself).

The humanist rejection of abstract reasoning may have influenced some writers in their presentation of ideas. Erasmus thought that truth could not be arrived at step by step, by the logical process; rather he preferred to suggest it obliquely. Hence his fondness for the dialogue form and for the ironies of Lucian; the reader has to make a synthesis which embraces all the complexities which the author has suggested. *The praise of folly* and *Utopia* notoriously elusive and complex works, and such qualities may be found in other Renaissance writers. *Debate and alternative points of view play an important part in*

Shakespeare's history plays, and Ben Jonson knew the value of ambiguity, irony and indirection in presenting moral issues, witness *Volpone.*

Source: Joanna Martindale, "Introduction," in *English Humanism: Wyatt to Cowley*, edited by Joanna Martindale, Croom Helm Ltd., 1985, pp. 17–51.

Lauro Martines

In the following essay excerpt, Martines examines the origins of Italian Humanism and describes its five interrelated disciplines.

The velocity and extent of change in the cities of late medieval Italy had a profound effect on consciousness. Especially susceptible were the dominant political and social groups who made the fundamental decisions. In the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a new awareness gradually dawned upon them, an awareness or redirection most effectively articulated by their literary and educational spokesmen. In one of its manifestations this awareness was humanism. We may therefore look upon humanism as a phase in the history of consciousness—the consciousness of the men who fashioned the destinies of the Italian cities. Seen in this light, the true burden of the historian of humanism is to identify the link between humanism and the values, moral and ideological, of the dominant social groups within the cities. The point of the succeeding pages will be to do this.

Changes of consciousness gave rise to changes in the methods and scope of education. Between about 1250 and 1400, church schools lost their exclusive control over education for the laity. Florence and other cities saw the establishment of private schools run by and for laymen. The schoolmasters were often professional notaries, and their schools were designed to teach the elements of Latin and commercial arithmetic to the sons of tradesmen, urbanized noblemen, and merchants who trafficked on an international scale. Strictly utilitarian in its aims—for Latin was the language of contracts and formal diplomatic dispatches—this development was the first phase in a gradual but basic change in the aims of education.

At the level of university instruction, the late fourteenth century witnessed the beginning of a new current, with the lecturing in Florence of men like Giovanni Malpaghini (1346–1417), who taught rhetoric, poetry, and moral philosophy, and Manuel Chrysoloras (d. 1415), who taught Greek to an audience of adult enthusiasts. In the fifteenth century, the vanguard in course offerings at the universities was held by the humanistic subjects—rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy. But the next phase of far-reaching educational change at a more basic level really began around 1400, with the founding of small but select schools run by humanists: that of Roberto de' Rossi (1355?–1417) at Florence, of Gasparino Barzizza (1359?–1431) at Padua, of Guarino Guarini (1374–1460) at Venice, Verona, and Ferrara, and of Vittorino da Feltre (1373–1446) at Mantua. In these schools Christianity was taken so much for granted—indeed, Vittorino had his pupils attend daily Mass—that the major classical writers could occupy the heart of study. Hencefort the *studia humanitatis*—"the humanities"—provided the substance for the most innovative and vigorous wave in primary and secondary education.

Human, humane, the humanities: these words are no more than a remote echo of what the nouns *humanista* and *studia humanitatis* meant in fifteenth-century Italy. We must not confuse vague twentieth-century notions with their more precise Renaissance forebears.

Italian humanism put man where it was both most flattering and most dangerous to be: at the center of active inquiry. The first modern treatise on painting (*Della pittura*, 1435), composed by the humanist Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472), directs painters to determine the sizes of objects in the picture space by the scale of the human figures there represented. Alberti's statement of this "law" conveyed an attitude of discovery. "Man is the measure." Protagoras had long since asserted the same thing, but after the achievements of Alberti and his circle neither painting nor sculpture was to recover from that perception.

In its most general and genuine sense Italian humanism was education for practical and worthy living; but it was education based on the study of the classical Roman and Greek writers. Florentine, Venetian, and other Italian humanists believed that classical literature held the rich and communicable remains of a momentous civilization, that it expressed a viewpoint centered on the value of man's activities in the world. This recognition was combined, as we shall see, with a keen appreciation of the secularity of time, the historical nature of time. There was no necessary conflict between these attitudes and Christianity, but the fact that the classical world was mainly pre-Christian was not entirely beside the point.

It is astonishing to note how many humanists were either members of the legal profession or career officials in government chancelleries, and just as many were born into professional or intensely political families. Three of the most celebrated—Petrarch (1304–1374), Lorenzo Valla (1407–1457), and Angelo Poliziano (1454–1494)—were sons of, respectively, a notary, a canon lawyer, and a civil lawyer. Four others of great preeminence—Coluccio Salutati (1336–1406), Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459), Pier Candido Decembrio (1392–1477), and Giovanni Pontano (1426?–1503)—were leading municipal, papal, and royal secretaries. In Venice nearly all of the most able humanists were drawn from the political partriciate.

These facts are mentioned in order to show that the humanist enterprise proceeded under the direction of, and in keeping with the values of, men brought up for practical activity in the urban community, whether in politics, the rough-and-tumble world of municipal administration, the law courts, the business of drawing up contracts (then the stock-in-trade of the notary), or the counting house. Immersed in practical affairs and oriented toward the accomplishment of everyday ends, such men had an urgent sense of time, a recognition of man's inescapable place in the world, and a sense of his achievements and possibilities. Thus the great appeal for them—or at least for the learned among them—of Aristotle's emphasis on action in his *Ethics*; and the even greater appeal of Cicero, with his emphasis not only on action and knowledge ("the true praise of virtue is in action") but also on eloquence, felicity, and force of verbal expression. Evidently, in the context of the evolved city-state, the orator easily came to represent the ideal fusion of action with wisdom, of will with contemplation.

Appropriately, in the history of modern Europe, the first great private libraries of classical works were built up by men of the sort described above: e.g., Niccolò Niccoli (1364–1437) and Antonio Corbinelli (1377?–1425), the sons of wealthy Florentine wool merchants; Giovanni Corvini (d. 1438?), political secretary to the last Visconti Duke of Milan; or rich citizens who stood at the forefront of public life, like the Florentines Palla Strozzi (1372–1462) and Cosimo de' Medici (1389–1464). No less than the most celebrated humanists, these men applauded the ardent search for the neglected manuscripts of ancient works, a pursuit first strikingly taken up in the first quarter of the fifteenth century.

Why did the break with medieval habits of thought not come sooner, in the thirteenth century, when Italian cities were at the peak of their economic and political vitality? The answer seems to be that the break was retarded by the very condition of urban experience: in this case the raw atmosphere of new cities populated by rustics, large numbers of illiterate noblemen, and tradesmen struggling to survive or to amass enormous fortunes. Since the traditional forms of orientation and feeling must often have seemed inappropriate, it must be that the experience of the urban populace—or whatever was novel in that experience—could not easily generate its own finished forms of expression over a short period of time, except perhaps in song. Particularly resistant in this regard was the fund of experience belonging to the new class of merchants and urban administrators, who eventually gave rise to humanism and provided the audience for it. In some respects their experience *had* to conflict with the prevailing modes of apprehension and cognition, which better suited a feudal society and an ecclesiastical intelligentsia. The intellectual tradition, after all, condemned all interest as usury. Temporal lordship was assigned heavenly essences. Government was often seen as punishment for sin. "Getting and spending" were regarded as inferior a priori to the gallant professions of arms, prayer, and contemplation.

Ideas of unity, hierarchy, and order; an overriding emphasis on authority, essences, and metaphysical reality—these provided the framework and foci for twelfth-and thirteenth-century thought. In a sense the entire fourteenth century, at all events in the world of the city-state, marks a decisive drift away from the more static and hierarchical assumptions of the late Middle Ages. But even Marsilius of Padua (c. 1275–1342), the most inquiring political thinker of the fourteenth century, was unread by his Italian contemporaries: his basic presuppositions were too much in conflict with established opinion concerning the temporal authority of the church. In the early fifteenth century, one of the most sophisticated conceptions of the unity of Christian society, that elaborated by the French thinker Jean Gerson (1363–1429), was still governed by a strict notion of the interlocking relationship between heavenly and earthly hierarchies. And within this scheme man had a fixed place.

Italian humanism worked a radical break with this tradition of thought. It put man at the center of intellectual and artistic inquiry but gave him no fixed nature, no metaphysical trappings or

The syllabus of humanism had five interrelated disciplines: grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy. By cultivating these subjects, the fifteenth-century humanists altered the course of intellectual history."

underpinnings. It focused on his humanity and his potential, and offered temporal glory rather than salvation. It therefore emphasized the study of history, recognizing that man lives in a changing temporal continuum; and it laid great emphasis on the study of moral philosophy (hence, on the dilemma of choice), having stripped man of his fixed nature. Humanism assigned vast importance to rhetoric—the art of persuasion and eloquence—for the practice of this art (i.e., effective and graceful verbal expression) combined action and wisdom, taught a certain control over the emotions (of others and so of one's own), and underlined man's reliance upon the immediate social and civil community. Finally, humanism turned philology—the rigorous historical and grammatical study of language and literature—into its primary intellectual tool, thus opening the way to a better understanding of the literature of antiquity.

In short, it was by means of philology that the humanists approached the classical world, maintaining critical detachment from it, and at the same time sharpening their sense of identity and of their own creative role in the hammering out of a new age. Paradoxically, therefore, the intensive study of classical literature was a process of self-realization. The humanists looked to antiquity to affirm the vitality, value, and experience of the present. In this way the old modes of thought were revolutionized: the impact of accumulated experience was finally able to determine the direction of intellectual and artistic development.

The syllabus of humanism had five interrelated disciplines: grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy. By cultivating these subjects, the fifteenth-century humanists altered the course of intellectual history.

1. *Grammar* meant, first, the study of Latin and then, ambitiously, Greek. It was a commonplace of Renaissance educational theory that all serious preparation for civil life began with the study of Latin grammar. In its highest form, grammar was indistinguishable from philology, for it entailed not only a mastery of the elements of grammar, of syntax, diction, usage, and orthography, but also a true understanding of their development: that is, a grasp of their precise place in the history of the language. This obviously meant a thorough-going familiarity with the history of literature. In this sense grammar was both a tool and a way of life; it opened all the doors of the intellect, but its mastery was the fruit of an austere schooling.

Lorenzo Valla was the outstanding philologist and in some ways the most brilliant humanist of the fifteenth century. Born in Rome in 1407, the son of a North Italian papal lawyer, Valla published his first work, *A Comparison of Cicero and Quintilian* (now lost), at twenty. He taught rhetoric at the University of Pavia in the early 1430s, thereafter drifting to Milan, Florence, and Genoa. In 1435 he settled in Naples, where he became secretary to King Alfonso of Aragon and Naples. In the 1430s and 1440s he brought out a variety of remarkably provocative works—philological, philosophical, and historical. Intellectually he was intensely combative: swift, arrogant, and courageous. Transferring himself to Rome in 1448, he served in a secretarial capacity under Popes Nicholas V and Calixtus III, and died there in 1457. His major philological work, *On the Graces of the Latin Language* (1435–1444) is a combined critical and historical grammar, as well as a handbook of rhetoric and style. It is marked by an astonishingly able grasp of the history of the Latin language. With Valla the possibilities of historical criticism receive a virtuoso demonstration, and in his perspicacity we have one of the first unmistakable examples of the modern historical sense. Nor did he hesitate to address his philology to Holy Scripture and church documents, as in his *Notes on the New Testament* (1449) and his learned harangue on *The Falsity of the Alleged Donation of Constantine* (1440).

2. *Rhetoric* or eloquence—the art of graceful but forceful persuasion—could obviously not be learned until the rules of grammar had been mastered. Cicero and Quintilian, the classical Roman rhetoricians, were taken to be the models in this

realm, the princes of oratory. The choice of the word *oratory* is deliberate: it emphasizes that aspect of rhetoric pertaining to action, to a job of doing. For in their writings the humanists turned and returned to the practical and useful nature of eloquence, most especially in connection with its utility for civil or community service. In his humanistic treatise *Concerning Excellent Traits* (ca. 1402), addressed to a son of the lord of Padua, Pier Paolo Vergerio (1370–1444) observes that "speaking and writing elegantly affords no little advantage in negotiation, be it in public or private affairs . . . but especially in the administration of the State." And in a short essay on literary education, *De studiis te litteris liber*, (ca. 1425), one of the most distinguished of all humanists, Leonardo Bruni (1372?–1444), holds—almost casually—that knowledge should have an application: "The high standard of education referred to earlier can only be achieved by one who has seen much and read much . . . but to make effective use of what we know we must add the power of expression to our knowledge."

These were views which found a ready audience in the intense social world of the city-state, particularly among the more alert and ambitious members of the governing classes.

3. *Poetry* helped to complete the individual; it enlarged his vision and added to his humanity. From it he could draw a fund of examples and enhance the force and variety of his own speech. The preferred poets were Virgil and Homer, then Seneca, Ovid, and Horace; but the vernacular poets, Dante and Petrarch, were by no means neglected. Carlo Marsuppini (1398–1453), first secretary of the Florentine republic from 1444 to 1453, translated the first book of the *Iliad* into Latin verse. He was followed in this effort by a major poet who was also the leading philologist of the second half of the century, Angelo Poliziano (1454–1494). At sixteen, Poliziano had translated books II–V of the *Iliad* into Latin verse, an accomplishment which brought him into Lorenzo de' Medici's entourage.

The most talented of all humanist poets, Francesco Petrarch (1304–1374), is sometimes called "the father of humanism" (as if such a designation made any historical sense). The son of a Florentine notary who suffered political disgrace and exile, Petrarch spent his life abroad, studied law for a time but soon rejected it for a life of writing and reflection. After taking minor religious vows, which gave him financial independence, he traveled widely and found patronage at Avignon, Rome, Milan, Padua, Venice, and elsewhere. Of particular interest for the fortunes of humanism—apart from his *De viris illustribus* (lives of famous Romans) and his stinging self-analysis in the *Secretum*—are Petrarch's Latin letters, known as the *Familiares*, which exhibit his boundless admiration for the world of antiquity, a longing to read Greek, a love of Cicero, familiarity with the history of ancient Rome, and an abandoned attachment to the elegance of classical Latin literature.

4. *History* was in some respects the unifying discipline of humanism. An affirmative view of the ancient world was, primarily, what the humanists had in common. When they united this view of the past with their study of the literature antiquity, they invented philology and brought historical scholarship into being. Yet we must not think that their attitude toward history presupposed an abstract approach. They looked at the past in terms of specific men and events, and their impulse to study history had a limited ground: here

Source: Lauro Martines, "The Italian Renaissance," in *The Meaning of Renaissance and Reformation*, edited by Richard L. DeMolen, Houghton Mifflin, 1974, pp. 27–70.

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Ackroyd provides a balanced biography of Sir Thomas More that successfully places the man in his historical context and reveals the source of his moral courage as well as his basic humanity.

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This work is an overview of the historical context of Humanism from the Renaissance to modern times.

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Hale offers an historical account of the transformation of Europe that occurred between 1450 and 1620 in art, literature, politics, and culture.

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Knight's text is a compilation of short pieces, sometimes excerpted from larger works, by well-known humanists.

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Kraye's book is a compilation of scholarly articles on aspects of Humanism, from rhetoric and philology to the humanist's relationship to art and science.

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This work is a defense of modern Humanism as a philosophy with an account of its historical traditions and its ethical beliefs.

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Margolin compiles a survey of humanist literature, its proponents, and its connection to educational systems in Europe.

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This comprehensive anthology contains literature from the Renaissance, including samples from most of the key humanist thinkers.

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Medieval Mystics

Movement Origin

c. 1250

Mysticism flourished in many parts of Europe, including Germany, Italy, the Low Countries, and England, from the middle of the thirteenth century to the middle of the fifteenth. The greatest figures in Germany were Meister Eckhart, a Dominican friar of formidable intellectual gifts, and his pupils, also Dominicans, Johannes Tauler and Henry Suso. In the Low Countries, John Ruusbroec developed a Trinitarian mysticism that owed much to Eckhart, despite his apparent disagreement with the earlier teacher. In Italy, the Franciscan scholar Bonaventure, St. Catherine of Siena, and St. Catherine of Genoa upheld the mystical flame, and there was also a mystical outpouring in England, associated with the names Julian of Norwich, Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, and the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

Many of the continental mystics were members of the Friends of God, a movement that worked for the spiritual revival of people at a time when the worldliness of the Church, the ravages of the Black Death, and the cracks in the traditional social order created a desire in many to develop a deeper spirituality. Although some of the mystics were hermits, like Rolle, others combined their mysticism with practical concerns such as preaching, administrative duties, and caring for the poor and the sick.

The most enduring figures in medieval mysticism produced works of high spiritual and sometimes literary quality. Although they were all loyal to the Church (including Eckhart, in spite of the

fact that he was posthumously condemned for heresy), they expressed their mysticism in a wide variety of themes and tones. Eckhart's lofty statements from the standpoint of eternity are very different from Catherine of Genoa's intense dialogue between soul and body, for example. Similarly, the visions of Christ's passion granted to Julian of Norwich differ greatly from the down-to-earth advice given by the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Taken as a whole, the writings of the medieval mystics provide a remarkable record of the vitality and variety of the spirituality of the period.

Representative Authors

Giovanni Bonaventure (1217–1274)

Giovanni Bonaventure was born in Bagnorea, Italy, around the year 1217. He entered the Franciscan order and was later sent to Paris to complete his education. In Paris he became friends with Thomas Aquinas, one of the great philosophers in the Christian tradition. Bonaventure taught in Paris from 1248 to 1257, when he was elected minister general of the Franciscan Order. He held this position for sixteen years, during which time he wrote his major works, including *Life of Francis*, a biography of St. Francis of Assisi, and *The Soul's Journey into God*. Bonaventure was made a cardinal in 1273; he died the following year, on July 15, while attending the Second Council of Lyons. He was canonized in 1482 and declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Sixtus V in 1587.

Catherine of Genoa (1447–1510)

Catherine of Genoa was born in 1447 to an aristocratic family. She had a melancholy temperament, which was made more pronounced by an unhappy marriage. A powerful spiritual experience in 1473 transformed her life, and after a period of penance and prayer she began to work among the city's sick and poor. In 1477, she founded the first hospital in Genoa and was its director from 1490 to 1496. It was during this period, in the summer of 1493, that an outbreak of the plague killed nearly four out of five of those who remained in the city. Catherine herself contracted the disease but recovered. Catherine attracted many followers, and between 1499 and 1507, she discussed her spiritual experiences with them, including the times in which she had experienced union with God. Catherine died on September 15, 1510, and was canonized by Pope Clement XII in 1733.

Catherine of Siena (1347–1380)

Catherine of Siena was born in Siena on March 25, 1347, the twenty-fourth child in a lower-class family. Even as a child she exhibited a longing for God, and she refused to marry. When she was about sixteen, she joined the Mantellate, a Dominican body that worked with the poor and the sick. In spite of her lack of formal education, Catherine also became known as a teacher. During her lifetime she attracted a large following, and she also founded a convent. Catherine was active in politics, acting as ambassador between the Papacy and the city-state of Florence. Throughout her life she had unusual spiritual experiences, including visions and ecstasies. In 1368, she experienced a "mystical marriage" to Christ, after which she felt totally given to Christ. She also received the stigmata (the marks of the wounds of Christ). All her life, Catherine practiced severe penance, and often she would eat very little. In 1380, she was unable to eat at all, which led to her death at the age of thirty-three on April 29th of that year. In 1970, Pope Paul VI proclaimed her a Doctor of the Roman Catholic Church.

Meister Eckhart (c. 1260–c. 1327)

Meister Johann Eckhart, who is widely considered to be the greatest of all the German medieval mystics, was born in the village of Hochheim, near Gotha, Germany in 1260. His father was the steward of a knight's castle in the Thuringian forest. When Eckhart was about fifteen, he entered the Dominican monastery at Erfurt and remained there for at least nine years. He then studied in Cologne before becoming prior of Erfurt and vicar of Thuringia. In about 1300, he was sent to Paris to teach, where he presented the Dominican theological positions against their rivals, the Franciscans. In 1302, the prestigious Studium Generale in Paris conferred a Master's degree on him, and since then he has been known as Meister Eckhart. In 1303, he became Provincial of the Dominican order in Saxony, and four years later, Vicar of Bohemia. In 1313, Eckhart, now widely known and respected, lived in Strasbourg, where he preached and was prior of a convent. At some later time, not earlier than 1322, he was invited to take up a professorship at the Studium Generale in Cologne, an extremely high honor. But the Archbishop of Cologne harbored a dislike of all mysticism, and he formally charged Eckhart with heresy. Eckhart denied the charges and made a vigorous defense. He is believed to have died in 1327. In 1329, Pope John XXII condemned many aspects of Eckhart's teaching as heretical.

Julian of Norwich (1342–c. 1416)

There is little information about the life of Julian of Norwich, who was one of the most important figures in medieval English mysticism. She reveals something of herself in her *Revelations of Divine Love*. She reports that she was given her revelations in 1373, when she was thirty and a half, which would mean she was born in 1342. Since she is named as a beneficiary in a will dated 1416, it appears that she was still living at that time as a recluse in Norwich, supported by the church of St. Julian and St. Edwards in Conisford. This church belonged to the Benedictine community. Julian's writings show her to be well read in many of the classic texts of Christian spirituality, and it is possible that she acquired her education by entering a religious order, although whether she was in fact a nun cannot be known.

Richard Rolle (c. 1300–1349)

Richard Rolle, who was born around 1300 in the Yorkshire region of England, has been called the father of English mysticism. Rolle was a prolific author in both English and Latin and was widely read and admired in his day. He was born at Thornton Dale, near Pickering, in Yorkshire. He studied at Oxford but appears to have abandoned his studies, since he did not receive a degree. Rolle then withdrew from the world and devoted himself to a contemplative life. He had a number of unusual psychic and spiritual experiences, feeling heat in his chest and hearing heavenly music. Some of his acquaintances thought him mad. He described these experiences in *Incendium Amoris* (c. 1340, trans. *The Fire of Love*). Rolle's works are characterized by a love of Christ and especially the power of the divine name Jesus. He emphasized love and a religion of the heart. Rolle died in 1349 at Hampole, near Doncaster. Legend has it that he died after tending to victims of the Black Death.

John Ruusbroec (1293–1381)

John Ruusbroec was born in 1293, in the village of Ruusbroec, near Brussels. He became a priest in 1317, when he was twenty-four. For the next twenty-six years he served as chaplain to the church of St. Gudule in Brussels. During this time he wrote treaties opposing the heretical teachings of a woman named Bloemardinne. In 1343, he retired to Groenendael in the forest a few miles from the city with two companions to lead a more solitary life. The small group acquired a few more members and became, with the blessings of the local bishop, an official religious community—canons regular of St. Augustine. Ruusbroec spent the remaining years of his life at Groenendael, where he wrote the most influential of his mystical works. He died December 2, 1381.

Painting of Saint Catherine of Siena by Pier Francesco Bissolo

Henry Suso (1295–1366)

Henry Suso, who with Eckhart and Tauler was one of the three great figures in German medieval mysticism, was born on March 21, 1295, to a noble family. When he was thirteen his parents sent him to the Dominican friary in the town of Constance. After being a member of the Dominican order for five years, he underwent a conversion experience that became the basis for his later life. In 1322 or 1323, he was sent to pursue advanced studies in the Dominican house at Cologne, an honor given to only a few. There he expanded his knowledge of theology and scripture, and his teacher for some of this period was probably Meister Eckhart. Suso remained in Cologne until 1326 or 1327, when he returned to the friary at Constance as a director of studies for the students in the order. Around 1330,

Suso was summoned to Maastricht to defend himself against charges of heresy, and he was dismissed from his position at the friary. But he must have emerged unscathed from the accusations, since later he was appointed prior or superior of the house at Constance. He also preached in the countryside and supervised the spiritual studies of Dominican nuns. In about 1348, Suso was transferred to the Dominican house in Ulm, where he lived for the rest of his life. During this time, he edited his works for publication, collecting them under the title *Exemplar*. Suso died in Ulm on January 25, 1366.

Johannes Tauler (c. 1300–1361)

Johannes Tauler was born around 1300 to a well-to-do family in Strasbourg. He began training in the Dominican Order in 1314, and became a preacher and director. In 1339, he moved to Basle because that city sided with Pope John XXII in his dispute with Louis of Bavaria, whereas Strasbourg was loyal to Louis. Tauler remained in Basle for four or five years, where his influence in the spiritual movement known as the Friends of God increased. Tauler was a disciple of Eckhart and a friend of Suso. Tauler became widely known in the vicinity for his preaching, and his teaching has come down to us in the form of sermons. He died in 1361, in the monastery of Saint Nicholas in Undis, during an outbreak of the plague.

Representative Works

The Cloud of Unknowing

The Cloud of Unknowing is an anonymous devotional book written in England, probably in the East Midlands, in the latter part of the fourteenth century. It is one of the classics of the English mystical tradition. The author appears to have been a male priest, but nothing more is known of him. In seventy-five short chapters, the author offers guidance to the spiritual seeker in his quest to know God. He points out that God is calling the disciple to a higher spiritual life. This is an act of grace on the part of God, and the seeker must respond with a desire for God. He must empty his mind of all thoughts and images in order to penetrate the "cloud of unknowing" that stands between him and God. Thoughts must be pushed away in a "cloud of forgetting." Then the love of God may pierce the cloud. Although the process may be difficult, the seeker eventually loses all awareness of himself, and his soul becomes united with God.

The Exemplar

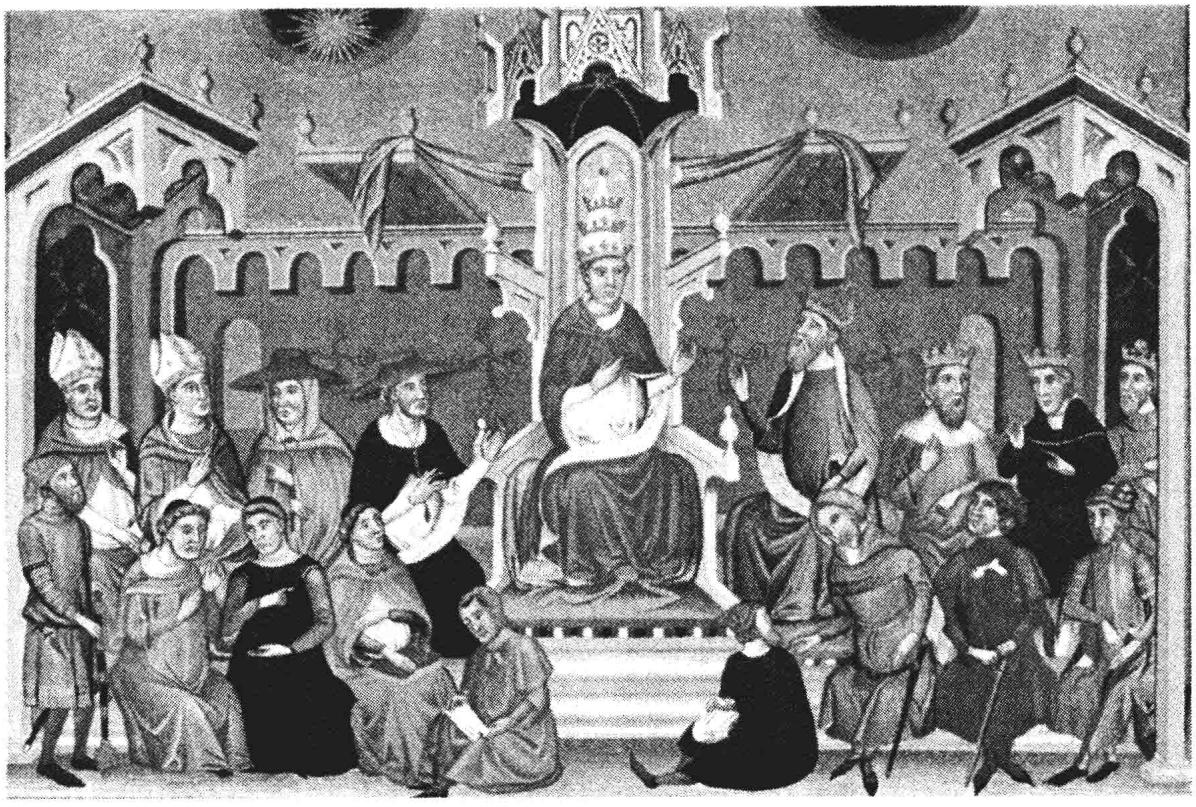
The Exemplar is the title given by Suso to the collection of his own works that he prepared for publication. It includes an autobiography, *The Life of a Servant*, which for the modern reader is the most accessible of Suso's works. Suso describes the severe bodily penance he imposed on himself as well as the visions and mystical experiences that came to him on his spiritual journey. *The Exemplar* contains three other works. *Little Book of Eternal Wisdom* was written to rekindle the love of God in those who wish for it, through the examples of Christ's sufferings and the sorrows of the Virgin. *Little Book of Truth* is about how to live a detached life and touches on many of the most important themes in German mysticism: spiritual freedom, the nature of true discernment, and of union with God. *Little Book of Letters* consists of letters of instruction for practical life and worship sent by Suso to women under his spiritual direction.

The Fire of Love

The Fire of Love is a translation of a Latin work, *Incendium Amoris*, written by English mystic Richard Rolle in about 1340. Rolle's devotional text was inspired by the mystical experience he describes in the prologue and chapter fifteen. Sitting in a chapel one day, he felt his own heart burning with heat and heard heavenly music. The experience became the basis of Rolle's poetic exposition of a life lived in what he called the fire of everlasting love. He explains that divine illumination has three aspects: *fervor* (heat), *dulce* (sweetness), and *canor* (song). The heat in the heart he associates with the burning of divine love. Sweetness refers to the peace and joy that results when the heart burns in love and the presence of the divine beloved is felt. By song, Rolle seems to mean the harmony experienced in the individual mind when all its powers are wedded to God; every thought becomes like a melodious song. These three modes of functioning (heat, sweetness, and song) represent the highest perfection of the Christian religion, although Rolle continually warns that they are not easily attained.

Meister Eckhart's Sermons

Eckhart's sermons, especially those that he preached and wrote in Middle High German rather than in Latin, provide a representative view of his most important thoughts. Of the German sermons that survive, scholars consider about one hundred authentic, and about fifty more probably so. Eckhart's sermons focus on a few central themes, such



Fourteenth-century manuscript illumination

as detachment or self-abandonment, the birth of Christ in the soul, the divine spark of the soul, the abyss of divine being, and the Godhead beyond even the Trinity. Eckhart's philosophy was based on mystical experience of the highest order, and his sermons and treatises were extremely controversial. In part this was because he had a gift for expressing himself in a striking way, using puns, word play, and paradox in the hope that his listeners would be startled into new understanding. In some respects also, the sermons express views that are on the margins of orthodoxy; Eckhart's teaching about the birth of Christ in the soul, for example, was condemned as being suspect of heresy.

Revelations of Divine Love

Revelations of Divine Love was written in the latter part of the fourteenth century by Julian of Norwich. It is organized around sixteen revelations, or "showings," as Julian called them, which she received from God. All but the last came during one five-hour period from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. on May 8, 1373, when she was extremely ill and believed herself to be dying. The illness and the revelations came as an answer to an earlier threefold prayer, in which she had asked to more fully understand the passion of Christ, to suffer physically, and to be given three "wounds": contrition, compassion, and longing for God. The first twelve revelations are based on the crucifixion and suffering of Christ, which was a demonstration of God's love that redeemed mankind. The thirteenth revelation deals with the problem of sin, which will, Julian says, be turned into a blessing by Christ. The fourteenth revelation discusses the nature and purpose of prayer, and the fifteenth, the bliss of heaven. The final revelation (which was given to her that same night) acts as conclusion and confirmation of the others.

The Soul's Journey into God

The Soul's Journey into God is a seven-chapter treatise by Bonaventure. The first six describe the steps toward the soul's union with God. In the first two steps, the soul looks outside of itself to God's creation and the world of the senses. In steps three and four, the mind turns within and contemplates God through the use of its faculties of memory, understanding, and will, and is purified through the traditional virtues of faith, hope, and charity. In the last two stages, the mind rises above itself to

consider first the essential attributes of God, and then the Trinity through its name, the Good. The last chapter describes the final goal, a mystical ecstasy in which the soul is entirely absorbed by God. In this chapter, Bonaventure is deeply indebted to a treatise by the sixth-century mystic Dionysius the Areopagite, who described the ultimate reality as a divine darkness, beyond all names, that can only be known by stripping away all concepts and all forms.

The Spiritual Dialogue

The Spiritual Dialogue was composed by friends of Catherine of Genoa to represent Catherine's teachings and her inner life. It had been written by about 1522, twelve years after Catherine's death. *The Spiritual Dialogue* is a spiritual autobiography cast in the form of a miracle play, in which different aspects of being conduct a dialogue as they go on their journey through earthly life. The main actors are Soul and Body. Body is joined by Self-Love and Human Frailty; Soul is supported by Spirit. The great enemy of the Soul is Self-Love, which is contrasted with the pure love that flows from God, which alone can lift the Soul from the murky waters of the material world in which it has become enmeshed. When she has been granted a vision of the pure love of God, Catherine is sent more tests. She is sent to minister to the sick, where all traces of Self-Love and Human Frailty are burned out of her. The last part of the *Dialogue* drops the allegorical figures and describes Catherine's final illness and death.

The Spiritual Espousals

The Spiritual Espousals is usually regarded as Ruusbroec's masterpiece, and it was widely known and read in his lifetime. Each of the three sections of *The Spiritual Espousals* (published c. 1335) is organized around the parable of the virgins in Matthew's gospel, in particular the passage, "See, the bridegroom is coming. Go out to meet him." The virgin is the individual soul, which must go out and meet the bridegroom (Christ), and Ruusbroec explains in each section the process by which this may take place. The first section, the active life, is intended for beginners; the second section describes the interior life, which is cultivated through virtue and the grace of God; the third section explains the nature of the "superessential" contemplative life, which few are able to obtain. This highest state of being, in which the individual is made one with God, cannot be gained by any learning or spiritual exercises but only by the abandonment of all forms and attributes of material life.

Theologia Germanica

The *Theologia Germanica* is an anonymous devotional text written in southern Germany around 1350 by a man from Frankfurt. The author was a member of the Friends of God movement in which Suso and Tauler were prominent. Strongly influenced by Eckhart and Tauler, the *Theologia Germanica* focuses on the difference between self-will and God's will. Self-will is the prime obstacle to the spiritual life and must be overcome. Self-will belongs to the natural man, but the spiritual man possesses no will other than the will of God. Everything about the natural man must be transcended, including the activity of the senses, in order to know God. Like many mystics, the author of the *Theologia Germanica* emphasizes the eternal Christ within, rather than the historical Christ. The *Theologia Germanica* was greatly admired by Martin Luther, who first discovered it and published it in 1516.

Themes

Awakening

Many medieval mystics describe a dramatic personal experience in which they are first awakened to the full reality of the divine life. Once the experience has occurred, the mystic is never the same again. He or she has been allowed to experience, as a matter of direct cognition rather than intellectual speculation, the ultimate reality of life, its spiritual essence. After this experience, the mystic can never go back to the old way of understanding, and they may also find that the direction and purpose of their life is dramatically altered.

Sometimes the experience of awakening comes spontaneously and unsought; at other times it represents a deepening of a religious life already chosen. An example of the first category is Catherine of Genoa, who had no interest in the religious life until the age of twenty-six. At that time, as it is recorded in her biography, written by one of her followers:

> Her heart was pierced by so sudden and immense a love of God, accompanied by so deep a sight of her miseries and sins and of His Goodness, that she was near falling to the ground; and in a transport of pure and all-purifying love she was drawn away from the miseries of the world.

As a result of this experience and others that followed in the ensuing days, Catherine embarked on her life of contemplation and service.

In the case of Henry Suso, he had already entered the Dominican Order when he had his dramatic awakening. The experience happened when, as he puts it, he was still a beginner. One early afternoon after the midday meal, he was alone in the chapel. He was feeling sad and oppressed by suffering, when suddenly "his soul was caught up," and he experienced something that he later, writing of himself in the third person, struggles to describe:

> It was without form or definite manner of being, yet it contained within itself the joyous, delightful wealth of all forms and manners.... He did nothing but stare into the bright effulgence, which made him forget himself and all else. Was it day or night? He did not know. It was a bursting forth of the delight of eternal life, present to his awareness, motionless calm.

The experience lasted for perhaps an hour. When Suso came to himself again, he felt as if he were coming back from a different world, and as he reflected on the experience it seemed as if he were floating in air. He knew intuitively that he could never forget what he had just known.

Descriptions of awakenings can be found also in Julian's *Revelations*, which is the record of one long experience of seeing into the divine essence and the divine plan. Rolle's *The Fire of Love* is another example, in which Rolle experienced, like Suso, a profound illumination while sitting one day in a chapel.

Purification and Penance

Having had a taste of the divine essence, the medieval Christian mystics undertook spiritual exercises involving purification and penance. The purposes of these practices were to make the mystics worthy vessels for further revelation of the divine, and to enable them to be of greater service to God. Some of the penance was through prayer, study of scripture, or solitude, in which the mystic turned away from the things of the world. The mystic also cultivated the traditional virtues of the religious life such as humility, obedience, and poverty. Sometimes penance involved bodily deprivation or self-inflicted physical pain. Some mystics took this to extreme lengths. Catherine of Siena regularly flagellated herself with an iron chain and fasted to the point where she was unable to eat. (She died of starvation.) Suso described in his autobiography how he would wear an undergarment to which were fastened a hundred and fifty pointed nails. He would tighten the garment until the nails pressed into his flesh. He also fastened to his back a wooden cross into which he had hammered thirty nails, and he wore this cross for eight years to praise the crucified Christ. This was by no means the most severe punishment that Suso inflicted on himself, and eventually, so Suso believed, God told him to cease such practices.

The mystics' desire to endure bodily deprivation or practice self-torture was explained by two reasons. First, it showed identification with the sufferings of Christ. Second, it rested on the dualism in Christian theology between body and soul, flesh and spirit. The body, as the site of sin and self-will, must be purged and made subservient to the higher faculties of soul.

However, not all mystics embraced this form of bodily penance, and even Suso later advised his students to take a more moderate course. Eckhart, in his "Talks of Instruction," wrote that "true penitence" required none of those things. The most effective penitence was simply a turning around of the will so that all the energies of the self were directed toward God.

Visions

Many of the medieval mystics were subject to visions. The entire revelations of Julian of Norwich, for example, were based on a series of visions of divine love. Catherine of Genoa also experienced visions frequently, as recorded in the *Spiritual Dialogue*. She saw angels and laughed with them; she saw Christ crucified, with his body covered from head to foot with blood; she had visions of love, of joy, and of sin. Ill and dying, she had a vision of a ladder of flame (representing divine love) that drew her upwards, to her great joy. That vision lasted for four hours.

Suso also had visions through which he acquired a sense of what heaven, hell, and purgatory were like. He also claimed that the souls of deceased people appeared to him and told him about their situation in the afterlife. These included Suso's father and even Meister Eckhart.

Other mystics, such as Eckhart, Tauler, Ruusbroec, and the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, hardly mention visions. In fact, *The Cloud of Unknowing* is openly suspicious of them. The author states that the spiritual seeker will never have an unclouded vision of God in this life. He is also wary of the power of imagination to conjure images that have nothing to do with the divine, and he even pokes fun at the foolishness of some young disciples who gaze upward and form mental pictures of what heaven is like.

The Dark Night of the Soul

After a period of living in awareness of the presence of God, it is common for medieval mystics to experience a time of spiritual aridity and personal adversity. It is as if they have been abandoned by God. The phrase "dark night of the soul" was coined by St. John of the Cross, a later mystic, but the same idea had been expressed many times before. Tauler, for example, refers to it as "spiritual poverty" and states that it is the second of three stages in the mystical life. And Suso tells a vivid story in chapter twenty-two in his autobiography of how he was overwhelmed with sickness and with attacks on his teachings by religious authorities. He complained bitterly to God about his situation.

Ruusbroec wrote of the dark night of the soul in Book Two, parts two and three of *The Spiritual Espousals*. In such a situation, the disciple feels abandoned, poor, wretched, and forsaken. He asks, Where has all the joy gone? He may lose friends, family, and earthly goods. Ruusbroec writes as if this feeling of abandonment is to be expected at some point. It is simply the path that spiritual progress follows. If the person has the right attitude, the dark night can be an opportunity for spiritual growth. All that is necessary is for the person to abandon himself to the will of God. This sentiment is echoed by Tauler: The state of "spiritual poverty" is the prelude to an even deeper and richer awakening.

Contemplation

Contemplation is a broad term that encompasses the various stages of the process by which the mystic grows closer to union with God. Contemplation involves an ingathering of the mystic's faculties, so that the mind and the senses are turned away from the external world. In the process often called recollection or quiet, the mystic experiences a state of silence within; the surface activity of the mind is stilled. In order to achieve this, *The Cloud of Unknowing* advises the repetition of a simple, one-syllable word in prayer, such as Love, or God, which will lead the mind to quietness. In the state of quietness, the *Cloud* states, there is a paradox. The individual mind is "nothing" and "nowhere," and yet that empty state of consciousness is also "all" and "everywhere," because it partakes of the boundless divine nature.

Eckhart and his disciple Tauler spoke frequently of this "emptying" process, whereby the individual mind passes beyond itself to the "ground of the soul." Tauler, for example, said in Sermon 1, "If you go out of yourself, you may be certain that God will enter and fill you wholly: the greater the void, the greater the divine influx."

The goal of contemplation, attainable only through the grace of God, is the state of mystical union between the soul and God, sometimes called spiritual marriage, or deification. As Tauler puts it, "[God] raises [man] from a human to a divine mode of being, from sorrow into a divine peace, in which man becomes so divinized that everything which he is and does, God is and does in him."

Style

Paradox

The mystical experience is inherently paradoxical. A paradox is a statement that appears to be contradictory but which may also be true. Tauler, for example, writes of the Trinity as an "imageless image." Perhaps the most common paradox in mysticism describes the coexistence of rest and motion, or stillness and activity. The paradox describes the nature of the divine reality, which is at rest within itself but also actively contemplates itself and ceaselessly flows out from itself into the world. The person who is in union with the divine partakes of this paradoxical divine nature. Eckhart, Ruusbroec, and Tauler give the clearest descriptions of the paradox, even as they state that words cannot really capture it. As Ruusbroec puts it:

> Every lover [of God] is one with God in rest and is like God in the works of love, for God in his sublime nature, of which we bear a likeness, subsists blissfully in eternal rest in accordance with the essential Unity of his being and also subsists actively in eternal activity in accordance with the Trinity. Each of these is the perfection of the other, for rest abides in the Unity and activity abides in the Trinity, and the two remain thus for all eternity.

Similarly, Tauler writes of the ground of the soul that God Himself inhabits:

> For it is an unfathomable abyss, poised in itself, unplumbed, ebbing and flowing like the sea. As one is immersed in it, it seems still and void; yet in an instant it wells up as if it would engulf all things.

There are other paradoxes in mystical theology, many of them echoing the statement of Christ in the New Testament that "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 10:39, Revised Standard Edition). The mystics interpreted this saying in terms

Topics for Further Study

- What relevance do the fourteenth-century mystics have for today's world? Are they remote, inaccessible, and incomprehensible, or do they offer something of value? If so, what, and for whom? For everyone or just a select few? Does one have to be a Christian to appreciate them? Could one be a mystic without even believing in God? How would a modern psychologist explain the phenomenon of mystical experience?
- Research the poetry and prose of the seventeenth-century poet Thomas Traherne. Might Traherne be called a mystic? What elements in his poetry are mystical? What does he have in common with the medieval mystics that you have read and how does he differ from them? (You may apply the same questions to another poet or prose writer with whom you are familiar.)
- What were the underlying assumptions that the medieval mystics made about existence? What did they believe about human nature, sin, and God, for example? In other words, what was their world view—the set of beliefs and assumptions that shaped their response to life? How does their world view differ from the world view underlying a literary movement such as Romanticism, or Absurdism, or any other literary movement with which you are familiar?

of the need to transcend in contemplation all activity of the senses and of the individual mind. By "emptying" themselves in this way, they would allow the fullness of the divine to take possession of them. By making themselves poor (to the external world of the senses), they would become rich (in God); by renouncing everything, they would gain everything. As Eckhart puts it, again paradoxically, "those who are equal to nothing, they alone are equal to God." A similar paradox underlies the entire *Cloud of Unknowing*: since God is beyond thought, he cannot be grasped by the mind, therefore the way to "knowing" is by "unknowing."

Related to the device of paradox is the oxymoron, in which two contradictory terms are yoked together. Eckhart refers to the "splendent darkness" of the Godhead (splendent means shining). Bonaventure uses the same phrase; he and Eckhart are both quoting Dionysius the Areopagite, the sixth century writer of *The Mystical Theology* who exerted a powerful influence on medieval mysticism.

Oxymora are also used or implied in reference to the life of the person who has fully submitted to God's will. In such cases, joy and sorrow become of equal value because they are both expressions of God's will. It is this that enables Eckhart to say of the enlightened man, "all pain is a joy to him"; and Suso to declare that his "severe sufferings . . . were like the sweet dew of springtime." It is only a short linguistic hop from these expressions to an oxymoronic "joyful pain" and "sweet sufferings."

Figurative Language

It is commonplace in mystical writing that the experience of union with God is ineffable. Because it cannot be described in words, mystics frequently resort to figurative language, particularly simile and metaphor. Ruusbroec, for example, uses an elaborate simile that compares the coming of God into the life of the believer to the passage of the sun across the heavens from the period in late spring to early autumn, as it passes through the zodiacal signs of Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, and Libra. Ruusbroec also makes use of a number of extended similes intended for instructional purposes. The seeker, when Christ's light shines on him, should be like the bee that works for the good of its colony; at certain other times, he should follow the example of the ant.

Many of the similes and metaphors used by the mystics have their origins in the Bible—Christ as the shepherd or bridegroom, for example. Catherine of Siena, who in general is quite conventional

in this regard, appears to have invented her own extended metaphor of Christ as a bridge. She writes in *The Dialogue* that this bridge stretches from heaven to earth and has three stairs, which correspond to three spiritual stages and to three parts of Christ's body. The first stair is the feet, which symbolize the qualities of the individual mind; the second, the heart, which is love; the third, the mouth, which symbolizes peace.

God as light or God as fire are also biblical images used frequently by the mystics, but their usage presents questions of interpretation. In some cases, the phrase "God is light" or similar is used in a figurative sense, but in other cases a literal light seems to be implied. The mystic describes what he sees and experiences. It is not always possible to tell the difference between these two usages, but when Eckhart writes of the "uncreated light" that exists in the ground of the soul, and Ruusbroec of the "incomprehensible light" that shines in the "simple being of [a person's] spirit," they are likely referring to a direct cognition and not speaking metaphorically.

The same problem occurs with the metaphor of God as a fire. When Rolle used the phrase the "fire of love," he intended a literal as well as a metaphorical meaning. He insisted that he felt a real, physical warmth, or heat, around his heart, and this formed the basis for his entire metaphysics of fire or heat as one of the modes by which the divine could be experienced. Other English mystics were not so ready to accept this literal meaning of divine fire. For Walter Hilton, a fourteenth-century English mystic who wrote *The Scale of Perfection*, the phrase "God is fire" is a metaphor, meaning simply that God is "love and charity."

Allegory

An allegory is a narrative that has two levels of meaning. One is literal, in which the characters act out their story; the other allegorical, in which the characters and actions symbolize something else—a set of concepts or ideas, for example. In general, the medieval mystics did not write much extended allegory, although they would frequently expound on the parables of Jesus. (A parable is a kind of short allegory.) However, Julian of Norwich does include in chapter fifty-one of her *Revelations of Divine Love* a long allegory about a lord and his servant. She supplies to the story her own double-level allegorical interpretation, in which the lord is God in his totality and also God the Father, and the servant is both Everyman and God's son.

Movement Variations

Christian mysticism is often divided into the two categories of *via negativa* (also known as apophatic theology) and *via affirmativa* (also known as kataphatic theology). The first emphasizes that God is not to be found in any image, name, or attribute, because these would be a limitation on him. The God of the *via negativa* is utterly beyond all concepts and all language, existing in an infinite darkness and eternal silence. In order to know him, the seeker must cast off everything that pertains to the individual self and lose himself in this infinity beyond being. The *via affirmativa*, on the other hand, affirms that words and images can convey something of the divine essence. God can be spoken of and known through contemplation of his attributes, such as goodness, love, wisdom, and power; through emulation of his son Christ; and through the revelations of scriptures.

Many mystics combine aspects of both approaches, and the categories should not be too rigidly applied. For example, in *The Soul's Journey into God*, Bonaventure describes the first six stages on the path in terms of the *via affirmativa*. Only in the last stage does he switch to the language of the *via negativa*.

Of the medieval mystics, Eckhart, Tauler, Suso, the *Theologia Germanica*, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and Ruusbroec embrace to a greater or lesser degree the *via negativa*. But there are differences between them. The most towering figure in this respect is Eckhart. In almost all of his German sermons he repeats his central idea of the "simple ground," the "quiet desert" which is beyond form or image, beyond even the Trinity, and that there is an uncreated "spark of the soul" that belongs to this divine ground. Tauler echoes this with his concept of the "ground of the soul." The difference between Eckhart and his two pupils is that Tauler and Suso do not have Eckhart's intellectual power or his gift for exploring abstract subtleties, but they make up for that in their ability to translate Eckhartian concepts into practical spiritual advice.

The differences between Ruusbroec and Eckhart are more marked. Although Ruusbroec's mysticism contains all the Eckhartian (and Dionysian) elements of negation and stillness in the ineffable "essential bareness" of the divine being, he is often also referred to as a "Trinitarian" mystic. According to Louis Dupré, in the preface to *The Spiritual Espousals and Other Works*, Ruusbroec's God is always dynamic, never at rest: "Ruusbroec

overcame the ultimate negation by refusing to posit a unity beyond the Trinity, as Eckhart had done." Moreover, some scholars claim that when Ruusbroec wrote treatises late in his life attacking the notion that the individual could in the fullest sense become God, he may have had Eckhart or one of Eckhart's disciples in mind. It seems likely that at the very least, Ruusbroec had concerns about this aspect of Eckhart's teachings, since during Ruusbroec's lifetime his disciple John van Leeuwen wrote a treatise that directly attacked Eckhart.

Of the other major mystics of the period, Julian of Norwich, Rolle, Catherine of Siena, and Catherine of Genoa belong more to the *via affirmativa*. Julian's entire *Revelations of Divine Love* consists of her meditations on her visions of Christ. The idea of her anonymous fellow English mystic (that God can be found only in a cloud of unknowing) would have been alien to her way of thinking. Her work is full of images and metaphors designed to lead the reader to a fuller understanding of the love of God. Mystics of this type often tend to be Christ-centered and to emphasize in particular (as Julian does) the passion of Christ. This is not something to be found in the pages of Eckhart. Nor could one imagine a mystic of Eckhart's type receiving the stigmata, the five wounds of Christ, as did Catherine of Siena as a result of her intense meditations upon Christ's sufferings.

Rolle too is Christ-centered and places great value on the name of Jesus. His central concern is to reveal God as love. Although Rolle was himself a recluse, this type of Christ-centered mysticism often emphasizes the importance of the active life. It does not rest ultimately in quiet contemplation. Catherine of Siena's mysticism, for example, has been called "missionary"; as Ray Petry puts it, "For her the love of Christ and neighbor is inseparable from the love of God." The same might be said of Catherine of Genoa. Both these saints distinguished themselves for their active work in ministering to the poor and the sick.

Historical Context

The Black Death

The fourteenth century in Europe was an extremely turbulent age for all levels of society. To begin with, there were more than the usual number of natural disasters. Famine, flood, and earthquakes caused misery and death for thousands, and the outbreak of the plague (Black Death) in 1348 was the most devastating public health crisis humanity has known. It began in Sicily in October 1347, and reached France in January 1348; it continued to ravage Paris until 1349. It reached England in August 1348, where it continued until early 1350. There were recurrences in 1360 and 1369. No one knows for certain what the death toll was, but it could have been one-quarter or even one-third of the entire population of Europe, which would have been about twenty million deaths. Paris lost half its population; London, one-third; Siena and Venice, two-thirds. (Catherine of Siena grew up during the period of the Black Death, and when there was another outbreak in 1374, she cared for some of the victims, as did Tauler when the plague hit Strasbourg.)

The devastation caused by the Black Death was so severe that many people thought the end of the world was coming. It also had social and economic consequences, leading to inflation and a shortage of labor. The resulting social disruption produced peasant rebellions in France in 1358 and England in 1381, where peasants for a time captured London. These rebellions were suppressed with great brutality. In France, over thirty thousand died.

The Black Death also produced changes in the way people behaved. Many people considered the disease to be God's punishment for sin, and some took to practicing extreme forms of penance. One example of this was the Order of the Flagellants, who marched through towns beating themselves with whips. Other people sought a scapegoat and blamed the Jews for the Black Death, claiming that the Jews had poisoned the wells. There were many massacres in which hundreds of Jews were killed.

The Church

The fourteenth century was a period of turmoil in the Catholic Church. Faced with political instability in Italy, the pope moved to Avignon, France, in 1309. This diminished the Church's authority, since Rome had been the traditional place where the pope reigned, and a pope in France was considered to be the tool of the French king.

During the Avignon period (which is known as the Babylonian captivity and lasted until 1377), the papacy also lost much respect because of its luxury and extravagance and the way it centralized the administration of the Church. High papal income taxes were imposed on the clergy, who passed them on to local parish priests and laity. There was also

Compare & Contrast

- **Fourteenth Century:** The fourteenth century is an age of faith. Although there is dissatisfaction with the worldliness of the Church, few people in Christendom doubt the essential truths of the Christian religion. They believe that Christ offers salvation to all who believe, and that heaven, hell, or purgatory await the soul after death.

  Today: Although many thousands of evangelical Protestant Christians still believe in the literal truth of the Bible, and Catholics still accept the authority of the pope and of Catholic doctrine, the modern Western world is predominantly secular. Christianity is no longer the common language of Western civilization. People identify more with political ideas such as freedom, democracy, and equality of opportunity than with theological concepts. In the United States, because of the separation of church and state, religion is more of a private than a public matter.

- **Fourteenth Century:** Before the development of the technology of printing, important manuscripts are copied and circulated by hand. For example, hundreds of copies are made of Rolle's *The Fire of Love*.

  Today: Anyone wishing to read Rolle's *The Fire of Love* simply has to access the Internet by computer. The electronic publication of texts revolutionizes the dissemination of knowledge as completely as the first printing press did.

- **Fourteenth Century:** The Black Death rages unchecked and kills perhaps twenty million people from Iceland to India. The disease is borne by rats and fleas, but this is not known at the time so no prevention is possible.

  Today: The plague of AIDS reaches public attention in the 1980s, and, although currently diminishing in the United States and Europe, it is spreading rapidly in other parts of the world. In 2000, there are three million deaths worldwide from AIDS. Most of the deaths occur in developing countries, which cannot afford the expensive new drug treatments that are prolonging the lives of AIDS sufferers in the West. The total number of deaths from AIDS is estimated to be 21.8 million.

widespread corruption, with religious offices open to the highest bidder and preferments of all kinds available in exchange for money. Many clergy neglected their religious duties, being more concerned with wealth and property. Catherine of Siena, as well as another mystic, Birgitta (1303–1373), were two of many voices bemoaning the decadence of the Church. Catherine had direct audiences with the pope in Avignon, urging him to return to Rome and initiate church reform.

This period of the papacy also includes the Great Schism, which began in 1378 and lasted thirty years. During the schism there were two rival popes, one elected in Avignon (by the French cardinals) and the other in Rome. Each man claimed to be the leader of the Church.

Heresies

With resentment growing against the Church, the time was ripe for heretical ideas to flourish. In late-fourteenth-century England, John Wyclif, an Oxford theologian and preacher, attacked the abuses of the Church and denied the authority of the pope. He claimed that priests were not necessary for salvation, denied the validity of the doctrine of transubstantiation, and encouraged the translation of the Bible into English. For Wyclif, following scripture was more important than accepting the received doctrines of the Church. Wyclif accumulated many followers in England, who were known as Lollards.

On the European continent, a movement known as the Spiritual Franciscans sprang up, who

protested against the wealth that the Franciscan order had accumulated. They said that since Christ lived without possessions, that was the only true Christian life. In 1315, the Church denounced the Spiritual Franciscan movement as a pernicious heresy. In Marseille in 1318, some Spiritual Franciscans were tried by the Inquisition and burned at the stake.

One of the most persistent heresies was that of the Brethren of the Free Spirit, which began in the thirteenth century and spread across vast areas of Europe. The most important surviving text of the movement is *A Mirror for Simple Souls*, written around the beginning of the fourteenth century by Marguerite Porete, who was burned as a heretic in 1310.

Adherents of the Free Spirit believed in a mystical doctrine far more extreme than that of orthodox mysticism. They claimed that they had been so transformed by their spiritual experiences that they had become permanently identical with God. Now made perfect, they were incapable of sin. This meant that in their view they were not bound by moral laws; they could simply do as they wished and take whatever they wanted (sexual liberties included) without being troubled by their consciences. Such beliefs involved a rejection of the need for the sacraments of the Church, and the Free Spirits saw no need to observe events in the Church calendar such as fast days and feasts, or to participate in confession or prayer.

The Brethren of the Free Spirit movement was condemned by the pope, and in the fourteenth century and beyond, the Church made extensive efforts to defeat the heresy. Some Free Spirits were burned at the stake. Many of the medieval mystics, including Ruusbroec, Tauler, and the author of the *Theologia Germanica* also tried to combat the movement. Ruusbroec in particular wrote treatises against it. He had firsthand knowledge of the Brethren of the Free Spirit because the movement flourished in the Low Countries during his lifetime, where in Brussels a woman named Bloemardinne had a large and devoted following.

Critical Overview

The medieval Christian mystics have exerted a powerful influence on Christian spirituality, both Catholic and Protestant, that continues to the present day. Perhaps the most interesting example is that of Eckhart. Seventeen propositions in Eckhart's teaching were condemned as heretical by Pope John XXII in 1329, but this did not destroy his influence. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, his writings continued to be copied and read in the Dominican and Carthusian Orders. He was known to the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and his pupils Suso and Tauler continued to interpret his teachings in practical ways for the Christian life.

However, Eckhart's condemnation ensured that for several centuries his influence was far less than it might otherwise have been. In the early nineteenth century, interest in his writings was revived and scholarly German editions of his work were published. The twentieth century saw a remarkable flowering of interest in Eckhart. Part of this coincided with a growth of interest in Eastern mysticism, and Eckhart's philosophy has often been compared to Zen Buddhism. The influential Catholic monk Thomas Merton acknowledged his debt to Eckhart, as did psychologist Carl Jung. There is also a consensus amongst scholars today that Eckhart was unjustly convicted of heresy. It is believed that those who examined him were influenced by politics and also had a more shallow understanding of the roots of Christian spirituality than he did.

Eckhart's disciple Tauler has had a consistently favorable reputation. There appear to be only a couple of exceptions to this, when his works were banned in 1518 by the Jesuits and in 1590 by the Belgian Capuchins for advocating quietism, the idea that the spiritual life consisted of passively resting in a state of mental quietness (a complete misreading of Tauler). But these attacks did not prevent Tauler from having a continuous influence during the Reformation, continuing into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The other fourteenth-century mystic who today occupies a place of honor only slightly less than Eckhart's is Ruusbroec. Like Eckhart's, Ruusbroec's writings concerning the union of the soul with God were daring, and he was aware that he might be in danger of being thought heretical. Towards the end of the fourteenth century, the last book of his, *The Spiritual Espousals*, was attacked by the theologian John Gerson, and this temporarily harmed Ruusbroec's reputation. But during the early years of the Reformation (beginning in the early sixteenth century) and Counter-Reformation (mid-sixteenth century), Latin translations of Ruusbroec's works were made, and these were intended to encourage people to remain in the Catholic fold.

Procession of flagellants

They had the effect of making Ruusbroec well known throughout the continent.

In modern times, Ruusbroec was championed by Evelyn Underhill in her authoritative book, *Mysticism* (1911). She regarded Ruusbroec as "one of the greatest mystics the world has yet known. In Ruysbroeck's [sic] works the metaphysical and personal aspects of mystical truth are fused and attain their highest expression."

William Ralph Inge, author of another influential study, *Christian Mysticism* (1899), grouped Ruusbroec with Suso, Tauler, and the *Theologia Germanica* as "the crowning achievement of Christian Mysticism before the Reformation."

In English mystical literature, *The Cloud of Unknowing* has always been held in high esteem. It was well known in medieval times since there were many manuscripts in circulation, and this was also true for Hilton's *The Scale of Perfection* and many of the works of Rolle. *The Cloud of Unknowing* has held its reputation to the present day. Clifton Wolters, its most recent translator, describes it as perhaps the greatest devotional classic of the English church: "No one who reads it can fail to catch something of its splendour and charm."

In medieval times, Julian of Norwich was not so well known as the other English mystics. Until the mid-seventeenth century, her *Revelations of Di-*

vine Love had only limited circulation. Today her reputation is secure, and she has been called the most approachable of the medieval English mystics. Medieval historian Jean Leclercq, in the preface to the Colledge and Walsh translation, comments that "her writings are now considered to have universal and permanent value. As a woman, she represents the feminine teacher and feminine insight that are less rare in the Western Christian tradition than many of our contemporaries might think."

Julian has even had an influence on English literature. The lines, "All shall be well and / All manner of things shall be well," which bring T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* to an optimistic close, are taken from Julian's twenty-seventh chapter: "It is true that sin is the cause of all this pain, but all will be well, and every kind of thing will be well."

Criticism

Bryan Aubrey

Aubrey holds a Ph.D. in English and has published many articles on mystical literature. In this essay, Aubrey discusses different ways in which mystical experience has been defined and classified.

When the modern reader approaches medieval mysticism for the first time, he or she may be more than a little bewildered by the language and patterns of thought of the period, and particularly by the mystical experiences themselves. These by definition are not everyday experiences and do not come under the category of things that can be explained solely by the rational intellect. Many questions arise: What is mystical experience? Is it an objective or a subjective phenomenon? How is it to be evaluated?

The problem is compounded by the fact that one cannot duplicate a mystical experience by reading someone else's account of it. At best one might receive a certain aesthetic pleasure from the act of reading and reflecting on the mystic's writings, but that is more like the pleasure that might accrue from reading, say, a novel or a poem; it is not the experience itself, which cannot be transmitted in this way.

And yet mystical experience, if what the mystics say about it is true, is surely a vitally important dimension of human knowledge. There is a well-known story about the great medieval scholastic theologian St. Thomas Aquinas. Toward the end of his life he was granted mystical experience, and he declared that all his learned tomes were but straw compared to what he had just been permitted to experience directly. Similarly, a later mystic, the unlettered Protestant Jacob Boehme (1575–1624), said that he had learned more in his fifteen minutes of mystical illumination in 1600 than he would have learned had he studied many years at a university.

Many writers have attempted to define and classify the different kinds of mystical experience. In a pioneering effort, philosopher William James, in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, identified four characteristics of mystical experience. The first is ineffability: the experience cannot be expressed in words. One consequence of this is that it must be directly experienced, since it cannot be passed on to another person by use of language. The second characteristic is noetic quality, by which James means that it is a state of consciousness that communicates real knowledge of some kind—"insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect." In other words, it is not illusory. The third characteristic is transiency. The mystical experience cannot be sustained for more than a brief period, perhaps up to one hour or two at the most. The final characteristic is passivity, in which the mystic feels as if his own will is suspended, and he is held by a superior power.

A later philosopher, W. T. Stace, in *Mysticism and Philosophy*, sheds further light on James's first two characteristics. Stace classifies mystical experience into two types: introvertive and extrovertive mysticism. Introvertive mysticism corresponds to the end result of the *via negativa*; it is an experience of the oneness beyond all thought and activity of the individual mind. When the mind has turned inward, away from the senses, and transcended all the ephemeral manifestations of life, it arrives at the one eternal, unchanging, silent reality, without form or limit. This state of being is beyond language because language deals only with the differentiated world of subject and object. In the introvertive experience, consciousness remains, but it is not consciousness of anything—there is no object of perception. It is, in a sense, the equivalent of the eye being able to see itself, an image that is used by Eckhart to convey his meaning (as translated by Blakney): "The eye by which I see God is the same as the eye by which God sees me. My eye and God's eye are one and the same—one in seeing, one in knowing, and one in loving."

Perhaps the best way to understand the introvertive mystical experience is by means of an

What Do I Study Next?

- Thomas Merton (1915–1969) was one of the most influential religious writers of the twentieth century. His *The Seven Storey Mountain* (1948) is his spiritual autobiography, describing his early doubts, his conversion to Catholicism, and his decision to become a Trappist monk.
- *The Tao of Physics* (1975), by Fritjof Capra, explores some of the striking parallels between modern theories of physics and the mystical traditions of the East.
- Jacob Boehme (1575–1624) was a shoemaker in Germany who had spontaneous experiences of divine illumination and became one of the greatest mystics in the Christian tradition. His *The Way to Christ*, originally written in 1622 and published by Paulist Press in 1978, presents the essence of his thought.
- *The Interior Castle* was written by Teresa of Avila in 1577 and published in the Classics of Western Spirituality series in 1988. The Spanish saint describes the mystical life in terms of seven interior mansions that make up the classic stages of purgation, illumination, and union on the mystical path.
- *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (1978), by Barbara Tuchman, is a best-selling history of the century in which almost all of the great medieval mystics lived. Tuchman sees those turbulent times as a mirror of the social and cultural upheavals of the twentieth century.
- *Thomas Traherne: Selected Poems and Prose* (1992) is a selection from one of the most mystical poets in English literature, who lived from 1637 to 1674. Traherne's poetry has been described as a nature mysticism that sees the glories of God in the external world.

analogy drawn from the modern world. Everyday perception is like seeing a succession of changing images projected on a blank screen, as with a movie. Normally, no one sees the blank screen on which all those images are projected. What the mystic does is free his mind of the images so that he experiences the blank screen, which is awareness itself, in all its simplicity—as it always is, was, and will be (although no such words of past and future can apply to it). Eckhart called this experience "isness," in the sense that it is beyond "myness." It is neither an objective nor a subjective experience; it is simply beyond such categories, and it is this that makes is so difficult for the rational mind to comprehend and for the mystic to describe. When the mystic does describe it, he is in effect capturing only his memory of it, since in the timeless moment in which it took place, "he" was not present, the individual self being wholly immersed in a state of undifferentiated unity, rest, and stillness.

If one had to identify a core mystical experience, common to all times and cultures, it would have to be, as Stace argues, the introvertive experience. The description of the experience of consciousness devoid of an object is consistently found in the spiritual writings of the East as well as the West. The *Mandukya Upanishad*, one of the oldest texts in the Hindu tradition, for example, says of reality:

> It is not outer awareness,
> It is not inner awareness,
> Nor is it a suspension of awareness.
> It is not knowing,
> It is not unknowing,
> Nor is it knowingness itself.
> It can neither be seen nor understood,
> It cannot be given boundaries.
> It is ineffable and beyond thought.
> It is indefinable.
> It is known only through becoming it.

It would be hard to find a clearer description of the *via negativa* than this, and there is nothing

in this quotation that Eckhart would have objected to. At this level of experience, differences between East and West tend to arise only when the mystic interprets his experience in the light of the doctrines of his own religious tradition. For the Hindu, the *Mundakya Upanishad* describes the essential Self that is identical by its very nature with Brahman, the universal consciousness.

The Christian mystic, on the other hand, is wary of how he describes this "unknowing" union of the soul with God. This is because in orthodox Christian doctrine, such "deification" is attained only through the grace of God, not by virtue of the intrinsic nature of the individual self, and the creature always retains its distinct identity even as it experiences its union with the divine. There is a certain tension between the theological position that mystics such as Eckhart and Ruusbroec felt the need to uphold and the introvertive experience itself, in which all distinctions of creature and creator, individual and universal, dissolve in the silent abyss of the divine ground.

Stace's second category, "extrovertive" mystical experience, occurs when the mystic perceives the underlying unity of all things in the multiplicity of the world of nature. This is often accompanied by a perception of glorification, in which everything is seen in the light of the divine. Evelyn Underhill, in her classic study *Mysticism*, described this as "the illuminated vision of the world." It is found in mystics such as Boehme and in mystically inclined poets such as Wordsworth, Blake, and Traherne. It is less common in the medieval mystics, who for the most part looked inward rather than outward.

But Eckhart, perhaps the most profound of all the medieval mystics, wrote numerous passages that allude in a subtle way to this extrovertive experience of seeing God in all things. Often his gnomic, paradoxical utterances must be unpacked before they yield his meaning. In his sermon on the passage in the Book of Acts, "Paul rose from the ground and with open eyes saw nothing" (as translated by Walshe), Eckhart gives a characteristic meaning to the word "nothing," as referring to God, for God is "no-thing," existing in the abyss beyond all "somethings." So in Eckhart's exegesis of the passage, when Paul got up he saw "nothing but God"; "in all things he saw nothing but God," and when he saw God, "he saw all things as nothing." Eckhart's play on words makes his meaning clear: when a person is filled with God, like the apostle Paul, everywhere he looks, even at the meanest thing in creation, he sees God, for God is the nothing that underlies and is present within all the multiplicity of created "things."

Does the mystic have genuine insight into the nature of reality? Does his experience add to our knowledge of human consciousness, or is it unverifiable in any meaningful sense?"

For a less intellectual, more practical (and devotional) example of the extrovertive experience, one might turn to St. Francis of Assisi (1182–1226), whose sense of union with all things was so refined that he preached to the birds, soothed captured turtledoves, and befriended pheasants, among other things. Underhill describes the reality that St. Francis lived not as an idea but as a direct experience: "every living creature was veritably and actually a 'theophany or appearance of God' . . . [he was] acutely conscious that he shared with these brothers and sisters of his the great and lovely life of the All." This kinship with all creatures, which is the practical fruit of mystical experience, is clear also in St. Francis's well-known "The Canticle of Brother Sun," in which he addresses the sun as "Sir Brother Sun" and the moon as "Sister Moon," as well as addressing "Brother Water" and "Brother Fire."

Given all these examples of introvertive and extrovertive mysticism, the question remains of the extent to which the mystical experience might be objectively evaluated. Does the mystic have genuine insight into the nature of reality? Does his experience add to our knowledge of human consciousness, or is it unverifiable in any meaningful sense? As William James pointed out, for the mystic, the experience by its very nature conveys a sense of truth. When the introvertive mystic sinks into a state of eternal peace and stillness, without boundaries of any kind, he finds it so immensely satisfying, so compelling, that he believes it to be self-evidently an experience of the ultimate truth,

since it stands in such stark contrast to the transient, restless nature of everything that exists in the realm of time and space.

But in the scientific age in which we live, subjective claims of truth count for little. The introvertive mystical experience, in which consciousness remains awake but with no object of experience, falls outside the realm of what contemporary neuroscience, cognitive science, or rationalist philosophy can explain. This leaves the mystic in the position of a person trying to explain the taste of strawberries to someone who has never tasted one (and who also may doubt that such a thing as a strawberry really exists). No amount of description is going to help. The mystic says: taste for yourself, and only then will you know.

Source: Bryan Aubrey, Critical Essay on the Medieval Mystics, in *Literary Movements for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Barry Windeatt

In the following introduction to his English Mystics of the Middle Ages, *Windeatt touches on why medieval mystics wrote and how they referenced each other in their works.*

> For sith in the first biginnyng of holy chirche in the tyme of persecucion, dyverse soules and many weren so merveylously touchid in sodeynte of grace that sodenly, withoutyn menes of other werkes comyng before, thei kasten here instrumentes, men of craftes, of here hondes, children here tables in the scole, and ronnen withoutyn ransakyng of reson to the martirdom with seintes: whi schul men not trowe now, in the tyme of pees, that God may, kan and wile and doth—ye! touche diverse soules as sodenly with the grace of contemplacion?
>
> (*The Book of Privy Counselling*)

The later Middle Ages in England were indeed to prove such an age of contemplative saints, and 'the medieval English mystics' are often now grouped together. Viewed with one kind of hindsight, something new stirs with the writings of Richard Rolle (d. 1349), broadens and gathers the later fourteenth century—with Walter Hilton, Julian of Norwich, and the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*—and also includes a corpus of translations into English of other mystical writings that point to contemporary interest in contemplation. Like most retrospects on 'movements' or 'schools' of writers, such a view simplifies both the continuities with earlier traditions and between the writers themselves. Hindsight differently focussed might emphasize the substantial earlier literature on contemplation available in England, or the tradition of meditations in the vernacular.Independent and original in their time the English mystics of the Middle Ages nonetheless remain. On the most demanding of subjects they write in their own tongue at a new level of intensity and complexity in English prose, while the surviving translations of continental mystics show no significant influence on the most creative English mystical writers. Their subject must be demanding, for it is nothing less than the way to God through love, and their aim is to give their reader direction, and signposting a schematic, progressive ascent. Mere knowledge or learning for its own sake is of no avail, and they dismiss it. The way to perfection described by the English mystics stands open—although the demandingness of contemplation will preclude all but the committed—and witnesses to the appeal of the inner life to a growing section of contemporary men and women readers, whether in solitary, monastic or secular life.

It is towards the cultivation and extension of that inward life that the English mystics seek to express their own understanding of the art of mystical loving. Rolle or Hilton achieved a much wider readership than the *Cloud*-author or Julian, and their approaches are as distinctive as their styles. A text that advises 'First gnawe on the nakid blinde felyng of thin owne being' (*The Book of Privy Counselling*) is working with different aims and assumptions from one that declares 'In this felynge myne undyrstandynge was lyftyd uppe into heven, and thare I sawe thre hevens...' (*Revelations of Divine Love*) Yet there are signs of interchange-between mystics, of reading and commenting on the experiences and writings of others. Most vivid of interactions between the English mystics is Margery Kempe's memory of her visit to consult Julian of Norwich, and she reports the anchoress as having a contemporary reputation as an expert in discerning truth and deception in revelations, locutions, 'sweetness and devotion.' Margery has evidently been affected by Rolle's work, and it is his unforgettable example and pervasive influence on subsequent perceptions of contemplative experience in medieval England that prompt some of the intertextuality between the English mystics. Coming in his wake, such later English advisers on contemplation as Hilton or the *Cloud*-author are often writing, albeit implicitly, 'against' Rolle, at least in the sense that for them some of Rolle's work prompted reservations and qualifications (although probably not such late work as *The Form of Living*). One surviving 'Defence' of Rolle by Thomas

Bassett, against the now-lost criticisms of a Carthusian detractor, insists that God does reveal his secrets to the humble and simple of heart, and seeks to counter the charges that Rolle made men judges of themselves and that more have been led astray than have profited by his writings.

Neither the *Cloud*-author nor Hilton refers directly to Rolle, or denies the experiences to which he lays claim. Yet both are recurrently concerned to offset any spiritually undesirable influence of their predecessor. As Rolle memorably described it—especially in *Incendium Amoris*—his own experience might seem too easily accessible: its sensory qualities could encourage the impressionable to mistake merely physical sensations for mystical experience. The *Cloud*-author apparently has Rolle's followers in mind when advising caption about 'coun*f*ortes, sounes, & gladnes, & swetnes,' or when characterizing would-be contemplatives who feel a physical sensation of heat in their breasts '& zit, parauenture, þei wene it be þe fiir of loue,' concluding sharply: 'For I telle þee trewly bat be deuil haþ his contemplatyues, as God haþ his.' Hilton gives a similarly strong warning on the fire of love misconceived bodily rather than spiritually (*The Scale of Perfection*); he also warns against 'felyng in þe bodily wittes,' whether 'in sownyng of þe ere, or saueryng in þe mouth, or smellyng at þe nese, or elles any felable hete as it wer fyr, glouand and warmand þe brest,' because such is not true contemplation and a comparable warning occurs in his *Epistle on the Mixed Life*. In *The Scale* Hilton also seeks to allay the recipient's disquiet, caused by what sounds like a reading of Rolle on devotion to the Holy Name, and *Of Angel's Song* sets Rolle's teachings on the hearing of heavenly melody in a proper context for Hilton's correspondent.

Near the close of *Angels' Song* Hilton's warning against the 'naked mynde' might be read as a comment on the *Cloud*-author's teachings, and the works of these two contemporary Midlands writers on contemplation do point to some interchange and mutual criticism, some learning from each other. At three points *The Cloud* acknowledges and refers its reader to 'another man's work,' in each case possibly referring to Book I of *The Scale*. In recommending 'Redyng, þinkyng & Preiing,' *The Cloud* declares: 'Of þeese þre þou schalt fynde wretyn in anoþ*er* book of anoþ*er* mans werk moche betyr þen I can telle þee,' perhaps referring to Hilton's account in *The Scale*. On the vexed question of whether 'counfortes and sounes and swetnes' be good or evil, *The Cloud* comments:

Their subject must be demanding, for it is nothing less than the way to God through love, and their aim is to give their reader direction, and signposting a schematic, progressive ascent. Mere knowledge or learning for its own sake is of no avail, and they dismiss it."

'þou mayst fynde it wretyn in anoþ*er* place of anoþ*er* mans werk a þonsandfolde betir þan I kan sey or write,' which could well refer to Hilton's discussion in *Scale*. When the *Cloud*-author expresses reservation about 'wher anoþ*er* wolde bid þee gader þi miztes & þi wittes holich*e* wiþ-inne þi-self, & worschip God þer*e*'—although he pays tribute to this other teacher: 'þof al he sey ful wel & ful trewly, ze! and no ma*n* trewlier & he be wel co*n*seiuid'—he may be criticizing such contexts as Hilton's advice to 'drawe in þi thoztes' or 'Geder þen þi hert togeder.' Indeed, it may be that while the *Cloud*-author responds to Book I of *The Scale*, Hilton in Book II sometimes writes with the *Cloud*-author in mind. His warning against the misunderstanding of spiritual language in material and spatial terms may reflect Hilton's absorption of *The Cloud*'s insistent teachings on this point. Yet Hilton's very different application of the idea of the 'lighty mirknes' shows his distinctive independence, while the Christocentric emphases of Book II of *The Scale* may express implicitly Hilton's critique of the *via negativa* in *The Cloud* and his concern to redress the balance. In his *Privy Counselling* the *Cloud*-author may himself be seeking to respond to such a criticism, to offset his earlier work's emphasis on leaving behind meditation on the manhood and Passion of Christ, although in *The Cloud* he could not have been more succinct. In the preface to *The Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ*, his early fifteenth-century translation of the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes vitae*

Woodcut print of Danse Macabre

Christi, Nicholas Love, prior of the Mount Grace Charterhouse, notes that to 'symple soules . . . contemplacion of þe monhede of cryste is more likyng, more spedefull & more sykere þan is hyze contemplacion of þe godhed,' and the English mystics make such a distinction in pursuing their own way to 'hyze contemplacion.'

When early in *Privy Counselling* the author dismisses the criticisms that 'I here sum men sey'—that 'my writyng to thee and to other is so harde and so heigh. . .'—he brings together the English mystics' alertness to their works' reception and a mode of intimate address, apparently directed in the first instance to a personally known recipient, which is characteristic of many of their writings. In *Mixed Life* Hilton is moved in part to write to his addressee 'for tendre affeccioun of love whiche thou haste to me.' *The Cloud* was initially written (as is made clear) for the direction of a particular twenty-four year old disciple, although the manner of address in the prologue ('whatsoever thou be that this book schalt have in possession') shows an awareness that what was written for one known individual will come to be seen and used by a wider unknown readership. The opening of *Privy Counselling* confronts this matter directly: the author prefers to write what he thinks 'moste speedful' to his particular 'goostly frende' rather than to write generally for a general audience, trusting that among others who may read his work those similarly disposed may find something rewarding to them. Even in the epistles that Rolle writes as if to known women recipients ('Til the I write specialy'; 'Loo, Margarete') there is provision for 'thou, or another that redes this,' as in the mention of alternatives ('or if thou be na mayden'). In the longer, presumably later version of her *Revelations* Julian addresses herself more emphatically and confidently in the first person plural to her 'even-Cristen'; in Book II of *The Scale* Hilton apparently envisages a wider audience than the anchoress to whom Book I is ostensibly written, although even here Hilton comments: 'Thou schalt be saufe as anker incluse, and noght only thou bot all Cristen soules.' The mystics' counselling directed to particular cases becomes more widely available without losing the immediacy of its address. *Mixed Life* sets out Hilton's interpretation of such a 'mixed' life for the benefit of a known individual in specific circumstances, yet the appeal of his theme is such that the epistle is copied unchanged in itself but with an emended opening address to a more general audience.

In one manuscript of *The Scale of Perfection* is written the message: 'My hert is ful heuy to send zow ois boke for I supposid þat ze suld hafe comen home þat we myght hafe comend togedir þer of' (Trinity College, Dublin). The English mystics' writings are often composed as if to inscribe such an intimate interchange, in the manner of a personal letter that stands in for a confidential conversation, and so represents parts of a larger implied dialogue between author and recipient. 'A thousand mile woldest thou renne to comoun mouthly with one that thou wist that verrely felt it,' and as an opening device to chapters, sections or whole works the mystics recurrently write as if responding to a request for guidance and direction. *Of Angels' Song* begins in this way, as does the 'Pilgrimage to Jerusalem' chapter of *The Scale*, while another chapter opens as if Hilton is reacting to his recipient's request to moderate the difficulty and adjust the level of his writing. That both the interpolation in this same chapter on the Holy Name and the later interpolation on charity begin with the similar 'But now, seist thou . . .' and 'But now seist þou . . .?' may indicate that such passages—evidently authentic, although absent from some manuscripts—represent Hilton's later responses to questions posed by some readers of his work. Such anticipations of a reader's possible questions, doubts and uncertainties are a characteristic feature of the implied dialogue that structures many of the mystics' writings. Hilton makes adroit use of the device, and it occurs in Rolle's epistles. Boldest use of such imagined questions from a reader is made by the author of *The Cloud*, not least when a question is forestalled only for the speaker to admit that it is unanswerable: 'But now

thou askest me and seiest: "How schal I think on himself, and what is hee?" And to this I cannot answere thee bot thus: "I wote never!"' It is the *Cloud*-author whose mode of address to his contemplative pupil may recall that of a seasoned coach, coaxing a pace from an athlete under training: 'Lette not therfore, bot travayle therin tyl thou fele lyst.' It is also the *Cloud*-author who in *Privy Counselling* shrewdly confronts the issue of authorial control implicit in such one-sided 'dialogues': 'Lo! here maist thou see that I coveite sovereinte of thee. And trewly so I do, and I wol have it!'

Why does a mystic *write*? To praise God? To make a record of experience, as a witness? To instruct others, as a guide? It is the impetus to offer direction, to share knowledge, that constitutes one unifying feature in theme and form among the English medieval mystics. To read them is to be in the presence of an experienced guide to a process that implies a progression or an ascent ('I wyll that thou be ay clymbandetyll Jhesu-warde'). No wonder that in *De Utilitate*, his Latin letter to Adam Horsley, Hilton exclaims: 'If not even the least of the arts can be learned without some teacher and instructor, how much more difficult it is to acquire the Art of Arts, the perfect service of God in the spiritual life, without a guide?' and he criticizes those so overconfident as 'to set out on the way of the spiritual life without a director or capable guide, whether it be a man or a book . . .' A book in place of a man: the medieval mystics aim to be that guide to the Art of Arts, although the limits of books are acknowledged ('For a soule þat is clene sterid bi grace to vse of þis werkynge may see more in an hour of swilk gostly mater þan myzt be writen in a grete book,' *Scale*). The mystics offer guidebooks, maps and manuals, and readers are urged to read them over not once but repeatedly. They represent instructions for use, for an art of loving to be put into practice beyond the process of reading and not to be confused with it. Indeed, *The Cloud* specifically warns against possibly mistaking the pleasures of the text for contemplative vocation: 'Alle þoo þat redyn or heren þe mater of þis book be red or spokin, & in þis redyng or hering þink it good & likyng þing, ben neu*er* þe raþer clepid of God to worche in þis werk, only for þis likyng steryng þat þei fele in þe tyme of þis redyng.' Any frisson of interest quickened by the literary effectiveness of the writing as art is not to be confounded with the soul's movement towards contemplation. Attainment lies over the horizon: it can rarely be more than adumbrated within the text and—always excepting Rolle—the English mystics are not generally concerned to strain after descriptive effects. Dame Julian, whose career begins in vision, leaves a text in which description is framed and transmuted by contemplation, while both Hilton and the author of *The Cloud* cast themselves as still travelling towards a goal, and so having limited personal experience from which to describe what they nonetheless assist their readers towards.

'If thou aske what contemplacioun is, it is hard for to telle or utterly diffine,' as one English version of Rolle admits, although such definition is the concern of almost every piece in this book. All description falls short—'For al that is spokyn of it is not it, bot of it,' as *Privy Counselling* notes—but the higher contemplation is defined in *The Scale* as illumination:

> for to se by vnderstondyng sothfastnes whilk is God and also gostly thynges with a soft swete bre*n*nand loue in hym, so p*er*fitely þat by rauyschyng of þis loue þe soule is oned for þe tyme and conformed to þe ymage of þe Trinite. þe biginnyng of þis contemplacio*u*n may be feled in þis lyfe, bot þe fulhed of it is keped in þe blis of heuen.

Nor is contemplative accomplishment to be won by study or booklearning, and may be hindered. In short, 'oure soule, bi vertewe of this reformyng grace, is mad sufficient at the fulle to comprehende al him by love, the whiche is incomprehensible to alle create knowable might' (*Cloud*). One other thing is clear: fulfilment may only be yearningly awaited and prepared for, never claimed: 'The swetnesse of contemplacioun . . . cometh not thoruh merite ne diserte of man, but oonly of the free yifte of God' (*Mendynge*).

Source: Barry Windeatt, "Introduction," in *English Mystics of the Middle Ages*, edited by Barry Windeatt, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 1–14.

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This analysis of the theology of *The Cloud of Unknowing* makes some very interesting comparisons to Zen Buddhism.

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This is an engaging, if somewhat opinionated, survey of mysticism from ancient times to the seventeenth century, including several chapters on that of the medieval period.

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Margery Kempe (c. 1373–c. 1440) was an illiterate woman from King's Lynn, England, who dictated the story of her stormy life and her spiritual journey toward God. The manuscript was lost for centuries before being rediscovered in 1934; it is the earliest surviving autobiography of an English person.

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Neoclassicism

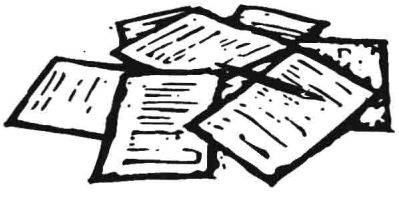
Movement Origin

c. 1660

Neoclassicism was a movement whose artists looked to the classical texts for their creative inspiration in an effort to imitate classical form. The writers in particular drew on what were considered to be classical virtues—simplicity, order, restraint, logic, economy, accuracy, and decorum—to produce prose, poetry, and drama. Literature was of value in accordance with its ability to not only delight, but also instruct.

Although the terms Classicism and Neoclassicism are somewhat interchangeable (and often used as such), Neoclassicism refers strictly the specific literary periods in history that produced art inspired by the ancients, which, of course, excludes the ancients themselves. It is usually more specifically defined as a Classicism that originally dominated English literature during the Restoration Age and which lasted well into the eighteenth century.

What these writers longed for began as a reaction to the Renaissance. Neoclassicists believed in Greek ideals, in restraint of passions, and valued communication as an exchange rather than individual self-expression. The Renaissance celebrated human potential, individualism, imagination, and mysticism. In contrast to the Renaissance, neoclassicists saw humans as being limited in potential and imperfect in form. They distrusted innovation and invention and believed in exercising restraint in personal expression. The efforts of the neoclassical writers resulted in the creation of



a polite, urbane, and witty art form that was as instructive as it was entertaining.

Representative Authors

Daniel Defoe (1660–1731)

Daniel Defoe produced his most important works during the Augustan Age, named for its writers who consciously attempted to emulate the work of the original Augustan writers, such as Vergil and Horace. He is also among those responsible for the creation of the English novel. Over the course of his lifetime, he worked as a journalist, pamphleteer, and essayist, writing as a social commentator for the merchant class. Defoe's work is a hallmark of the neoclassical age. It was didactic as well as intellectual in nature. Defoe wrote as effortlessly on the subjects of politics, religion, and economics as he did fiction and employed the use of several neoclassical conventions, including the satire and the epic.

Scholars estimate that Defoe's birth occurred sometime in 1660, the year that marked the beginning of the neoclassical age. He was born to James Foe, a tradesman and merchant, and Alice Foe; it is unclear why Daniel added the "De." Though his father was reasonably successful, he could not send his son to the best schools, as he was a Dissenter, which was a religious group that did not conform to the Church of England. In his adult life, Defoe would work as a businessman in land speculation, the import business, as an inventor, and in other endeavors.

During Defoe's life, England was politically driven by the monarchy and the Anglican Church, and, like his father, Defoe was a Dissenter and found need to defend his faith. Defoe participated in several rebellions, and, after a show of support during the Glorious Revolution, was honored with several positions, serving William of Orange from 1689 to 1702.

Defoe's religious beliefs are what prompted many of his writings, including several political pieces and pamphlets and some satirical poetry. It was *The Shortest-Way with Dissenters; or, Proposals for the Establishment of the Church*, a satire written in support of religious freedom, that earned him fame in 1702. In reaction to the work, Defoe found himself charged with libel, fined, and imprisoned until Robert Harley secured his release in 1703 in exchange for his services as a pamphleteer and undercover public propagandist for the government, which continued for roughly ten years.

A Review of the Affairs of France, with Observations on Transactions at Home, was a triweekly journal Defoe created in 1704. Though he likely felt obligated to lean his review in favor of the government, his employer, it was still an essential vehicle of expression for the writer at the time. In the journal, Defoe offered his views on a variety of topics, including politics, economics, morality, and religion. His reporting techniques, social commentary, advice columns, and other features made *A Review of the Affairs of France, with Observations on Transactions at Home* a model publication for journalism today.

The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner, better known today as *Robinson Crusoe*, was published in 1719. It was his first novel and is his most recognized. Defoe is also responsible for writing several other novels including *Moll Flanders*, *Colonel Jack*, and *Roxana*, all of which are still in publication.

Defoe died April 26, 1731, in Moorfields, London, England.

John Dryden (1631–1700)

John Dryden, a champion of the Restoration Age, was an amazing writer whose versatility has rarely been matched and whose works managed to change the course of English literary history. He produced a wide variety of literature, including satires, comedies, tragedies, lyric poetry, farces, translations, literary criticism, political poetry, and essays. Identified by some scholars as England's first verse satirist, Dryden's development of the verse satire and use of the heroic couplet would be carried on by a new generation of writers for an entire century following his death.

He was born in 1631 in Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire, England. He grew up the son of Erasmus Dryden and Mary Pickering, land-owning gentry, and was well schooled in the classics, first attending Westminster School and then Trinity College, Cambridge, starting in 1650. Dryden won recognition for his poetry throughout his school career, winning prizes for various poems. He eventually earned a bachelor of arts in 1654, the same year his father died.

A year after his graduation, he left Trinity and eventually obtained a position in London working as some sort of civil servant under Oliver Cromwell. His first poem of any significance was

in reaction to Cromwell's death, entitled "Heroique Stanzas to the Glorious Memory of Cromwell," in 1659. Several poems followed, but his first lengthy poetic work was "Annus Mirabilis." The poem consisted of 304 quatrains (four-line stanzas) documenting English history, covering a recent war, plague, and the Great Fire. *Mac Flecknoe*, published in 1682, was his first notable satire.

By 1663, Dryden had also begun to write his plays. His first was *The Wild Gallant*, followed by *The Rival Ladies*, and then *The Indian Queen, The Indian Emperour*. He wrote a critical piece entitled *Of Dramatick Poesie: An Essay*, published in 1668, which was a precursor to future dramatic works. Subsequent companion pieces were published in 1668, *A Defence of an Essay of Dramatick Poesie*, and in 1672, *Of Heroique Playes*. Both were written in response to the criticisms of Sir Robert Howard, who took issue with some of Dryden's theatrical conventions.

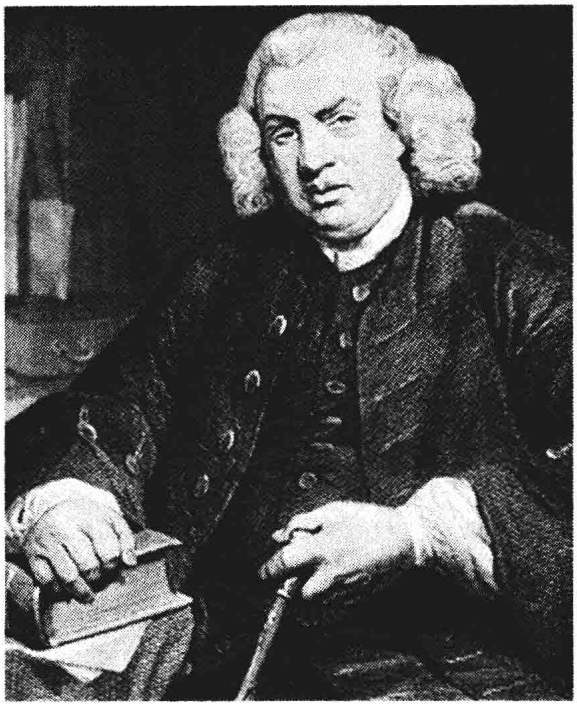
Of Heroique Playes betrays his strong interest in writing an original epic, as does his *Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire* (1692). Although Dryden found no time to realize his epic, other essential works would follow.

By 1668, Dryden is England's leading playwright and, shortly after the restoration of Charles II to the throne, is appointed poet laureate. Throughout the remainder of his life, Dryden would continue to produce critical works in response to the ever-changing nature of literary form. In addition, he would produce some of his finest poetry, including "To the Memory of Mr. Oldham" in 1684, and pieces that experimented with the beast fable. On May 1, 1700, he died and was buried in Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey.

Samuel Johnson (1709–1784)

Though the Age of Johnson marked the end of Neoclassicism, Samuel Johnson is still considered a major author of the era. Johnson was a man of many talents, including those of lexicographer, translator, journalist/essayist, travel writer, biographer, editor, and critic. He injected into the neoclassical age his own energy and enthusiasm, an appreciation of nature and the country life, and an ever-widening range of intellectual interests.

Born to Michael and Sarah Ford Johnson in 1709 at Lichfield in Staffordshire, Johnson spent most of his early childhood coping with illness. Poor financial circumstances left his family in a state of unrest. Despite a troubled childhood, Johnson demonstrated a keen intellect during his time at Lichfield Grammar School. He then attended Stourbridge Grammar School and would eventually work there.



Samuel Johnson

The first poem Johnson wrote was "On a Daffodil, the First Flower the Author Had Seen That Year" in 1724. Most of his work at Stourbridge was translations of specific books of the *Iliad*. He also wrote several poems; works demonstrating his talents through his experimentation with poetic conventions and his use of diction as well as rhythm. In 1728, Johnson attended Pembroke College, Oxford. There, as throughout the rest of his career, Johnson demonstrated a natural ability for writing poetry with incredible speed as well as precision.

His first attempt at writing professionally came when he moved to London in 1737 in an effort to complete and promote his blank-verse tragedy *Irene*. Johnson eventually began writing for *Gentleman's Magazine*, producing poetry of light verse as well as Latin and Greek epigrams. Johnson turned to a popular contemporary poetic form—the imitation—to attempt to create his first independent piece. The art of imitation allowed the author to exercise creative freedom as he translated the original compositions of others. Johnson chose the Latin poet Juvenal and imitated his *Satura III*, writing on

urban life in London. *London: A Poem, in Imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal* was published in May of 1738. He then published *One Thousand Seven Hundred and Thirty Eight*, a second imitation, just a few days later. The success of these poems led to subsequent renderings of Juvenal's works and a steady stream of poetry from Johnson to follow.

Johnson would spend the next fifteen to twenty years working as a hack writer and journalist. He continued writing reviews, translations, and articles for *Gentlemen's Magazine* through the mid 1740s. Much of his work, at this time, was prose, although he did revise several poems, including "The Young Author," "Ode to Friendship," and "To Laura," which were published in the magazine in 1743 along with Latin translations like *The Vanity of the Human Wishes* and *Satura X*.

During the latter part of his life, Johnson earned an honorary master of arts degree at Oxford (1755) for the *Dictionary of English Language*. In 1765, Trinity College, Dublin, also presented him with an honorary doctor of laws degree. By the time of Johnson's death, on December 13, 1784, he had earned his place in Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey, near the foot of Shakespeare's monument. Not only recognized as being a master of heroic-couplet verse among critics, Johnson is also recognized for his great contributions to the age, ranked with Pope and Dryden as masters of the form. His work and views would pave the way to English Romanticism.

Representative Works

Of Dramatick Poesie: An Essay

Of Dramatick Poesie: An Essay (1668) represented John Dryden's challenges to the trends of English theater in the seventeenth century and is considered one of his best prose works. The significance of the piece lies within the argument it presents concerning the development of the English theater and would prove to be a driving influence.

In *Of Dramatick Poesie: An Essay*, four speakers, namely Crites, Eugenius, Lisideius, and Neander, drift down the Thames River as the English and Dutch wage a naval battle. Dryden presents his views in dialogue form. The use of several characters allowed Dryden to present the various aspects of his argument from a multitude of perspectives without specifically endorsing a given opinion. The author offers clear positions on the issues discussed, i.e., on the merits of English theater versus that of the French and on other dramatic conventions, including his defense of drama written in verse. Dryden had an affinity for this mode of argument, being characteristic of much of his work, as it allowed him to offer consideration for various positions in an effort to support his own.

The characters in the essay are engaged in a discussion of classical conventions, as they are used by the French, and the value of the unities in English theater. The unities were strict rules of dramatic structure formulated by Italian and French writers during the Renaissance and loosely follow the dramatic principles of Aristotle. Presented as a dialogue, another classical convention, the work is as intellectually engaging as it is entertaining.

Gulliver's Travels

Jonathan Swift experienced overnight success with the publication of his politically charged satire *Gulliver's Travels*. It had all of the elements of a tempting read—mystery as well as political, social, and sexual scandal. So controversial was its content, however, that Swift saw fit to publish the book anonymously in 1727.

Lemuel Gulliver is the main character of *Gulliver's Travels*, and the book is an account of his adventures in Lilliput, Brobdingnag, Laputa, and Houyhnhnms. Gulliver finds himself towering over the inhabitants of Lilliput (they are only six inches high), and they refer to Gulliver as "Man-Mountain." Gulliver's size is a political issue, and, as he becomes more and more involved in Lilliput, demands are put upon him to aid the Lilliputians in a war against Blefuscu.

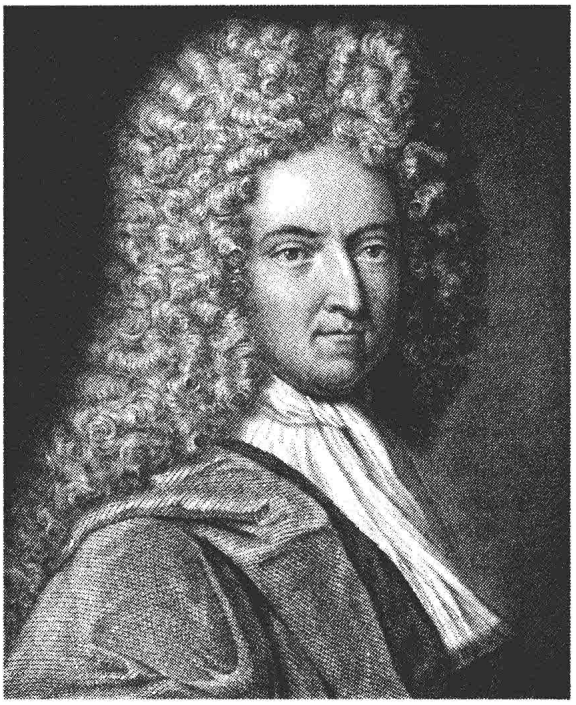
The plot was largely allegorical in its comment on contemporary British politics. It did not take the public long to discover that the author was writing about England rather than Lilliput and the like, or that the author of this satire was Jonathan Swift. He was not only active on the political scene but a well-known journalist with an easily recognizable style.

Robinson Crusoe

A classic in its own right, *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, Mariner*, now recognized as simply *Robinson Crusoe*, was published in London by William Taylor on April 25, 1719. It was based on the adventures of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish sailor marooned alone on the island of Yernandez in the South Pacific. By many accounts, it has been branded as one of the first English novels.

Robinson Crusoe rejects his mercantile family in favor of a life at sea. After a number of adventures, including his encounters with pirates and an escape from slavery, to name a few, Crusoe is caught in a hurricane. His ship is rendered useless as a result of the storm, and for the next twenty-eight years, he finds himself stranded on an island in the Caribbean. The work documents Crusoe's struggle to survive in isolation.

Robinson Crusoe has many characteristics of a classical epic, with an identifiable hero, hard travel, separation from a homeland, and even small battles. Defoe assigns the character of Robinson Crusoe several admirable qualities, recognized, both now and at the time of the book's publication, for his practicality, intelligence, and a well-balanced religiousness, among others. The book was even used for instructional purposes as a result. Known for its efficiencies, it is devoid of needless complexity and is unified in plot and character, also attributes valued by the ancients.



Daniel Defoe

The Rape of the Lock

When one thinks of the works of Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock* is often the first that comes to mind. In light of the work's value, this immediate association is not unfounded—*The Rape of the Lock* has been identified as one of the best examples of the mock epic from the neoclassical age. Pope's work has also been recognized for its use of the heroic couplet and as a good example of satire in eighteenth-century literature. The work was published in 1712, when Pope was just twenty-three years old.

The story was written to smooth over the tensions that developed between two prominent families when Lord Petre cut a lock of Arabella Fermor's hair. In Pope's version, Belinda (Arabella Fermor) meets the Baron (Lord Petre), among others, at the Hampton Court Palace. Over coffee and tea, the Baron cuts the treasured lock, inviting a verbal attack from other women at the gathering who witness the crime. Belinda manages to throw snuff in his face before threatening him with a hairpin. At this point, the speaker interjects his own consolation to the victim, and at the work's end, he also points out that, though the lock is lost and cannot be recovered, it will be preserved on the moon (a common belief of the time concerning things lost) and may outlast even Belinda.

The work, in the tradition of the genre, softens the events on which it was based by satirizing or making light of them. Pope honors this minor tragedy in classical form and, in doing so, undermines the intensity of Arabella's experience. This is precisely because the trivialities of modern life fail to compare to the subject matter classicists usually reserved for the genre.

London

This work is an imitation, a popular contemporary poetic form used by Samuel Johnson. *London* was a translation of *Satura III* by Juvenal, a great satirical poet of ancient Rome. It is a work on urban life in London, and it is of particular significance since it would be the first piece Johnson would create and publish on his own, independent of the magazine he was working for in 1738.

The satire speaks first to the difficulties of making an honest living in the city and then moves on to discuss the dangers of urban life. Johnson did not stick closely to the text, however, but reworked it to accommodate his depictions of country life as a viable alternative for city dwellers. This celebration of country life is dictated by the time in which he wrote, a time when literature expressed a preoccupation with nature and life on the farm. Johnson also left out many of Juvenal's depictions of urban blight and poverty as well as the nuisances accompanying them, i.e., noise, crowds, traffic, crime, etc. Johnson also expands *Satura III*, adding

Media Adaptations

- *Gulliver's Travels* appeared as a television miniseries released by Hallmark Home Entertainment in 2000. This adaptation of the classic preserves the satire and wit of the original.
- *Robinson Crusoe* has been adapted for film several times, most recently in 1996, starring Pierce Brosnan.

many contemporary political references to the introduction of the work. Following a common practice of the times, Johnson used his work as a platform for critique, in this case, pointed at Spanish efforts to squash British commerce, among other things.

Themes

Intellectuals and Intellectualism

Devotion to the exercise or application of the intellect was important to the neoclassical writer. This tendency is a natural outgrowth of the classical tradition these writers sought to imitate. Writers like Dryden, Johnson, and Pope, not wanting to limit themselves to one genre, engaged in experimentation to broaden their own intellectual abilities, imitating the conventions of classical poetic verse, drama, and rhetoric. In addition, these writers commented on a wide range of topics—political, historical, and social—demonstrating a wealth of personal knowledge. Intellectual expression was of greater value to the neoclassicist than the expression of feelings, and out of this desire came the satire and various forms of didactic (instructional) literature.

Often the writings of these authors were a printed form of warfare, intellectual contests in print and journalism. Satirists would compete with one another, relying on a keen sense of wit to savagely expose their adversary. When John Dryden wrote *Of Dramatick Poesie: An Essay*, he criticized the current trends of the English theater. Sir Robert Howard immediately responded to the essay with some criticisms of his own. The result was a scathing rebuttal, *A Defence of An Essay of Dramatick Poesie*, in which Dryden attacks Howard's comments. Howard's response was fairly mild, almost as if he were surrendering.

Social Protest

The seemingly unchecked actions and irresponsibility of the monarchy were a source of deep contention among its critics. The reign of Charles II and James were mired in contradiction, their public faces never mirroring their true intentions. There was also great opposition to the "reign" of Robert Walpole, 1st Earl of Orford; a highly influential statesman, he all but assumed the role of king, gaining the confidence of George I and II.

Neoclassical writers would, time and again, prove to pose a threat to the establishment, resorting to their own form of social protest, the written word expressed as satire, to inform, educate, and inspire public outrage. In response to Walpole's flagrant abuse of power, the two popular political parties of the time, the Tories and the Whigs, would form a loose alliance against Walpole. Of those dissenters, Tory writers Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, John Gay, and Henry Fielding and the Whig writer James Thomson formed an alliance bent on exposing Walpole publicly. The efforts of the small group of sharp-tongued intellectuals stung Walpole. He responded to the attacks by imposing censorship on the group.

Imitation

The neoclassicists sought to imitate the classics, looking to the poetic conventions, the dramatic theories, as well as the rhetorical skills of the classicists for guidance. From the onset of the Restoration Age through the Age of Johnson, writers would look to classical forms such as the ode, the satire, and the epic for their inspiration. They also tended to favor rhymed couplets utilizing conventional poetic diction and imagery in their works.

Imitation was also a neoclassical genre. An imitation is a translation by which the translator takes certain artistic liberty with a classical work in an effort to produce something new. Using the classical source as a point of reference, the translator often altered not only the language but the actual structure of the work, sometimes omitting or changing sections of it to suit contemporary tastes.

Imitation was a well-accepted art form, readily adopted by Restoration poets. Samuel Johnson was an imitator and chose the Latin poet Juvenal, imitating his *Satura III*, to express himself on urban life in London. Johnson took care to include Juvenal's words at the bottom of the pages of his *London*, wishing to preserve Juvenal's sentiments next to his own. Johnson preserved the original structure of the work but altered portions of it in order to voice his own views, which were more specific to his audience.

Style

Allegory

An allegory is a narrative technique in which symbolic characters or actions are used to convey a message or teach a lesson. Typically used to teach moral, ethical, or religious ideals, it is also used for political purposes. In the case of the neoclassicists, the latter was often the case, often in conjunction with satire.

Swift's criticism of English politics was so harsh that he felt it necessary to publish his work *Gulliver's Travels* anonymously. On the surface, the work is mere fiction, but on a deeper level it is an account of the bitter political struggles between the two major political parties of the early eighteenth century, the Tories and the Whigs.

Johnson lampoons those intimate with the British political scene in his depiction of certain characters. For example, the Lilliputian emperor is characterized as being tyrannical and corrupt and is also easily recognized as George I, King of England (from 1714 to 1727). The Lilliputian Empress stands for Queen Anne, who, offended by Swift's earlier satires, chose to prevent his advancement in the Church of England. The two parties in Lilliput, the Low-Heels and the High-Heels, represent the Tories and the Whigs.

Didactic

This term describes works of literature that aim to teach some moral, religious, political, or practical lesson. The term usually refers to literature in which the message is more important than the form. The aims of many of the neoclassical writers were instructional, as many of them were moralists and critics of English politics, and all shared an interest in conveying their position. In the case of *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe's lesson for the young audience is that perseverance pays off.

Topics for Further Study

- The neoclassicists often used references to ancient cultures to give their works added meaning. Investigate some of the materials behind these references and explain their significance in the works of the neoclassical writers.
- English politics was the major target for satirists Swift, Dryden, Pope, and others. Satire was often viewed as a dangerous political weapon, resulting in censorship or the arrest of many satirical writers. Investigate the influence of satire on the press during the neoclassical period in response to political events of the time.
- The Age of Johnson represented a profound shift in the neoclassical genre that would ultimately result in the advent of Romanticism. What were the factors that caused such a shift as well as the end of the neoclassical era?

Robinson Crusoe was recognized as a book of extraordinary value for children in its time. Many believed Crusoe to be an excellent role model for children. Steady, intelligent, spirited, independent, industrious—Defoe's character demonstrates all of these qualities in the face of great adversity and survives. Defoe's work has also been praised because of children's ability to relate to Crusoe and his persistence, delighting in the discoveries he makes and the things he does to survive.

Blank Verse

Any unrhymed poetry constitutes blank verse; more specifically, it is unrhymed iambic pentameter verse (composed of lines of five two-syllable feet, or sets, with the first syllable accented and the second unaccented). Blank verse was often used by neoclassical poets, as it was by post-Renaissance poets, and was appreciated for its flexibility as well as its dignified tone.

Shakespeare wrote most of his plays in blank verse, subsequently attracting imitators like John Dryden. Dryden was known for his mastery of various

rhyme forms, and blank verse was among his repertoire, *All for Love* (1678) being a prime example.

Mock Epic

This literary form was a common and clever mode of satire used to make light of a wide range of contemporary concerns. Many of the neoclassical writers—Pope, Swift, Dryden, Defoe, Richardson, Johnson—wrote satires on what they viewed to be some of the social and political excesses of the age.

First, consider the classic epic—a long narrative poem about a hero, someone of great nationalistic, historic, or legendary importance. The setting is vast, and often there is some sort of cosmic intervention in the form of gods, angels, or demons. The work is usually written in a classical style, with elaborate metaphors and allusions to further express the importance of its subject.

The mock epic employs many of the same classical conventions as the epic—the work is written as a long narrative, employing the use of high language, metaphors, and allusions. The subject matter, however, is decidedly less heroic, thereby ridiculing real-life overreactions to it.

Pope's "Rape of the Lock" is a good example of the mock epic. As duly pointed out by Frances Mayhew Rippy, in "The Rape of the Lock: Overview," Pope's work looks at modern concerns, finding them less heroic than those of the classical world. Rippy adds that the "Epic battles have become card games and snuff-throwing," and the "genealogy of weapons has become the history of Belinda's ornamental hairpin." Essentially, the work succeeds in satirizing the loss of a sense of what is important.

Movement Variations

The neoclassical period was framed by specific historical events. Scholars generally agree that the movement began with the return of the Stuarts to the English throne in 1660 and ended with the publication of "Lyric Ballads" by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1798. The period itself includes the Restoration Age (1660–1700), the Augustan Age, (1700–1750), and the Age of Johnson (1750–1798).

The Restoration Age (1660–1700)

England underwent a transformation at the outset of the Restoration, in strong reaction against Puritanism. The period was marked by a resurgence of scientific thought as well as investigation. It is at this point, with the infusion of French influences, that Neoclassicism begins to develop.

During the Restoration Age, the Heroic couplet, a rhyming couplet written in iambic pentameter (a verse with five iambic feet), was the major verse form. The poetry itself was typically didactic or satirical in nature—the work's main aim was either to instruct some moral, religious, political, or practical lesson or to ridicule and attack some aspect of contemporary life. The ode was also a widely used form. An ode is a lengthy, lyrical, rhyming poem addressing or praising some object, person, or quality in a lofty, noble style.

Prose took on a more "modern" style, as represented by Bunyan, Dryden, and Milton, principal writers of the age. Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* were among the major literary achievements of the period, and Dryden's work demonstrates a transition toward the Augustan Age. Locke's writings, more political in nature, represented the course of English thought during this time.

The Restoration Age also enjoyed the reopening of theaters. Both William Wycherly and William Congreve would infuse the stage with their contemporary dramas. The comedy of manners and the heroic drama developed as genres.

The Augustan Age (1700–1750)

Classical ideas of common sense and reason took precedence over creativity fueled by emotion and imagination during the Augustan Age. Characteristically, literature produced in this time is realistic, satirical, and moral—it was also guided by the politics of the day. Authors like James Thomson continued to reflect in their writings a concern for the study of nature and science.

Poetry is decidedly cleaner and tighter, as reflected in that of Pope, and the mock epic as well as the verse essay became commonly used literary forms. Defoe's journals, collections of essays, and periodicals like the *Spectator* influenced English prose style. Swift's satires were popular as were the early novels of Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding, among others. Finally, the theater took a turn in character from a moralistic bent in favor of the sentimental comedy. In addition, classical and domestic tragedy also dominated the stage.

The Age of Johnson (1750–1798)

A period aptly named after Samuel Johnson, whose prose and critical works eventually led to the end of the neoclassical tradition, the Age of Johnson represented a transition from a focus on classical study/imitation to an interest in folk literature and popular ballads, which can be similarly observed in Johnson's writing.

During this time, the novel advanced steadily, and Sterne and Mackenzie developed what would be called the novel of sensibility. The Gothic novel came into view due to the efforts of Ann Radcliffe and Horace Walpole. Henry Brooke and William Godwin wrote novels steeped in distinct philosophical as well as political commentary. Shakespeare was exceedingly popular, and both the sentimental comedy and the comedy of manners remained widely used forms. In addition, burlesque, pantomime, and the melodrama also came to the forefront.

The age experienced a growing interest in human freedom, intensified by both the American and French revolutions. An interest in the outdoors, a celebration of country life, and an engagement in an ever-widening circle of intellectual pursuits characterized the period, as did the development of several religious movements like Methodism. It would be in this environment that the neoclassical tradition would then finally be put to rest while English Romanticism gained moment.

Historical Context

The English climate during the neoclassical period was one of false appearances in both political and the public domains. Part of the masquerade involved a monarchy that was publicly sensitive yet privately ambivalent concerning many issues. There was also a *nouveau riche* middle-class who were more interested in gentrifying themselves with clothing and mannerisms than acknowledging the political conflicts swirling about them.

The history of the monarchy was fuel enough for a great deal of criticism on the part of the neoclassicists, and rightfully so. The hopes of the public were high for a leader who could promise relief from the religious and political struggles that plagued England. It is not surprising that a crowd gathered to cheer Charles II as he landed on the shores of Dover in May of 1660. Many felt that Charles's coronation in 1661 would signify an end to the civil and political unrest. However, he would prove to be a man of contradictions.

Charles II, at least on the surface, gave England much to hope for. Publicly, he professed a love of parliaments and expressed a hope for an independent Church of England. Privately, however, he often postponed parliaments, pushed for toleration of Catholics, and even converted to Catholicism on his deathbed. Similarly, James, Charles's brother and successor, initially pledged support of the Anglicans by promising to honor the national church and to end religious uniformity. Soon, however, he would move against Anglican interests. His attempts to convert the nation to Catholicism provoked William of Orange, his Dutch son-in-law, to organize an army. A confrontation occurred in November of 1688, causing James to flee to France.

The reign of King William III saw the restoration of the Church of England but also an England deep in debt from funding the revolution, inspiring much political grumbling and satire. Queen Anne, his successor, had what some historians have called a peaceful reign, inspired by consumer confidence and a sense of nostalgia. But after Queen Anne's death, King George I and his family were imported from Hanover, Germany. He could only speak broken English and had little interest in English politics.

At that point, Robert Walpole chose to step in and manage the affairs of both George I and his successor, George II. Walpole, acting more as minister than advisor, overstepped his bounds, swaying party politics, making way for the Whigs to assume a dominant role. He was sarcastically dubbed "prime" minister, due to his arrogance and his politics. So tyrannical were his policies that the two main parties, the Whigs and the Tories, formed a temporary alliance against him. It would be the pressure of military conflict that would ultimately lead to Walpole's resignation.

George III was next to take the throne, and though his reign has been characterized as a tumultuous, historians are quick to point out that during that time, Britain was the richest nation with the largest world empire. The return of English control to the monarchy also fostered the reopening of the London theaters in 1662. The new theaters were no longer located in the lower-class parts of town, as was often the case in the Elizabethan age, but were now between Westminster and the City of London, elevating the audience's experience to new levels. It was a chance for people of

Compare & Contrast

- **1600s–1700s:** Oliver Cromwell's protectorate is overthrown, and after two decades in which England was without a sovereign, Charles II is crowned king.

  Today: Tony Blair is the prime minister of England, and Queen Elizabeth II is the symbolic head of state under a parliamentary democracy.

- **1600s–1700s:** The most celebrated eighteenth century periodical, *The Spectator*, is founded by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele.

  Today: The advent of the internet revolution connects millions of households with a seemingly limitless number of newspapers, magazines, and periodicals at the click of a mouse.

- **1600s–1700s:** The rise of the English theater changes social patterns as English citizens from all classes begin to attend theatrical performances.

  Today: The advent of the DVD and the development of home entertainment systems begin to change the patterns of many moviegoers, who, instead of visiting the theater, opt to stay home.

- **1600–1700s:** With the restoration of the English theater comes an intermingling of the social classes, and fashion becomes the focus as middle- and upper-middle class patrons of the stage imitate the monarchy in style and dress.

  Today: Overnight pop music sensations like Britney Spears set fashion standards for contemporary teens.

many financial positions to observe royalty and the well to do in addition to the actors' performances. The drama of the theater also managed to overshadow a major naval defeat at the hands of the Dutch in 1673.

It was also a time of high fashion. As the middle class mingled with gentry, they strove to imitate what they saw as being their tastes. Wigs, scarves, silks, jewelry—all of these commodities were in demand and appeared in catalogs like Sotheby's. Advertising was also a natural outgrowth of such consumerism and began to be a major source of financial support to periodicals. There was also a focus on politeness and self-control. Pope, Swift, and others would satirize what they saw as being frivolous or pointless attempts at self-promotion.

All of the diversion—the pomp and circumstance of the social classes, the drama of the theater, the drama of the monarchy—could not avert the ever-widening gaps between rich and poor. Nor could it avert the public outcry against the slave trade, a business that was the reason for much of England's financial success as a superpower. These conflicts and others would move literature towards Romanticism.

Critical Overview

Neoclassicism is an extension of the classical period. Scholars generally note that it was in fact a time of great importance because the works produced during this period have greatly influenced the course of literature to follow. Dubbed by many to be "intellectual art," the works of neoclassical writers were praised for their didactic nature. Great admiration has been bestowed upon these founding fathers of the English canon—many have marveled at the great versatility of these writers who produced a seemingly endless variety of work, including poetry, satire, odes, drama, prose, criticism, and translations. The works themselves commanded greater admiration still, as they were apt to be written with elegance, simplicity, dignity, restraint, order, and proportion.

One rather negative assertion made on the part of critics is that imagination was intentionally repressed during the neoclassical period. To the contrary, Donald F. Bond, author of "The Neo-Classical Psychology of the Imagination," argues that although writers were concerned with the "dangers of an uncontrolled imagination, an examina-

tion of the psychological background of the period reveals an awareness of the validity of the imagination." Considering the mind as a "storehouse of images," he elaborates on his point by stating that "this aspect of the imagination, as the power whereby the mind is cognizant of external objects without direct sensory stimulus, is prevalent throughout the period."

Another problem of note is the rather fuzzy classification Neoclassicism is subject to. Depending upon the critic, the terms Classicism and Neoclassicism are thought to be sometimes interchangeable and sometimes not. James William Johnson's "What Was Neoclassicism?" explored the issue, taking the position that the research of his contemporaries has uncovered "a vast range of literature simply ignored—or perhaps suppressed—by earlier critics." His conclusion was simply that "the resulting disparity between limited assumptions and expanded information has called into question the very possibility of formulating any critical schema that accurately describes the characteristics of English literature between 1660 and 1800."

In Donald Greene's "What Indeed Was Neoclassicism," the author counters Johnson, dismissing his ideas as "tedious pseudo-problems, better left for journalists—and professors of literature—to play with if it amuses them."

Napoleon at St. Bernard *by neoclassicist painter Jacques-Louis David*

Criticism

Laura Kryhoski

Kryhoski is currently employed as a freelance writer. In this essay, Kryhoski considers critical opinions on the definition of Neoclassicism.

The boundaries defining the neoclassical genre have been tested, questioned, and found wanting by many literary critics. Equally troublesome to many of these critics is the notion that a literary canon can be categorized strictly on the basis of what is a largely accepted, though narrowly focused. In the late 1960s, James William Johnson considered this idea in his work "What Was Neoclassicism." He was chiefly concerned with what he identified as a vast range of literature widely ignored in favor of a "limited, prejudged selection of Restoration and 18th Century literature."

Johnson contends that modern writers are also a threat, having no sense of aesthetic or principle akin to that of the neoclassicists, or even the Victorians, for that matter. Although this is an old argument, it continues to resonate today. Even the most respectable literary reference books will prove discerning as to just what differences exist between a classic and a "new" classic. Some literary dictionaries will go as far as to say that the terms Classicism and Neoclassicism are interchangeable, leaving the amateur (and perhaps even the seasoned) scholar to shake his or her head.

Donald Greene, in his reply to Johnson's work, "What Indeed was Neo-Classicism? A Reply to James William Johnson's 'What was Neo-Classicism?,'" also responds to what he sees as a somewhat troublesome form. Greene states that unlike other literary periods in history, the neoclassical age comes with "undistinguished credentials," without, what he calls, some of the big, generalizing terms used to define periods of significant literary importance. Greene feels that a substantial objection to the application of the term Classicism, or any of its variants, is based on the understood basis of classification for such literature. Greene states simply that in the classification of such literature of the period, 1660–1800, it remains that

> if it means that people in the eighteenth century read widely in the Latin and Greek classics and were

What Do I Study Next?

- *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (1993), by Merry E. Weisner, represents the author's research of women from 1500 to 1750. The author focuses on women's roles in relation to general historical developments and the effects of such developments on women. Her work is characterized by her approach to study as a sort of "digging into women's private and domestic experiences." There is consideration not only of the physical experiences of women—those of menstruation, pregnancy, and motherhood—but of the ways in which women attempted to carve out meaningful lives for themselves based on such experiences. The work also compares female gender roles with those roles imposed on males, to produce some very interesting insights and observations.
- *Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* (1990), edited by John Morrill, is a discussion of Oliver Cromwell's life, both personal and political. Although he died at the dawn of the neoclassical age, he was one of the best-known, as well as one of the most controversial, figures in English history and would shape political discourse well into the neoclassical age. Cromwell has been celebrated as a champion of both religious and civil liberties and for his role in the defeat of Stuart tyranny. The book describes the phases of his career as citizen, soldier, and lord protector.
- *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (1938), written by Ian Watt and reprinted in 2001, is a consideration of the relation between the growth of a reading public and the emergence of the English novel in the eighteenth century. Watt's study draws on the works of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding, among other important novelists, to discuss the qualities of the English novel that distinguished it from other existing literary genres. His work has been characterized as a classic description of the social conditions, changing attitudes, and literary practices dominating the period during which the novel reigned as a dominant literary form. Watt's study also considers the audience the novel reached, its role in the book trade, and the evolution of English society during the eighteenth century.
- *The Literary Life and Other Curiosities* (1981), by Robert Hendrickson, is a wonderful collection of anecdotes, quotations, lists, and poems concerning books and their authors, including many from the neoclassical period. It's a wonderfully humorous and historically valuable work, offering unusual insight into writers such as Dryden and Swift. In his chapter entitled "Wits, Wags, and Literary Weasels," Hendrickson explores the use of wit, pun, and hoax amongst writers, offering very amusing anecdotes and examples.

influenced by them, they did so equally, and sometimes more, in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and a good deal of the nineteenth centuries.

The whole idea that there was a sudden "revival" of Classicism is repellent to Greene and others. It has been noted that if there was such a period in English history, a period when Classicism was declared dead, in Greene's rather humorous words, "this is indeed some important news." He cites the efforts of one of the greatest writers of the years preceding what has been coined the "classical revival" in the history in England, namely those of Milton. The example is a compelling one because of Milton's stature in the literary community and in the Western canon as a whole. He is identified by Greene, and, undoubtedly, countless others, as one perhaps more profoundly schooled in the classics than "any other English author." Milton was also admired for his uses of classical Latin elegiac verse; his last publication mirrored a strict form of Greek tragedy to boot.

Shakespeare also seems to take a sort of nebulous position within the context of neoclassical conventions. Thora Burnley Jones, in her collec-

tion, *Neo-classical Dramatic Criticism, 1560–1770*, considers the acceptance of Shakespeare by Restoration playwrights such as Pope and Johnson. Jones asserts that such playwrights encouraged a "climate of opinion which ensured the acceptance of Shakespeare as the central figure in the English literary tradition." However, Shakespeare certainly did not fit within the conventional window of opportunity provided as a reference for describing the English neoclassicists.

Yet Jones takes the author's style to task, citing, rather pointedly, his neoclassical qualities as a playwright. First, says Jones, Shakespearean plays had a certain degree of verisimilitude to them. He was able, with great depth and accuracy, to explore the human condition in a language that was all-inclusive, one that everyone could hear and be touched by. Shakespeare does not subscribe to the neoclassical principles of form, however. Critics often note Shakespeare's lack of concern for established classical form and for rules of decorum. He often mixed comedy with tragedy and completely ignored the unities. (Jones suggests the possibility that he knew nothing of such convention.) He also often lacked the level of style and elevation that other classicists shared as a common trait in their writings. Jones states that the third criterion defining the neoclassicist hinges on the idea of "art and morality." It is the task of the neoclassical writer to "indicate the way to a good life." Shakespeare is certainly guilty of this tendency, although his moralistic tendencies have been viewed as being somewhat misguided.

Shakespeare did have some faults when compared to those neoclassicists who followed him. Such faults seemed to clash against the very virtues that the neoclassicists strove to imitate. But the Augustan Age brought with it a marked interest in Shakespeare. Shakespeare somehow managed to rise above the fray, to continually be both recognized and excused for his deficits. Jones states that critics engage in "excusing his faults by the application of false historicism: he lived in barbarous times, spoke a less refined vernacular, shared the company of coarse players, and so on."

The convention in Augustan criticism of pitting Shakespeare against Aristotle is said to be a tradition of the age. For whatever reason, this did little, if anything, to ruin his critical reputation among other writers of the period. He is instead continuously excused for ignoring the rules of form precisely because he knew no better. Critics have often forgiven Shakespeare for his weaknesses with plot and structure, looking to his character sketches in order to grant the playwright redemption.

The conventions of Neoclassicism, no matter how loosely applied, do not seem to warrant the classification of Shakespeare as a neoclassicist."

Shakespeare's critics make a case for the assertions set out by Johnson that critics are often blinded by their own personal interests. This is not to dispute the value of Shakespeare's contribution to literature; rather, it is only used to demonstrate the seemingly arbitrary assignment of values even those neoclassicists who were contemporaries of the age might assign an author in determining merit. For instance, in Jones's works, she recalls the preface to Pope's text on Shakespeare. The preface states that he transcended imitation, going beyond the interpretation of a common human experience (nature), and has "conjured up a golden world."

But Jones claims that Pope is merely repeating the established view that "Shakespeare's characterization is good because it is lifelike; it is individualized and it is consistent, drawn from life and not from other writers." Pope's work about the playwright is interesting insomuch as he was pandering to an audience who loved Shakespeare. Pope forgives his excesses, attributing them to the types of audiences he answered to. As to his lack of education, Pope pointed to Shakespeare's level of wit and fancy, claiming that the abilities he had in both areas more than made up for his lack of scholasticism.

The conclusion Jones comes to is that despite the critical techniques of writers like Pope, there still exists an urge to apply neoclassical values to Shakespeare's work, regardless of the fact that such value judgments are in direct opposition with a felt response to the poetry. The conventions of Neoclassicism, no matter how loosely applied, do not seem to warrant the classification of Shakespeare as a neoclassicist. Again, the critics of neoclassical literature and form are not impervious to their own personal motivations and, as demonstrated by Pope, eschew critical response in an effort to forward their own personal agendas.

So who will redraw the lines of the genre, and what artists should be included? Should they be redrawn at all? To Donald Greene, at least, the matter is simply a matter of vision. Specifically, he warns of the dangers of looking too closely at individual instances where the convention might fit a person or idea, in favor of looking at the cultural landscape that inspires such movements.

Source: Laura Kryhoski, Critical Essay on Neoclassicism, in *Literary Movements for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

John Sitter

In the following essay excerpt, Sitter considers what constituted "wit" during the neoclassicist period by examining philosophical writings of the times.

> For thee explain a thing till all men doubt it,
> And write about it, Goddess, and about it.
> —Alexander Pope, *Dunciad*

Sooner or later in any discussion of neoclassical literature the word *wit*, if not the spaniel, splashes its way back to the hunter's side. That major authors of the Restoration and early eighteenth century prized and practiced wit is perhaps the one thing every succeeding generation has agreed on, although with widely differing evaluations of that achievement. Each retrospective estimate of Dryden or Pope seems, interestingly, to approach Dryden's view of one of his predecessors: "if we are not so great wits as Donne, yet certainly we are better poets." As Dryden's usage and the work of many modern scholars remind us, the value and definition of wit have been complex all along. Wit is Nature in ambiguity dressed—and so is Nature.

Despite the broad problems of historical semantics, readers continue to agree that Restoration repartee, *The Rape of the Lock*, Fielding's asides and prefaces, most of the poetry of Swift and Prior, and *The Beggar's Opera* all are witty. Whatever neoclassical wit is taken to be, it is likelier sought in Gay than Gray. It is not sought everywhere in the period—rarely in Defoe, scarcely in Richardson, for example—but wherever it is found the impression is generally one of hearing a shared language of the age, a shared rhetoric, rather than a clever ideolect. The examples mentioned range greatly but call to mind a familiar mixture of "common" sense, unconventional perspective, quickness, economy, and irreverence, to which no single writer (no Austen or Wilde, for example) has a unique claim in the period. This historical impression might be focused by looking for a moment at what might be called the epitaph of neoclassical wit, the couplet John Gay wrote for his tomb, and at the reaction it provoked in a young writer of a later generation, Samuel Johnson. The lines Gay asked Pope to put on his grave and that duly appeared in Westminster Abbey are these: "Life is a jest; and all things show it, / I thought so once; but now I know it." Writing for the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1738, Johnson finds this "trifling distich" more proper for the "window of a brothel" than for a monument. All people, he argues, do or do not believe in a future state of rewards and punishments. "In one of these classes our poet must be ranked. . . If he was of the latter opinion, he must think life more than a jest, unless he thought eternity a jest too; and if these were his sentiments, he is by this time most certainly undeceived. These lines, therefore, are impious in the mouth of a Christian, and nonsense in that of an aetheist." Nothing suggests that Gay saw any contradiction between making a good end and making a jest, or that friends such as Pope, Arbuthnot, and Swift found the epitaph trifling. Johnson's objections have their reason, but not the reason of his predecessors. The encounter is a reminder again of how often neoclassical wit plays upon mortality and how often it laughs at the oppositional logic of either/or. The common language Gay counted on was quickly disappearing.

While this episode suggests wit's passage, the more closely this ordering rhetoric is looked for the less explicit it seems to have been. Not only does "wit" itself have an array of meanings, as even the casual reader of *An Essay on Criticism* soon suspects, but it has its own oppositional story through the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. The best-known version is that of true wit versus false wit in Addison's series of *Spectator* essays (nos. 58–63), but Addison builds on Locke's earlier opposition of wit and judgment. Locke in turn was probably influenced by Malebranche, almost surely by Hobbes, perhaps by Boyle, and possibly by Bacon. Locke is a good place to begin not only because his oppositions seem to have been the most influential but also because a careful reading of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* shows that behind the desire to derogate or dignify wit lie issues far different from coffeehouse decorum. At stake are conflicting notions of intellectual coherence and competing versions of reality. After exploring Locke's dichotomy and its implications in his theory of knowledge, I shall turn to its subversion, respectively genteel and raucous, by Addison and Prior. Less suspicious of language than Locke,

both Addison and Prior are more deeply sceptical of individual aspirations to an unmediated agreement of thinking and things.

Wit and Judgment in Locke

> I shall imagine I have done some service to Truth, Peace, and Learning if, by any enlargement on this Subject, I can make Men reflect on their own Use of Language; and give them Reason to suspect, that since it is frequent for others, it may also be possible for them, to have sometimes very good and approved Words in their Mouths, and Writings, with very uncertain, little, or no signification. And therefore it is not unreasonable for them to be wary herein themselves, and not to be unwilling to have them examined by others.

In a later chapter of the same book Locke would attend to wit under the rubric "Of the Abuse of Words," but he had in fact discussed it at some length before deciding to take language as his province. This earlier passage from book 2 ("Of Ideas") is the one Addison put into broad circulation the morning of 11 May 1711 by quoting most of it in the fifth of six *Spectators* on wit:

> If in having our *Ideas* in the Memory ready at hand, consists quickness of parts; in this, of having them unconfused, and being able nicely to distinguish one thing from another, where there is but the least difference, consists, in a great measure, the exactness of Judgment and clearness of Reason, which is to be observed in one Man above another. And hence, perhaps, may be given some Reason of that common Observation, That Men who have a great deal of Wit, and prompt Memories, have not always the clearest Judgment, or deepest Reason. For *Wit* lying most in the assemblage of *Ideas*, and putting those together with quickness and variety, wherein can be found any resemblance or congruity, thereby to make up pleasant Pictures, and agreeable Visions in the fancy: *Judgment*, on the contrary, lies quite on the other side, in repeating carefully, one from another, *Ideas* wherein can be found the least difference, thereby to avoid being misled by Similitude, and by affinity to take one thing for another. This is a way of proceeding quite contrary to Metaphor and Allusion, wherein, for the most part, lies that entertainment and pleasantry of Wit, which strikes so lively on the Fancy, and therefore [is] so acceptable to all People; because its Beauty appears at first sight, and there is required no labour of thought, to examine what Truth or Reason there is in it. The Mind, without looking further, rests satisfied with the agreeableness of the Picture, and the gayety of the Fancy: And it is a kind of affront to go about to examine it, by the severe Rules of Truth, and good Reason; whereby it appears, that it consists in something, that is not perfectly conformable to them.

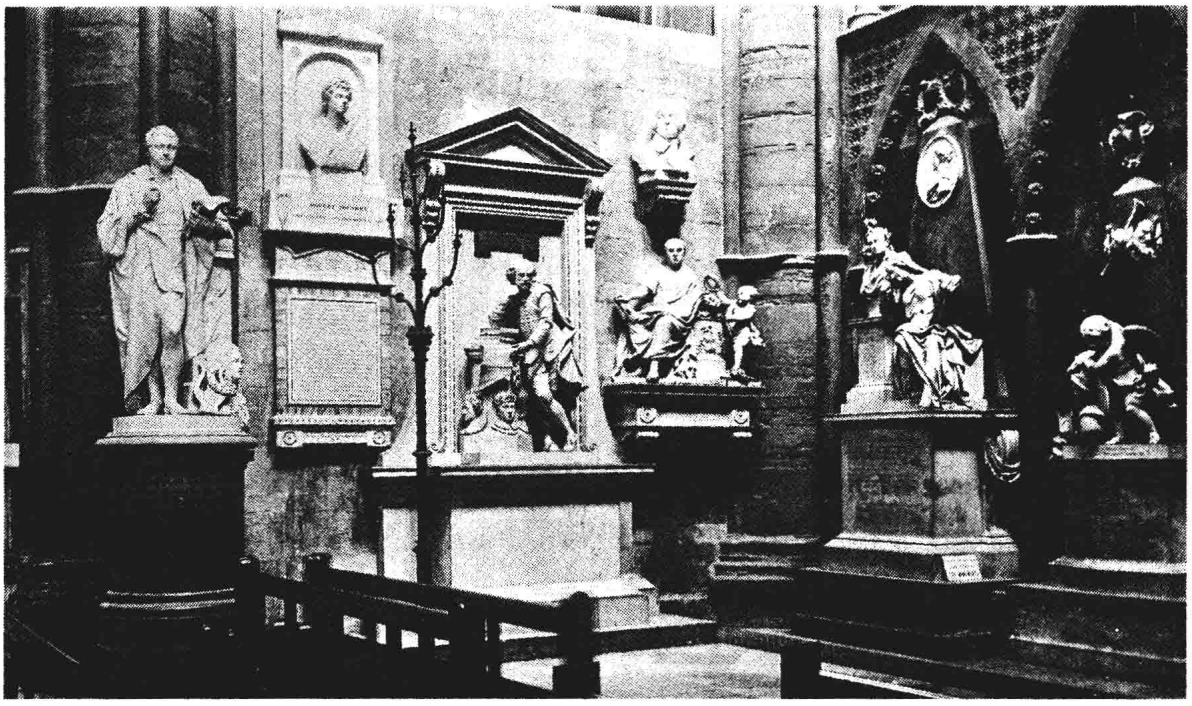
This pasage is worth considering more carefully than has been the modern habit. Kenneth

"Not only does 'wit' itself have an array of meanings, as even the casual reader of *An Essay on Criticism* soon suspects, but it has its own oppositional story through the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries."

MacLean, in what is regrettably still the standard work on Locke and eighteenth-century literature, points to the influence of the dichotomy but refers to it as a "detached bit of psychology" of "obviously little significance" in Locke's philosophy, a view more recent commentators seem to endorse by passing on in silence. Even literary critics as alert to Locke's metaphorical valences as is Paul de Man (1979) tend to proceed directly to book 3 and the explicit remarks on language. My view is that this piece of psychologizing is thoroughly attached to the tensions in Locke's argument throughout the *Essay* and that understanding those tensions can help in the reading of several neoclassical works of wit in something more of the spirit their authors writ. . .

It is clear that metaphor marks the appetite of wit for similarities, while judgment patiently seeks out differences. The place of allusion may seem less obvious, however, first because it is not necessarily associated with wit in particular (as distinguished, for example, from scholarly writing or sermons), and secondly because Locke gives no plain counterpart to it other than judgment's "whole way of proceeding." But it is clear that allusion is still on Locke's mind when he discusses wit again in book 3. This section is again long, but I quote it whole in the interests of care rather than quickness:

> Since Wit and Fancy finds easier entertainment in the World, than dry Truth and real Knowledge, *figurative Speeches*, and allusion in Language, will hardly be admitted as *an* imperfection or *abuse* of it. I confess, in Discourses, where we seek rather Pleasure and Delight, than Information and Improvement, such Ornaments as are borrowed from them, can scarce pass for Faults. But yet, if we would speak of



Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey

> Things as they are, we must allow, that all the Art of Rhetoric, besides Order and Clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of Words Eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong *Ideas*, move the Passions, and thereby mislead the Judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheat; and therefore however laudable or allowable Oratory may render them in Harangues and popular Addresses, they are certainly, in all Discourses that pretend to inform or instruct, wholly to be avoided; and where Truth or Knowledge are concerned, cannot but be thought a great fault, either of the Language or Person that makes use of them. What, and how various they are, will be superfluous here to take notice; the books of Rhetorick which abound in the world will instruct those who want to be informed: Only I cannot but observe, how little the preservation and improvement of Truth and Knowledge is the Care and Concern of Mankind; since the Arts of Fallacy are endow'd and preferred. 'Tis evident how much Men love to deceive, and be deceived, since Rhetorick, that powerful instrument of Error and Deceit, has its established Professors, is publickly taught, and has always been had in great Reputation: And I doubt not but it will be thought great boldness, if not brutality in me, to have said thus much against it. *Eloquence*, like the fair Sex, has too prevailing Beauties in it to suffer itself ever to be spoken against. And 'tis in vain to find fault with those Arts of Deceiving, wherein Men find pleasure to be Deceived.

The opposition of "truth" and "rhetoric," it has been argued, has been essential to philosophy's self-definition since Plato's attack on the Sophists; philosophy is distinguished by not being rhetoric or poetry. Locke's particular "plain-style" aversion to the "arts of fallacy" is familiar. This passage emphasizes the values implicit in Locke's earlier distinction, since the quasi-psychological opposition of wit and judgment now becomes the openly ethical contest of wit and fancy on one side (the syntax of the first sentence merges them) against knowledge and truth on the other. . .

The first sentence of the earlier passage associates wit with "having our *ideas* in the memory ready at hand" but judgment with "having them unconfused and being able nicely to distinguish one *thing* from another" (my emphasis). This silent slide from ideas to things is crucial to Locke's dichotomy and, as I shall try to show, a clue to greater problems within the *Essay*. The attribution to wit of the "artificial and figurative application of words" and of "allusion" implies, of course, contrary ways of proceeding in the world of judgment, knowledge, and truth. What exactly are these contraries? Presumably the first would be the natural and literal application of words, and the second would be unallusive language.

In short, Locke's charged opposition of wit and judgment entails three major claims: (1) we can

know and speak of things as they are; (2) we can (and should) speak naturally and literally; (3) we can (and should) speak without allusion. The question is whether there is really any space in Locke's *Essay* for any of the three assumptions. Put another way, in light of Locke's rigorous contributions to epistemology, to the study of language, and to ethics, what are we to make of his supposition that we can and should seek an unartificial language free of allusion and illusion? The boundaries between the epistemological and linguistic-ethical claims Locke makes in attacking wit are less clear than my listing of them may suggest, but I shall try to consider them in the order enumerated above.

I have already suggested that the general difficulty behind Locke's claim that judgment distinguishes *things* or that it guides us in speaking of "things as they are" stems from the commitment of the *Essay* as a whole to the view that what we know are (only) our ideas. Since able readers of Locke from Thomas Reid to the present have commented on the tension between that commitment and Locke's equally strong belief that our senses give knowledge of the external world, it is possible to concentrate selectively on a few of the *Essay's* moments of attempted reconciliation in order to see the range of Locke's ideas about ideas. Seeing that range may help in understanding Locke's occasional vehemence, because it stretches, sometimes awkwardly, from ideas as "mental Draughts" or "Pictures of Things" to ideas as barely legible signs.

In his discussion of "clear and obscure, Distant and Confused Ideas," Locke launches at once into visual metaphor—"the Perception of the Mind, being most aptly explained by Words relating to the Sight"—in order to argue that "our *simple ideas* are *clear*, when they are such as the objects from whence they were taken did or might in a well-ordered sensation or perception, present them" (2.29.2). This painstakingly worded statement seems to offer more certainty than it provides. It sounds as if clear ideas are visual copies ("taken") of objects viewed in the way a normal person perceives them. But if in place of the words Locke italicizes we attend to *as* and *might*, we find that what seemed a generic or causal account of the origin of clear ideas is a conditional description of them based on a simile: Ideas are clear when they are kinds of mental images *like* those that normal viewers *might* have registered had they been there.

The fate of *simple* ideas is noteworthy because while Locke is habitually ready to grant that *complex* ideas are things we make up to think and talk with ("fictions of the mind") rather than direct perceptions, he is understandably less willing to sever the mimetic link between simple ideas and the external world. At his most scrupulous, however, he does sever most of it. Not only is "likeness" to things in the world restricted to simple ideas, it is narrowed still further to simple ideas of "primary qualities" of body (solidity, extension, figure, motion, and number as opposed to colors, sounds, tastes, and so on). It would seem that only Newton spent most of his time having ideas "like" the world. Such ideas "*are resemblances*" of bodies and "these patterns do really exist." The rest "*have no resemblance* of them at all. There is nothing like our *Ideas* existing in the bodies themselves." It is in this chapter that Locke's "idea" becomes more like the response to a sign than like a picture. Most simple ideas of sensation are "no more the likeness of something existing without us than the names that stand for them are the likeness of our *ideas*, which yet upon hearing they are apt to excite in us."

Our experience, in other words, is closer to reading or listening to speech than to looking at things. We have, with the exception of primary qualities, access not to objects but to signifiers. Had Locke pursued this model of experience consistently, rather than the complex of visual metaphors noted earlier, the *Essay* would be a very different book. As it is, the linguistic analogy surfaces at several revealing points, often in negative terms, as in the remarks on wit or rhetoric. Before going further it is necessary to underscore the significance of the analogy here by recalling that Locke is perhaps the first major analyst of language to stress that the relation of signifier to signified is not divinely instituted or mimetic but "perfectly arbitrary." What the linguistic analogy implies, then, is a functional, convenient but wholly ungrounded relation of idea and world.

At this point we can begin to see Locke's denigration of figurative expressions and allusions in the context of his uneasiness about language in general. There are moments in Locke, as will be seen, where words alone are certain truth, but many more, and more explicit ones, of linguistic skepticism: "For he that shall well consider the *Errors* and Obscurity, the Mistakes and Confusion, that is *spread in the World by an ill use of Words*, will find some reason to doubt whether Language, as it has been employ'd, has contributed more to the improvement or hindrance of Knowledge amongst Mankind." Locke's suspicion of what he terms the "cover of wit and good language" runs deeper than

the currents of plain-style Puritanism or scientific polemic. The tension between Locke's thinking of ideas as pictures or as interpretations of signs (or correspondingly of objects available to us as things or as signifiers) is played out at large in the *Essay* as a tension between truth as residing in perceptions or in propositions. The explanation I want to try to illustrate is this: having reached the uncomfortable insight that our experience of "things" is in fact the experience of signifiers, Locke seeks to manage the radical implications of the linguistic analogy by reverting to the model of perceptions and pictures and by stipulating impossibly strict standards for proper language. If experience may just be a language, then language itself had best be kept determinate. It should (against all odds) speak of things as they are.

Locke's treatment of language in book 3 of the *Essay* strikes most readers as remarkably free of theories of origin and (and perhaps therefore) surprisingly consistent on the arbitrariness of the relation between signified and signifier. Hans Aarsleff claims more than chronological priority for Locke (1982). To be sure, language is God's gift to humanity, but the terms remain general: language is defined as the totality of all natural languages and as their use by the totality of speakers. Unlike vast numbers of his contemporaries and many later writers, Locke nowhere in the *Essay'* s chapters on language speculates about how Adam and Eve communicated, the Tower of Babel, or, except dismissively, mysterious or mystical connections between names and things named. However pious his intentions at large (the "main end of these inquiries" being "knowledge and veneration" of the "Sovereign Disposer of all things", for purposes of philosophic discussion there is no linguistic paradise lost. Where an Adamic myth surfaces instead is in Locke's notion of a language of judgment that names things as they are, without figure and, as only Adam could, without allusion.

Locke's contradictions on the subject of figurative language in book 3 have been brilliantly illustrated by de Man, and the issue of metaphor in the *Essay* as a whole can best be considered in connection with the responses to Locke of Addison and Prior. For now at least a partial answer emerges to the question of what allusion has to do with figurative speech in Locke's opposition of wit and judgment. Like "eloquence" and other "artificial" uses of language, allusions lack original innocence, are in fact the most emphatic figure of this lack, of having fallen into time. Return briefly, then, to the question of how an ideal of an unallusive language fits so uneasily with Locke's arguments elsewhere in the *Essay*.

The two arguments that run counter to the unallusive norm are linguistic and epistemological, although again the boundaries are not always distinct. The linguistic is relatively simple. When discussing language directly Locke argues, consistently, that since words have "naturally no signification" the "*idea* which each stands for must be learned and retained by those who would exchange thoughts and hold intelligible discourse with others." What such learning and retention of common usage amounts to is a continual series of allusions, namely to the usage of past and present speakers. Most of these allusions are of course unconscious, and any conventional notion of language implies the ability to make them, even the inability to *not* make them most of the time. But Locke goes further to recommend conscious allusions. If we would seek "propriety of speech" as indeed we should since words are "no man's private possession by the common measure of commerce and communication," we will find propriety by studying and imitating the usage of our linguistic predecessors: "The proper signification and best use of Terms is best to be learned from those, who in their Writings and Discourses, appear to have had the clearest Notions, and apply'd to them their Terms with the exactest choice and fitness."

Let me acknowledge at once that my use of "allusion" may well be broader than Locke intended and that he might have been thinking not of the shared use of words but of distinctive phrases and sentences—something closer to quotation. But it is also clear that in the attacks on wit in books 2 and 3 he is not criticizing the citation of authorities, something he does attack elsewhere but as characteristic of Scholasticism rather than of wit, fancy, or eloquence. It may be that he means something close to what allusion usually means in modern literary discussion, that is, intentional reference to previously used phrases or verbally established contexts for the complication of present meaning. And if it may be added that allusion often complicates by suggesting at least a fleeting parallel, it may be seen why Locke repeats the word in the same breath with "figurative speeches" and "similitude." But when all of this has been granted, it remains true that Locke's notion of a wholly direct and unallusive discourse belongs to a less sophisticated theory of language than to the secular one he works out. While we can speak of some writ-

ers, for example, as more allusive than others, there is no logical place for a use of language "quite contrary" to allusion. In view of Locke's account of language as the sum of common conventions, a speech that is the opposite of allusive speech would seem to belong to a world of neither wit nor judgment but desire.

If the allusiveness Locke denigrates is in fact central to his theory of language, is it also central to his theory of knowledge? Much of the *Essay* can be read as a succession of attempts to answer no to this question, to put the knower and the known in a direct relation, unmediated by community or language. Before considering a few of the efforts to find extralinguistic certainties in book 4, let us turn to a final episode in the discussion of language that seems already an epistemological episode as well. Locke is discussing the names of "mixed Modes," that is, several ideas of "sorts or Species of Things", and arrives at the interesting observation that, unlike simple ideas, these complex ideas usually become known to us *after* we have learned the words for them.

> I confess, that in the beginning of Languages, it was necessary to have the *Idea*, before one gave it the Name: and so it is still, where making a new complex *Idea*, one also, by giving it a new Name, makes a new Word. But this concerns not Languages made, which have generally pretty well provided for *Ideas*, which Men have frequent Occasion to have, and communicate: And in such, I ask, whether it be not the ordinary Method, that Children learn the Names of mixed Modes, before they have their *Ideas*? What one of a thousand ever frames the abstract *Idea of Glory* and *Ambition*, before he has heard the Names of them?

With the rare exceptions, then, of new coinages, the large range of ideas that make converse of any complexity possible are learned by a process of allusion. The vocabulary of these ideas exists first as a vocabulary.

I have been arguing that Locke's criticism of the figures and allusions of wit is part of an uneasiness about language at large and that his criticism was sharpened by the suspicion that knowledge and language are inseparable. Locke would not concede their inseparability. What he says instead, explaining how he came to write book 3, is that he found that knowledge and words had "so near a connexion" that "very little" could be "said clearly or pertinently" about knowledge without first observing the "face and manner of signification" of words. Because knowledge is, in Locke's suggestive phrase, "conversant about truth," it has "constantly to do with propositions." While it ends "in things," it arrives there "so much by the intervention of words" that they seem "scarce separable" from general knowledge. "At least they interpose themselves so much between our Understandings, and the Truth, which it would contemplate and apprehend that, like the *Medium* through which visible Objects pass, their Obscurity and Disorder does not seldom cast a mist before our Eyes, and impose upon our Understandings." The progress of actions attributed to words is striking: words intervene, then interpose, and finally impose.

In a landscape so populated or where, to take a later metaphor, so many have wandered "lost in the great Wood of Words", mathematics often looks like the safest way out of allusion and illusion. "By abstracting their Thoughts from Names, and accustoming themselves to set before their Minds the *Ideas* themselves . . . and not sounds instead of them," mathematicians have escaped most of the "perplexity, puddering, and confusion" of other fields (ibid.). If we would "but separate the *Idea* under consideration from the Sign that stands for it" moral knowledge would be "as *capable of real Certainty*, as Mathematics." I shall return to Lockes admiration for mathematical method in discussing Prior's response to the *Essay*, but the general point is simply that the main appeal of mathematics for Locke seems to be that it offers not a world of symmetry unencumbered by matter, or (as one might expect), more direct access to primary qualities, but an escape from words.

Locke's desire for extralinguistic certainty shows forth even when he argues more fully the point that truth resides in propositions. The chapter in which he does so, "Of Truth in General", is one of the most curious in the *Essay*, primarily because of Locke's insistence on a distinction between mental and verbal propositions, "truth of thought" and "truth of words." For it turns out that when he begins by defining truth as "nothing but *the joining or separating of Signs, as the Things signified by them, do agree or disagree one with another,*" Locke is not at all making the same definitional move that Hobbes had made in declaring that "*true* and *false* are attributes of speech, not of things. And where speech is not, there is neither *truth* nor *falsehood*. . . Truth consisteth in the right ordering of names in our affirmations." For Locke, on the contrary, the "signs" joined or separated to make propositions can be either words *or* ideas: "So that Truth properly belongs only to Proposi-

tions: whereof there are two sorts, viz. Mental and Verbal; as there are two sorts of Signs commonly made use of, *viz. Ideas* and Words." This is a most unusual definition of "idea," I believe unprecedented in the *Essay* to this point. (Although I have argued that some of Locke's descriptions of ideas imply that they are like our responses to signs, the synonyms he himself normally uses are phantasms, notions, perceptions, pictures, and so on.) This odd twist allows Locke, however, to go on to assert the necessity of considering truth of thought and truth of words "distinctly one from another."

Necessary as it may be, two difficulties are conceded. The first is that as soon as we begin to describe mental propositions in words they become verbal propositions (a problem analogous to trying to observe oneself without being self-conscious, say, which does not usually lessen the belief that one has periods of unselfconsciousness). The second, much greater difficulty Locke poses to his own distinction appears to undo it entirely: "And that which makes it *harder to treat of mental* and verbal *Propositions separately*, is That most Men, *if not all* [my emphasis], in their Thinking and Reasonings within themselves, make use of Words instead of *Ideas*, at least when the subject of their meditation contains in it complex *Ideas*." Having opened the possibility that all propositions of much complexity are verbal rather than purely mental, Locke vacillates in the rest of this brief chapter between extremes, wishing at one point that those who speak on subjects like religion, power, or melancholy (all of them remarkably complex ideas) would "think only of the Things themselves" rather than their words, and at another point restricting his definition of truth further to only verbal propositions: "*Truth* is the marking down in Words, the agreement or disagreement of *Ideas* as it is."

> Every one's Experience will satisfie him, that the Mind, either by perceiving or supposing the Agreement or Disagreement of its *Ideas*, does tacitly within it self put them into a kind of Proposition affirmative or negative, which I have endeavoured to express by the terms *Putting together* and *Separating*. But this Action of the Mind, which is so familiar to every thinking and reasoning Man, is easier to be conceived by reflecting on what passes in us, when we affirm or deny, than to be explained by Words.

Locke's meaning seems to be that our habit of making nonverbal propositions can be better imagined nonverbally than explained verbally. In other words, the proposition that we habitually make tacit propositions is most clear as a tacit proposition.

Addison, Prior, and Locke's Dichotomy

If Locke's opposition of wit and judgment involves as many problems as the previous section claims (and a few more will be suggested here), it is material to ask why it ever attracted Joseph Addison. That we cannot know Addison's motivation as he sat to the pages that would become *Spectator* 62 does not preclude some guesses. There is the general prestige of the *Essay*, and there is Addison's particular interest in bringing philosophy from the closet to the coffeehouse. Moreover, Locke's opposition has the appeal of familiar wisdom (so-and-so is "clever" but not thoughtful, or "steady" but not quick) suddenly bolstered by modern analysis ("and hence perhaps may be given some reason . . .") and looking for the moment as if it might offer an exhaustive characterological dichotomy (a recurrent fantasy neatly satirized in the quip, "There are two kinds of people: those who divide things into two and those who don't"). Neither eighteenth- nor twentieth-century intellectuals are immune to the charms of such a prospect. But it is probably safer to modify the question about Addison to *how* he found Locke's dichotomy attractive. How much of it does he accept, how does he use it, and how does it look when he has finished?

Like the rest of the series, *Spectator* 62 contrasts "true" wit and "false" wit. Addison begins it by referring to Locke's "admirable Reflection upon the Difference of Wit and Judgment, whereby he endeavours to shew the Reason why they are not always the Talents of the same Person." He then quotes all of the passage from 2.11.2 quoted earlier, except the first sentence, replaced by his summary, and the last sentence and a half, thus ending with Locke's observation that through metaphor and allusion wit "strikes so lively on the Fancy, and is therefore acceptable to all People." The passage, then, that Addison commends as the "best and most philosophical Account that I have ever met with of Wit" has already changed clothes for the meeting. His introduction neutralizes Locke's explanation of why men of wit are often not good judges (Locke says nothing of wit being beyond the reach of men of judgment) to a distinction of talents. And in silently ignoring the latter part of Locke's section he suppresses Locke's *regret* that wit is so "acceptable to all people," a fact due to its requiring "no labour of thought" and not being up to the rigor of "truth or reason." Similarly, there is no mention in the essay of Locke's attack on wit, figurative language, and allusion in book 3 (quoted above).

To what he does quote, Addison adds and qualifies. Locke's is the best (previous) explanation of wit, "which generally, tho' not always, consists in such a Resemblance and Congruity of Ideas as this Author mentions. I shall only add to it, by way of Explanation, That every Resemblance of Ideas is not that which we call Wit, unless it be such an one that gives *Delight* and *Surprize* to the Reader: These two Properties seem essential to Wit, more particularly the last of them." The reserve clause ("generally, though not always") can be held, with Addison, until the conclusion of his consideration of Locke. Before going there it is worth noting, first, that Addison's "Resemblance and Congruity of Ideas" replaces Locke's assertion that wit is an "assemblage of ideas" based on "any resemblance or congruity" the assembler can find, and, second, that Addison's emphasis on the "surprize" of wit suggests pleasure from the discovery of real resemblance in place of Locke's "beauty . . . at first sight." Both alterations are important for Addison's later propositions. "That the Basis of all Wit is Truth" and that a beautiful thought has "its Foundation in the Nature of Things."

The essential claim of most of the rest of Addison's essay, where he appropriates Locke's dichotomy between wit and judgment into his own between two kinds of wit, is that true wit is true. The point is explicit but sometimes lost sight of because "true" wit can be taken to mean something like "genuine" or "pure" wit and because Addison also uses contrasts like "Gothic" versus "natural"; but the starker terms are "Falsehood" and "Truth." The phrase probably quoted most often in summarizing Addison's position is "true Wit consists in the resemblance of Ideas, and false Wit in the Resemblance of Words." What he actually says is that this description covers the examples he has just cited ("according to the foregoing Instances"), among which figure prominently the familiar targets, such as shaped verses, acrostics, quibbles, and puns. The attack on puns (which false wit might call an argument ad homonym) is usually best remembered because it fits so readily the distinction between resemblances of words and resemblances of ideas. But *similarity* of ideas is not the basis of all true wit, as Addison's conclusion makes clear:

> I must not dismiss this Subject without observing, that as Mr. *Locke* in the Passage above-mentioned has discovered the most fruitful Source of Wit, so there is another of a quite contrary Nature to it, which does likewise branch it self out into several Kinds. For not only the *Resemblance* but the *Opposition* of Ideas does very often produce Wit; as I could shew in several little Points, Turns and Antitheses, that I may possibly enlarge upon in some future Speculation.

Perhaps if Addison had returned to the opposition of ideas in a later essay this passage would by now have attracted more notice. Standing almost as an afterthought, its casual tone is as disarming as the suave appearance of agreement with Locke earlier in the essay. Here Addison does much more than shift Locke's emphasis. If it is true that wit discerns differences as well as similarities, then the dichotomy between wit and judgment collapses. Having enlisted it in an argument for the truth of wit, Addison leaves Locke's distinction, so to speak, without judgment.

It may be coincidence that Addison characterized the wit of opposition as "quite contrary" to the more familiar sort Locke had described. Accident or allusion, the phrase suggests their distance, since it is the one Locke used to oppose not one kind of wit to another but the ways of difference and similitude. My brief discussion of *Spectator* 62 no doubt reveals the judgment that Addison knew exactly what he was doing. But judgment, as Locke eventually argues in some passages to which it is now time to turn, should be distinguished from knowledge.

The fourth book of Locke's *Essay*, "Of Knowledge and Opinion," begins with the proposition that because the mind's only immediate object is its own ideas, knowledge is "nothing but *the perception of the connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our Ideas.* In this alone it consists. Where this Perception is, there is Knowledge, and where it is not, there, though we may fancy, guess, or believe, yet we always come short of Knowledge." In fact, as Locke everywhere emphasizes, we usually do come short of knowledge. Fancying, as we have seen, has nothing to do with knowledge, but we must often guess or believe in order to "know" how to live. "He that in the ordinary Affairs of Life, would admit of nothing but direct plain Demonstration, would be sure of nothing, in this World, but of perishing quickly." Rarely in the presence of certainty, our guesses and beliefs in this "twilight" of probability are guided by judgment, the subject of a late chapter (14).

To understand Locke's account it is necessary to see what is at stake. The starting point of book 4 makes clear that knowledge—like truth, its expression in propositions—is conversant about similarities of ideas ("agreement") as well as about differences. The difference between wit and knowledge in this respect seems to be that wit *makes* similarities and knowledge *perceives* them. The

question, which Addison helps indirectly to focus, is whether the same is true of judgment. Is judgment closer to knowledge or to wit?

Locke does what he can to close the gap between judgment and knowledge by associating them with each other as much as possible, and, as we have seen, the attacks on wit and eloquence in books 2 and 3 provide occasion to use judgment, truth, reason, and knowledge as near synonyms. Whatever the discriminations to be made elsewhere among the four terms, Locke seems to fuse them to compose whatever it is that is "quite contrary" to wit. Judgment ("being able nicely to distinguish") and knowledge ("perception" of agreement or disagreement) are closely associated elsewhere by Locke's tendency to speak of perceiving and distinguishing as the same thing: the mind recognizes separate ideas "at first view," for example, "by its natural power of Perception and Distinction."

A broader association of judgment with knowledge by virtue of what "it" is opposed to operates in the chapter "Of the Reality of Knowledge," where Locke contrasts the knowledge of a "sober" man and a man of the "most extravagant Fancy in the world." How do these two differ, Locke imagines his reader asking, if knowledge is only the internal agreement or disagreement of one's own ideas? Like the original contrast of judgment and wit, this opposition of sobriety and fancy signals a great deal of strain. Locke's answer to the question is that our knowledge is limited but consists of "two sorts of *Ideas*, that, we may be assured, agree with things," simple ideas and all complex ideas except those of substances. What he in fact argues is much narrower: simple ideas "*are not fictions* of our Fancies" because they represent things to the extent "ordained" by the "wisdom and will of our Maker," in the way we are "fitted" to perceive them; complex ideas have all the "*conformity necessary to real knowledge*" because they are "*archetypes* of the mind's own making" and were never "intended to be the Copies of anything." When, after several paragraphs on the desirability of separating ideas from words, Locke concludes that we have "certain real knowledge" whenever "we are sure those ideas agree with the reality of things," the words come uncomfortably close to his later dismissal of enthusiasts: "They are sure because they are sure." The chapter ends in a tone weirdly reminiscent of *A Tale of a Tub:*

> Of which agreement of our *ideas* with the reality of things having here given sufficient marks, I think I have shown wherein it is, that *Certainty, real Certainty*, consists. Which, whatever it was to others, was, I confess, to me heretofore, one of those *Desiderata* which I found great want of.

When Locke finally comes to write of the judgment directly rather than by way of "contraries," it is still on the side of truth, but the fundamental association with knowledge no longer holds. The brief chapter (4.14) concludes with a new refinement.

> Thus the Mind has two Faculties conversant about Truth and Falsehood:
>
> *First, Knowledge*, whereby it certainly perceives and is undoubtedly satisfied of the Agreement or Disagreement of any *Ideas*.
>
> *Secondly, Judgment*, which is the putting *Ideas* together, or separating them one from another in the Mind, when their certain Agreement or Disagreement is not perceived, but *presumed*... And if it so unites or separates them as in Reality Things are, it is *right Judgment*.

In this scheme knowledge perceives but judgment puts together and separates. At least half (and if Addison is right, all) of its operations, then, seem less contrary than kindred to the "assemblage of ideas, and putting those together" previously assigned to wit. The function of the original dichotomy seems in retrospect to have been to protect the "good" assemblages (complex ideas, for example) from the taint of fiction and to make a firmer claim on "things as they are" than the Lockean way of ideas can consistently justify. Having in this chapter momentarily opened the possibility that judgment may after all proceed rather like wit, Locke attempts to close it in the last sentence with the sudden introduction of "*right Judgment*." It might fairly be objected that if we can have right and wrong judgment we can have right and wrong—or true or false—wit as well. In that case, wit and judgment are not distinct actions but different manners: one "quick," the other "careful." To Matthew Prior, at least, Locke's judgment would seem a name for slow wit.

Prior's "A Dialogue between Mr: John Lock and Seigneur de Montaigne" was not published until this century. By far most of the best of its roughly ten thousand words are given to Montaigne, whose urbanity and ranging observation are plainly more sympathetic to Prior than is Locke's earnest introspection. When Locke objects that as the "loosest of writers" Montaigne naturally undervalues "my close way of Reasoning," Montaigne replies: "All the while you wrote you were only thinking that you thought; You and Your understanding are the

Personae Dramatis, and the whole amounts to no more than a Dialogue between John and Lock." And the shortcomings of monodrama are as plain as the maxim that "he that does not talk with a Wiser Man than himself may happen to Dye Ignorant." "Really who ever writes in Folio should convince people that he knows something besides himself, else few would read his Book, except his very particular Friends." When Locke again criticizes Montaigne's lack of method, this time enlisting Chanet, Scaliger, and Malebranche for support, Montaigne says: "I have observed that there is Abcedarian Ignorance that precedes Knowledge, and a Doctoral Ignorance that comes after it. . . Method! our Life is too short for it."

Despite the breezy antipathy of these exchanges, references to arguments and examples from all four books of the *Essay* show that Prior read it with care if not respect. He is particularly attentive to Locke's suspicion of figurative language and allusions. Prior approaches allusion by having Locke boast that while Montaigne's writing is a collection of stolen goods, "I spin my Work out of my own thoughts." The claim predictably leads Montaigne to "allude" to *The Battle of the Books* and play Swift's bee to Locke's spider, with an additional shake of the metaphor: "But to come nearer to you, Mr: Lock, You like many other writers, Deceive your Self in this Point, and as much a Spider as you fancy your Self, You may often cast your Webb upon other Mens Textures." Locke answers that if he has been anticipated in some points without knowing it, "what I write is as much my own Invention as if no Man had thought the Same thing before me," while Montaigne simply copied materials from his commonplace book. To this Montaigne replies laconically: "Why the best One can do is but compose, I hope you do not pretend to Create." Finding Locke undaunted, Montaigne charges him with unwitting allusion:

> Your Ideas, as you call them . . . were so mixed and Blended, long before You began to write, in the great Variety of things that fall under their Cognizance that it was impossible for You to Distinguish what you Invented from what You Remembered. . . When you Seem to have least regard to Orators and Poets you have recourse to both for your very turn of Style and manner of Expression. Parblew Mr. Lock, when you had writ half your Book in favor of your own Dear Understanding you quote Cicero to prove the very Existence of a God.

In another part of this long speech, Montaigne asserts that Malebranche, like Locke, warned against misleading the judgment with figurative language but was in fact wise to ignore his own advice: "the Strength of his Argument consists in the beauty of his Figures." This claim, that figurative language discovers rather than covers an author's judgment, conveys the radical difference between Prior and Locke. It emerges more resonantly in a passage that gains point when we recall that Locke's suspicion of language had led to celebrations of mathematics; on at least four occasions he had paused in particular to hope that philosophy would attain an "instrument" of "sagacity" approaching algebra. In this exchange Montaigne has just attacked Locke with two analogies, one of them taken from the *Essay*:

> *Lock.* Simile upon Simile, no Consequential Proof, right Montaigne by my Troth. Why, Sir, you catch at Similes as a Swallow does at Flies.
>
> *Montaigne.* And you make Similes while you blame them. But be that as it will, Mr. Lock, arguing by Simile is not so absurd as some of You dry Reasoners would make People believe. If your Simile be proper and good, it is at once a full proof, and a lively Illustration of Your matter, and where it does not hold the very disproportion gives You Occasion to reconsider it, and You set it in all it's lights, if it be only to find at least how unlike it is. Egad Simile is the very Algebra of Discourse.

This simile (or "metasimile") falls so neatly that it may seem, as Locke would say (the actual Locke), a "kind of affront to go about to examine it by the severe-rules of truth and good reason." Locke's point is that the obvious inappropriateness of such an examination is itself an admission that wit is not "conformable" to the way of judgment. But whatever Prior thinks of Locke's method, he invites the reader to apply the test of truth, maintaining in fact that all similes issue such invitations. If a simile succeeds in being at once "full proof" and "lively illustration," it conveys knowledge (as Locke's agreement of ideas); if it does not, it calls judgment into action ("gives . . . occasion to reconsider") and will lead to knowledge (as Locke's disagreement of ideas). Bad similes may lower our estimate of a work; but for the reader a simile "works" whether it succeeds or fails.

Prior clearly assumes a less vulnerable reader than Locke's, one whose judgment will be quickened rather than outdistanced by wit's quickness. Exactly how much more he assumes in the passage is difficult to determine, but it seems likely that he might expect the reader who would examine the comparison of algebra and simile to be thinking of algebra as more than a shorthand notation. Considering algebra generally as the study of functions

rather than fixed quantities (and the word seems to have had at least this currency), "the algebra of discourse" suggests the working-out of relationships within language. This is another way of claiming, with Addison, that wit has verity as well as brevity; in other words, it not only paints pictures but contemplates general relations. If the philosopher's desire is ultimately the Hobbesean one that words be used as the wise man's "counters" rather than as the fool's "money", to seek an extralinguistic discovery procedure for moral philosophy is simply to turn one's back on the higher mathematics already at hand in the liveliest uses of language.

With different emphases but complementary doubts, Addison and Prior both question Locke's devaluation of wit and the opposition of wit to judgment. Challenging the claim that discrimination is peculiar to judgment, Addison points politely to the collapse of the dichotomy. Prior more explicitly raises the problem of any such dichotomy (regardless of which side is "privileged") by questioning whether making similitudes and making distinctions are really separable acts of mind. This is the fundamental question at the level of common sense, and common sense sides, I believe, with Locke one moment and Prior the next: yes, we sometimes "distinguish," sometimes "assemble," and can "distinguish" between the operations; no, we cannot differentiate without comparing and vice versa. But behind this armchair antinomy the problem dividing Locke from Addison and Prior can be seen as a question with particular pertinence to our own era and criticism: does it make more sense to think of "things as they are" as represented (perhaps badly) by language or as constituted by language?

The preceding commentary suggests at several points that Locke's accounts of language in general and of figurative language in particular are efforts to reclaim indirectly an access to pre- or extralinguistic "things" that other parts of his *Essay* seal off. In suggesting now that Addison and Prior are deeply skeptical of the attempt to get past language to something firmer, I do not mean to convert them into proto-Nietzschean or proto-Derridean rhetoricians of contradiction. From the perspective of poststructuralism, both are grounded in "logocentrism." Both believe that in the beginning was the Word, the authorial will originating all subsequent meaning. Neither would know what to make of the idea that this belief should be reinscribed as "In the always-already are words." Nor would either be likely to hear more than burlesque in Beckett's version, "In the beginning was the pun." But at the same time, neither Addison nor Prior seems to share Locke's nostalgia for things and ideas untouched by words or for truths too tacit to enter the shared figures and allusions of language. If these differences are significant, then it seems we would need to speak of logocentrisms in neoclassical writing (and presumably in other literary periods) for the term to be historically useful; in the monolithic singular it is, like Locke's "wit," less descriptive of variable rhetorical practices than protective of its rhetorically constructed opposite.

Source: John Sitter, "About Wit: Locke, Addison, Prior, and the Order of Things," in *Rhetorics of Order: Ordering the Rhetorics in English Neoclassical Literature*, edited by J. Douglas Canfield and J. Paul Hunter, University of Delaware Press, 1989, pp. 137–57.

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Realism

Movement Origin

c. 1860

The realist movement in literature first developed in France in the mid-nineteenth century, soon spreading to England, Russia, and the United States. Realist literature is best represented by the novel, including many works widely regarded to be among the greatest novels ever written. Realist writers sought to narrate their novels from an objective, unbiased perspective that simply and clearly represented the factual elements of the story. They became masters at psychological characterization, detailed descriptions of everyday life in realistic settings, and dialogue that captures the idioms of natural human speech. The realists endeavored to accurately represent contemporary culture and people from all walks of life. Thus, realist writers often addressed themes of socioeconomic conflict by contrasting the living conditions of the poor with those of the upper classes in urban as well as rural societies.

In France, the major realist writers included Honoré de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, Émile Zola, and Guy de Maupassant, among others. In Russia, the major realist writers were Ivan Turgenev, Fyodor Dostoevsky, and Leo Tolstoy. In England, the foremost realist authors were Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Anthony Trollope. In the United States, William Dean Howells was the foremost realist writer. Naturalism, an offshoot of Realism, was a literary movement that placed even greater emphasis on the accurate representation of details from contemporary life. In the United States, Regionalism and local color fiction in particular were

American offshoots of Realism. Realism also exerted a profound influence on drama and theatrical productions, altering practices of set design, costuming, acting style, and dialogue.

Representative Authors

Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850)

Honoré de Balzac is recognized as the originator of French Realism in literature and one of the greatest novelists of the nineteenth century. Balzac was born Honoré Balssa on May 20, 1799, in Tours, France. He spent much of his adult life in Paris, where he frequented many of the notable literary salons of the day and began to use the last name de Balzac. Balzac supported himself through writing, typically spending fourteen to sixteen hours a day on his craft. He was a man of great charisma and lived to the excesses of life, abusing coffee and rich food in order to work longer hours. His life's work comprises a series of some ninety novels and novellas collectively entitled *La Comédie humaine* (*The Human Comedy*). Balzac died following a long illness on August 18, 1850, leaving his wife of five months with mountains of debt.

Charles Dickens (1812–1870)

Charles Dickens is known as an early master of the English realist novel and one of the most celebrated and most enduring novelists of all time. Dickens was born in Portsmouth, England, on February 7, 1812. He lived and worked in London as a law clerk, court reporter, and newspaper journalist. With the publication of his first novel, *Pickwick Papers* (1836), Dickens soon became the most popular author in England.

Dickens's major novels include *Oliver Twist* (1838), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839), *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), *Barnaby Rudge: A Tale of the Riots of 'Eighty* (1841), *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844), *Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and Son, Wholesale, Retail, and for Exportation* (1848), *David Copperfield* (1850), *Bleak House* (1853), *Hard Times: For These Times* (1854), *Little Dorrit* (1857), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), *Great Expectations* (1861), and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865). His Christmas story *A Christmas Carol* (1843) remains an ever-enduring classic. Dickens died of a paralytic stroke in Kent, England, on June 9, 1870.

Guy de Maupassant

Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881)

Fyodor Dostoevsky (also spelled Dostoyevsky) is known as a major author of Russian realist fiction and one of the greatest novelists of all time. Dostoevsky was born October 30, 1821, in Moscow, Russia. He received a degree in military engineering in 1843 but resigned his post in order to pursue a career in writing. His first published work was a translation from French into Russian of Balzac's novel *Eugénie Grandet*. Dostoevsky's original novella *Bednyye lyudi* (*Poor Folk*), published in 1846, immediately gained the admiration of the leading Russian writers and critics of the day.

In 1849 Dostoevsky was arrested for his association with a group of socialist intellectuals. After eight months in prison, he was given a death sentence and, along with several other prisoners, led out to be shot by a firing squad. However, at the last moment the sentence was reversed, and the prisoners were allowed to live; this mock-execution had been designed as a form of psychological torture. Dostoevsky was then sentenced to four years in a Siberian prison followed by six years in the army. After serving this ten-year sentence, he went on to a successful career as a novelist and journalist.

Dostoevsky's fiction has had a profound influence on the literature, philosophy, psychology, and

religious thought of the twentieth century. His novels are celebrated as masterworks of psychological Realism in their portrayal of individuals haunted by their own dark impulses. Dostoevsky's greatest works include the novels *Prestupleniye I nakazaniye* (1866), translated as *Crime and Punishment*; *Idiot* (1868); *Besy* (1872), translated as *The Possessed*; *Dnevnik pisatelya* (1873–1877), translated as *The Diary of a Writer*; and *Brat'ya Karamazovy* (1880), translated as *The Brothers Karamazov*, as well as the novella *Zapiski iz podpolya* (1864), translated as *Notes from the Underground*. Dostoevsky died in St. Petersburg, Russia, on January 28, 1881, of complications from emphysema.

George Eliot (1819–1880)

George Eliot is the pen name of Mary Ann (or Marian) Evans, one of the most outstanding novelists of English Realism. Eliot was born in Warwickshire, England, on November 22, 1819. After the death of her mother, Eliot took on the role of her father's caretaker. After her father died, she moved to London to support herself as a freelance writer and editor. There, she became acquainted with a circle of free thinkers, including some of the major philosophical and literary minds of the day, such as Herbert Spencer. Eliot's major works include *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marner* (1861), *Middlemarch* (1871–1872), and *Daniel Deronda* (1876). Eliot died suddenly of heart failure in London, England, on December 22, 1880.

Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880)

Gustave Flaubert is known as the cornerstone of French Realism and is celebrated as one of world literature's greatest masters of literary style. Flaubert was born on December 12, 1821, in Rouen, France. He spent most of his adult life at his family estate in Croisset, where he devoted his life to writing. Flaubert became acquainted with many of the important writers of the day, including George Sand, Émile Zola, Alphonse Daudet, Guy de Maupassant, and Ivan Turgenev. His major works include the novels *Madame Bovary* (1857), *Salammbo* (1863), and *L'Education sentimentale* (1869; *Sentimental Education: A Young Man's History*), as well as the volume *Trois Contes* (1877), a compilation of three short stories. Flaubert died from a stroke in Croisset on May 8, 1880.

William Dean Howells (1837–1920)

William Dean Howells is considered the foremost American realist writer of the nineteenth century. Howells was born March 1, 1837, in Martin's Ferry, Ohio. In 1860 he wrote a biography of then-presidential candidate Abraham Lincoln. After Lincoln was elected, Howells was given a consulship in Venice, Italy, which he held from 1861 to 1865. Upon returning to the United States, he worked as assistant editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine from 1866 until 1871, then as chief editor until 1881.

Howells earned distinction as a highly influential literary critic, championing the realist writing of American authors Henry James, Mark Twain, and Stephen Crane as well as European authors Ivan Turgenev, Henrik Ibsen, Leo Tolstoy, and Émile Zola. Howells's major works include *A Modern Instance* (1882), *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), *Annie Kilburn* (1888), and *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890). Howells died in New York City, New York, on May 11, 1920.

Guy de Maupassant (1850–1893)

Guy de Maupassant is known as a major practitioner of Naturalism and Realism in literature and one of the greatest short story writers of all time. Maupassant was born August 5, 1850, near Dieppe, France. When the Franco-German war broke out in 1870, he left law school to serve in the military effort. When the war ended in 1871, Maupassant continued his law studies and began a career in the French bureaucracy. Maupassant developed an important literary apprenticeship under Gustave Flaubert, who also served as a father figure. Flaubert introduced the young writer to major literary figures of the day including Émile Zola, Ivan Turgenev, Edmond de Goncourt, and Henry James.

With the publication of his story "Ball of Fat" (1880), Maupassant gained immediate literary success and was able to quit his job in order to write full time. He went on to publish some three hundred short stories and six novels as well as several nonfiction books and a volume of poetry. Maupassant's major volumes of short stories include *La maison Tellier* (1881), translated as *The Tellier House*; *Mademoiselle Fifi* (1883); *Contes de la bécasse* (1883), translated as *Tales of the Goose*; *Clair de lune* (1884); *Les soeurs Rondoli* (1884), translated as *The Rondoli Sisters*; *Yvette* (1884); *Toine* (1886); *Le Horla* (1887); *Le rosier de Madame Husson* (1888), translated as *The Rose-Bush of Madame Husson*; and *L'Inutile beauté* (1890), translated as *The Useless Beauty*. His most important novels include *Une vie* (1883), translated as *A Woman's Life*; *Bel-Ami* (1885), translated as *Good Friend*; and *Pierre et Jean* (1888), translated as *Pierre and Jean*.

As a result of syphilis, Maupassant suffered increasing mental and psychological instability. He died in a nursing home on July 6, 1893, at the age of forty-two.

Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910)

Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy (also spelled Tolstoi) is known as a major Russian realist writer and one of the most eminent novelists of all time. Tolstoy was born in the Tula Province of the Russian Empire on September 9, 1828. His mother died before he was two years old. By the time Tolstoy was nine, his father had also died. Tolstoy's first publication, *Detstvo* (1852; *Childhood*), is a nostalgic work of fiction based on these early years of his life.

In the early 1850s, Tolstoy joined the military and fought in the Crimean War of 1853–1856. In the late 1870s, he experienced a religious conversion and developed ideas of Christian faith that were at odds with the Russian Orthodox church, from which he was excommunicated in 1901. His religious ideas included a devotion to nonviolence that later influenced Mahatma Gandhi, the great twentieth-century Indian nationalist and proponent of nonviolent resistance.

Tolstoy's greatest novels are *Voini i mir* (1869; *War and Peace*) and *Anna Karenina* (1877). His *Smert Ivana Ilicha* (1886; *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*) is considered one of the greatest examples of the novella, or short novel form. He died of pneumonia in the province of Ryazan on November 20, 1910.

Émile Zola (1840–1902)

Émile Zola, one of the greatest novelists of all time, was the founder of Naturalism in literature, which was a further development of Realism. Zola was born in Paris, France, on April 2, 1840, and grew up in Aix-en-Provence in southern France. Zola's father died when Zola was still in grade school. After his first novel was published in 1865, Zola quit his job as a clerk at a publishing company in order to support himself as a writer. Inspired by Balzac's *The Human Comedy*, Zola set out to write what became a twenty-novel series entitled *Les Rougon-Macquart* (*The Rougon-Macquarts*).

Zola became associated with the painters Paul Cézanne (a boyhood friend) and Edouard Manet as well as the French Impressionist painters Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, and Pierre-August Renoir. He also became acquainted with major literary figures of the day including Gustave Flaubert, Edmond Goncourt, Alphonse Daudet, and Ivan Turgenev. In 1880 Zola oversaw the publication of a collection of short stories by six naturalist authors entitled *Les Soirées de Médan* (*Evenings at Médan*), after the location of his home at Médan, outside of Paris, where his circle of naturalists met.

In 1888 Zola became famous for his literary intervention in the Dreyfus Affair, a highly controversial political issue that dominated French political debates for twelve years. In an article entitled "J'Accuse" ("I Accuse"), Zola defended the rights of a Jewish military officer, Alfred Dreyfus, who had been falsely accused of espionage. Zola has since been celebrated as a champion against anti-Semitism and an important influence on French public opinion. Zola died of accidental asphyxiation in Paris, France, on September 29, 1902.

Representative Works

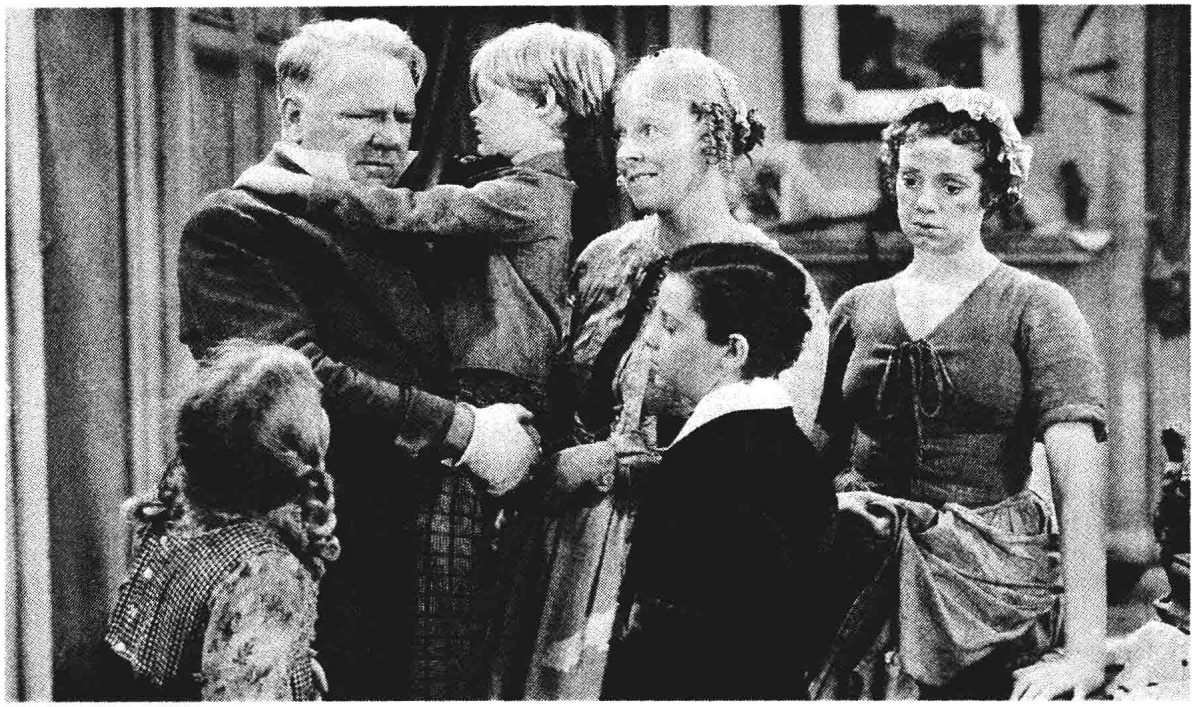
Anna Karenina

Anna Karenina (1875–1877), by the Russian realist writer Leo Tolstoy, is considered one of the greatest novels of all time. The story concerns the intrigues of three Russian families: the Oblonskys, the Karenins, and the Levins. In the Oblonsky family, the husband, Stiva, is unfaithful to his wife, Dolly. The Oblonskys are the subject of Tolstoy's famous opening line in *Anna Karenina*: "All happy families resemble each other; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."

The Karenin family is disrupted when Anna Karenina (the feminine version of the last name Karenin) leaves her husband and child because of an affair she is having with Aleksey Vronsky, a young military officer. The third element of *Anna Karenina* concerns the young Konstantin Levin and his courtship of Dolly's sister Kitty. The character of Konstantin embodies one of Tolstoy's major philosophical values: that the best life is lived through the daily events of honest work, a stable family and domestic situation, and that intellectualizing about life is useless.

"Ball of Fat"

"Ball of Fat," originally "Boule de suif" is considered the masterpiece of Guy de Maupassant. "Ball of Fat" was first published in 1880 in *Les Soirees de Médan* (*Evenings at Médan*), a volume of stories by six different authors writing on the subject of the Franco-German war of 1870–1871.



A scene from the 1935 film version of David Copperfield *with W. C. Fields as Mr. Micawber*

In "Ball of Fat," a prostitute is traveling by coach with several other passengers, all of them French, to flee German occupation of the city of Rouen. At first the other passengers are friendly with the prostitute because she has food which they want her to share with them. When they stop for the night at a hotel, a German military officer threatens to not let them continue their journey unless the prostitute satisfies his lust. Not wanting to consort with the enemy, the prostitute at first refuses to consent to his wishes. However, in order to ensure their own safe passage, the other passengers manipulate her into giving in to the German officer. Afterwards, the other passengers ostracize the prostitute for succumbing to the officer. "Ball of Fat" is a notable example of Maupassant's mastery at economical composition in the short story form.

Crime and Punishment

Prestupleniye i nakazaniye (1866; *Crime and Punishment*), by the Russian realist writer Fyodor Dostoevsky, is considered one of the greatest novels of all time. In *Crime and Punishment* a young intellectual, Raskolnikov, uses philosophical reasoning to justify his plan of murdering an old woman for her money. After the murder, however, Raskolnikov is filled with a sort of spiritual dread. Meanwhile, a detective who believes Raskolnikov to be the murderer manipulates him into confessing his crime. When Raskolnikov is convicted and sent to prison in Siberia, the woman who loves him, Sonya Marmeladova, follows him to live near the prison. Influenced by Sonya, Raskolnikov experiences a religious conversion while in prison. Dostoevsky is celebrated for his detailed psychological study of the character Raskolnikov, tracing the complex and minute factors which motivate his crime.

David Copperfield

David Copperfield (1849–1850), by the English realist writer Charles Dickens, remains one of his most popular and most enduring novels as well as being the author's personal favorite. *David Copperfield* is a semi-autobiographical work in which Dickens used material from his own childhood and early adulthood to narrate the life of a fictional character. *David Copperfield* is most noted for the early chapters describing childhood experiences. Among these is a description of Dickens's experience of being taken out of school as a child to work in a factory in London while his father was imprisoned for unpaid debts. In *David Copperfield*, Dickens addresses the social injustices of urban poverty and industrial labor.

Germinal

The novel *Germinal* (1885) is considered the masterpiece of Émile Zola, a French realist writer and the originator of the school of Naturalism in literature. *Germinal* takes place in a mining town and portrays the socioeconomic tensions between the working-class miners and the upper-class mine owners. The novel depicts the effects of a workers' strike on the mining community and addresses major political theories of the day, such as Marxism, socialism, and trade unionism. Zola uses the metaphor of a monster to describe the coal mine, which devours the workers who enter it. In *Germinal*, Zola accurately represents the conditions of the two separate social spheres as well as tackling important political debates regarding inequalities in socioeconomic class.

A Hazard of New Fortunes

A Hazard of New Fortunes (1890), by the foremost American realist writer, William Dean Howells, is regarded as one of his most important novels. *A Hazard of New Fortunes* takes place in New York City and concerns a group of people trying to start a magazine. Howells was inspired by his reading of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* to write a long novel, wide in scope and containing many characters. The result includes fifteen major characters and is notable for Howells's depiction of many sectors of society in New York City during the 1890s as well as his rendering of the flow of life in a city teeming with people. Howells expressed strong socialist views in *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, and many of the characters represent differing points on the spectrum of American political opinion.

The Human Comedy

The Human Comedy, originally *La Comédie humaine* (1842–1855), is the collective title for a grouping of some ninety novels and novellas by Honoré de Balzac. In his fiction, Balzac portrays all levels of French society with impressive accuracy. He is noted for the vast number of different characters created in his fiction, numbering some three thousand throughout *The Human Comedy*. Balzac introduced the literary device of including many of the same characters in several different novels. In managing this diverse range of characters, Balzac was a master of characterization, portraying in minute detail the psychological and sociological minutiae that make up each individual's personality and determine his or her actions. *The Human Comedy* addresses themes of socioeconomic class, ambition, and obsession.

Madame Bovary

Madame Bovary (1857), by Gustave Flaubert, is considered to be the cornerstone of realist fiction and one of the most eminent novels ever written. *Madame Bovary* is the story of a middle-class woman whose extramarital affairs lead to tragedy. *Madame Bovary* was first published in installments in a magazine in 1856. In 1857 Flaubert was taken to court by the French government on the grounds that the story was considered immoral. However, his lawyer convincingly defended his case and *Madame Bovary* was published in book form soon afterward. The novel is noted for Flaubert's narrative objectivity and the psychological detail by which he accounts for the course of events initiated by his characters.

Middlemarch

Middlemarch (1871–1872), by George Eliot, is considered the masterpiece of a major English realist writer and one of the greatest novels of all time. *Middlemarch* is set in a small fictional town in rural England and is noted for the detail with which Eliot depicts characters from all walks of life. While *Middlemarch* includes many major characters, the central figure of the story is Dorothea, a young woman who marries an older clergyman and religious scholar because she hopes to do something meaningful with her life. One of Eliot's major themes throughout the novel concerns the idea that the seemingly insignificant lives of seemingly insignificant individuals can have a profound effect on the people around them. *Middlemarch* is considered a landmark in the development of the novel, elevating the form to a higher level of intellectual complexity.

Themes

Class Conflict

One of the major themes addressed by realist writers is socioeconomic class conflict. Many realist writers, in their efforts to depict characters from all levels of society, highlighted differences between the rich and the poor.

In *David Copperfield*, by Dickens, the main protagonist experiences the suffering of impoverished children forced to work in industrial factories. In *Germinal*, Zola focuses on the conflict between working-class miners and wealthy mine owners, which erupts in a labor strike. In the process, Zola considers various political theories

Media Adaptations

- The many realist novels of Charles Dickens have been adapted to film for theaters as well as for television in a variety of productions dating as far back as the 1930s. *David Copperfield* was adapted to film in 1935 (with George Cukor directing) and in 1970 (with Delbert Mann directing).
- Many of Dickens's novels have been recorded on audiocassette. *David Copperfield* was recorded by Media Books Audio Publishing in 1999 with Ben Kingsley reading. In 2002, a twenty-six cassette edition was released by Audio Partners Publishing Corp. with Martin Jarvis as the reader.
- The major works of Dostoevsky have also been adapted to film in several different productions as well as being recorded on audiocassette. *Crime and Punishment* was adapted to film in two different productions in 1935 (one of these a French production) as well as a Russian production in 1970.
- An audiocassette recording of *Crime and Punishment* was read by Michael Sheen for Naxos of America in 1994.
- Many of Eliot's novels have been adapted to film and recorded on audiocassette. *Middlemarch* was adapted to film as a made-for-television movie, directed by Anthony Page, in 1994.
- *Middlemarch*, read by Nadia May, was recorded on audiocassette by Blackstone Audio Books in 1994.
- Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* has been adapted to film many times. The first English version appeared in 1949 and was directed by Vincente Minnelli. Tim Fywell directed a made-for-television version in 2000.
- *Madame Bovary* was recorded by New Millennium Audio, read by Glenda Jackson, in 2002.
- Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* was adapted to film in 1935, starring Greta Garbo; in 1947, starring Vivien Leigh; in 1974, as a ballet; and in 1985, starring Christopher Reeve.
- *Anna Karenina* was recorded on audiocassette by Bantam Books for the "BBC Radio Presents" series in 1999.

about the conditions of the working class. In *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, Howells portrays characters from various places on the spectrum of American political thought who come into conflict over their efforts to start a magazine. In the end of *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, a young man is killed during the violence that erupts in a workers' strike. In *War and Peace*, Tolstoy portrays conflicts between the Russian landowners and the serfs who work their land. Many realist authors thus addressed social, economic, and political concerns through their depictions of socioeconomic class conflict.

The City

Many realist novelists sought to depict various aspects of life in the rapidly industrializing nineteenth-century city. Balzac, in the novels of *The Human Comedy*, is often noted for his extensive and accurate portrayal of society, culture, and commerce in Paris during the mid-nineteenth century. Howells, in *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, has been praised for his detailed depiction of the diverse flow of human life in New York City. Dickens set much of his fiction in London, describing specific streets, buildings, and neighborhoods in his novels. Russian realist writers Tolstoy and Dostoevsky described various elements of society in Moscow and St. Petersburg in their novels. Realist fiction thus often has a documentary quality to the extent that these writers have accurately reported the details of a specific historical era in the development of the modern city.

Philosophy and Morality

Realist novelists often address the related themes of religion, philosophy, and morality in their

works of fiction. While realist novels are known for their accurate descriptions of various physical details, many of them are also highly theoretical in their presentation of various religious and philosophical debates. The Russian realist Tolstoy, for example, included characters in his novels that grapple with complex questions regarding Christian faith and the meaning of life. The Russian realist Dostoevsky also created fictional characters who carry on extended philosophical discussions and debates about Christian morality. In such novels as *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, Dostoevsky was particularly concerned with the moral, ethical, and religious issues raised by characters who commit crimes such as murder and other acts of depravity. In a famous scene of *The Brothers Karamazov*, one character carries on an imaginary debate with the Devil, who visits him in the form of an aging gentleman. In *Crime and Punishment* a young man who has committed a murder that he justified by his philosophical reasoning later finds redemption through Christian faith.

Marriage and the Family

Realist novelists often focused on the dynamics of marriage and family life in different sectors of society. Extramarital affairs are the subject of such major works of realist fiction as Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, both novels about married middle-class women whose affairs lead to social decline and suicide.

Realist fiction often focuses on several sets of families or couples within a single novel. *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace* each focus on three families. Eliot's *Middlemarch* also focuses on the family and marital dynamics within several different households. Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* focuses on four brothers (including one illegitimate half-brother) and their father, whom one of them has murdered. Dickens often wrote about orphans who were without family but who eventually find people who function as surrogate families. In their portrayals of marriages and families, realists explored various social and psychological factors contributing to the quality of domestic life in the nineteenth century.

Style

Narrative Voice

The term narrative voice refers to the way in which a story is told. Many realist writers sought to narrate their fictional stories in an omniscient, objective voice, from the perspective of a storyteller who is not a character in the story but rather an invisible presence who remains outside the realm of the story. Realist writers hoped thereby to create accurate portrayals of objective reality. The French realists in particular—Balzac, Flaubert, Zola, and Maupassant—sought to describe the subject matter of their fiction in clear, detailed, accurate terms, devoid of judgment or moralizing on the part of the narrator.

Setting

Setting is an important element of Realism in literature. Realist writers sought to document every aspect of their own contemporary cultures through accurate representations of specific settings. Realist novels were thus set in both the city and the country, the authors taking care to accurately portray the working and living conditions of characters from every echelon of society. Thus, realist novelists documented settings from all walks of life in major cities such as London, Paris, New York, Boston, Moscow, and St. Petersburg. The living and working conditions of peasants and serfs in rural settings throughout England, Russia, and France were also represented in great detail by major realist authors.

Realist writers also set their fictional stories in the midst of specific historical events of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* is set during the French Revolution. The volume *Evenings at Médan* comprises six short stories by six different authors, all set during the Franco-German war of 1870–1871. Eliot's *Middlemarch* is set in a fictional town in the context of major political debates over social reform which took place in England during the first half of the nineteenth century. Tolstoy's *War and Peace* is set in the historical context of the Napoleonic wars between Russia and France during the early 1800s.

Characterization

Many realist writers have been celebrated for their masterful creation of a wide range of characters from all walks of life. Balzac, in his novel series *The Human Comedy*, sought to create an encyclopedic range of characters representing every aspect of contemporary French society. In some ninety novels making up *The Human Comedy*, Balzac created over three thousand different fictional characters. Balzac was also innovative in his use of the same characters within different novels, so that a

Topics for Further Study

- The Parnassian poets were a major offshoot of the realist movement in literature. Research one of the following poets of the Parnassian movement: Leconte de Lisle, Albert Glatigny, Theodore de Banville, François Coppée, Leon Dierx, or Jose Maria de Heredia and provide a brief biography of this poet as well as an overview of his literary career and major works. Discuss how the poet empolys the elements of Realism in the poem.
- The realist movement in literature was first inspired by the paintings of the French artist Gustave Courbet, particularly his paintings "The Stone-Breakers" and "Burial at Ornans." Learn more about the life and work of Courbet. Write an essay providing a biography of Courbet and overview of his artistic career. Then describe one of his paintings and explain the elements of Realism in the painting.
- Realism in literature developed simultaneously with major developments in still photography during the second half of the nineteenth century. Research the history of photography between 1830 and 1900. What major technical discoveries and inventions characterized photography during this period? What types of photographs were being taken during this period? Find reproductions of early photographs from this period and discuss the style of photography in comparison to photography in your own time and culture.
- Write a short story and apply the ideals and major stylistic elements of Realism to your fiction. Explain what elements of your story are in keeping with realist literature.

character who is the protagonist of one novel may show up as a minor character in another novel.

Zola, inspired by Balzac's *The Human Comedy*, represented many aspects of French society through his twenty-volume series *The Rougon-Macquarts*, which centers on one family over several generations. Howells, inspired by the French and Russian realists, included in his novel *A Hazard of New Fortunes* fifteen main characters, each representing different places on the spectrum of American political thought. Dickens is also known for his many unforgettable characters, such as the miserable miser in *A Christmas Carol*, who have become enduring figures in Western culture.

Realist novelists are also celebrated for the impressive psychological detail by which their fictional characters are portrayed. Dostoevsky and Flaubert, in particular, are known for their mastery at delving into every nuance of a character's psychology in order to explain the complex array of factors which contribute to the motivation of that character. In their efforts to represent characters from all walks of life, realist novelists were masterful in their use of dialogue, capturing regional dialects as well as differences in the speech patterns of people from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Movement Variations

Naturalism

Naturalism was an important offshoot of Realism, although many critics agree that the differences between the two movements are so minimal that Naturalism is actually a subcategory of Realism. In fact, the two terms are often used interchangeably. Naturalism extended and intensified the tenets of Realism in that the naturalist writers sought to apply the evolutionary principles of Charles Darwin to their fiction. They believed that the course of each individual's life is determined by a combination of his or her hereditary traits and the historical and sociological environment into which she or he was born. Each character is thus essentially a victim of circumstance and has little power to change the course of his or her life.

The naturalist writers, spearheaded by the French novelist Zola, extended the values of Realism to even greater extremes of objectivity in their detailed observations and descriptions of all echelons of contemporary life. Zola's 1880 article "The Experimental Novel," the manifesto of literary Naturalism, describes the role of the author as that of a scientist examining a specimen under a microscope. In 1880 Zola edited the volume *Evenings at Médan*, a collection of stories by six authors in his circle of naturalists who met regularly at his home in Médan. Followers of Zola's school of Naturalism include Maupassant and Joris-Karl Huysmans in France as well as the German playwright Gerhart Hauptmann and the Portuguese novelist Jose Maria Eca de Queros.

The influence of Naturalism was not seen in American literature until the later writers Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Jack London, and Theodore Dreiser. Naturalism also found its proponents and practitioners in theater and painting.

The Parnassian Poets

The Parnassian poets who emerged in France during the 1860s were another offshoot of the realist movement in literature. The term Parnassian comes from the title of an anthology of poetry to which major poets of this movement contributed; the anthology *Le Parnasse Contemporain* was published in three separate volumes between 1866 and 1876.

The Parnassian poets developed their ideals as a reaction against the emotional outpouring of Romantic poetry. In their poetry, the Parnassians strove for emotional restraint and precise, objective descriptions of their subject matter. The leader of the Parnassian poets was Leconte de Lisle. Other major poets of the Parnassian movement include Albert Glatigny, Theodore de Banville, Francois Coppée, Leon Dierx, and Jose Maria de Heredia. The Parnassians exerted a significant influence on the poetry of Spain, Portugal, and Belgium.

American Regionalism and Local Color Fiction

In the United States, during the post-Civil War era, important subcategories of Realism were Regionalism (also called Midwestern Regionalism) and local color fiction. The regionalist authors were mostly from the Midwestern United States and wrote stories focused on the hardships of rural Midwesterners as well as the inhabitants of the Midwestern city of Chicago. Important regionalist authors include Hamlin Garland, Theodore Dreiser, and Sherwood Anderson. Local color fiction, which is very similar to Regionalism, focuses on the local customs, traditions, dialects, and folklore of small town and rural America. Important local color writers include Bret Harte, Mark Twain, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Kate Chopin.

Realism in Painting

The most important artist associated with Realism was the French painter Gustave Courbet (1819–1877). Courbet's works of art were the primary inspiration for the development of Realism in literature. Courbet broke new ground in painting when he depicted the realities of workers and peasants in stark, unromanticized images. Courbet put forth the ground-breaking idea that art should accurately represent unadorned reality and the common man, rather than idealized images. His most famous paintings include "The Stone-Breakers" (1849), which depicts two men performing manual labor in a rural setting, and "Burial at Ornans" (1849), which depicts the funeral of a peasant and includes over forty individual figures. Because of his daring break with artistic standards, Courbet fought an uphill battle for recognition by the art world. In 1855, rejected by a major exhibition in France, Courbet put on his own exhibition of paintings that he labeled "realist." Courbet's Realism became a profound influence on many writers as well as artists throughout Europe. Realism exerted a major influence on nineteenth-century painting in the United States, where it was most notably practiced by Winslow Homer and Thomas Eakins. Realism continued to exert a profound influence on various schools of painting of the early-twentieth century.

Historical Context

The realist movement in literature exerted a profound influence on the literature of France, Russia, England, and the United States in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. During this period, each of these nations experienced major political and social upheavals as well as periods of relative stability and liberal social reform.

France

The nation of France went through several major social and political upheavals during the second half of the nineteenth century. In the Revolution of 1848 the Emperor Louis-Phillipe was deposed as a

Compare & Contrast

- **1840–1900:** France experiences several major changes of government. With the Revolution of 1848, France enters the era of the Second Republic. From 1852 until 1870, the French government is known as the Second Empire. After the revolution of 1871, France enters the era of the Third Republic which lasts until 1940. During the periods of Republic, all adult males in France are granted the right to vote in political elections. Women in France do not have the right to vote.

  Today: Since 1959, the French government is known as the Fifth Republic, a constitutional democracy ruled by an elected president. Women as well as men have full voting rights. France is a member of the European Union, an organization of some fifteen European nations united by common economic and political interests to promote peace, security, and economic prosperity.

- **1850–1900:** Russia is an empire ruled by a succession of autocratic czars. In 1861 a major societal reform is enacted with the emancipation of the serfs.

  Today: Russia has recently emerged from the era of communist rule, which lasted from the revolution of 1917 until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Women and men have full voting rights. Since 1991 the former Soviet Union consists of some twelve independent nation states, of which Russia is the largest and most powerful. The nations of the former Soviet Union belong to a coalition known as the Commonwealth of Independent States.

- **1850–1900:** England is ruled by a parliament and prime minister under a sovereign queen. As of 1833 slavery has been abolished in England. Various reform laws vastly expand the number of white men granted the right to vote. Women in England do not have the right to vote.

  Today: England is ruled by a prime minister and parliament. The queen remains an important figurehead but holds little real political power. Women and men have full voting rights. England is a member of the European Union, a fifteen-member organization of European nations united by common social, economic, political, and security interests.

- **1850–1900:** The United States is a constitutional democracy ruled by an elected president. It experiences major internal conflict during the Civil War. After the Civil War, slavery is abolished and all African-American men are granted the right to vote. Women do not have the right to vote.

  Today: The United States government has remained a stable democracy since the revolution of 1776. Women and men have full voting rights.

result of a popular uprising, and his nine-year old grandson named as the new emperor of a new parliamentary government known as the Second Republic. Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, nephew of the more famous former emperor and military commander Napoleon Bonaparte, was elected the first president of the Second Republic. Louis-Napoleon ruled as president of France from 1848 until 1852. However, because the French constitution stated that no president could serve more than one four-year term, Louis-Napoleon staged a coup of his own government at the end of his term so that he could remain in power. In 1852, Louis-Napoleon proclaimed the Second Empire of France and had himself named Emperor Napoleon III. Napoleon III ruled the Second Empire until 1871, when a popular revolt heralded the end of the Second Empire and the beginning of the Third Republic, ruled by a popularly elected president. The Third Republic of France remained relatively stable until 1940 when, during World War II, Germany invaded and occupied France. During periods of the various

French Republics, all adult males in France were granted the right to vote in political elections.

Russia

The Russian government was one of the few in Europe that remained relatively stable throughout the nineteenth century. While revolutions swept through Europe in the year 1848, the Russian Empire experienced no such political upheaval. Russia during this time was ruled by a succession of autocratic czars. Czar Alexander II ruled during the period of 1855 to 1881, when he was assassinated in a car bombing by an anarchist activist. Czar Alexander III ruled from 1881 to 1894. The last Emperor of Russia was Czar Nicholas II, who ruled from 1894 until the Russian Revolution of 1917, when he and his family were assassinated. A major social reform took place in Russia in 1861, when the peasant serfs, who were essentially slaves under the control of wealthy landowners, were legally emancipated and granted the right to own land.

England

England during the nineteenth century was characterized by the long reign of Queen Victoria, from 1837 to 1901, known as the Victorian era. While the Queen remained the sovereign ruler of England, much of the nation's politics were carried out by parliament under a prime minister. Toward the end of the century, the office of prime minister became the predominant political force in England, as the role of the queen in national politics receded into the background.

Throughout the nineteenth century the English government diffused revolutionary pressures by passing a series of major reforms, including the Reform Acts of 1832, 1867, and 1885. These reforms included numerous changes in public policy and political structure, significantly expanding access to education, protecting the rights of laborers, and widening the sphere of political enfranchisement. Through expanded voting rights, an increasingly large segment of the adult male population was granted the right to vote in political elections. In addition, slavery was abolished in 1833. Toward the end of the century, organizations pressing for women's voting rights began to gain momentum.

United States

Although the United States has remained stable as a constitutional democracy with an elected president ever since the American Revolution of 1776, not every citizen in the nation had equal rights during the nineteenth century. In the beginning of the century, only white men had the right to vote. Until the end of the Civil War, most African Americans in the United States were slaves to white southern plantation owners. Because they were not considered full citizens, slaves did not have the right to vote. The United States experienced major social and political rupture in the mid-nineteenth century during the Civil War. In the Civil War the southern states rebelled against the United States government under President Lincoln and the northern states over the issue of slavery. The Civil War ended with victory by the North and the U.S. government thus ending the institution of slavery in the United States.

The period after the Civil War is known as the era of Reconstruction, during which the South faced many social and political struggles over issues of race and the rights of the African Americans newly released from slavery. During this period, a constitutional amendment granted all adult males the right to vote, regardless of race. Women, however, were still denied the right to vote, and a national movement to lobby for women's right to vote, eventually known as the woman's suffrage movement, gained momentum.

Critical Overview

The realist movement in literature had a broad-sweeping and profound affect on international literature throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century.

Many realist novelists were nationally and internationally recognized, within their lifetimes, to be among the greatest writers of the century. The public reception of many major realist novels was overwhelmingly positive. In general, realist novels were commercially successful throughout France, Russia, and England, to the extent that many major realist writers were able to support themselves entirely from the proceeds of their publications. In England, Dickens achieved unprecedented, and perhaps unsurpassed, popularity with the public. In Russia, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy were widely revered for their literary accomplishments. In France, Balzac, Maupassant, Flaubert, and Zola were all recognized as major literary figures.

Yet, while many realist novels were popular with the reading public, the unabashed view of contemporary society and unadorned representation of contemporary culture expressed by the realists were

Child labor was common in factories in the nineteenth century

criticized in some corners as indecent and morally repugnant. In France, for example, the forces of government censorship stepped in to prosecute Flaubert for the publication of *Madame Bovary*, a tale of marital infidelity, based on the grounds that it violated what are considered laws of morality and decency. In a court of law, however, Flaubert's novel was found not guilty, and the scandal only increased the book's popularity.

Realist writers are widely celebrated for their mastery of objective, third-person narration. C. P. Snow, in *The Realists*, has described the powerful, "intelligent" narrative voice and sociological accuracy of realist novels as their most prominent contribution to literature. Snow observes, in *The Realists: Eight Portraits*, that "In great realistic novels, there is a presiding, unconcealed interpreting intelligence," by which the fictional characters are "examined with the writer's psychological resources and with cognitive intelligence." By contrast, some critics of the late-twentieth century have pointed out that the realist's ideal of narrative objectivity is belied by the personal style and subjective attitudes of the individual novelists. These commentators argue that the very notion of individual narration style implies the imprint of the author's subjective perceptions on the work he produces.

Many realist novels are considered to be reliable sociocultural documents of nineteenth-century society. Critics consistently praise the realists for their success in accurately representing all aspects of society, culture, and politics contemporary to their own. Critics often point to the work of Balzac as a representative example of this aspect of realist literature. Snow applies such statements in regard to Balzac to the entire body of realist fiction:

> Engels said that Balzac told us more of the nature of French society in his time than all the sociologists, political thinkers, historical writers in the world. The same could be said of other realists as they dealt with their time and place.

In addition to literature, Realism has exerted a profound and widespread impact on many aspects of twentieth-century thought, including religion, philosophy, and psychology. Realist writers, particularly Flaubert and Dostoevsky, are celebrated for their acute attention to the complexities of human psychology and the many factors contributing to human motivation. Sigmund Freud, the father of modern psychology, attributed his own theories in part to the influence of Dostoevsky's psychological novels. In the mid-twentieth century, the pacifism espoused by Tolstoy in his novels profoundly influenced Mahatma Gandhi, the leader of India's nonviolent movement for national independence.

Throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, the major realist novelists continue to be regarded as some of the greatest writers ever to have lived, and their masterpieces among the greatest literary accomplishments of all time.

However, the value of the realistic aesthetic to literature of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has become a topic of heated debate among contemporary literary critics. In a 1989 article, "Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast," published in *Harper's* magazine, novelist Tom Wolfe observed that, beginning in 1960, Realism fell out of fashion as a literary aesthetic in the United States. Wolfe traced the decline of Realism in American fiction, commenting, "By the early 1960s, the notion of the death of the realistic novel had caught on among young American writers with the force of a revelation." Wolfe, however, offered a counter argument to this antirealistic trend in American literature, asserting that a return to Realism in fiction, based on journalistic observations of contemporary life, is essential to the continuing vitality of American literature. Referring to the journalistic efforts of the nineteenth-century realist writers, Wolfe commented, "Dickens, Dostoyevski, Balzac, Zola,

and Sinclair Lewis assumed that the novelist had to go beyond his personal experience and head out into society as a reporter." It is this sociocultural, journalistic quality of realist fiction, Wolfe argued, that continues to be an essential ingredient of great fiction today. Wolfe asserted:

> At this weak, pale, tabescent moment in the history of American literature, we need a battalion, a brigade, of Zolas to head out into this wild, bizarre, unpredictable, Hogstomping Baroque country of ours and reclaim it as literary property.

Many critics have since responded, both positively and negatively, to Wolfe's landmark statement on the continuing value of Realism to the vitality of literature.

Criticism

Liz Brent

Brent has a Ph.D. in American culture and works as a freelance writer. In this essay, Brent discusses the realist movement in theater and drama.

Realism in Theater and Drama

The realist movement in literature had a profound influence on all aspects of dramatic writing and theatrical production during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Realist theater moved away from exaggerated acting styles and overblown melodrama to create theatrical productions truer to the lives of the people in the audience. The major realist playwrights treated subjects of middle-class life in everyday, contemporary settings, featuring characters that face circumstances akin to those of average people. The term Realism, when applied to theater, is often used interchangeably with Naturalism.

Zola inaugurated the development of realist theater throughout Europe when, in 1867, he declared the need for a new type of theatrical production that eliminated artificiality and sought to accurately reproduce the details of daily life. His play *Therese Raquin*, a theatrical production of his 1867 novel, was produced on the stage in 1873 and marks the beginning of realist theater. Interestingly, several of the French authors who became major writers of realist fiction were failures as playwrights. Flaubert, Turgenev, Goncourt, and Daudet all wrote plays that failed in theatrical production. As a result, they jokingly gave themselves the epithet *auteurs sifflés*, meaning "hissed authors," because their plays were so bad they got hissed off the stage by disgruntled audiences. Nonetheless, the realist movement in literature gave rise to some of the greatest playwrights and most celebrated plays in history.

The Realist Playwrights

The realist movement led to major changes in the dialogue written by playwrights and the manner in which actors delivered their dialogue. Playwrights began to write dialogue in a more natural style that mirrored the casual speech patterns of everyday conversation rather than the stilted, formalized speech of traditional theater. They addressed serious dramatic themes with plays set in contemporary times and concerning characters from everyday life. Realist playwrights often raised public controversy by addressing taboo social issues, such as marital infidelity and venereal disease. The greatest realist playwrights include Anton Chekhov and Maxim Gorky in Russia, August Strindberg in Sweden, and Henrik Ibsen in Norway. Other realist playwrights of note include Henry Becque, Eugene Brieux, and Georges Porto-Riche in France, Gerhart Hauptmann in Germany, and B. M. Bjornson in Norway.

Anton Chekhov (1860–1904) was the foremost Russian realist playwright of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Chekhov wrote in naturalistic detail about the uneventful lives of the Russian landed gentry in an era of economic and social decline. His play *The Seagull* was first performed in 1896, when it was so unfavorably received that it was nearly hissed off the stage. However, when the Moscow Art Theater performed *The Seagull* two years later, applying newly developed principles of realist acting and staging to their production, it was an immediate success. Chekhov's other major realist plays include *Uncle Vanya* (1896), *Three Sisters* (1901), and *The Cherry Orchard* (1904), the latter two written specifically for the Moscow Art Theater. Maxim Gorky (1868–1936) was another major Russian realist playwright. His most celebrated play, *The Lower Depths* (1902), concerns a character from the lower echelons of Russian society.

Two Scandinavian playwrights, Ibsen (1828–1906) and Strindberg (1848–1912), are among the most celebrated realist dramatists of their time. Ibsen wrote realist plays concerning dark moral undercurrents running beneath the placid, mundane surface of middle-class family life. He addressed

What Do I Study Next?

- *Howells and the Age of Realism* (1954), by Everett Carter, provides discussion of author and literary critic William Dean Howells and his significance to the development of Realism in American literature.
- Kate Chopin is one of the most important realist writers of nineteenth-century fiction. Her most famous work is *The Awakening* (1899), a story about a woman's self-discovery and growing sexuality in the American South.
- *Introduction to Russian Realism* (1965), by Ernest J. Simmons, is a collection of essays on Realism in Russian literature and includes essays on Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Chekhov.
- *The Alienation of Reason: A History of Positivist Thought* (1968), by Leszek Kolakowski, provides a history of positivism in nineteenth-century thought. Positivism was an important influence on the development of the realist movement in literature.
- Mark Twain, the pen name for Samuel Langhorne Clemens, was a pioneer in the use of realistic speech patterns, notably through the use of dialectical speech. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Tom Sawyer's Comrade* (1884) are good illustrations of his use of dialect.
- *Romanticism and Realism: The Mythology of Nineteenth-Century Art* (1984), by Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner, offers discussion of Romanticism and Realism in nineteenth-century art.
- *"Middlemarch": A Novel of Reform* (1988), by Bert G. Hornback, is a discussion of the political and social views represented in Eliot's realist masterpiece *Middlemarch*.
- *"War and Peace": Tolstoy's Mirror of the World* (1995), by Rimvydas Silbajoris, provides critical discussion of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*.

such topics as infidelity, suicide, and syphilis in plays that were criticized in his home country as morally depraved but celebrated throughout Europe as masterpieces of realist drama. Ibsen's major plays include *A Doll's House* (1879), *Ghosts* (1881), *The Wild Duck* (1884), *Hedda Gabler* (1890), and *The Master Builder* (1892). The Swedish playwright Strindberg is equally celebrated for his works of realist drama. In his plays, Strindberg attacked conventional society in harsh terms of biting social commentary. He is also noted for his stark psychological Realism and mastery of naturalistic dialogue. Strindberg's major realist plays include *The Father* (1887), *Miss Julie* (1888), and *Creditors* (1888).

Realist Theaters

In accordance with the development of Realism, a number of small, private theaters were founded throughout Europe for the purpose of producing realist plays. The most influential of these new theaters were the *Théatre-Libre* ("Free Theater") in France, the *Freie Bühne* ("Free Stage") in Germany, The Independent Theatre Club in England, and the Moscow Art Theater in Russia.

The *Théatre-Libre* was founded in Paris in 1887 by Andre Antoine for the purpose of staging works of naturalist, or realist, drama. Antoine had been influenced by both the realist novels of Zola and the innovations of the Meiningen Theater Company in Germany. In its first season, the *Théatre-Libre* produced a set of one-act plays. With the production of a play by Tolstoy in the theater's second year, the *Théatre-Libre* became an international influence on the theater world. Works by many of the major realist playwrights from throughout Europe were showcased at this theater, including those of Becque, Brieux, Ibsen, Strindberg, Hauptmann, Bjornson, and Porto-Riche. In less than ten years of its existence, the *Théatre-Libre* housed the production of some one hundred plays by fifty different playwrights. Although the

Théatre-Libre eventually failed due to financial difficulties, Antoine went on to become an important film director in 1914.

In Berlin, the *Freie Bühne* theater, modeled after the *Théatre-Libre*, was founded in 1889 for the purpose of staging realist drama to a select private audience. The *Freie Bühne*, founded by Otto Brahm, staged plays by Ibsen, Hauptmann, Tolstoy, Zola, and Strindberg. Brahm's theatrical productions focused on the representation of everyday reality through naturalistic acting styles, dialogue, and set designs. Realist drama quickly caught on with the general public in Germany, and mainstream commercial theaters began to stage realist plays as well. In 1894 Brahm was made director of the Deutsche Theater and incorporated the *Freie Bühne* as an experimental division of this larger, established theater.

The Independent Theatre Club was founded in London in 1891 to produce works of realist drama. Jacob Grein, who founded the Independent Theatre Club, modeled it after the *Théatre-Libre* as a private theater catering to a small, select audience of writers and intellectuals. The Independent Theatre, as it is generally called, produced plays by Ibsen as well as by the English playwright and drama critic George Bernard Shaw. In 1891 the Independent Theatre was disbanded.

The Moscow Art Theater Company, founded in 1898, represents the pinnacle of realist theater. The Moscow Art Theater was founded by Konstantin Stanislavsky and Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko for the purpose of producing dramas in accordance with their ideals regarding realist theater. Stanislavsky became the head of the Moscow Art Theater and its defining artistic force. One of the earliest productions of the Moscow Art Theater was Chekhov's *The Seagull*. *The Seagull* had been a complete failure in a production several years earlier, because traditional production was not suited to Chekhov's realist play. Under the direction of Stanislavsky, however, *The Seagull* was an instant success. Thereafter, the playwright Chekhov and The Moscow Art Theater under Stanislavsky became inextricably associated as representative of realist theater at its best. The Moscow Art Theater also produced the works of such major realist playwright's as Gorky, Hauptmann, and Tolstoy.

Realist Acting

To accommodate the realist play, a new style of acting was needed. Acting styles in realist theaters were thus altered, instructing actors to deliver their dialogue in a more naturalistic manner, rather than the exaggerated, melodramatic style of traditional stage acting. In order to accomplish this, Stanislavsky developed an innovative method of acting that emphasized the natural expression of emotion on the part of the actor. This new acting method, known as the Stanislavsky Method, or Method Acting, exerted a profound influence on theatrical and film acting of the twentieth century.

Changes in theatrical acting style were facilitated by the introduction in 1885 of electric lighting on the stage. Since 1825, stages had been illuminated with gas lighting, but the use of electric lighting made small gestures and facial expressions of the actors more readily visible to the audience. As a result, exaggerated styles in acting were no longer a technical necessity for communicating with the audience.

"The stagecraft of realist theater emphasized the representation of realistic details from everyday life. Long-standing traditions of set design were thus altered by realist dramatists in the effort to move away from artificiality and toward Naturalism."

Realist Set Design and Stagecraft

The stagecraft of realist theater emphasized the representation of realistic details from everyday life. Long-standing traditions of set design were thus altered by realist dramatists in the effort to move away from artificiality and toward Naturalism.

One of the first innovations of realist stage design was in the shape of the stage itself. Traditionally, stage sets did not reproduce the dimensions of actual rooms but included a backcloth and stage wings. Realist stage sets, however, began to include a "box" shape, reproducing the dimensions of an actual room, with a ceiling and three walls—the fourth wall being open to face the audience. The

first "box set" stage design was utilized by English actress and singer Madame Vestris in 1832.

Realist set design, costuming, and use of props were further characterized by excessive attention to the reproduction of realistic details from everyday life. The *Théatre-Libre* included in one production real meat hanging from hooks during a scene set in a butcher shop. The realist productions of the English dramatist T. W. Robertson came to be called "cup-and-saucer" dramas, because they often included scenes of family meals in which the actors actually ate. Other realist productions included live animals. The American producer David Belasco, for example, once brought a real flock of sheep onto stage in a religious play.

Although the dominant works of realist literature were novels, the innovations of realist theater during the 1880s and 1890s exerted a profound and lasting influence on all aspects of playwriting and theatrical production throughout the twentieth century.

Source: Liz Brent, Critical Essay on Realism, in *Literary Movements for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Alison Byerly

In the following introduction to her Realism, Representation, and the Arts in Nineteenth-Century Literature, *Byerly explores how Victorian novelists evoked and resolved the arts and their influence in realist novels.*

> By rejecting reality—and this is not a form of escapism but an inherent quality of art—art vindicates reality. Adorno. *Aesthetic Theory*

Fin de siècle American culture is often criticized for its refusal to distinguish between reality and fiction, between fact and artifact. "Reality television" programs hire crime and accident victims to reenact burglaries, fires, and dramatic rescues. "Fictionalized" biographies turn historical figures into novel characters by inventing thoughts and dialogue. Movies about current events go into production before the events themselves have reached a conclusion. Television commercials mimic the daily life of consumers, a life of comparing and choosing, with music and images that impart aesthetic glamour to the ordinary objects at hand. All of these things suggest a blurring of the boundary between art and reality that is sometimes linked to a commensurate blurring of moral boundaries. Our capacity to respond appropriately to real problems, some fear, may be deadened by excessive exposure to simulated reality. This makes it easy to feel a certain nostalgia for a time when reality commanded respect and art knew its place.

It is precisely because contemporary media are capable of a vividness that far exceeds what can be achieved through the written word that consumers have become somewhat suspicious of representations that threaten to supplant the reality they depict. The advent of "virtual reality" could immure us in purely subjective worlds, depriving us of interest in whatever common ground stands outside representation. It is with a shock of recognition, therefore, that we perceive Victorian qualms about their own most popular art forms. The rise of "realism" in nineteenth-century British literature and art shows how highly the Victorians valued art's mimetic capacity. But the Victorians also saw that art could be turned from a reflection of reality into a substitute for reality; it could act as either a powerful diagnostic tool or as a placebo. At the same time that they lauded the honest portrayal of ordinary life in art, the Victorians created museums and collections that segregated the objects of their aesthetic interest from the world of ordinary things. For art to retain its power and prestige, it had to be recognized as "art," and not confused with anything else. (As others have pointed out, if art were functionally equivalent to reality, there would be no need of it.) At the same time, the artifact's relation to the real world had to be perspicuous and authentic.

Victorian novels are famously self-conscious about their status as artifacts. While earlier novels often masqueraded as "real" narratives such as letters or journals, the Victorian novel sought credibility by admitting to its own artifice. Like the actor in the television commercial who admits, "I'm not a doctor, although I play one on TV," the Victorian narrator reinforces his or her authority with disarming candor about the nature of his role. The world described by such a narrator is not the real world, but it is the next best thing to it.

The question faced by these novelists—how can art evoke reality while acknowledging its difference from the real world?—was, I will argue, resolved through their obsessive analysis and display of art's many guises. This book confronts a stunning paradox in the classic Victorian realist novel. A "realist" novel, according to most conventional definitions, might be expected to exclude, even condemn artifice, while mirroring the most ordinary and natural of human experiences. And yet the arts assume a prominent place in so many of the

Victorian novels usually labeled "realist" that their presence seems almost a defining characteristic of the genre. As we will see, the novels of Charlotte Brontë, William Thackeray, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy are filled with both explicit references to artworks that have a function within the narrative—portraits, caricatures, charades, musical performances—and metaphors that implicitly compare the novelist's own representation to specific forms of art. Insistent reminders of the disjunction between art and life, these artistic references threaten to sabotage the realist claim to unmediated representation. Such persistent allusions to art must, it would seem, have a purpose beyond mere decoration in order to be worth the risk.

By disentangling the various meanings the Victorians attached to representation in all its forms, this book attempts to account for the way in which Victorian novelists were able simultaneously to deplore and exploit the idea of the aesthetic. At first, their novels seem wholly suspicious of art. In Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847–8) and Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853), for example, art possesses a dangerous power that can be easily exploited. Becky Sharp's considerable talents are used only to deceive, yet she evades moral judgment by deliberately inviting aesthetic judgment of herself. Many of George Eliot's and Thomas Hardy's characters present themselves as art objects in order to disguise their human flaws, or use the mesmerizing power of music to entrap a listener who mistakenly equates musical expression with depth of feeling. But in spite of this apparent distrust of art, these writers often describe the novelist's work as "drawing a picture," "painting a portrait," or "sketching a scene." They illustrate characters and situations by referring to works of visual art and denote emotions through allusion to music. Although painterly terms were used conventionally by nineteenth-century literary critics, these novelists employ them not as mere elegant variations on words like "describe" and "represent," but as a way of consciously invoking a non-literary mode of description and representation.

Artistic allusion has often been seen as a sort of literary dandyism, an old-fashioned and somewhat precious "dressing up" of a particular scene, character, or theme. Its most obvious function is to highlight a particular moment in the text. It also could be said to exhibit the author's superior knowledge and taste. But "art" is not necessary to accomplish these goals. Other techniques of elaborate, lyrical description can intensify the reader's perceptions; other realms of cultural discourse can verify the novelist's expertise. It must be asked, then, what evocations of art accomplish that other forms of allusion do not.

"But in spite of this apparent distrust of art, these writers often describe the novelist's work as 'drawing a picture,' 'painting a portrait,' or 'sketching a scene.' They illustrate characters and situations by referring to works of visual art and denote emotions through allusion to music."

It may seem strange to consider what, in this context, art is "there for," since art is conventionally defined by its uselessness. It is customary to consider art to be anything that is created primarily for aesthetic appreciation, rather than something created to serve another function. Ordinary objects become artworks only when they are removed from their everyday use and displayed or commented upon *as* art. But as Theodor Adorno points out, the creation of art involves a "purposefulness" that contradicts the supposed purposelessness of its existence: "Art as akin to production cannot escape the question 'what for?' which it aims to negate" (*Minima Moralia*). Art forces us to take notice of its unique status as art, and to account for its presence. Artistic allusion in the novel attempts to confer on particular passages the autonomy and uniqueness of the artifact. No other form of cultural reference separates itself so decisively from the world in which it is embedded—even when this world is a fictional one.

While artistic allusions might seem like ostentatious displays of descriptive virtuosity on the narrator's part, in fact they tend to efface the narrative voice: because a picture cannot directly assert anything, a narrative "painting" does not seem like part

A group of Russian Peasants around 1900

of the narrator's commentary. It achieves a kind of independence from the narrative as a whole. Through this alterity the Victorian novel's preoccupation with art actually reinforces its claims to realism. As Barbara Herrnstein Smith points out, utterances or representations that are to be "taken as . . . fictive discourse" (*Margins of Discourse*) can be separated from "natural discourse" by "an act of artistry no more strenuous than placing a frame around them." By framing a person or a scene as an artwork, the author separates it from the world of the novel, performing what Barthes would call an act of "découpage," or cutting out (*Image—Music—Text*). The hole thus created in the text allows the image to escape into a different sign system, and by labeling this other world "art," the novelist makes the world left behind seem more real. Françoise Meltzer's definition of the literary portrait as "an insurmountable opacity," a "radical otherness in the text" (*Salomé*), applies equally to the other artifacts and performances represented in the Victorian novel. Their primary function is to be ontologically different from the world in which we find them.

Realism itself grew out of the impulse to contradict: as George Levine explains in the classic modern study of Victorian realism, realism "defines itself against the excesses, both stylistic and narrative, of various kinds of romantic, exotic, or sensational literatures" (*Realistic Imagination*). Because it is based on the repudiation of literary genres, realism has always been difficult to characterize. Its Victorian founders were forced to rely on contrast with the movements they sought to negate. George Henry Lewes described realism as the antithesis of "Falsism," while Thomas Hardy distinguished it from mere "copyism." For George Eliot, realism meant *not* representing "things as they never have been and never will be," while Charlotte Brontë warned that readers who expect "anything like a romance" will find that they "were never more mistaken." And yet this sort of opposition is potentially reductive, leading to what J. Hillis Miller calls "the sterile oscillations of the traditional paradigm of realism" ("Literary Theory"). He points out that "criticism in this area tends to express itself in either/or dichotomies: either realism or vacuous, free-floating fiction . . . either the representation of some verifiable and objective truth, or the merely relative, some partial, subjective truth, therefore no truth at all."

These sorts of distinctions can slice both ways. Recent theorists have tended to oppose "naive realism" to the elaborately self-conscious modern fiction that seems both more true to the ambiguities of existence and more truthful in its awareness of its own dependence on language. Realism thus be-

comes, in Bruce Robbins' words, a "scapegoat term" that is useful in generating arguments because of the "blatant strawmanism" that renders it an easy target ("Modernism"). Whichever side of the equation is valorized, the inadequacy of a simple opposition between true and false, real and unreal, is obvious. It is reflected in the use of the term "realistic" to denote things that seem real but are not, and the recourse to a neologism, "irreal," by writers as diverse as philosopher Nelson Goodman and science fiction writer Philip K. Dick.

The literary problem parallels a larger philosophical debate. Just as realistic fiction can be regarded as a construction that depends on the relative status of its internal constituents, so our sense of the real world, some philosophers suggest, derives from our perception of the relation between key elements. But philosophical realism, like literary realism, seems to be plagued by "reductive dichotomies," as N. Katharine Hayles has recently noted ("Constrained Constructivism"). Hayles suggests that "the binary logic of true/false" is inadequate to the spectrum of possibilities contained within the concept of mental representation, which permits things to be "consistent or inconsistent" as well as "congruent or incongruent" with reality: "Realism tends to elide the differences [among these terms] . . . assimilating not-false into true and not-true into false." The philosopher Hilary Putnam has argued for the rejection of such dichotomies as "subjective/objective," "projection/property of the thing in itself" and "power/property of the thing in itself" (*Many Faces of Realism*), but asks, "*can* one be any sort of realist without the dichotomies?" If belief in the stable presence of a real world means that one must be able, confidently, to label phenomena as real (objects) or unreal (projections), then a whole spectrum of experience becomes impossible to describe. Victorian novelists, however, wished to illuminate precisely this space, and meticulously rendered the ambiguity of perception by filtering it through the multifaceted prism of art.

The novelists studied here use the category of "art" to create a sphere of "radical otherness" within their texts, an artificial realm that is poised against an underlying "reality." The world thus created, however, is multidimensional. The density, sophistication, and credibility of the fictional world depends, not upon a simple binary opposition between art and not-art, but upon the representational array created by the novelists' invocation of *multiple* arts. The association of literature with other "sister arts" was a common trope from the Renaissance onward, but such conventional allusions to painting or music claimed aesthetic similarity between a single art form and the art of poetry. Thackeray, Brontë, Eliot, and Hardy use a wide range of arts in combination, creating a complex system of aesthetic cross-referencing. Each art is eventually assigned a different moral value, creating a hierarchy of the arts that privileges music over what come to be seen as the more limited perspective of painting and the more deceptive mode of theater. However, taken together, their collective gesture is to provide a coherent model of realistic representation. The juxtaposition of painting, theater, and music in these novels has the effect of measuring the arts' representational abilities not against external reality but against each other. The realism of the novelist's own creation is evaluated within this framework, rather than in relation to an actual reality with which it cannot hope to compete.

The effect of "aesthetic cross-referencing" is to give coherence and unity to fictional worlds by constructing different levels of representation within them. This operation is similar to the way in which we make sense of the world around us, since, as Arthur Danto points out, "coherence is taken to be the defining property of reality" (*Connections to the World*). The process whereby we construct reality by "tak[ing] as true the largest set of self-coherent ideas" (Danto, *Connections to the World*) allows us to perceive fictional worlds, which are necessarily characterized by "incompleteness" (Pavel, *Fictional Worlds*), as nonetheless coherent, even robust. Here I attempt to unravel the process of "taking as true," or, in Herrnstein Smith's words, "taking as natural." As these expressions suggest, our ability to extract a real-seeming world from between the cardboard covers of a book depends upon the apparently casual, almost unconscious, assumptions we make. Michael Riffaterre has suggested that "a metalanguage functions as if it presupposed the reality of the topics it glosses, when it actually presupposes the reality of the language in which these topics are broached" (*Fictional Truth*). The artistic metaphors I examine function as just such a metalanguage. They become what Riffaterre calls "fictional indices," tropes that "presuppose the real." The novelist is exempted from the impossible task of describing the real world in all its complexity; instead, s/he describes representations that are judged accurate or inadequate *as representations* of a reality that is implied by their reference to it. The representations themselves attest to the presence of an ontologically prior world.

The fictional worlds generated by these novelists are thus both coherent and autonomous. If they are so similar to the real world, how exactly do they differ from it? One could argue that the main difference, from the reader's point of view, is that they happen not to exist. The fact that a world can be represented through the novelist's language suggests merely that it *could* exist. However, the fact that a world is so fully constituted that it can be *re*-represented through allusions to other art forms suggests that it *does* exist. Of course, this suggestion need not be accepted. Clearly, belief in the existence of "Wessex," "Labassecour," or "Pumpernickel" would be a mistake. As Thomas Pavel suggests, "fiction cannot be strictly identified with metaphysically possible worlds" (*Fictional Worlds*). But these novels create, if not possible worlds, then plausible ones.

Nelson Goodman's suggestion that instead of asking, "What is art?," we should more properly inquire "When is art?," underlies my inquiry throughout. Within the contexts of these fictional worlds, I ask, when is art? And how do we know? And, moreover, *why* is art? What do these novelists gain that is worth the evident riskiness of reminding the reader how deceptive or inadequate art can be? All use particular forms of art to signal hypocrisy, self-delusion, deceit, or simply the difficulty of understanding a world of multiple consciousnesses and rendering it accurately. But this admission of art's failures does not render the novelist's own art more suspect: like the informant who fingers a fellow criminal, the novelist accommodates our sophisticated doubts about representation by forcing someone else to take the fall. The novel, witness to the potential dangers of our attempts to represent and manipulate reality, gets off scot-free.

Recent critics have tended to see the kind of framing or detachment I have described as an ideological rather than purely aesthetic gesture. Fredric Jameson suggests that such "aestheticizing strateg[ies]" (*Political Unconscious*) have the power, through a "process of abstraction and reification," to transform a passage or scene into "an art-commodity which one consumes by way of its own dynamic." If such passages are considered to be in some sense equivalent to actual artworks, then Pierre Bourdieu's claim that aesthetic "consumption" is "an act of deciphering . . . which implies the implementation of a . . . cultural code" (*Distinction*) would suggest that one function of artworks within a novel is to illustrate or even interrogate the process of cultural encoding. Bourdieu argues that the "'pure gaze'" is a "historical invention" intended to disguise the fact that "aesthetic perception is necessarily historical, inasmuch as it is differential, relational, attentive to the deviations (*écarts*) which make styles." Bourdieu insists that aesthetic judgment is a social act whose purpose is differentiation or distinction between classes. A novel that evokes artifacts, then, is able to create a multilayered social world by showing different characters' participation in aesthetic judgment.

Of course, the novel may also be said to situate *itself* in relation to class through its deployment of artistic references. If artistic allusion is considered to be a kind of metalanguage, as I have suggested, then we must question whether it is what Bakhtin calls a "unitary language" that reflects "historical processes of linguistic unification and centralization" (*Dialogic Imagination*), or whether its presence within the narrative contributes to the novel's "heteroglossia," as it enters into dialogue with the text in which it is embedded. Mieke Bal suggests that "realism" is in conflict with a "textualism" that seeks to replace the "self-evident wholeness" of traditional realism with a "self-conscious construction of wholeness" ("De-disciplining the Eye"). She sees its "'convention of unity'" as "a powerful ideological weapon because of the pressure it exerts on the reader to choose one interpretation over another . . . it encourages the projection of 'masterplots' that colonize or erase the marginal." Aesthetic cross-referencing participates in this productive conflict: it is a form of "self-conscious construction" that creates a "self-evidently" coherent and autonomous fictional world. Ultimately, I would argue, the use of art in these novels contributes to a realism characterized by formal, but not necessarily ideological, coherence. The novelists' self-consciousness about aesthetic representation is often paralleled by self-consciousness about social representation and the role of aesthetics in the constitution of culture.

This is the "singular anomaly" of the Victorian realist novel: the emphasis on aesthetics that is integral to its exploration of social and cultural values. Michèle Barrett has recently complained about the "marginalization of aesthetic questions in the interpretation of culture" ("Max Raphael"), and while she refers specifically to the application of aesthetic standards of texts of cultural interest, her comments apply equally to the need to examine aesthetic judgments that occur within texts themselves in relation to the culture they describe. It seems appropriate, then, for this book to answer the formal-

ist question with which it begins—how do these artistic references function within these text?—with the help of sources that illuminate relevant ancillary topics in nineteenth-century British culture: the tension between the picturesque aesthetic and agricultural development; the tainted position of actresses in Victorian society; the xenophobic response to foreign musicians in England; the competition between traditional parish choirs and modern church organists in rural society; the connection between public executions and other forms of spectacle. Victorian novels not only describe, they *enact* the process whereby the drawing of aesthetic boundaries takes on moral and political dimensions.

The representational play afforded by the Victorian use of multiple arts was set in motion by Romantic explorations of painting and music as alternative models for poetry. In chapter I, "The Picturesque Aesthetic and the Natural Art of Song," I argue that the Romantics used first metaphors of painting and then metaphors of music to blur the boundary between nature and art, breaking down those time-honored categories in a way that would allow the Victorians to recast the problem as an opposition between "real" and "false." The picturesque descriptions that appear in the works of Leigh Hunt, William Lisle Bowles, Thomas De Quincey, and the early Wordsworth treat natural scenes as a kind of "found art" whose apparent origin in nature authenticates the feelings that they metaphorically describe. But while the picturesque presented itself as a purely aesthetic mode of perceiving landscape, it was subtended by a political agenda that ultimately destroyed its nostalgic claims to ahistoricity. Later Romantic writing used the picturesque as a form of critique, and finally replaced it with music, a fully engaged mode of artistic communication that involves living bodies that sing and are penetrated by song.

The leap from a non-mimetic art like music to Victorian "word-painting" might seem a large one. But by using music to represent a literature that was both grounded in nature and an autonomous form of art, the Romantics laid the foundation on which realist novels would be built. Unlike the picturesque aesthetic, the musical aesthetic developed in the later poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats does not attempt to deny its temporality. Emanating from the land—its winds, waters, and birds—it transcends material contingency as it transcends language itself. Music, like the picturesque, works to elide the difference between nature and art, but by weighing a different end of the equation. While the function of picturesque tropes is to aestheticize nature, the function of musical tropes is to naturalize art.

The Romantic empowerment of art rendered it both fascinating and dangerous to the Victorians. The myth of genuine self-expression embodied in the poetic ideal of music seemed problematic to early Victorian novelists, who saw a social world constituted not by authentic expression but by deliberate hypocrisy. Chapter 2, "Masterpiece Theatres: Art as Spectacle in William Thackeray and Charlotte Brontë," traces the transformation of the essentially aesthetic questions raised by the Romantics into cultural questions about the relationship between artistic representations and social reality. The novels of William Thackeray and Charlotte Brontë use art—all of the arts, including music—as a metaphor for the social façade that is too easily mistaken for inner truth. Art's relation to reality in these novels is often characterized as "theatrical": that is, art signifies a deliberate effort to "make up" people and situations, disguising their true import. The public danger implicit in the coerciveness of the theatrical spectacle, vividly rendered in Thackeray's essay about the hanging of the murderer Courvoisier, is reflected in the novels' emphasis upon the perils of representation.

Theater is not the only art that is guilty of theatricality. In *Vanity Fair*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Villette*, overtly theatrical performances are paralleled by equally deceptive instances of singing, dancing, and drawing. By invoking all of these arts, Thackeray and Brontë suggest that the crucial difference is not between one medium and another, but between false art and true. While the Romantics compared the formal capabilites of different media and genres, Thackeray and Brontë shifted attention from the beauty or accuracy of an "imitation" to its authenticity, a quality more dependent on the artist than on the medium. This deflection was crucial to the development of the novel, a form constantly beset by directives about what it could and could not represent. By freeing the arts from the positions they had long been assigned on the basis of their formal capabilities, Thackeray and Brontë initiated the development of a new artistic hierarchy, one based on moral, rather than aesthetic, considerations. Their separation of the world into layers of truth and illusion was the first step toward realism in nineteenth-century English literature.

George Eliot, who was interested not only in how we represent ourselves to the world but how we represent ourselves to ourselves, used the wide

range of arts introduced into the novel by Thackeray and Brontë to set up a representational system that reflects the many strata of deception and self-deception that can separate inner reality from outer expression. Chapter 3, "George Eliot's Hierarchy of Representation," shows that in Eliot's novels the association of individual characters with specific arts produces a moral hierarchy in which visual art is exposed as a detached and static simplification of reality, theatrical art is linked with a dangerous deception of self and others, and music alone is capable of representing truth.

This hierarchy is strangely at odds with the novelist's own metaphoric language. Richly pictorial descriptions have a positive, even essential, function within Eliot's novels. Theatrical terminology and dramatic staging of scenes testify to the lessons Eliot learned from the theater. Most astonishingly, music, the very art that symbolizes genuine communication, is the one art that Eliot never uses as a metaphor for her own. This apparent contradiction suggests that Eliot's hierarchy does not reflect an intrinsic privileging of any one form of art, but is a carefully constructed representational code. This code enables each of Eliot's novels to constitute a world of its own—a world that does not reproduce reality, but resembles it in the dense materiality that its autonomy engenders.

The book's final chapter, "Art Works: Thomas Hardy and the Labor of Creation," explores Thomas Hardy's confident appropriation of the artistic metaphors that seemed so disturbing to earlier novelists. In the eight novels written between 1872 and 1896, from *Under the Greenwood Tree* to *Jude the Obscure*, aesthetic appreciation is treated not as a dangerously limited perspective but as a discerning response to natural beauty. Hardy uses painting to represent the trustworthy surface of things, music to reflect his characters' inner responsiveness to people and places, and architecture to give concrete form to cultural memory. Theater alone bears the burden of representing misrepresentation. While Eliot's "word-painting" usually consists of generalized evocations of genres like the portrait or the domestic interior, Hardy's famous pictorialism involves brief and numerous references to specific painters and paintings. His allusions suggest not just resemblance but equivalence between his characters or scenes and those depicted in great paintings, as he claims for his simple rural subjects an aesthetic value equal to that of high art.

In spite of his highly aestheticized view of reality, Hardy's evaluation of any medium or artifact is based not on conventionally "aesthetic" criteria, but on its place in the life of the community. He does not focus on art objects, but on artistic creation itself, and the strenuous labor it involves. Where the Romantics had prized art as an apparently effortless manifestation of spontaneous feeling, Hardy depicts art as a product of skill, hard work, and tradition. Art is no longer opposed to life—to gritty, material reality; it is incorporated into it through Hardy's vision of a world in which the transcendent beauty of creation is immanent in the mundane work of existence.

Ironically, the moral aesthetic generated by these novelists' representations of the arts helped pave the way for Aestheticism, a movement that denied any moral obligations on the part of the artist. In a brief coda, "Aestheticism: The Erasure of the Real," I show how the boundaries separating different forms of art, so carefully outlined by Eliot and Hardy, are conflated in the works of Wilde and Pater. All arts become alike in their potential for aesthetic gratification. Instead of disjunctive artistic moments that shake our sense of what is real, in a novel like *The Picture of Dorian Gray* we are faced with a story that is nothing but art from beginning to end. Romantic texts took an aesthetic view of objects such as mountains and lakes; Victorian novels extended the aesthetic perspective to particular people and situations; Aesthetic works make an artifact of life itself. The art/reality binary that energized the Victorian novel ultimately collapses under its own weight, leaving a black hole that absorbs moral and aesthetic considerations into its undifferentiated mass.

In Hardy's willingness to regard people and places as proper objects of aesthetic contemplation we see the modulation of the earnestness of the earlier Victorians into the decadence of the Aesthetes. Wilde's belief that "the type of all the arts is the art of the musician" and Pater's famous statement that "all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music" attest to the important lesson early Modernists learned from the Victorians: that music is, not the natural expression of the soul, but, for better or worse, the most artificial of arts. By exposing artifice at the level of expression once considered closest to the authentic self, an author risks calling into question the sincerity of his or her own narrative "voice."

The replacement of the Romantic pretense that art is natural by an open acknowledgment that art is fictive clearly places the realist project in jeopardy. Thackeray, Brontë, Eliot, and Hardy invoke the sis-

ter arts of literature in order to create worlds that acknowledge both true and false representation. The early Thackeray illustration "Rex, Ludovicus, Ludovicus Rex" shows that he understood the dangerous connection between representation and power. Thackeray's sequence of three drawings shows first the empty regalia of a king, then the pathetic figure of Louis himself, and finally "Ludovicus Rex": the impressive symbol of imperial power that is produced by the superimposition of representation over reality. Art, these novelists admit, is a very risky business. But this confession removes their own art from the precarious realm of the aesthetic and places it in the world of the "real": a stable region where the testimony of neutral observers like themselves helps to keep the government honest.

Source: Alison Byerly, "Introduction," in *Realism, Representation, and the Arts in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 1–13.

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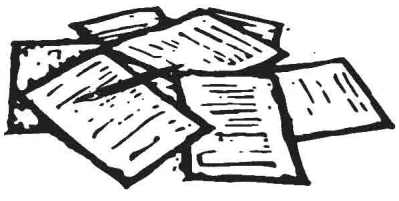
Renaissance Literature

Movement Origin

c. 1450

It could be argued that no other literary period in history is as rich—or paradoxical—as the Renaissance. Many historians place the Renaissance from the mid-fifteenth until the early seventeenth century. There are, however, a few writers from other time periods whom historians and critics commonly associate with the Renaissance. The European Renaissance produced some of history's greatest writers and works of literature, yet most historians and critics have not reached a consensus as to *when* it actually took place. In addition, the very ideas that began the Renaissance eventually led to other movements that signaled its demise. So what is the Renaissance? Contemporary "Renaissance" fairs and many movies set in "Renaissance" times are often set in England. In reality, however, the Renaissance started in Italy, then spread slowly to other European countries, most notably France, Spain, and finally, England.

At its most pure form, the Renaissance (from the French word for "revival") refers to the widespread renewal of interest in classical Greek and Roman learning and culture that took place between the Middle Ages and the modern period. With the advent of the printing press in 1450, the development of vernacular languages, and the weakening influence of the Catholic Church on daily life, among other historic events, Renaissance writers and scholars received new avenues for expressing their views. The explosion of literary works that followed live on today as some of the most celebrated in literary history. Early writers like Desiderius



Erasmus and Thomas More staged direct attacks on the Church and society with works such as Erasmus's *The Praise of Folly* and More's *Utopia*. These writers helped open doors for later writers, including William Shakespeare, who is considered the greatest writer of all time by some critics.

Representative Authors

Miguel de Cervantes (c. 1547–1616)

Miguel de Cervantes (Saavedra), son of Rodrigo de Cervantes Saavedra and Leonor de Cortinas, was born circa September 29, 1547, in Alcalá de Henares, Spain. After studying under a humanist teacher in Madrid, Cervantes enlisted in the Spanish military and helped to defend southern "Europe from the invasion of the Ottoman Turkish Empire. While involved in this effort, Cervantes suffered an injury that crippled his left hand. On the way back home from the front, Cervantes and other Spanish soldiers were captured by pirates and detained in northern Africa for five years, at which time they returned to Spain as heroes. However, economic times were tough, and Cervantes's status as hero soon waned. He turned to writing plays but with little success. He finally was able to secure a civic position as a supplies manager, whereupon he was blamed for the mismanagement of food and jailed. Following these misfortunes, Cervantes wrote his masterpiece *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quixote de La Mancha* (translated as *The History of that ingenious gentleman: Don Quixote de La Mancha*), commonly referred to as simply *Don Quixote*, which details the misadventures of a madman. Cervantes died of edema on April 22, 1616, in Madrid, Spain.

Desiderius Erasmus (c. 1466–1536)

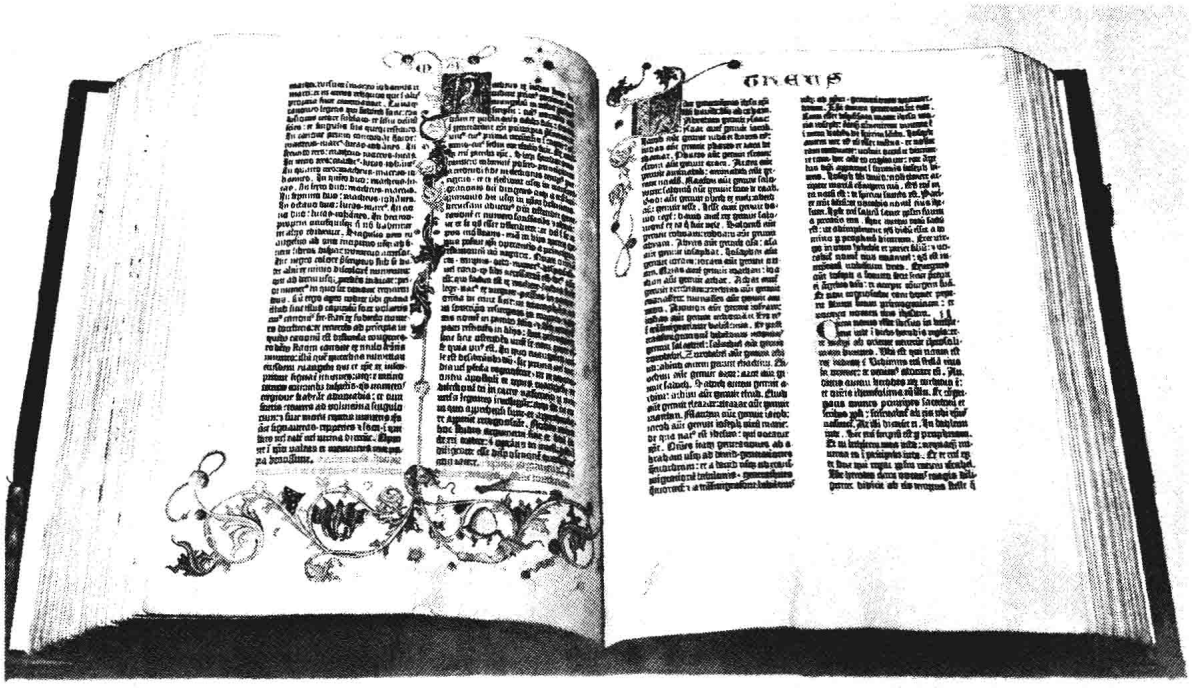
Desiderius Erasmus was born circa October 1466, most likely in Rotterdam, Netherlands. He attended cathedral school, where he was first exposed to Renaissance humanistic thought, and his desire for the intellectual life was born. He used his religious education to access as many classics as he could find. Unlike many Renaissance writers who followed him, Erasmus wrote entirely in Latin, still considered at this time to be the language of the educated. Although he made plans to obtain a degree in theology, these plans were constantly put on hold because of his intellectual pursuits, including several trips to England, where he met influential English humanists like Thomas More. Following More's lead, Erasmus eventually combined his religious and intellectual interests into a new program of reform, using his literary works to stage satirical attacks on the Church and society. Out of all of his works, Erasmus's satire *The Praise of Folly* had the greatest influence on later humanist writers, who mimicked Erasmus's style in their own satirical works. It should be noted that Erasmus, like other humanist writers, wished to reform the Catholic Church while keeping it unified. However, in his criticisms of the Church and his scholarly interpretation and translation of the Bible, Erasmus was one of many humanists who inadvertently helped to instigate the Protestant Reformation and subsequent division of the Church. Erasmus died on July 12, 1536, in Basel, Switzerland.

Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–c. 1527)

Niccolò Machiavelli was born on May 3, 1469, in Florence, Italy, to a middle-class family of civic workers. He studied Latin from an early age and was drawn to the classics, particularly texts about the Roman Republic. He followed family tradition and entered the Florentine political scene during Italy's politically unstable "city-state" period, when large cities like Florence acted as independent republics. Within Florence, a number of factions vied for power. In 1498, Machiavelli helped one of them overthrow the dominant religious and political figure. Through a few other political posts he held over the next fourteen years, Machiavelli gained influence, while observing the harsh realities of politics. After the Medici family returned to power in 1512 and exiled Machiavelli to his country home, Machiavelli spent much of his time translating his political experiences into two treatises, or explanatory documents. The most infamous of these is *The Prince*. Machiavelli died of illness circa June 21, 1527, in Florence.

Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593)

Christopher Marlowe, son of John and Catherine Marlowe, was born in February 1564 in Canterbury, England. Although he embarked on a humanistic education, receiving his bachelor of arts from the University of Cambridge while on scholarship, Marlowe was initially denied his master of arts due to his absences during his studies. Marlowe's activities were vouched for, however, by the court of Queen Elizabeth. Historical evidence suggests that during his educational absences, Marlowe was serving as a spy in the queen's service, helping to uncover and foil an insurrection plot by expatriate Roman Catholics. This life of intrigue



The Gutenberg Bible

and suspicion continued during Marlowe's six years in London, where he was imprisoned for a short time as an accomplice to murder. During the six years he was in London, Marlowe wrote plays, the most famous of which is *Dr. Faustus*. Marlowe was again a suspect when a friend of his was found with incriminating papers, which the friend testified were Marlowe's. Shortly after the incident, Marlowe was stabbed to death on May 30, 1593, in a Deptford tavern by one of his companions during a fight over the tavern bill.

Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592)

Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, son of Pierre Eyquem, was born on February 28, 1533, in Perigueux, France. The Montaigne name was a noble title, purchased by the author's great-grandfather and first used by the author. At the direction of Montaigne's father, the entire Eyquem household spoke Latin in an effort to instill it into the young Montaigne. Montaigne studied and practiced law for several years and served two terms as mayor of Bordeaux. However, his major focus during his adult life was writing. Despite his background in Latin, Montaigne wrote his major work, *The Essays*, in his native French. Montaigne died on September 13, 1592, in Perigueux.

Sir Thomas More (c. 1478–1535)

The records for Sir Thomas More's birth are not exact, although historians surmise he was born February 7, 1478, in London, England. More was the son of John More and Agnes Graunger More. While in his early to mid twenties, More lived with monks and adopted their lifestyle. Like his friend Erasmus, More combined his religious and intellectual pursuits into one humanistic ideal that he pursued for the rest of his life. The ultimate expression of this ideal came with the publication of *Utopia* (1516). In his adult life, More served King Henry VIII and Parliament, and in 1521 he was knighted. When Henry declared himself head of the Church of England in 1531, however, More was forced to choose between his king and his Church. Faithful to the Church until his last days, More resigned his chancellor position and three years later refused to swear an oath endorsing King Henry VIII's authority over the Church of England and nullifying that of the pope in England. More was sent to the Tower of London and was beheaded July 6, 1535.

François Rabelais (c. 1494–1553)

Details about François Rabelais's life are incomplete, but it is believed that he was born circa

1494 in Chinon, France, into a wealthy family. Rabelais embodied the spirit of the Renaissance, which encouraged the pursuit of multiple vocations and interests. In his varied career, Rabelais worked as priest, physician, scholar, and writer. He also served his brother, the governor of Italy's Piedmont region, as an intermediary in the escalating conflicts between Catholics and Protestants. This was an ironic task, since Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* was condemned by the Sorbonne—the Catholic theological faculty at the University of Paris—as sympathetic to the Lutheran cause, while the Calvinists (Protestants) thought Rabelais's books promoted atheism. Despite this animosity from religious groups, Rabelais's books enjoyed a wide circulation, thanks to his protection from the French crown. Most of Rabelais's work was written in the French vernacular, which inspired other French writers to do the same. Rabelais's writings influenced other European humanists as well, most notably Cervantes. Rabelais died in 1553 in France.

William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

Tradition holds that William Shakespeare, son of John and Mary Arden Shakespeare, was born on April 23, 1564, in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, although the specific date of his birth has not been verified. In fact, for a man who is regarded by many critics as one of the most important writers in history, surprisingly little is known about his life. Most of the details are derived through speculation. Because his father was a man of some civic importance, it is assumed that Shakespeare received a well-rounded, humanistic education. Scholars also make evidence of Shakespeare's references to schools in his plays as some measure of his own education. Given the enormous variety of experiences Shakespeare describes in his plays, it is also assumed that he pursued or observed many vocations and activities. Not much else is known about Shakespeare until 1592, when he became popular as an actor and writer in the London theater scene. He wrote more than thirty plays, including *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Julius Caesar*. Shakespeare died in Stratford-upon-Avon, on April 23, 1616, exactly fifty-two years after his birth.

Representative Works

Don Quixote

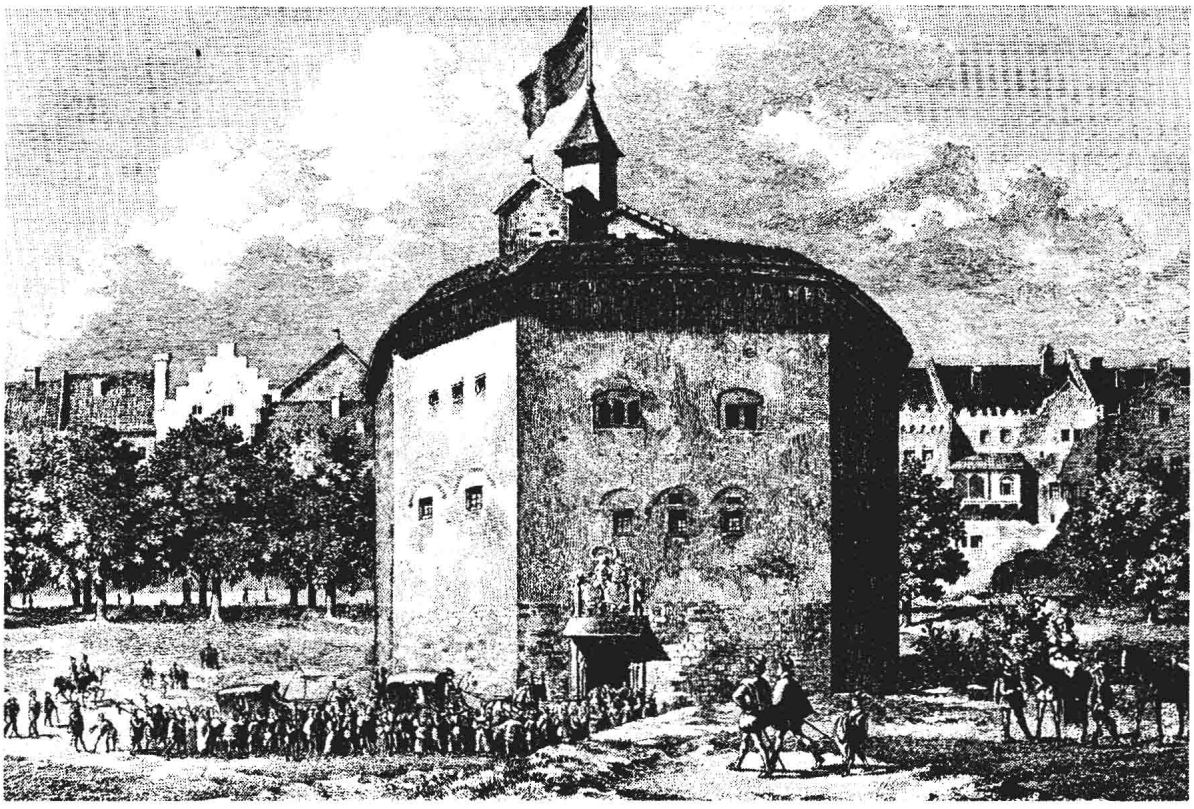
The two parts of Miguel de Cervantes's *The History of that ingenious gentleman: Don Quixote de La Mancha*, commonly referred to as simply *Don Quixote*, were published in 1605 and 1615, respectively. Both parts are generally included together in one publication. The story details the misadventures of an old man who has gone mad from reading too many chivalric romances, a form of medieval literature that was popular in Spain during Cervantes's lifetime. True to the form of chivalry, the old man idealizes everything he sees, to much humorous effect. At the end of the novel, Quixote comes to his senses and denounces chivalric ideals before he dies. The novel painted an accurate picture of life in early seventeenth-century Spain and struck a resonant chord with Cervantes's public. Although Cervantes himself thought the work nothing more than a parody, modern critics have noted the book's Renaissance view of favoring realism over idealism and have credited the book for its influence on the development of the modern novel. In addition, Cervantes's novel spawned the term "quixotic" (the pursuit of foolish ideals), which is still used in the twenty-first century.

The Essays

When Michel de Montaigne wrote his collection of inquiries known as *The Essays*, first published in 1580, he created the modern literary essay form. However, the book itself—composed of three books of 107 chapters of widely varying length—is not organized into essays as recognized by modern readers. Rather, the term "essays," translated from the original French title of the book, *Les essais* (meaning "tests" or "attempts"), refers to the introspective, or self-driven, experimental methods that Montaigne used to explore the limits of his own human experience—the dominant idea of Humanism. This method is the only unifying factor in the book. The essays lack chronological order and sometimes contradict each other. In some cases, the essays are about subjects that have nothing to do with the title, and in other cases, the author switches topics within the essay. Although a few critics have attacked this lack of cohesiveness, the majority have looked past the structure of the book to its idea of introspection and its use of a conversational tone that creates an intimate bond between author and reader. Montaigne's in-depth, critical examination of subjects both large and small emphasized the idea of extreme skepticism popular in humanist thought, which influenced later Renaissance writers, including Shakespeare.

Hamlet

William Shakespeare was first and foremost a humanist, and all of his plays distinctly capture this



The Globe Theatre

Renaissance spirit. In his first tragedy, *Hamlet*, Shakespeare gives his title character an introspective intellect that is both humanist and modern. The play, published in 1600 or 1601, details the internal struggle that Prince Hamlet faces in deciding whether or not to avenge his father's murder. Although his father's ghost commands Hamlet to kill the murderer (Hamlet's uncle), Hamlet is not so easily swayed and thinks through the problem for himself. In the process, Hamlet discusses many ideas about philosophy and human experience, all the while experiencing a spiritual crisis. The play resonated with Shakespeare's contemporary audience and has continued to impact audiences and critics into the twenty-first century, many of whom note its psychological depth.

The Praise of Folly

Desiderius Erasmus published his satire *The Praise of Folly* in 1511. Making use of the goddess Folly, the book features biting commentary on the injustices the author perceived in his world, most notably examples of religious foolishness such as the sale of indulgences (vouchers people could buy to absolve themselves of sin). When the work was released, it angered conservative Church officials. In Renaissance fashion, Erasmus incorporates classical references throughout the work and parodies the blind idealism of medieval times, a technique which influenced later humanist writers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including Cervantes. Erasmus's use of the word "folly" in different ways throughout the book has kept critics busy for the last four centuries trying to ascertain Erasmus's true intentions with the work.

The Prince

It can be argued that no other work in the history of literature has inspired more long-term, widespread distaste than Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*, published in 1532, five years after the author's death. Although Machiavelli intended the work to be a handbook for political leaders, most readers in the sixteenth century were outwardly disgusted by the book's cold discussion and support of the unethical methods, such as murder, that successful leaders used to acquire and remain in power. At the time of its publication, the book was condemned as a manual for tyranny, and many critics since that time have had a similar response to

the work. Largely due to the deliberate spread of mistranslations of *The Prince*, English Renaissance writers like Shakespeare and Marlowe incorporated negative depictions of Machiavelli into some of their works. The book even inspired the term "Machiavellian" (meaning duplicitous), which remains in use into the twenty-first century.

It has only been in the last two centuries that *The Prince* has been accurately translated and reevaluated in its historical context. In this new light, the intentions of the author have been hotly debated. Some critics have conjectured that Machiavelli was simply reporting on behaviors that he observed, while others believe that Machiavelli wrote the book as a satiric attack on tyranny. In any case, through works like *The Prince*, Machiavelli has been referred to as the founder of empirical political science.

Utopia

Thomas More's *Utopia*, published in 1516, is one of the most influential works written during the Renaissance. The book has two parts. The first critiques the social and political problems More saw, while the second describes life in an idealistic fictional society called Utopia. Utopians employ various communist methods to prevent problems experienced in sixteenth-century England. In both parts, More himself is the narrator and, as such, acts as the Renaissance skeptic for the reader. In addition to criticizing his own society, he also criticizes as absurd the methods that the utopians use, causing critics to debate what More's true beliefs were. The author never resolves the issues, leaving the book open-ended instead of trying to provide a clear solution. Critics have noted that this ambiguity invited his readers to join in the discussion on these topics, a call heeded by other Renaissance writers.

Themes

Antiquity

The Renaissance was sparked by a return to a classical style of learning, which had largely been ignored during the Middle Ages, when most writers glorified the Catholic Church and its teachings. As cities began to prosper, religious corruption increased and the influence of the Church waned; however, writers rediscovered the classics and began to incorporate them into their own works. "My father was neither the Chaos, nor Orcus, nor Saturn, nor Jupiter," says Erasmus's personified "Folly" in *The Praise of Folly*, referring to four gods, who were figures from the stories of the successions of the gods in Greek and Roman mythology. With the advent of the printing press in the 1450s, the age of mass-market print distribution began, and more writers were able to receive a classical education.

Individualism

Study of the classical languages and values moved Renaissance writers to incorporate the classical style into their own works and encouraged a more worldly view than that of Middle Age religious writings, so that writers and scholars began to look beyond the Church's teachings and to take matters into their own hands, including the interpretion of the scriptures. This dramatic shift in

Media Adaptations

- *Don Quixote* was adapted as a television movie in 2000 by Hallmark Entertainment. It was directed by Peter Yates and starred John Lithgow as Don Quixote and Bob Hoskins as Sancho Panza. The movie is available through Turner Network Television (TNT).
- *Hamlet* was adapted by Pilgrim Pictures as a classic 1948 film, directed by and starring Laurence Olivier in the title role. Today, it is available from Universal-International distributors. Several of Shakespeare's plays, under the following titles, have been adapted for film by Kenneth Branagh serving as writer and director: *Love's Labour's Lost* (2000), *Hamlet* (1996), *In the Bleak Midwinter* (1995, also known as *A Midwinter's Tale*), *Much Ado about Nothing* (1993), and *Henry V* (1989). Branagh also stars in the first two and the last two of these productions.
- Niccolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* was adapted to an audiocassette, entitled *Prince*, and was published by Blackstone Audiobooks in 1997.
- Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* was adapted to audiocassette and was published by Blackstone Audiobooks in December 1991.

thought, from relying totally on the wisdom of the Church to developing understanding through scholarship, led to the intense examination and appreciation for the human individual. This movement was called Humanism. The glorification of humans and human experience eventually led to the idea that humans could achieve perfection in this life as opposed to only in a divine paradise. Shakespeare's Danish prince Hamlet echoes this sentiment in a famous passage from *Hamlet*: "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculties!" (Faculties in this sense means "abilities.")

Faith in Reason

With the resurgence in classical learning and the focus on more secular, or nonreligious, human issues, scholars and writers embraced a spirit of skepticism and began to place a greater importance on reason. This belief was directly contrary to Church teachings, which encouraged people to have faith in the Church alone. However, it is important to note that the humanists were not against the Church. On the contrary, most humanists believed their faith was strengthened by reason, and when they used rational or skeptical arguments against the Church, it was in an attempt to inspire reform of the Church's practices. In addition to its applications to the Church, humanists also used reason to rebel against the unrealistic ideals popular in medieval literary works, most notably the chivalric romances. Cervantes's *Don Quixote* embodied this application. The old man in the story is so blinded by the idealism he has read about in medieval romances that he can no longer see the truth, thinks he is a knight, and goes seeking adventures. In one of the most famous examples from the story, Quixote attempts to fight a number of windmills, which he mistakes for giants. Says Quixote: "This is noble, righteous warfare, for it is wonderfully useful to God to have such an evil race wiped from the face of the earth."

Education

Education was extremely important to Renaissance writers, and they pursued their own educations with vigor. As literacy increased due to the printing revolution and more people than just scholars were able to read, writers also turned their focus outward. Historian Norman Davies says in *Europe*, "The humanists knew that to create a New Man one had to start from schoolboys and students." From students, Renaissance writers turned to other specific sections of the public, toward whom they aimed a number of educational publications detailing the proper ways to do just about everything. In 1518, Baldassare Castiglione wrote *The Courtier*, a manual for courtly behavior. In 1530, Erasmus wrote *Manners for Children*. In 1532, Guillaume Budé emphasized the importance of learning itself in *The Right and Proper Institution of the Study of Learning*, while in the same year, Machiavelli wrote *The Prince*, his handbook for government leaders.

Style

Vernacular

The Renaissance movement began with a resurgence in classical learning, including the study and proper use of Latin. However, Latin was the language of scholars, not the common person. As more people became literate, many authors began to write in their own vernacular, or native language, to reach this wider audience. At the same time, many writers attempted to demonstrate that their native languages were just as good as Latin, as Rabelais did when he published his *Gargantua and Pantagruel* in his native French. In addition, many writers produced works defending the decision to use vernacular, of which Joachim du Bellay's *Defence and Illustration of the French Language* is one of the most famous. "I do not, however, consider our vulgar tongue, as it now is, to be so vile, so abject as do these ambitious admirers of the Greek and Latin tongues," says Bellay, arguing against the prevailing belief of the time that only the classical languages could produce literary greatness.

Irony

Irony is found in literature in two forms, verbal and situational. In its most basic sense, verbal irony refers to saying one thing when meaning the opposite, often for a humorous effect. Situational irony, on the other hand, refers to an instance where a situation directly contradicts the expected outcome. For example, in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the title character is given false confidence from a prophecy by three witches, stating that he cannot be killed by a man born of a woman. At the end of the play, Macbeth relies on this prophecy when he goes to battle Macduff and is so sure he will kill the man that he taunts him, telling Macduff about the prophecy that he cannot be killed. However, as Macduff tells Macbeth:

> Despair thy charm;
> And let the angel whom thou still hast serv'd

Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb
Untimely ripp'd.

Because Macduff was not technically "born," he has the capability of killing Macbeth, which he does. This is contrary to the expectations of both Macbeth and the audience.

Satire

Satire is a sort of attack or protest, which is created by portraying the object of the protest in an unfavorable manner. In Renaissance times, writers like Erasmus and his friend More responded to the social injustices they saw with satirical attacks, as an example from Erasmus's *The Praise of Folly* demonstrates. When speaking about Christians, who he says are "enslaved to blindness and ignorance," Erasmus writes that priests encourage this blindness because they have wisely foreseen "that the people (like cows, which never give down their milk so well as when they are gently stroked), would part with less if they knew more." Erasmus is saying that if people were more educated about the Church and its injustices instead of just relying on the Church's comforting assurances, people would not be so willing to give their faith to the Church. By referring to the process of duping the people into faith as milking a cow, Erasmus sets up a negative image in the readers' minds and causes them to think about his argument.

Utopia

More's *Utopia* inspired many imaginary societies in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and is so famous that the word "utopia" now refers both to any idealized place and the literary form that utilizes such a place. Renaissance utopian works sought to inspire social change by creating a new, imaginary, society that addressed problems in a different way. Two related examples from *Utopia* illustrate how More did this. In the first part of the book, More has his fictional character Raphael Hythloday talk to Cardinal Morton (King Henry VII's chancellor) about some reforms he proposes. Hythloday brings up a current problem of the day, the wool trade. Says Hythloday, "Your sheep . . . that commonly are so meek and eat so little; now, as I hear, they have become so greedy and fierce that they devour men themselves." This is not a literal eating of men, but a symbolic one. It points to the fact that landlords who wished to get rich from the wool trade were creating widespread poverty by stealing all of the common land people formerly used for agriculture, so that the landlords' sheep could graze on it. As a result, many of the new rural poor crowded the cities, which led to other social ills such as disease and crime. In the second part of the book, about utopia itself, Hythloday demonstrates how the utopians do not have this problem because they conserve their resources when making and using clothes: "They use linen cloth most because it requires the least labour . . . . a Utopian is content with a single cloak, and generally wears it for two years."

Topics for Further Study

- The Renaissance period is not the only time in human history in which a culture has experienced a rebirth of older values or ways of life. Research one other culture that has taken such a renewed interest, and write a short paper about how this rebirth changed the culture.
- William Shakespeare is regarded by many to be one of history's greatest writers, and yet little is known of his background. Research what you can find of Shakespeare's life and the historical details of town life and the theater of his time period. Write an essay describing what may have been a typical day for Shakespeare, including what it may have been like to work in the theater of his time.
- Although the humanists did not intend this, their writings helped to spark the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation. Research the particulars behind each of these movements, and then compare the two views of religion. What is the same? What is different?

Movement Variations

The Protorenaissance

Many historians and critics acknowledge a "protorenaissance" that preceded and laid the groundwork for the actual Renaissance. While critics are in disagreement as to when this protorenaissance began, the period lasted approximately from the twelfth century (when many universities

were built) to the first half of the fifteenth century (up until the advent of the printing press). During this time period, many influential writers began to create the Renaissance spirit that would influence later Renaissance writers. The most notable of these are three Italian writers—Dante Alighieri, Francesco Petrarch, and Giovanni Boccaccio—and English writer Geoffrey Chaucer. When Dante wrote his *Divine Comedy* in Italian in the early fourteenth century, he literally created and defined the written version of Italian, paving the way for later Renaissance writers to develop their own vernaculars. At around the same time, Petrarch not only helped to track down and reproduce many of the great classical works later writers would study, he also helped popularize the use of the sonnet, a type of lyrical poem that many European Renaissance writers utilized for centuries.

Giovanni Boccaccio also helped to recover and translate ancient texts and, as historian Paul Johnson notes in his book *The Renaissance: A Short History*, "he produced a number of reference works, including two massive classical encyclopedias," one on the topography of the ancient world and one categorizing all of the ancient deities. Boccaccio also wrote *The Decameron*, a collection of one hundred tales some critics think influenced Geoffrey Chaucer. Chaucer's work, most notably *The Canterbury Tales*, published in 1400 after his death, helped to develop the English vernacular, inspiring later English writers as Dante's work had done in Italy. *The Canterbury Tales*, which tell the stories of several pilgrims on their way to Canterbury, are also noted for their humanistic depiction of late medieval society. Johnson says of the pilgrims: "These men and women jump out from the pages, and live on in the memory, in ways that not even Dante could contrive."

The American Renaissance

Ralph Waldo Emerson issued a ringing challenge to the literary community of the young American nation in his 1837 Harvard address, "The American Scholar": if American writers were "free and brave," with words "loaded with life," they would usher in a "new age." Emerson looms over that age, whether as an inspiration to reformers and artists of his generation and the next or as a bugbear to those distrustful of social and institutional change or literary innovation. Never wishing to lead a party or to be imitated himself, he always thought it his role (and that of the scholar) to provoke others to discover their own resources of genius and power. The rich literary production in New England during the next quarter century—in many senses a response to Emerson's provocation—constituted what has come to be known as the "American Renaissance."

The Renaissance Man

The Renaissance inspired the term "Renaissance man," which defines an ideal to which men of the time period aspired. A Renaissance man was a person who pursued as many vocations and interests as possible, following the humanist notion that man's capacity to learn and improve is endless. This ideal was emphasized in the Renaissance education, which included study in several different areas. One of the most famous examples from the time period is the Italian Leonardo Da Vinci, who was accomplished as a painter, sculptor, and scientist, just to name of few of his many vocations. Davies says, Leonardo "possessed seemingly limitless talents to pursue his equally limitless curiosity." In the twenty-first century, the term Renaissance man or woman applies to any well-rounded, learned individual who is successful in many areas.

Historical Context

From the mid-fifteenth to the early sixteenth centuries, Europe experienced many vital changes, many of which were interconnected, and most of which were built upon technical, social, and political developments from the late Middle Ages. The most notable of these was the development of printing, which in turn influenced a number of other events. In Germany, Johann Gutenberg's invention of the moveable-type printing press in 1450, which combined a number of existing technologies, quickly caught on in other European countries. With the renewed interest in classical literature and the increasing contributions to Renaissance literature, book production rose steadily. Johnson notes, "By 1500, after forty-five years of the printed book, the total has been calculated at nine million." As vernacular languages gained in popularity, the number of printed books increased even more.

Meanwhile, an increasing number of people were flocking to universities, which had been created in the late Middle Ages to educate members of the clergy. However, as literacy increased and people renewed their interest in classical education,

Compare & Contrast

- **1450s:** German businessman Johann Gutenberg prints the first Bible (in Latin) from a printing press.

  1510s: Martin Luther's theses and other literature promoting reformation of the Catholic Church are quickly disseminated through printing presses.

  Today: There continues to be a market for printed books, though literature is also being spread and published by electronic media.

- **1450s:** After decades of bitter rivalry, the Italian city-states form the "Italian League" and agree to protect each other from outside attacks.

  1510s: Machiavelli writes *The Prince*, an instruction manual on how monarchs gain and wield power. He addresses it to the Medici family, the unofficial rulers of the Florentine republic.

  Today: After many transformations in Italian government, city-states have been abandoned in favor of a democratic republic.

- **1450s:** After fifty years, Italian sculptor Lorenzo Ghiberti completes his famous bronze doors for the northern and eastern portals of the baptistery of the cathedral of Florence, which depict scenes from the Bible in astonishing realism.

  1510s: Erasmus publishes *The Praise of Folly*, a seminal humanist work that advocates interpreting the Bible with realistic, scholarly methods to determine God's true intent instead of relying solely on church tradition.

  Today: Some people believe that, if the original text of the Bible is fed into a computer and analyzed for certain patterns, hidden messages can be revealed.

universities began to offer more secular curricula like law. Many Renaissance writers were trained at these universities.

The Renaissance was also a time of mobility, both within Europe and abroad. As the Holy Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic Church waned in power, Italy's city-states and Europe's monarchies increased in importance. With this development, Rome was no longer the intellectual or cultural center of Europe, and Renaissance scholars began to travel elsewhere, spreading their ideals in the process. The most notable of these traveling scholars was Erasmus, whose visits to England in the late fifteenth century introduced him to several other influential humanists and helped him to develop the ideas that would make him famous. As Johnson notes, Erasmus came in 1498 to study at Oxford University in England because "it was no longer necessary to go as far as Italy."

Meanwhile, explorations outside Europe were on the rise, and a whole new world was being discovered. The successful navigation around Africa's Cape of Good Hope in the 1450s was one such voyage, while Christopher Columbus's discovery of America in 1492 was another. The resulting expansion of the world in the eyes of Europeans influenced Renaissance writers like Rabelais, whose *Gargantua and Pantagruel* incorporates fantastical islands that can be reached by ocean travel, and features very odd beings: "We got sight of a triangular island.... The people there.... all of them, men, women, and children, have their noses shaped like an ace of clubs."

In England, the Renaissance spirit of criticism increasingly focused on the Catholic Church. In 1517, Martin Luther posted his famous ninety-five theses to the door of his church; these, with the aid of the printing press, were also widely distributed. One of the theses demonstrates the main point of his argument: "Thus those preachers of indulgences are in error who say that by the indulgences of the pope a man is freed and saved from all punishment." Although Luther, like the humanists who inspired him, had hoped his theses would inspire a reformation of the Church while keeping it whole, most historians agree that his symbolic act

launched the Protestant Reformation. From this point on, parishioners gathered in two factions, Catholics and Protestants. In 1529, the Catholic Church refused to acknowledge King Henry VIII's divorce from his second wife, Catherine of Aragon, who had failed to bear the king a male heir. Two years later, Henry retaliated by declaring himself the supreme head of the Church of England.

The Protestant Reformation inspired the Catholic Church's response, the Counter-Reformation, in which the Church changed its tactics and started to embrace some of the humanist aspects it had originally fought so hard against. During these two major movements, both Catholic and Protestant printers used their trade as a weapon, creating propaganda literature they distributed to people in hopes of keeping or gaining their faith.

Critical Overview

The confusion over what constitutes the official period of the Renaissance and its role in history dates back to 1858. Samuel Johnson says, "The term 'Renaissance' was first prominently used by the French historian Jules Michelet." Two years later, Jacob Burckhardt immortalized the term in the publication of his *The Civilization of the Renaissance*, in which the period was viewed as the beginning of the modern age.

From that time until late in the twentieth century, historians and critics alike envisioned the Renaissance as a transition period between the Dark Ages—in which there was little or no technical innovation or cultivation of the arts—and the modern age. In fact, Renaissance critics themselves were under a similar impression about the importance of the time period. Critic Vernon Hall sums it up in his book *A Short History of Literary Criticism*, when speaking about the literary critics of the time: "Looking upon the Middle Ages as a semibarbaric period, they were out to bestow form, classical form, on the literature and life of their age."

During the Renaissance, the new humanistic literature inspired both positive and negative responses from readers and critics. Because many Renaissance works criticized the Catholic Church, they were not received well by either the Church or the Church's supporters, who would often ban or burn these works. On the other hand, for those who were open to the new ideas Renaissance literature proposed, the works were received very well. So to a large extent, the reception of a work depended on the predisposition of the critic examining it. In addition, in many cases the writer and critic were the same, as in the aforementioned examples of works promoting the use of vernacular language. Hall says about the Renaissance critics, "regardless of whether their influence was good or bad they succeeded admirably in doing one thing. They established literary criticism as an independent form of literature."

As scholars in later years have looked back on the Renaissance, critics have tended to focus on one country. Says Jonathan Hart in his introduction to *Reading the Renaissance*, a collection of essays examining the Renaissance as a whole, "Most often, scholars examine the national literatures of the Renaissance in isolation."

Some of the most famous criticism has been for one particular author, as in the famous "Preface to Shakespeare" by eighteenth-century writer and critic Samuel Johnson, in which he notes, "Shakespeare is above all writers. . . . the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirrour of manners and life." Shakespeare has been, without fail, the single most studied writer of the Renaissance, in part because his works synthesize many of the humanistic themes that Renaissance writers employed, which still ring true with many critics and audiences in the twenty-first century.

Criticism

Ryan D. Poquette

Poquette has a bachelor's degree in English and specializes in writing about literature. In the following essay, Poquette discusses Doctor Faustus as an example of two warring ideologies in Christopher Marlowe's play of the same name.

Christopher Marlowe's play, *Doctor Faustus*, written in 1604 at the height of the Renaissance in England, lends itself to countless interpretations. Critics have read it as an extreme humanist play, focusing on Faustus's decision to pursue knowledge at all costs, even damnation, a concept which he does not initially believe in. Others, however, have read it as a medieval Christian morality play, a type of cautionary tale that demonstrates the battle for a human soul between primal good and evil forces like "God" and "The Devil." Indeed, there is evidence in the text to support both of these as-

Anatomical charts created by Leonardo da Vinci

sumptions. The truth is, the play is both. Faustus, a product of the transitional times in which he (and the playwright, Marlowe) lived, is a character so saturated in both medieval Christianity and Renaissance Humanism that he is incapable of committing to either. In the end, this spells his ruin.

As the play starts, Faustus has come to a decision. True to humanist fashion, he has set himself on a task of consuming all of the worldly knowledge he can, and in doing so "thou hast attained the end." Faustus here begins his practice of referring to himself as "thou" (the Renaissance version of "you") in addition to referring to himself as "I." He will continue to refer to himself as "thou" or "Doctor Faustus" off and on throughout the play. By having Faustus refer to himself as both an insider ("I") and outsider ("thou" and "Doctor. Faustus"), Marlowe underscores the division between fantasy and reality on which Faustus will tread on the road to his damnation.

This road is deliberately chosen by Faustus. Having reached the limits of human knowledge, he turns instead to the magic arts: "A sound magician is a mighty god. / Here, Faustus, try thy brains to gain a deity." With this decision to turn to magic to try to make himself a god, Faustus turns to the

What Do I Study Next?

- Allan Atlas's *Renaissance Music: Music in Western Europe, 1400–1600* (1998) is a comprehensive book about music during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Europe.
- Craig Harbison's *The Mirror of the Artist: Northern Renaissance Art in Its Historical Context* (1995) examines the origins of Renaissance art in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Netherlands, France, and Germany.
- *Architecture of the Renaissance: From Brunelleschi to Palladio* (1996), written by Bertrand Jestaz and translated by Caroline Beamish, provides a good overview of the architectural rebirth in fifteenth-century Italy, which was inspired by the columns, rounded arches, and classical architecture of Greece and Rome.
- Florence was the key city for the arts during the Italian Renaissance. *Florence and the Renaissance: The Quattrocentro* (1997), by Alain J. Lemaitre and Erich Lessing, examines the course of creative development in architecture, sculpture, and paintings during the Renaissance in Italy.
- Ingrid D. Rowland's *The Culture of the High Renaissance: Ancients and Moderns in Sixteenth-Century Rome* (1998) employs an interdisciplinary approach to explore the cultural conditions that produced the Renaissance.

dark side, and the play takes a turn from skeptical Humanism to medieval mysticism. A true humanist, schooled in all of the natural sciences, would not believe in magic. This is one of the many paradoxes in the play.

After seeking out some magician friends, Faustus acquires the skill to conjure. His first major act is to call forth the devil, Mephistopheles, which he does with the aid of some Christian implements, such as holy water. When the devil appears for the first time, he is so hideous that he scares Faustus: "I charge thee to return and change thy shape. / Thou art too ugly to attend on me." Faustus forces Mephistopheles to come back in the shape of a "Franciscan friar," which is more pleasing to him. Faustus is willing to forsake himself and his religion, but only if the items he gets in return fit a certain mold. As Roland M. Frye notes in his article "Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*: The Repudiation of Humanity," "From this point onward Faustus's hold upon reality steadily dissolves."

Faustus's delusions start with his failure to believe that Mephistopheles is actually in hell. Mephistopheles explains that any existence that does not include the grace of God is a hell, and so Mephistopheles suffers whether he is in the earthly realm or the underworld. Faustus refuses to believe the devil and forges ahead with his plan to surrender his soul to Lucifer in exchange for "four-and-twenty years" to have Mephistopheles as a servant to attend on Faustus and give him whatever power he needs.

Still, Faustus falters before he actually goes through with the process; pausing, he entertains the thought of God, although he quickly scolds himself for such thoughts: "What boots it then to think of God or heaven? / Away with such vain fancies and despair!" Faustus even goes to the other extreme, saying he will turn to Beelzebub and "offer lukewarm blood of new-born babes." Again, the forces of rational Humanism and medieval theology war with each other within Faustus, but this is the first time Faustus has offered to murder for his cause. It is at this point that other forces start fighting with each other, namely a good angel and bad angel, who come in to try to fight for Faustus's soul. This is much in the style of a medieval morality play. The evil angel wins the battle by tempting Faustus with the power he so desperately craves.

Faustus, enraptured with the idea of being able to have Mephistopheles for his pet and to be able

to "raise up spirits" whenever he wishes, makes the pact with Mephistopheles and Lucifer. It is only at this point that Faustus, confident in his decision, decides to ask Mephistopheles again about the nature of hell. Once again the demon gives an answer similar to the first one, saying that "All places shall be hell that is not heaven." It is interesting that Faustus asks this question. He is confident he will not be damned in hell and that in his rational mind he has gotten the better end of the bargain. He thinks he will have twenty-four years of power and then get off easy, and yet the first question he asks Mephistopheles after officially pledging his soul to Lucifer is what hell is like. Yet once again, Faustus does not believe the devil's answer, saying, "Come, I think hell's a fable." If this is so, then why does Faustus ask about hell? Is he so sure in his mind that he is safe that he wishes to taunt the devil? Or is there a nagging doubt from his Christian side that has prompted him to ask the question? This is another instance where Faustus's contradictory beliefs introduce a paradox in the play.

From this point on in the play, the nagging doubts in Faustus's mind increase in frequency. He asks for a wife from Mephistopheles, and the devil brings him another devil in the guise of a woman. This is not what Faustus requested, and so he is offended. But Mephistopheles cannot give him a human wife. The devil can give him power, but it has its limits. Instead, if Faustus asks for human women, he will bring more devils. Mephistopheles hints at this when he says he will bring women "as beautiful" as Lucifer was, before his expulsion from heaven. Faustus glosses over this and the other spells the devil demonstrates. Faustus is intent on his real wish, which is to "raise up spirits when I please." His wish to be able to raise the dead is reminiscent of Jesus' raising of Lazarus, of which Faustus is aware. Faustus is at this point a humanist to the extreme, for if one carries along to a superlative degree the idea of believing in human power to better oneself, it turns into the belief that humanity can supersede God.

However, Faustus soon takes a turn back to his theological side. After reviewing Mephistopheles's spell book, he sees the error of his ways. He asks the devil to show him the heavens: "Now would I have a book where I might see all characters and planets of the heavens, that I might know their motions and dispositions." The devil shows Faustus, who in the next scene realizes that he is damned and curses Mephistopheles, "Because thou hast deprived me of those joys."

"Faustus is at this point a humanist to the extreme, for if one carries along to a superlative degree the idea of believing in human power to better oneself, it turns into the belief that humanity can supersede God."

Faustus now fights with himself more openly, first praying to God to save him, then begging Lucifer to forgive him for praying to God. He is a man unhinged, and he alternately clings to one ideology and then the other. In his more Christian moments, he believes in God and hell but thinks he is past the point of saving. In his more humanistic moments, he asks incessant questions of Mephistopheles, trying to disprove the existence of God and hell so that he will not be damned. "Tell me who made the world," Faustus asks the devil, who cannot say God's name, and so refuses. Instead Mephistopheles says: "Think thou on hell, Faustus, for thou art damned." In other words, not only should Faustus forget his salvation, he should concentrate on the fact that when his contract with Lucifer comes due, his life could be made very bad in hell.

Faustus decides to stick to his damnation and starts to enjoy his power. Or at least he tries. Most of his attempts to use magic backfire, as in his attempt to play a trick on the pope, which ends with he and Mephistopheles fleeing before they are cursed: "Forward and backward, to curse Faustus to hell." This is a hard lesson for Faustus. It is no accident that Marlowe chose to have his character try to provoke the pope, who in the medieval Catholic religion is the direct servant of God. Here, Faustus has aligned himself with evil and tries to win over good but cannot.

The rest of his attempts at magic are even worse, as they are squandered doing deeds for others, most of which do not fall in line with his original plan of playing a commanding role over all of creation. "I am content to do whatsoever your

majesty shall command me," says Faustus to the emperor, who has Faustus bring forth the spirit of Alexander the Great and his paramour.

At the end of his twenty-four years, Faustus has wasted all of his time and reflects on his plight, being once again of the medieval mind: "What art thou, Faustus, but a man condemned to die?" In one last attempt to please some scholars, Faustus has Mephistopheles bring forth the spirit of Helen of Troy. "Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?" Of course, it is not. None of the spirits that the devil has conjured have been human, but rather demons, just like the first demon Mephistopheles brought forth to Faustus for a "wife." However, at this point, Faustus is lost, and in his delusion, he sees Helen, not the demon, whose "lips suck forth my soul."

The play, which has taken a roller-coaster ride through competing ideologies, ends on the medieval note, as Faustus awaits his damnation, trying one last time to repent by throwing away the quest for knowledge that has damned him: "I'll burn my books. Ah Mephistopheles!" Faustus is carried off to hell, which is unfortunately more real than his humanist side would have wished.

Source: Ryan D. Poquette, Critical Essay on Renaissance Literature, in *Literary Movements for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Vernon Hall Jr.

In the following essay, Hall examines the poet's station in English society during the Renaissance—to belong to, and write for and about, England and its aristocracy.

One cannot discuss the position of poetry in a society without understanding the position of the poet. In Renaissance England the conception of the poet as a seer and divine prophet is borrowed from the ancients and put to frequent use. Sidney says:

> Among the Romans a poet was called *Vates*, which is as much as a Diviner, Fore-seer, or Prophet, as by his conjoyned wordes *Vaticinium* and *Vaticinari* is manifest: so heavenly a title did that excellent people bestow upon this hart-ravishing knowledge.

Thomas Lodge lists such Biblical and church worthies as David, Paulinus, and the "Byshop of Nolanum" as men who were not ashamed to be called poets. He then continues:

> It is a pretye sentence, yet not so prety as pithy, *Poeta nascitur, Orator fit:* as who should say, Poetrye commeth from above, from a heavenly seate of a glorious God, unto an excellent creature man; an Orator is but made by exercise.

Since in this paper we are not interested in Neoplatonism or in any other formal philosophy, why did we bother to insert the above quotation? The answer is simple. In any society the ruling class soon learns, automatically, to use the value terms "good" and "bad" in a class sense, and this is equally true of religious terms. The conception of "divine right" is held by every ruling class that has a religious philosophy. So, when we learn that the poet is considered "divine," we should not be surprised to find that he also must be an aristocrat. Thus Spenser declaims in the *Shepheardes Calender:*

> O pierlesse Poesye, where is then thy place?
> If nor in Princes pallace the doe sitt:
> (And yet is Princes pallace the most fitt)
> Ne brest of baser birth doth thee embrace.

Spenser's abstract statement that only people of gentle blood are poets is concretized by Puttenham in his critical treatise, where after saying "In other ages . . . we read that Kinges & Princes have written great volumes and publisht them under their owne regall titles," he proceeds to give a list of royal poets that ranges from Julius Caesar to "our late soveraigne Lord, king Henry the eight," In a passage which supports our contention that the aristocrat identified "good" with his class, Spenser declares that in the past, poetry was limited to princes and high priests and that the trouble with poetry now is that it has been touched by the base hands of common people:

> Whilom in ages past none might professe
> But Princes and high Priests that secret skill,
> The sacred lawes therein they wont expresse,
> And with deepe Oracles their verses fill:
> Then was shee held in soveraigne dignitie,
> And made the noursling of Nobilitie.
>
> But now nor Prince nor Priest doth her maintayne,
> But suffer her prophaned for to bee
> Of the base vulgar, that with hands uncleane
> Dares to pollute her hidden mysterie.
> And treadeth under foote hir holie things,
> Which was the care of Kesars and of Kings.

Today, says Spenser, we can be thankful that Elizabeth, at least, upholds this noble tradition by writing poetry. Puttenham openly declares that poetry is the art (if not the mere plaything) of the aristocracy. He frankly admits that he writes his treatise for this class alone. He says:

> our chiefe purpose herein is for the learning of Ladies and young Gentlewomen, or idle Courtiers, desirous

> to become skilful in their owne mother tongue, and for their private recreation to make now & then ditties of pleasure, thinking for our parte none other science so fit for them & the place as that which teacheth *beau semblant*, the chiefe profession aswell of Courting as of poesie.

Puttenham's position is extreme, not in limiting poetry to gentle-folk, but in reducing it to a mere toy for them to play with. But what are his geometrical figures, his "tapers reversed," his "rondels displayed," his "triquete," his "Lozanges rabbated" but toys for the idle courtier? Isn't it this sort of thing which the "sage and serious" Spenser is thinking of when he declares that among a section of the courtiers the "artes of school" are "counted but toyes to busie ydle braines." Spenser does not like this attitude, because he considers poetry a science for people with gentle blood, a serious science. This passage from the *Faerie Queene*, which happens to be on the art of horsemanship, is equally applicable to the art of poetry:

> In brave pursuit of honorable deed,
> There is I know not what great difference
> Betweene the vulgar and the noble seed,
> Which unto things of valorous pretence
> Seemes to be borne by native influence;
> As feates of armes, and love to entertaine;
> But chiefly skill to ride, seemes a science
> Proper to gentle bloud; some others faine
> To menage steeds, as did this vaunter; but in vaine.

One should never forget that the Renaissance also considers itself a learned age. Naturally, the aristocracy considers learning aristocratic, and the literary critics at times almost identify the two. As we remember, the "hexametrists" felt that the way to remove poetry from the people was to use a learned form that only the educated poet could master. Notice how Puttenham equates learning with the court when he speaks of "the authors owne purpose, which is to make a rude rimer a learned and a courtly Poet." Not a little justification for this attitude could be found, indeed. Leaving aside the polyhedral learning of numerous courtiers, one only has to think of the linguistic attainments of Elizabeth or the classical interests of Lady Jane Grey. Spenser considers the patronage of learned men and the desire to be learned the very hallmark of nobility:

> It most behoves the honorable race
> Of mightie Peeres, true wisdome to sustaine,
> And with their noble countenaunce to grace
> The learned forheads, without gifts or gaine:
> Or rather learnd themselves behoves to bee:
> That is the girlond of Nobilitie.

The critics, aristocrats themselves for the most part, infer that the poet should be of gentle birth; yet we are faced with the well-known fact that publication is often considered beneath the dignity of the aristocrat."

Learning, and in no superficial sense, is considered necessary for the formation of the perfect courtier by all the writers of courtesy books in that age, and the nobleman in many cases attempted to live up to the standards therein set.

Nash's preface to *Greene's Menaphon* addressed "to the Gentleman Students of both Universities" is replete with the idea that poetry is a learned and gentlemanly occupation. He declaims against the playwrights "that could scarcelie latinize their necke-verse if they should have neede," and implies that a university education is necessary for him who would be a poet. Sidney says that the poet must be the monarch of all sciences. As a matter of actual opportunity, who but one closely connected with the aristocracy in the sixteenth century could pretend to such a title?

The critics, aristocrats themselves for the most part, infer that the poet should be of gentle birth; yet we are faced with the well-known fact that publication is often considered beneath the dignity of the aristocrat. Few persons of rank dare the disapproval of their coterie by openly publishing, as does James I of England. We all know the subterfuges employed: one poet pretends that his publisher published without his permission; another declares he has been forced to give a true copy of his verses, because a mangled pirate edition of his verses has already appeared. Many actually do not bother to publish at all. Puttenham complains:

> I know very many notable Gentlemen in the Court that have written commendably, and suppressed it agayne, or els suffred it to be publisht without their owne names to it; as if it were a discredit for a Gentleman to seeme learned and to shew himselfe amorous of any good Art.

A scene from the television movie Don Quixote, *which was originally written by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra*

The courtiers who were known as poets slighted the fact. Sidney throws out, "I knowe not by what mischance in these my not old yeres and idlest times, [I have] slipt into the title of a Poet." K. Myrick, in *Sir Philip Sidney as a Literary Craftsman*, declares that this aristocratic attitude toward poetry is a deliberately cultivated air of graceful negligence and borrows Castiglione's term "sprezzatura" as the most exact word. This "sweet disorder," to use Herrick's term, which Myrick declares is almost the same thing, this seemingly effortless production of good poetry is, then, a pose of the Renaissance courtier. It does not contradict the position that the poet must be a gentleman, since the attitude of "sprezzatura" does not reflect upon the value of poetry, it simply describes the "air" the courtier poet must assume.

The Purpose

The conception of the purpose of poetry by the poets and the critics of the Elizabethan age is of fundamental importance to the student who seeks to determine the content of their criticism. This problem has been the burning one in literary criticism from the Greeks to the present time and is the lodestone around which all other critical problems cluster. Find out what a given critic says on this point, and there will be revealed to you the fundamental philosophic and social preconceptions on which his work is built.

It is customary to begin the discussion of purpose with an examination of the Puritan attack on poetry and the answers of her defenders. We shall follow the tradition here. It is also customary to end the discussion with the replies to the attack. This, however, we shall not do, for it will be our contention that the questions under discussion in this particular controversy are not the ones which best reveal our writers' conceptions of the purpose of poetry. Gosson's main criticism and that of the other Puritan attackers is that poetry is immoral. They attack the playhouses as hotbeds of vice, they denounce the lewdness of poetry, and for the most part they are with Plato in asking that the poets be banished from the commonwealth. When we ask what are the vices the Puritans complain against, we discover that to a large measure they are foreign. A great part of the attack is against the Italianate fashions of the day. Like the moralists of all ages, they see wickedness in anything which comes from beyond the national boundaries. As Gregory Smith points out, these Puritans are middle-class men. They are moved as much by social and nationalistic stimulants as by "morality" in the more restricted religious sense. That the Italian influences are finding their way into England via aristocratic channels make them doubly unacceptable. On the other hand, the defenders of poetry are courtiers and aristocrats who are hardly conscious of the existence of the popular art that the Puritan knew, and their attitude to the problem is quite different. Naturally, the defenders are as much against "vice" as are the Puritans. Differences arise only when one begins to give content to these abstractions. So the defenders marshal the old arguments. The purpose of poetry is the "winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue," the poets "win men to virtue by pleasant instruction," poetry is the sugar coating to the pill of ethical truth, the end of poetry is to "teach and delight," and so forth. Thus, the defenders are as "moral" as their attackers. The question now arises as to what the "morality" of the defenders is. As we have seen above, the poet must be of gentle birth to write true poetry. It follows that the same requirement is requisite in the reader if he is to appreciate this poetry. Puttenham

is explicit as to the audience the poet writes for. He says:

> Our maker or Poet is appointed not for a judge, but rather for a pleader, and that of pleasant & lovely causes and nothing perillous, such as be those for the triall of life, limme, or livelyhood, and before judges neither sower or severe, but in the eare of princely dames, yong ladies, gentlewomen, and courtiers, beyng all for the most part either meeke or of pleasant humour.

Again, Puttenham speaks of certain types of poetry as fittest to entertain the "pretie amourets in Court . . . their delicate wits requiring some commendable exercise to keepe them from idlenesse." Now, when the critics require that the poet must be of gentle blood and they state that his audience is composed of gentle ladies and noble lords, one may suspect that the "morality" and "purpose" of poetry may be in some way connected with the aristocracy. The whole system of patronage implies that one end of poetry is to please the aristocracy. Spenser, who feels that he is not receiving as much patronage as he should, looks back with longing to a past age, when the good poet received a just reward:

> But ah *Mecœnas* is yclad in claye
> And great *Agustus* long ygoe is dead:
> And all the worthies liggen wrapt in leade,
> That matter made for Poets on to play:
> For ever, who in derring doe were dreade,
> The loftie verse of hem was loved aye.

Patronage was a necessity for the poet in Renaissance England. As Miss Sheavyn says, "Not a single writer who persevered in his vocation was free from obligations to patrons." Unfortunately, there were more writers than there were patrons, with the result that wealthy men were besieged by crowds of poets and would-be poets. Most of the patrons attempted to meet the situation by scattering their largess in small sums of money among a large group of writers. Only a few, such as Sir Philip Sidney and his sister Mary, had the discernment to reward generously the real poets among the mass of claimants. The end of unorganized, casual patronage was unfortunate for all concerned. The wealthy were annoyed by perpetual appeals and most of the poets had to cast all self-respect to the winds in order to write fulsome dedications to some noble lord in hopes of a few crowns recompense. The favors that came their way were not sufficient to keep body and soul together in most cases, and the professional penmen lived in sordid poverty. Nash describes his plight at not being able to gain patronage sufficient for his needs:

> All in veine, I sate up late and rose earely, contended with the colde and conversed with scarcitie; for all my labours turned to losse, my vulgar Muse was despised and neglected, my paines not regarded, or slightly rewarded, and I my selfe (in prime of my best wit) laid open to povertie... Wereupon ... I ... raild on my patrones.

Nevertheless, the poet must look for patrons and promise them fame by immortalizing their deeds.

Spenser puts the deeds of great men foremost as subjects of poetry and implies that when the aristocracy declines, poetry declines along with it. Poetry is thus doubly dependent on the aristocracy for patronage and for subject matter; but the aristocracy is equally dependent upon poetry. It is only through the songs of the poet that the fame of noble deeds is known to posterity:

> The sacred Muses have made alwaies claime
> To be the Nourses of nobility
> And Registres of everlasting fame
> To all that armes professe and chevalry.

This sentiment has added significance when one considers that it occurs in one of the dedicatory sonnets to the *Faerie Queene*. The purpose of these sonnets is to promise immortality in the poem to the lords who will patronize the poet. This is the theme of almost every sonnet. The one dedicated to the Earl of Essex begins:

> Magnificke Lord, whose vertues excellent
> Doe merit a most famous Poets witt,
> To be thy living praises instrument,
> Yet doe not sdeigne, to let thy name be writt
> In this base Poeme, for thee far unfitt.

The close connection between poetry and the ruling class is further attested by the fact that one of the most frequent defenses of poetry is based on the approbation of poetry by princes. Sidney mentions among others, Alexander, Caesar, and Scipio, while Webbe says that among other honors poetry has received must be mentioned the fact that "Kinges and Princes, great and famous men, did ever encourage, mayntaine, and reward Poets in al ages," because they recognized that the everlasting verses of poets alone could assure their immortality. In his *Arte of English Poesie* Puttenham devotes seven continuous pages to a listing of the "noble Emperours, Kings and Princes that have bene studious of poesie."

> It would constitute a serious omission if we failed to take note of the fact that one of the main incentives to poetry, one of the "purposes" of poetry, is to praise England. That the very people who make poetry an aristocratic thing are also strongly nationalistic is no

cause for surprise. Not only is the Elizabethan age nationalistic to such an extent that all literature of the age is colored by it, but particularly nationalistic are the members of the ruling class which for all practical purposes is the nation. This is plainly shown in the Bastard's last speech in *King John* about the return of the nobles to their fealty:

> Now these her princes are come home again,
> Come the three corners of the world in arms,
> And we shall shock them. Nought shall make us rue,
> If England to itself do rest but true.

Thus, an ever recurrent note in these treatises is the plea for more national literature and the praise of that which exists. Webbe's faith is typical:

> That there be as sharpe and quicke wittes in England as ever were among the peerlesse Grecians or renowmed Romaines, it were a note of no witte at all in me to deny. And is our speeche so course, or our phrase so harshe, that Poetry cannot therein finde a vayne whereby it may appeare like it selfe?

The aristocratic and the national purpose is blended in the queen. When Spenser writes "In that Faery Queene I meane glory in my generall intention, but in my particular I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our soveraine the Queene, and her kingdome in Faery land," he says that one of the purposes of his poem is to praise Elizabeth both as a person and as the representative of England and her glory. The figure of Elizabeth is a symbol which unites the aristocratic and the national ideals. Spenser is always conscious of this. In the *Shepheardes Calender* he promised to sing the praises of the queen, and in his great poem he carried out that promise.

Another function of poetry is to perfect, as do the courtesy books, the courtier in the morality of his class. The most notable statement of this purpose is, again, Spenser's. In the letter which contains his exposition of the whole intention of his work, Spenser writes: "The generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline." This being his main purpose, Spenser adds, he has "coloured it with an historicall fiction." If we believe the poet, his fable and poetry exist only in order to sugar the pill for his courtier audience. Sidney in his *Apology* advances as one of his main arguments the theory that the nobleman learns how to conduct himself by means of poetic examples: "But even in the most excellent determination of goodnes, what Philosopher's counsell can so redily direct a prince, as the fayned *Cyrus* in *Xenophon?* or a vertuous man in all fortunes, as *Aeneas in Virgill?*" Then, too, everyone has noticed the great amount of space devoted to politics in the *Arcadia*, to mention only one aspect of this work professedly written to amuse the leisure hours of a noble lady. R. W. Zandvoort says of the riot scenes in the *Arcadia:*

> But if Sidney's view of democracy need cause no surprise, the brutal tone he adopts whenever referring to the lower classes as a whole or to any single member of them is harder for a modern reader to understand... Evidently, one could be 'the president of Noblesse and of Chevalree' and hold a baseborn rustic of less account than a hound or a horse.

K. O. Myrick denies that in the political passages Sidney was merely reflecting the prejudices of his class and contends that he had a noble purpose. "I believe," says Myrick, "he was trying to quicken in his courtly readers a sense of responsibility toward the state." It is of no moment to this paper which of these interpretations we accept as valid. Both are grist for our mill, since both point out that the purpose of the *Arcadia*, according to Sidney's own practice, is aristocratic.

Although most of our Renaissance critics would agree that the deeds of noble princes comprise the chief matter of poetry and that the registering of noble names is one of its chief purposes, James VI feels that the affairs of kings are materials too lofty for the poet:

> Ye man also be war of wryting any thing of materis of commoun weill, or uther sic grave sene subjectis ... because nocht onely ye essay nocht your awin *Invention*, as I spak before, bot lykewayis they are to grave materis for a Poet to mell in.

The only king who at this time wrote a critical treatise wanted no poets meddling in his business. One is afraid that this very personal opinion cannot stand against the overwhelming tendency of the critics to place these "grave materis" among the foremost ones of poetry. Perhaps, too, James was thinking of topical rather than historical writing. If so, there are no dissenters.

The classical nature of the bulk of Elizabethan criticism has been often remarked, but I do not think that the close connection between the aristocratic purpose and this classicism has been sufficiently indicated. It must be remembered that in the Renaissance the term "art" covered a broader field than it does today. Not only were the pageants and the dances which played such a large part in courtly life considered art forms, but the very forms of polite living were felt to come within the domain of aesthetics. To the new Elizabethan aristocracy the

acquisition of courtly manners was a conscious artistic process. As we have remarked, literary works, as well as the many courtesy books, were written to train the aristocrat in formal living. It is not surprising, then, that in this society, consciously attempting to be formal, literary criticism should put emphasis upon the formal and decorous element in art. Thus, whereas the great art of the period is romantic, the criticism is strictly classical. The ever-articulate Spenser bears witness to the feeling that courtly living is an art. Courtesy is inseparable from the court:

> Of Court it seemes, men Courtesie doe call,
> For that it there most useth to abound;
> And well beseemeth that in Princes hall
> That vertue should be plentifully found,
> Which of all goodly manners is the ground,
> And roots of civill conversation.

Although the young nobleman needs training in the art of living, it is, at the same time, something inherent in his blood and cannot be acquired by a low-born person:

> True is, that whilome that good Poet sayd
> The gentle minde by gentle deeds is knowne.
> For a man by nothing is so well bewrayed,
> As by his manners, in which plaine is showne
> Of what degree and what race he is growne.

One must pause here to note how very central to our problem this quotation of Spenser's is. The author of the *Faerie Queene* was familiar with those sections of *Il cortegiano* which we have used in the part of this work dealing with Italy where the interlocutors decide that gentle birth is a prerequisite for gentle manners. Henry Peacham is even more positive than Castiglione. He declares nobility to be "of it selfe *essential* and absolute." In *Orlando furioso* Ariosto (whom Spenser had read) offers the reverse of this proposition, declaring that ungentle birth makes for ungentle manners:

> Convien ch'ovunque sia, sempre cortese
> Sia un cor gentil, ch'esser non pùo altramente,
> Che per natura, e per habito prese
> Quel, che di mutar poi non è possente.
> Convien, ch'ovunque sia sempre palese
> Un cot villan si mostri similmente.
> Natura inclina al male; e vienne a farsi
> L'habito poi difficile à mutarsi.

As gentle manners are cultivated as an art in the Renaissance, it is not surprising that the same requirements are demanded for the production of art as for gentle manners. What is true of gentle manners is equally true of art; gentle blood is necessary. In order to buttress this contention the aristocratic critic turns to the Neoplatonists and takes from them the idea of the identity of the good and the beautiful.

For the Renaissance writers, who follow Plato as seen through the eyes of Ficino, the beauty of outward things springs from the beauty of the soul. The beauty of the world is an emanation of the spirit of God, and the beauty of a woman is a result of the formative energy of her soul. Spenser denies that the beauty is merely a question of externals. It is a reflection of the beauty of the good soul:

> How vainely then doe ydle wits invent,
> That beautie is nought else, but mixture made
> Of colours faire, and goodly temp'rament
> Of pure complexions, that shall quickly fade
> And passe away, like to a sommers shade,
> Or that it is but comely composition
> Of parts well measurd, with meet disposition.

The next step is to equate the good and the aristocratic ethic from which it follows that beauty and aristocracy are one:

> For all that faire is, is by nature good;
> That is a signe to know the gentle blood.

No doubt this feeling for form in life springs, too, from a new consciousness of the formal character of the new state. The growth of the political structure from a collection of semi-independent barons to a monarchy headed by a ruler with supreme power is reflected in literature by the progression from the poorly constructed productions of the Middle Ages to the more artistic forms of the Renaissance. The very political structure of the state is conceived of as a work of art. Samuel Daniel, in his "Defence of Rhyme" gives us this concept:

> Let us go no further but looke upon the wonderfull Architecture of this state of *England*, see whether they were deformed times that could give it such a forme: Where there is no one the least piller of Majestie but was set with most profound judgement, and borne up with the just conveniencie of Prince and people: no Court of justice but laide by the Rule and Square of Nature, and the best of the best commonwealths that ever were in the world: so strong and substantial as it hath stood against al the storms of factions, both of beliefe and ambition, which so powerfully beat upon it, and all the tempestuous alterations of humourous times whatsoever.

Saintsbury points out, in his *History of Criticism*, that between the date of Jonson's "Timber" (1625–1637) and the date of Dryden's "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" (1668) there is practically no substantial literary criticism in England save for the

prefatory matter to *Gondibert* (1650). Saintsbury attributes this gap to the disturbance caused by the Civil War. It seems to this writer that mere physical disturbance is not sufficient reason for this cessation of critical writing. As this whole essay has pointed out, not only is the social basis of English literary criticism before the Civil War aristocratic but also, as we have seen in the section on tragedy, the king was considered to typify the highest ideal in art. If the purpose of this criticism was, as we contend, aristocratic, what is more natural than that it should pass out of sight during the Puritan, middle-class domination of the Commonwealth period, to reappear with the Restoration of the monarchy? Does not the fact that it disappeared during the nonaristocratic period support our thesis that this criticism is aristocratic in purpose? The exception which Saintsbury mentions, the prefatory matter to *Gondibert*, was written in Paris by two royalist exiles, a fact which strengthens our suppositions. Naturally, in the place of this aristocratic criticism, one could not expect a new type to spring up in the few years of the Commonwealth. A new tradition, in criticism or anything else, is not started so easily. Nevertheless, we can find indications that point to a different conception of the purpose of poetry. Milton, for instance, says that poets are the defenders of a people's liberty and the " strenuous enemies of despotism." Here we have a purpose of poetry which is the antithesis of the monarchical-aristocratic. It is explainable only by those who are aware that a change in the social structure of society is reflected in even the most abstract realms of human thought.

Source: Vernon Hall Jr., "The Poet and His Purpose," in *Renaissance Literary Criticism: A Study of Its Social Content*, Peter Smith, 1959, pp. 215–28.

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Romanticism

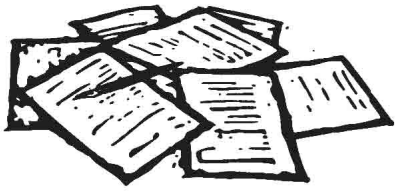
Movement Origin

c. 1789

Romanticism as a literary movement lasted from about 1789 to 1832 and marked a time when rigid ideas about the structure and purpose of society and the universe were breaking down. During this period, emphasis shifted to the importance of the individual's experience in the world and his or her interpretation of that experience, rather than interpretations handed down by the church or tradition.

Romantic literature is characterized by several features. It emphasized the dream, or inner, world of the individual. The use of visionary, fantastic, or drug-induced imagery was prevalent. There was a growing suspicion of the established church, and a turn toward pantheism (the belief that God is a part of the universe rather than separate from it). Romantic literature emphasized the individual self and the value of the individual's experience. The concept of "the sublime" (a thrilling emotional experience that combines awe, magnificence, and horror) was introduced. Feeling and emotion were viewed as superior to logic and analysis.

For the romantics, poetry was believed to be the highest form of literature, and novels were regarded as a lower form of writing, often as "trash," even by those most addicted to reading them. Most novels of the time were written by women and were therefore widely regarded as a threat to serious, intellectual culture. Despite this, some of the most famous British novelists wrote during this period, including Jane Austen, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, and Sir Walter Scott. In addition, this period



saw the flowering of some of the greatest poets in the English language, including William Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and William Wordsworth, many of whose works are still widely read today.

Representative Authors

Jane Austen (1775–1817)

Jane Austen was born December 16, 1775, in England, the youngest daughter of a Hampshire clergyman. Her six novels were set in the world in which she lived, that of the comfortable, rural middle class, and were often based on her observations of people she knew and her assessments of human character. The novels depict young women entering society, many of whom make mistakes or become confused but ultimately find their way to a happy marriage.

Austen began writing as a teenager and initially shared her writing only with family and friends. When she eventually published, she did so anonymously. Not well known in her own time, she soon garnered a reputation for her precision, irony, and delicate touch as a writer. Her best-known works are *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), and *Emma* (1816). She influenced many later writers, including Charles Dickens, W. M. Thackeray, and Anthony Trollope, as well as George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell. Austen's books have endured to the present day as some of the few "classics" widely read for pleasure. She died from illness on July 18, 1817, in Winchester, England.

William Blake (1757–1827)

Artist and visionary poet William Blake, born November 28, 1757, in London, England to a hosier, was apprenticed at age fifteen to engraver James Basire, for whom Blake made drawings at Westminster Abbey. In 1783, Blake's *Poetical Sketches* were printed, and in 1789, he engraved *Thel* and *The Songs of Innocence*. The increasing turmoil caused by the French Revolution and the war between Britain and France influenced Blake to engrave *America* (1793) and *The Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793). In the following year, he produced the combined *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, *Europe*, and *The First Book of Urizen*.

In 1803, Blake was accused of sedition (inciting resistance or insurrection against lawful authority). He was tried in 1804 but acquitted of the charge. During this time, he finished *Milton* and began *Jerusalem*. However, for the next two decades his life became increasingly despairing, poverty-stricken, and obscure. He was regarded as insane by some observers, and eked out a living by illustrating a pottery catalog and selling his print collection. However, late in his life he found supporters and patrons, and in 1820 *Jerusalem* was finally engraved. He died August 12, 1827, in London. While he was known primarily as an artist and engraver during his lifetime, Blake became known as an important writer after his death, influencing other poets such as William Butler Yeats.

Lord Byron

Lord Byron (1788–1824)

George Gordon Byron was born January 22, 1788, in London, England, inheriting his title of the sixth Lord Byron when he was ten years old. He grew up at the family estate near Nottingham, Newstead Abbey, and received an education at Harrow and Cambridge. His first publication, the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, was based on a tour of Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Turkey he took between 1809 and 1811. The work was immediately successful, and he followed it with a series of tales featuring exotic Middle Eastern settings and hero-villains.

Byron's marriage to Anne Isabella Milbanke in 1815 lasted only fifteen months, largely due to rumors spread by Byron himself about his homosexuality and incestuous relations with his half-sister Augusta Leigh. In 1816 he left England permanently, undergoing a series of travels which inspired cantos three and four of *Childe Harold* (1816, 1818). Eventually, he settled in Venice, Italy, where his immersion in the Italian language and culture would have a profound influence on his work, particularly *Don Juan* (1819–1824). While in Italy, he was the lover of Countess Teresa Guiccioli and became involved with Italian independence movements. In 1823 he went to Greece to participate in the Greek movement for independence from the Turks. He died during a voilent electrical storm on April 19, 1824, in Missolonghi, Greece, after suffering from fever-induced illness for almost two weeks. His body was returned to England, but he was refused burial in Westminster Abbey because of his scandalous past. He was eventually buried in his family's vaults near Newstead Abbey. In his time, Byron's work was noted for its emphasis on freedom, its overtly sexual themes, its pessimism, and its use of tormented, villainous heroes.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born October 21, 1772, in Ottery St. Mary, Devon, England, the youngest child of a clergyman and his wife. At the age of ten he entered Christ's Hospital School in London, where he read a wide variety of classical and political works. In 1791, he entered Jesus College in Cambridge, and became interested in revolutionary politics and Unitarianism. He left school without earning a degree. In 1794, he met poet Robert Southey, with whom he planned a utopian community to be built on the banks of the Susquehanna River in the United States. As part of this plan Coleridge married Southey's sister-in-law Sara Fricker.

In 1794, he published his first poetry in the *Morning Chronicle*. In 1795, he began giving a series of lectures to finance the utopian scheme, but when the idea was abandoned, he returned to writing poetry. From 1797 to 1798, he lived at Nether Stowey in Somerset, and completed the poems "The Ancient Mariner," "Frost at Midnight," "Fears in Solitude," and "Kubla Khan," some of his best-known works. In 1798, with William and Dorothy Wordsworth, he traveled to Germany, where he became deeply interested in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Coleridge's addiction to opium gradually overtook him and his marriage. He traveled to Malta in 1804 in an attempt to restore his mental and physical health, as well as his marriage. He returned to England in 1806, but by then his marriage had fallen apart.

By 1813, he had returned to Christian beliefs and was being treated for his opium addiction. He began working on *Biographia Literaria* (1817), a discussion of poetry and a critique of Wordsworth drawing on the work of German philosophers such as Kant and Fichte. He died July 25, 1834, in Highgate, England.

John Keats (1795–1821)

John Keats was the youngest of the major romantic poets. He was born October 31, 1795, in London, England, to a lower-middle-class family. His father's accidental death in 1804, and his mother's death in 1809 after a long bout with tuberculosis, marked him with a sense of the precariousness of life—a theme that recurs in his poetry. He was apprenticed to a surgeon, and in 1816 was licensed as an apothecary and surgeon. This training in science helped to ground his poetry in the sensory details of nature and everyday life.

His first published poem was "O Solitude," which appeared in *The Examiner* in 1816, and aroused the interest of Leigh Hunt, the periodical's editor, who encouraged him to quit his medical practice and devote his life to poetry. He viewed this as the most noble goal one could have and was filled with a deep sense of the continuity of poetry and literature through the ages, a great love for the English language, and a desire to return poetry to its roots in Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Spenser. His first published collection entitled simply *Poems 1817* (1817) was dedicated to Leigh Hunt. His second work, *Endymion* (1818), fell short of his own expectations, but his third collection, *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St Agnes, and Other Poems* (1820) contained "some of the greatest poems in the English language," according to Jean-Claude Sallé in the *Handbook to English Romanticism* (edited by Jean Raimond and J. R. Watson). Keats died of tuberculosis Feburary 23, 1821, in Rome, Italy, at the young age of twenty-five.

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797–1851)

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley is best known as the author of *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818). She was born August 30, 1797, in

London, England. The daughter of two well-known authors, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary's early years were unstable. Her mother died ten days after her birth, and she was raised by her father and stepmother. In 1812 she met the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, a friend of her father's, and in 1814 they ran off together, though Percy was married. During Mary and Percy's subsequent travels in Europe, Mary began work on *Frankenstein*. Percy's wife Harriet committed suicide in 1816, and shortly afterward Percy and Mary were married. Four years after *Frankenstein* was published, Percy drowned. Mary died of a brain tumor on February 1, 1851, in London.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822)

Percy Bysshe Shelley was the oldest child and only son of a baronet. He was born August 4, 1792, in Horsham, Sussex, England. He attended Eton, where he was mercilessly harassed because of his acute sensitivity and distaste for physical activity. He then attended University College in Oxford, but was expelled after a few months because he published a pamphlet promoting atheism. Shortly after his expulsion, he eloped with Harriet Westbrook as part of a plan to help her escape from her boarding school.

By 1914, his marriage was failing, and when Shelley met Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin through a friendship with her father, he traveled to Europe with her. Harriet committed suicide in 1916, and shortly after this Shelley married Godwin. By 1818 the couple, with Mary's stepsister Claire Clairmont, decided to move to Italy, and Shelley never returned to England. He and Mary wandered throughout Italy, and between 1818 and 1822, Shelley wrote some of his most important work, including *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) and his odes and lyrics. His work is noted for its reflections on a great variety of fields—including science, history, philosophy,—and for his attempts to synthesize seemingly conflicting theories in these fields. Shelley was drowned in a storm while sailing on the bay of La Spezia July 8, 1822. His body was cremated on the beach a few days later.

William Wordsworth (1770–1850)

William Wordsworth was born April 7, 1770, in Cockermouth, Cumberland, England. His father was a law agent, and after his mother's death in 1778, he was sent away to school, where he enjoyed a great deal of freedom. His father died in 1783, leaving Wordsworth and his four siblings in the care of relatives. Throughout his life, Wordsworth remained very close to his sister Dorothy.

Wordsworth began writing poetry as a young man, but his most notable works were composed after 1803 and many of them were collected in *Poems in Two Volumes* (1807). These volumes include the famous "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" and "Resolution and Independence." His long poem *The Excursion* was published in 1814 and was widely read. In 1835, a major collection of his poems was published, and in 1843 he became poet laureate of England.

Wordsworth's poetry is notable for his vision of the sublime, or the divine, in ordinary people and places. He believed wholeheartedly in the redeeming power of nature, and saw mystery and wonder in both people and natural things. Wordsworth died after a bout of pleurisy on April 23, 1850, in Rydal, Cumbria, England.

Representative Works

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage

Byron published cantos one and two of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in 1812, canto three in 1816, and canto four in 1818. The poem is based on Byron's European travels and describes exotic landscapes and people, along with contemporary military and political events, presenting them from the viewpoint of Childe Harold. Harold is a typical "Byronic" hero: tormented by guilt over an unnamed sin, he is bitter, cynical, and melancholy, but also proud and at times filled with remorse. Because of these feelings, he is isolated from other people, cut off by the intensity of his feelings and by his intense suffering. He wanders in search of some release, but never finds it.

Byron's descriptions of current political events, such as the Spanish resistance to the French invaders and the battle of Waterloo, allow him to depict the senselessness of war as well as the human drive for freedom from oppression. Through his hero's unsatisfied wanderings through a great variety of places, he presents the idea that the only human permanence is found in writing and the lofty creations of the human mind.

Early reviewers praised the poem for its originality, despite Byron's scandalous reputation, and Byron secured lasting fame because of it. It was widely imitated and translated, and was the basis

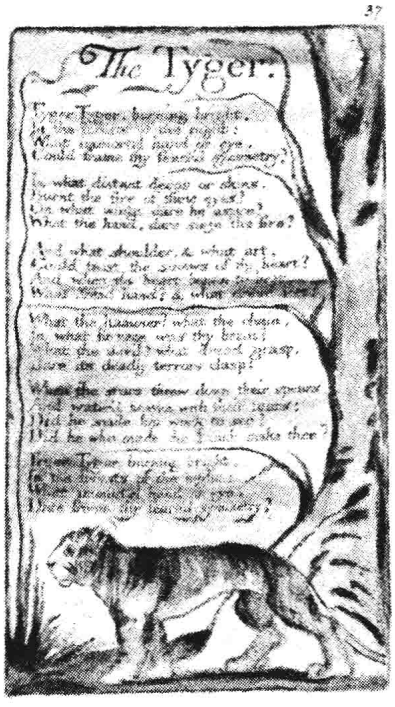


Illustration of the poem "The Tyger" by William Blake

of a symphonic work by Berlioz. According to J. R. Watson in *A Handbook to English Romanticism*, "It is a poem about Europe, and Europe was delighted to recognize itself in this passionate, elegiac, conservative yet liberal and revolutionary masterpiece."

Frankenstein

Mary Shelley's novel, published between 1816 and 1818, is classically romantic in its emphasis on: feelings over intellect and the dangers of relying exclusively on intellect; the frightening, awe-inspiring nature of the sublime; the loneliness of the sensitive hero; and the sadness inherent in the human ability to corrupt what should be naturally good. In the novel, arrogant scientist Victor Frankenstein creates a man using dead bodies, and animates him. The childlike monster wants only to be loved, but horrifies everyone who sees him.

Shelley subtitled the novel "A Modern Prometheus," linking Frankenstein to the Titan who stole fire from the gods and gave it to humans. Prometheus was ultimately punished by Zeus for meddling in this way. Shelley makes the point that, in taking the power to create life for himself, Frankenstein is heading for a fall. He loses touch with other people and with all human feelings. By the end of the book, Frankenstein is even more alienated than the monster he created. The idea of a protagonist whose ambition defiantly knows no bounds was attractive to other romantic writers, including Shelley's husband Percy Bysshe Shelley, Coleridge, and Byron.

Frankenstein shocked readers of its time, who were horrified by the idea of digging up the dead and reanimating them. Many initial reviewers attacked the book. However, the book was immediately famous with the general populace, despite its shocking nature. The first stage adaptation of it occurred in 1823, the first film was made in 1910, and adaptations continue being made into the twenty-first century. In *Exploring Novels*, George V. Griffith wrote, "*Frankenstein* lives well beyond its young author's modest intentions to write an entertaining gothic tale to pass some time indoors on a cold Swiss summer evening."

Pride and Prejudice

Austen's 1813 novel, which she originally published anonymously, is her second and best-known work. She wrote it for her family's amusement, but readers everywhere have enjoyed its wit, amusing dialogue, and insightful characterizations. It is a "novel of manners"; in other words, it portrays comfortable middle-class rural people and dramatizes the complex web of customs and manners holding everyone in their social places. Anyone who transgresses this code is destined for a fall. The novel, like all of Austen's books, shows a young woman learning how society and human nature operate. Throughout the book, Austen shows the results of improper behavior; some characters learn from their mistakes, while others do not.

Although Austen was not well known during her lifetime, her books influenced later writers, including Charles Dickens, W. M. Thackeray, and Anthony Trollope, as well as George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell. In addition, she helped to raise the novel to a respected art form, and paved the way for other women to write even when they did not share the extensive education that was then reserved for men. Despite her relative obscurity during her lifetime, Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* has sold more than 20 million copies since its original publication and has never been out of print.

Prometheus Unbound

Percy Bysshe Shelley's long poem portrays the epic struggle between the Greek god Jupiter and the Titan Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods and gave it to humans. In the poem, Jupiter personifies the forces of tyranny and Prometheus is a symbol of liberty, making the poem a commentary on the current political situation in England, as well as a depiction of the human struggle for freedom and truth throughout history.

According to Murray G. H. Pittock in the *Reference Guide to English Literature*, writer C. S. Lewis called *Prometheus Unbound* "the best long poem written in English in the nineteenth century." Pittock himself comments, "*Prometheus Unbound* is a stupendous vision of human potential," while the poem also makes clear "human beings are limited by the very desires they so long to fulfil."

Songs of Innocence and of Experience

Blake wrote the earliest poems in his *Songs of Innocence* prior to 1784, and completed the collection by 1789. In 1793 *Songs of Experience* was published, and the two collections were combined in 1794. Blake subtitled the combination, "Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul," indicating that they were meant to complement each other.

In *Songs of Innocence* Blake presents childhood fears and hopes about life, which are usually forgotten or suppressed in adulthood. The poems celebrate the joy of childhood, for, like Wordsworth, Blake believed children were closer to the divine than adults.

Songs of Experience, on the other hand, provide adult perspectives children cannot possibly know or understand, and thus balance *Songs of Innocence*. Like all of Blake's poetry, the poems are illustrated, with the words an integral part of the design. In some cases the drawings are so much a part of the poems that the poems cannot be understood without them. In the *Reference Guide to English Literature*, David Fuller writes that "be it in density of language, power or subtlety of rhythm, or lyric beauty in the line or stanza, the lyrics all share an evident verbal craftsmanship which the drafts in Blake's notebook show was often painstakingly achieved."

According to Francois Piquet in the *Handbook to English Romanticism* (edited by Jean Raimond and J. R. Watson), this was "the only one of Blake's books that attracted the admiration of his fellow writers during his lifetime." Piquet notes that Coleridge said of Blake, "He is a man of genius . . . certainly a mystic, emphatically."

"To Autumn"

John Keats's ode, written in September 1819, was the last ode he wrote that year. According to Douglas Brooks-Davies in the *Reference Guide to English Literature*, "There is virtually unanimous critical acclaim for the poem's supremacy among Keats's works." "To Autumn" is simply a description of the fall season, and seems to be a conclusion to the odes Keats wrote before it. Like many of his other odes, such as "Ode to a Nightingale," "Ode on Melancholy," and "Ode on a Grecian Urn," the poem can be seen as a commentary of grief, most likely in response to the death of Keats's beloved brother Tom in December 1818.

"To Autumn," like Keats's other odes and his poetry in general, expresses his deep love of and sensual connection with nature, and his view of nature as a place of spiritual contemplation and renewal—typical of the romantics. According to Sallé in *Handbook to English Romanticism* (edited by Jean Raimond and J. R. Watson), "With the odes, Keats invented not only a new and influential mode of symbolic poetry but also discovered the form most appropriate to his agnostic, questing genius."

Themes

Dreams and Visions

Perhaps the most notable example of the emphasis on dreams and visions in romantic literature is Coleridge's poem "Kubla Khan" (1816), which he claimed to have "written" during a dream while deeply asleep. While transcribing the lines from his dream, he was interrupted by a visitor, and later claimed that if this interruption had not occurred, the poem would have been much longer. The idea that a person could compose poetry while asleep was commonplace among romantics. Although critics at the time were not particularly enthusiastic about "Kubla Khan," no one thought to question whether it was possible for someone to dream such a long poem.

Coleridge was not the only poetic dreamer in his time. John Milton also claimed to have received inspired verses while sleeping, and Keats, like others, believed that poets were endowed with a special gift to translate dreams into words. In addition,

Media Adaptations

- Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was first filmed by inventor Thomas Edison in 1910 and directed by J. Searle Dawley. This film has since been lost from public archives, but many more versions were made. These include the most famous adaptation, filmed in 1931 by Universal Pictures, which starred Boris Karloff as the monster.
- Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* has also spawned numerous spin-offs, including *Bride of Frankenstein* (Universal, 1932), *Son of Frankenstein* (Universal, 1939), *Ghost of Frankenstein* (Universal, 1942), and *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman* (Universal, 1943).
- *Frankenstein* was made into a comedy in *Abbot and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (Universal, 1946) and Mel Brooks's *Young Frankenstein* (20th Century Fox, 1974). In 1994, a more serious version, which claimed to be faithful to the book, was produced by Columbia/Tristar, titled *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*.
- Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* was filmed as a television miniseries in 1995 by BBC Television and the A&E Network. It was first shown on the A&E Network beginning in January 1996 and is now available on video and DVD. The program starred Jennifer Ehle as Elizabeth Bennet and Colin Firth as Mr. Darcy. It was directed by Simon Langton.

opium was cheap and widely available, and its use was not yet considered harmful, so some writers—notably Thomas De Quincey, who wrote *Confessions of an Opium Eater*—used it to gain access to what they considered to be a higher, more visionary faculty of the mind.

Pantheism

Pantheism, which is the belief that there is no difference between the creator and creation, holds that God is not separate from the world, but manifested in it. This idea was popular among romantics. For example, Wordsworth writes in his poem "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798":

> 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.

This sensation of a divine "presence" in all things marked a shift in public perceptions of nature. Until this period, most people were busy struggling to eke out a living, largely through farming, and viewed nature as simply a resource that could be used and harvested, not as a place of renewal and purity. However, with the rise of the Industrial Revolution, cities became more crowded and dirty. To the growing urban middle class, the green countryside became more attractive as a place of recreation and an escape from the ever-increasing filth and disorder that industry brought to towns. The romantics likewise viewed nature as a place of spiritual purity and peace, where people could be redeemed by contact with the divine force immanent in the natural world.

The Self

During the romantic period, for the first time in history, people became aware that there were parts of each individual's personality beyond the access of ordinary consciousness. This idea was further developed during the twentieth century as part of modern psychological theory, but at the time of the romantics it was a novelty. The romantics were fascinated with self-exploration and with the particulars of the individual's experience in the world. Previous writers had focused on politics, business, trade, and the lives of royalty or other famous people. The lives of ordinary people had been deemed unworthy of general interest. However, the romantics were influenced by the events of the American and French revolutions and their underlying political theories, and like the revolutionaries, they believed the ordinary individual had the same rights and worth as any leader. This sociopolitical theory inspired writers to consider the worth of the individual in their work and to focus more on the experiences of ordinary people.

Emotion and Feeling

In keeping with an emphasis on the individual self, the romantics valued emotion, intuition, and

feeling over logical abstraction. They sought "the sublime," a state of being in which a person was simultaneously awed, frightened, and filled with a sense of majesty and wonder. A poet's response to a wild, remote, and grandiose spot in nature often invoked the sublime, as did the immense night sky, gigantic geological upheavals, and vast castles. Romantics also relied on their intuitive sense of things—as opposed to physical facts—to interpret the world. If a writer sensed the presence of the divine in a natural spot, for example, the reality of this presence was not questioned, but accepted as a given because the person had felt it.

Style

Rejection of Rigid Poetic Forms

In keeping with their glorification of the unlimited freedom and potential of the individual, the romantics rejected old poetic conventions—such as the heroic couplet used by Alexander Pope and Samuel Johnson—and used freer forms of verse like the ode and the verse narrative. They believed that the form of a verse should be shaped by the subject matter, in contrast to the neoclassicists before them, who used rigid forms and shaped their material to fit them.

Emphasis on Poetry

An interesting aspect of the romantic period was the emphasis on poetry. Most of the great romantic writers were poets instead of novelists, as novels were widely regarded as inherently inferior to poetry, which was deemed a loftier form of writing. Critics have offered various reasons for this prejudice. Some suggest it arose from the fact that most novelists were female, and because women were devalued during the romantic period, their work was discounted. Others note that many novels were of poor quality, giving the entire genre a bad reputation. In addition, as Bradford K. Mudge notes in his foreword in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, the poets themselves, notably Wordsworth and Coleridge, campaigned against the spread of popular fiction, claiming it would lower the tastes of the reading public and lead them away from poetry. According to Mudge, Wordsworth wrote that newspapers, novels, plays, and even some poetry, would "encourage mental lethargy" and reduce readers to "a savage, uncivilized state."

Topics for Further Study

- Read Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein* and watch one or more of the many films that were inspired by the book. How do the book and film differ? How are they the same? In particular, how is the character of the monster portrayed in each?
- During the romantic period, opium was cheap and widely available, and people did not know its use could be harmful. Read some works by romantic writers who claimed to be inspired by opium, such as Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" and Thomas de Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1822). Write an essay explaining the ways the drug may have affected the writing, citing specific examples from the work.
- Read Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, and write your own poetry in the same style. Or, write an ode in the style of Keats.
- Read about the life of Mary Shelley or Jane Austen. Write an essay explaining how they were affected by cultural attitudes and expectations of women in their time period? How did they rebel against those attitudes and expectations?

Movement Variations

In the *Emerson Society Quarterly*, James E. Miller Jr. writes, "America has traditionally incarnated the romantic in almost every sense," and that "The American adventure, the great democratic experiment . . . are the essence of Romanticism." Romanticism in America flourished between 1812 and the years of the Civil War. Like English Romanticism, its writers emphasized the dignity and freedom of the individual; rebellion against restrictions, whether political, cultural, or social; the importance of emotion over intellect; and the need for a personal relationship with God and the natural world.

However, American Romanticism differed from the English movement because it was shaped by factors unique to American history, culture, and

geography. Americans, unlike the English, lived in a democratic, more egalitarian society in which the ordinary individual had political power and was free from the dictates of a king or an entrenched upper class of nobles. In addition, rebellion and freedom of all kinds was encouraged by the presence of an apparently limitless supply of land; if people felt restricted, they would simply move farther west, where there was freedom and opportunity. In small, insular England, this feeling of personal freedom and the lure of "the open road" was nonexistent.

Because the United States was a new country with an extremely diverse population, it did not have an established set of literary forms, traditions, and masters. This lack of a creative structure or ceiling encouraged writers to experiment with new forms, genres, and styles. Americans were proud of their country and its freedoms, felt a certain rivalry with Britain, and wanted to prove that they, like the British, could create works of lasting merit that nevertheless reflected the uniqueness of the American character. Thus, American romantic writers focused on American settings and themes. In addition, the vast and largely unspoiled beauty of the American landscape provided perfect material for romantic musings on nature and spirituality.

Writers considered part of the American romantic movement include Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allen Poe, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman. According to Mark Bevir in the *English Historical Review*, these writers differed from their British counterparts in their "close relationship to both Unitarianism and frontier individualism."

Unitarians opposed the concept of a divine Trinity, and believed that God had a single personality or manifestation. They rejected the concepts of damnation and eternal hell, the innate sinfulness of humanity, and the belief that Jesus had atoned for human sins. Bevir notes these beliefs "readily opened the way to a belief in a single spiritual deity existing within nature, rather than a transcendent God standing outside nature." He comments that although English romantics believed nature could inspire or renew people, American romantics typically believed God and nature were one, and that God's purpose was achieved through the action of natural forces.

Many romantics in England and America looked to the past for inspiration. In England, Coleridge believed that a national church could provide stability and balance against the onward forces of social progress, and art critic John Ruskin was interested in reviving the medieval importance of trade guilds and craft skills. However, American romantics such as Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman were inspired by the democratic ideals of United States Presidents Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson, and believed the birth and growth of America as a democratic state was part of a divine plan for the creation of a perfected nation. American romantics emphasized material simplicity, living close to nature, and the honest manual labor of the self-sufficient farmer and frontier dweller. Thoreau—perhaps the greatest proponent of the simple, self-sufficient life—lived alone in a hut by Walden Pond, trying to live so simply that he needed very little, and growing or making whatever he absolutely could not do without.

Historical Context

American and French Revolutions

The French Revolution, which drew upon some of the principles enacted in the American Revolution, resulted in the overthrow of the monarchy of France and the spread of interest in democracy, nationalism, and socialism throughout Europe. On the eve of the revolution, France was in crisis; the monarchy, which claimed to rule by divine right, had spent so much money that the country had a massive deficit. A poor harvest and bitter winter in 1788 plunged the country into famine and drastically increased prices. In addition, British textile makers were underselling their French counterparts, leading to the closure of some French manufacturers and the spread of unemployment among the workers. The increasingly restless poor found that the wealthy nobles, clergy, and upper middle class made good targets for their anger at this situation.

The revolution was not a clean victory for either the poor or democracy, as by 1799 France was a military dictatorship. However, intellectuals throughout Europe were thrilled and inspired by the notion of revolutionaries rising up and demanding their rights. Wordsworth, Blake, Coleridge, and others wrote glowingly of the revolution, and Bysshe Shelley and Byron thoroughly supported its radical principles. In general, the romantics believed in the worth, potential, and freedom of the individual, and exalted this freedom over the then-traditional acceptance of social hierarchy and political repression.

Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution was a period of social and economic change that began in the mid-1700s and lasted until the late 1800s. This change was instigated by the invention of various mechanical means of producing goods more quickly and cheaply than by hand. For example, textile mills allowed the production of vast amounts of cloth, with far less labor and cost, than if the cloth were produced by the traditional method of individual weavers working in their homes. Factory ironworks produced iron items more quickly than individual craftspeople could, and the "spinning jenny," a device for spinning thread, could make more cotton thread than many human spinners.

The Industrial Revolution was also fueled by declining mortality rates, which resulted in rapid population growth. The increasing numbers of people provided both a workforce for the factories and a market for the goods produced.

The new factories necessitated improved transportation routes for raw materials and finished goods, as well as housing and other services for the laborers. These needs caused roads and canals to be improved or constructed, and swelled the cities with cheaply built housing. The first British railway, between Stockton and Darlington, was built in 1821.

The factories hired women and children as well as men, and were often unsafe. Housing built for the workers was often substandard and unsanitary. The factories themselves polluted both air and water, belching out smoke from coal-fired furnaces and releasing dye and other wastes into rivers. The regimented hours and repetitive work in the factories were viewed as dehumanizing and numbing by the general populace.

Romantic writers were aware of these changes, which presented such a contrast between the hellish life of the city laborer and the purity and peace of nature. The industrial changes convinced many romantics the natural world was purer than the industrial one, and that nature was a place of spiritual truth, release, and renewal. In *The Excursion*, Wordsworth applauds the advances in science and technology that made the mills possible, but also criticizes the exploitation of women and children, the dehumanizing work shifts, and the all-encompassing greed of the factory owners.

Religious Influences

The Church of England was the official religious body during the Romantic period, but it had lost touch with much of the population. Some parishes were run by parsons who never actually visited them, while other parsons pursued their own material and physical pleasures. The growing urban population of uneducated laborers often went unserved, and in the largest cities many people grew disillusioned of the church. David Jasper notes in the *Handbook to English Romanticism* (edited by Jean Raimond and J. R. Watson) that on Easter Day 1800, there were only six worshipers in St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Coleridge (as quoted in the *Handbook to English Romanticism*), whose father was a clergyman, was so skeptical that he wrote about his own son's baptism, "Shall I suffer the Toad of Priesthood to spurt out his foul juice in this Babe's face?" and Blake characterized members of the clergy as hypocritical liars. In general, the romantics believed the established church was suffering from staleness and complacency, and they sought other avenues to express their spirituality.

The Unitarians, at the time a small sect that rejected the doctrine of the Trinity and believed that Christ was not divine, were highly educated and had a great deal of influence on the romantics. Coleridge, who was a Unitarian for some time, preached in their churches. Romantics were also influenced by the views of Immanuel Swedenborg, a Swedish mystic who promoted a pantheistic worldview particularly attractive to William Blake, who attended a Swedenborgian conference in 1787.

However, of all the churches, the Methodists had the most impact on the romantics, who were moved by the Methodist portrayal of humans as fallen sinners seeking redemption and the grace of God. In addition, the Methodist emphasis on emotional conversion rather than intellectual contemplation, as well as their joy at Christ's gift of salvation, fit the romantic worldview.

Critical Overview

The writers who are now called "romantic" did not consider themselves to be part of a movement while they were writing. The term "romantic" was applied to them much later. At the time they were writing, their work received a mixed reception. Some works, like Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* were immediately praised, and others, such as Austen's novels and Blake's other work, did not receive recognition until long after their original publications.

Compare & Contrast

- **Nineteenth Century:** Women are not expected or encouraged to have professions or to make a living. There are no women diplomats, lawyers, or judges, and professions such as medicine, law, engineering, architecture, and banking refuse entry to women. A woman must marry to ensure that she will be financially supported. It is considered immoral for an unmarried woman to live alone. If a woman does not marry, she is expected to earn her keep and remain "respectable" by living with and taking care of a male sibling or her parents.

  Today: Although there are still differences in pay scale and status between men and women in many fields, women in many countries are now working in all professions and can choose to be educated in any field. In addition, a majority of women are not required to marry and can choose the type of household or family that is most suitable to them.

- **Nineteenth Century:** The Industrial Revolution results in a greater variety of goods for consumers as well as in the growth of cities. It also leads to pollution, urban overcrowding, labor problems, and the exploitation of laborers, including children. The growing blight in the cities leads people to view nature in a new light and to value it for its own sake rather than simply as a resource to be exploited.

  Today: Factories are still polluting nature, and people are still trying to find a balance between industrial growth and the preservation of natural resources. However, children in most industrialized nations are no longer permitted to work and laws require factories to provide healthy workplaces. A computer/Internet revolution is occurring, leading to widespread changes in industry, communications, and consumer habits.

- **Nineteenth Century:** Novels are largely regarded as "trash," not something serious, intelligent people should spend time reading. Many novelists are women. Poetry is considered the highest form of literature.

  Today: Novels are written by both men and women and are widely read. They range from light reading to serious, award-winning fiction, and some novelists make millions of dollars on their books. In contrast to the romantic age, poetry has been marginalized in popular culture, and it is difficult for poets to make a living from their art.

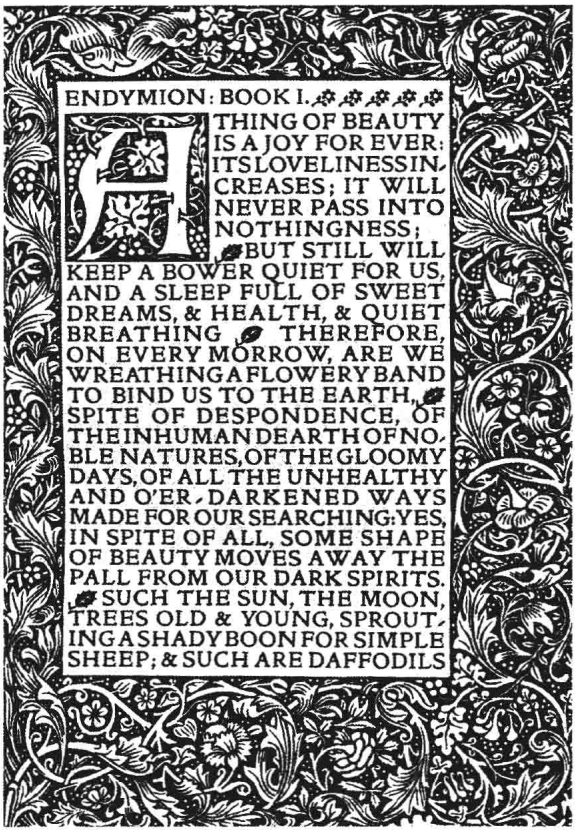
As John R. Greenfield points out in his foreword in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, contemporaries of the romantic poets saw them "not as a monolithic movement all agreeing upon the basic premises of Romanticism, but as belonging to various schools with different orientations concerning taste, religion, and politics." Greenfield also notes that much literary criticism was based not on the work in question but on the writer's political stance; if the critic objected to a writer's politics, he simply gave the writer a bad review. The critics divided the poets into various schools: a "radical circle" of Blake, William Godwin, and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley; the "Lake Poets," including Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Robert Southey; the "Cockney School," which included Keats and Leigh Hunt; and the "Satanic School" of Percy Shelley and Byron. The latter group received its name because of Byron's scandalous reputation and Shelley's atheism and radical beliefs, which shocked readers of the time.

In the early twentieth century, Romanticism was strongly criticized by writers such as T. S. Eliot, T. E. Hulme, and Cleanth Brooks. In *Midwest Quarterly*, Asad Al-Ghalith writes, "Throughout most of his writing career, Eliot attempted to write poetry that would reflect his antiromantic taste and preferences," and that Eliot

> wanted to break away from the romantic development of poetic structure. However, despite Eliot's dislike of Wordsworth and other Romantic poets, he shared with [Wordsworth] a profound kinship in his concern for spirituality within nature, in his stress on the present in relation to past and future, and in the emphasis on the role of memory to recapture the fleeting moments of childhood.

Recent critical work on the romantics has focused on resurrecting the almost-forgotten contributions of women writers, many of whom have historically been marginalized. In *Midwest Quarterly*, Stephen C. Behrendt points out that readers "are beginning to study a 'British Romanticism' that looks and feels very different from the one that most of their predecessors studied." Behrendt and other scholars have focused on the connections among romantic writers, instead of studying them as if they lived and wrote in isolation. Behrendt also observes Romanticism "involved women far more prominently than has traditionally been acknowledged." He maintains the traditional critical image of the romantic poet was that of "the lone male poet whose visionary experience places him beyond domesticity," a view that has persisted since the romantic period, when cultural values prevented people from seeing women's contributions as equal to those of men. Women who dared to enter the "male" territory of poetry were considered unnatural. They were allowed to write novels because novels were considered unimportant. According to Behrendt, this idea of male poets and female novelists has persisted to the present day, but, he comments, "a whole new model has to be generated, one that incorporates men and women authors alike, in all genres."

Despite occasionally falling from critical favor when literary tastes change, the major romantic writers are still considered among the greatest poets and novelists in the English language. Their work continues to influence writers into the twenty-first century.



Frontispiece from an edition of Endymion *by John Keats*

Criticism

Kelly Winters

Winters is a freelance writer. In this essay, Winters considers the persistence of romantic ideas in current attitudes about nature and the environment.

Romantic odes may be out of style, and few novels are now written in the style of Jane Austen or Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, but some romantic ideas and ideals are still deeply embedded in our own popular culture, particularly in popular attitudes about nature. Most people do not know it, but our current ideas about the environment and our relationship to it were born during the romantic era.

The Birth of Environmentalism in Romanticism

For the romantics, the vast, uncontrolled wilderness of nature was a holy place, a place where people could retreat from the increasing filth and falsity of civilization. Nature was viewed as "wiser" than humans; it had existed since before humans existed and, if left alone, would continue to flourish. Humans could not produce anything as complex, beautiful, and grand as nature, and they could certainly not improve on anything nature had created. However, by going to wild places, people could align themselves with the harmony and wisdom inherent in nature, and be renewed.

In addition, ecological movements encourage people to think of themselves as kindred to, and part of, the natural world, rather than standing apart

from it. This feeling of kinship and oneness is a hallmark of Romanticism.

These views, which persist in our own culture, were new during the romantic era. Until the eighteenth century, people had little time to spare for appreciating nature; they were busy farming, fighting wars, and simply trying to survive. However, the Industrial Revolution gave the new urban middle class time for recreation. It also resulted in pollution and overcrowding in the cities, so these people looked to natural areas, rather than the increasingly unpleasant urban ones, for their recreation. Gardening, nature walks, and appreciation of natural beauty became common pastimes for the first time in history. As Lucy Moore writes in the *Ecologist*, "For the first time, nature became an object, and this may be the moment the modern environmental movement began."

The Influence of Romantic Writers

Through the influence of romantic writers, ordinary people became interested in experiencing nature. For example, Wordsworth, who wrote poems about the beauty and spirituality of nature, was a highly successful poet in his own lifetime and was even appointed poet laureate in 1843, but his guides to the area where he lived were even more popular than his collections of poetry. He lived in the Lake District of England, and his writings about the natural beauty of the area made the Lake District a tourist attraction in the mid-1800s. Travelers visited the area hoping to partake of the same natural beauty, inspiration, and spiritual renewal the poet describes in his writings. Although it seems commonplace now to retreat to nature for renewal, at the time this was a novel idea, and walking in the Lake District and perhaps encountering the poet on his own walks became a kind of fad of the romantic era.

Coleridge, who also lived in the area and was a favorite of Lake District tourists, likewise saw nature as a redeeming and purifying force, and loved wilderness and wildness. According to Moore, Coleridge wrote, "The farther I ascend from animated Nature, from men, and cattle, and the common birds of the woods, and fields, the greater becomes in me the intensity of the feeling of Life."

For a time, Coleridge believed he could build a utopian community that would partake of the spiritually purifying aspects of nature, and he and Robert Southey planned to construct such a community on the then-wild banks of the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania. Although, like many such utopian dreams, the plan ultimately fell through, Coleridge retained his belief that nature could provide solace and wisdom to people.

Percy Shelley, who was not quite as active in outdoor pursuits, nevertheless wrote, "I love all waste / And solitary places, where we taste / The pleasure of believing what we see / Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be."

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley reflected the romantic view of nature as a place of peace and redemption in *Frankenstein*. In the book, unlike in the films based on it, the monster is a peaceful and gentle creature. When the monster discovers how cruel humans are, it dreams of fleeing to South America, where it will live peacefully in the forest with a mate Dr. Frankenstein will make for it. They will live simply on the fruits and nuts of the forest, sleeping among the trees: a romantic ideal, a return to the spiritual innocence and purity of the Garden of Eden. However, Dr. Frankenstein, who is afraid of the monster's potential, destroys the female, forcing the monster back to civilization—and civilization's destruction.

Keats was also keenly aware of the destructive human impact on nature, and that appreciation of nature often occurs only when people become aware that natural beauty is fragile and can be destroyed and lost forever. In short, the romantics believed that untouched nature invoked a sense of awe and grandeur within people; that experiencing this awe could allow people to experience a feeling of purification and redemption; that untouched nature was superior to humanity; and that the long-term presence of people in nature could only be detrimental to it.

These principles have long guided attitudes toward the preservation and use of wilderness areas, and continue to the present day. The U.S. Wilderness Act of 1964 provides for the protection and preservation of areas untouched or little-touched by human intervention, where humans can merely be temporary visitors, and where permanent human settlement or construction is not allowed. This idea of nature as pristine and separate from the degrading presence of people goes back to the romantics.

In addition, most campers and hikers have heard the popular phrase "leave no trace," which urges people to minimize their impact on nature to such an extent that, after they leave the wilderness area, it would be difficult or impossible for observers to tell that they were even there. Campers are asked to carry out everything they carry in, and to "take only pictures; leave only footprints" behind.

What Do I Study Next?

- Christopher Hibbert's *The Days of the French Revolution* (1999) discusses the political and social ideals underlying this revolution that influenced the romantic movement.
- Claire Tomalin's *Jane Austen: A Life* provides a fascinating biography of the now popular author.
- Renowned critic Harold Bloom's *The Visionary Companion: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* (1971) delves into the works of many of the great English Romantic Poets, such as Keats, Shelley, Byron, Blake, Coleridge, and Wordsworth.
- Edited by Thomas H. Johnson, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1976) has all 1,775 poems arranged in the chronological order of their writing (as far as could be determined). Dickinson was a poet of the American Renaissance in the nineteenth century. Her style is distinctive and unparalleled, noted for its brevity; its beautiful, sometimes morbid, imagery; and for occassional obscurity.
- *Florentin* (1801), by German romanticist Dorothea Schlegel, tells the story of a typical romantic hero, from his mysterious birth, difficult youth, and amorous encounters until the hero is eventually driven to discover the truth of his existence. However, the full truth of this mystery is never reavled since *Florentin* was intended to be the first book among several, but Schlegel never finished the series.
- French romantic novelist Victor Hugo penned his most famous book *Les Misérables* in 1862, which was a successful bestseller in its day. *Les Misérables* is the story of a poor man who is transformed by the generous kindness of another person. Jean Valjean eventually rises to success, despite the fact that his past continues to haunt him.
- Alexander Dumas was a novelist of the romantic style who became famous within his lifetime. His book, *The Three Musketeers* (1844) continues to be a favorite among young readers today as it is unabashedly filled with adventure, intrigue, and romance.

While in the wilderness, people are also asked to respect wildlife by keeping their distance from it, to be as quiet as possible so that the sounds of nature are the only ones heard, and to avoid crowding or overusing any one area. As R. Bruce Hall notes in the *Journal of Leisure Research*, this philosophy, like other currently prevalent wilderness-use principles, "encourages people to think of themselves as temporary visitors whose presence can only harm nature. . . . [and] emphasize[s] the negative consequences people have on natural areas and on recreation experience." It also emphasizes the benefits that people can gain from experiencing nature in its purest, least-disturbed state.

Getting and Spending: The Impact of Industry

Wordsworth wrote in his poem "The World Is Too Much With Us," "Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers; / Little we see in nature that is ours; / We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!" What he means is that in the frenzy of economic expansion and exploitation of the environment, people have lost touch with the spiritual and creative powers that true contact with nature can provide. Thus, we are out of touch with both the environment and ourselves.

The Industrial Revolution began over two hundred years ago, but we are still experiencing it and its effects on society and nature; the problems of pollution and waste have only increased since that time as industry has grown and become ever more complex. According to James Pinkerton in *Foreign Affairs*, David Malin Rodman of the World-Watch Institute, an environmental group, noted that it is "the very nature of industrial economic systems to degrade the environment on which they depend." This idea first became prevalent during the

Previously marginalized ecologically-based political movements, often rooted in romantic ideas about nature, grew and gained so many adherents that they became a part of mainstream political debate."

Industrial Revolution, when coal-fired factories began spewing black smoke over England's green countryside and dumping toxic wastes into previously clean rivers.

This worry about the negative effects of industry is still widely held today. Toward the end of the twentieth century, with increasing environmental destruction, people became increasingly aware that irreplaceable natural treasures were being degraded or lost, and increasing numbers of species were becoming extinct. Pinkerton writes, "Many people have become aware that unbounded cultivation, extraction, and construction have disastrously degraded the ecosystem of the planet."

As a result of this awareness, previously marginalized ecologically-based political movements, often rooted in romantic ideas about nature, grew and gained so many adherents that they became a part of mainstream political debate. In 1997 in Europe, according to Pinkerton, the ecological political parties had a potential electorate that was almost as large as that of the Christian democratic parties. In the United States, Green Party candidate Ralph Nader came in fourth in the 1996 presidential election and came in second in many areas that were heavily populated by college students. In 2000 Nader came in third in the national election, and some observers claimed that his presence on the ballot diverted a substantial number of voters from the Democratic Party and thus lost the election for Democratic candidate Al Gore. These victories for the environmental parties show that many people, like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and other romantics, still believe that nature, as a source of renewal, transcendence, and peace, should be celebrated and protected.

Source: Kelly Winters, Critical Essay on Romanticism, in *Literary Movements for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Susan J. Wolfson

In the following essay, Wolfson examines four poetic works of the Romantic period, including The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, *to show why interpreting an "uncertain" poem "must become an active seeking and generating of meaning."*

I

In 1799 William Blake reminded the Reverend Dr. Trusler, "The wisest of the Ancients considerd what is not too Explicit as the fittest for Instruction, because it rouzes the faculties to act." This comment may be applied to the rhetorical activity of much Romantic poetry as well, especially in poems in which logical structures—the plots of an argument, a tale, or an informing legend—are the expected means of instruction. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *The Thorn*, "La Belle Dame sans Merci," and "Ode on a Grecian Urn" all unfold mysteries against potential sources of interpretation: moral lessons, arguments, glosses, village testimony, portentous encounters, spectral legends. Yet however much such sources may "rouze" the mind to render intelligible "what is not too Explicit," in these poems, the materials invoked for that purpose themselves become invaded by what Keats calls "uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts." If these poems arouse expectation that there is a secure logic to be discovered for their perplexing circumstances, they tend to dramatize the difficulties of such discovery more than its success.

These are poems, in other words, about problems in interpretation, involving questions that go to the heart of the Romantic concern with language itself: What is the status of explication or logical argument in poems that appear to frustrate such modes of discourse even as they put them forth? What kind of poem, or poetry, does this activity produce? One effect, certainly, is to cast into doubt the principles of coherence (the causal sequences) on which plots and arguments alike rely and to foreground the less certain, uneasy motions of mind attempting to describe such principles in the circumstances that have compelled its attention. Such stress yields a poetic syntax more psychological than logical in organization, more affective than narrative in its procedures. These poems all show

the degree to which interpretation cannot consist simply of deciphering hidden patterns of meaning or discovering causal sequences, but must become an active seeking and generating of meaning.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and *The Thorn* dramatizes the efforts of their speakers to elucidate mystery through recourse to the logic of moral argument and the logic of narrative, respectively. The Mariner's "Rime" itself involves several kinds of interpretation, but the most blatant sense-making scheme in Coleridge's text—the Marginal Gloss—is amassed against the Mariner's "Rime" as a parallel commentary, making the poem as a whole bear the signature of two distinct intelligences: that of the riming Mariner and that of the Marginal Editor. In *The Thorn*, Wordsworth entertains dilemmas of interpretation in the body of the poem itself; moreover, he diminishes the locutional differences between the narrator of the tale and the voice of his logic-seeking questioner—as if to suggest a unity of enterprise. In both these lyrical ballads, the sources of interpretive authority and the logical patterns they promote or delineate never quite emerge as "points and resting places in reasoning" independent of "the fluxes and refluxes of the mind" trying to interpret.

So psychological an emphasis (and the poetic texture it effects) must have impressed Wordsworth and Coleridge alike as a revolutionary enough experiment in the language of poetry. Yet Coleridge's belief that "the best part of human language . . . is derived from reflection on the acts of the mind itself" was not to be given its most radical poetic treatment until a generation later. Keats explicitly features the questions of interpretation that haunt *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *The Thorn* in his own lyrical ballad "La Belle Dame sans Merci"—a poem that bears a structural resemblance to *The Thorn*. Not long after, he was at work on a series of odes (of which "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is the most striking example) in which he not only makes a premise of the problems of interpretation all these lyrical ballads trace with increasing intensity, but extends that negotiation with uncertainty to the reader's engagement with the play of his rhyme.

II

Today, most readers of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* are probably not as bothered as was Coleridge's acquaintance, the poet and essayist Mrs. Barbauld, about the "improbable" nature of his story. The second "fault" of which she complained to the author, however, remains something of a notorious vexation for many modern readers—namely, that the poem "had no moral." Coleridge is willing to cede the point on "probability"; but "as to the want of a moral," he counters, the poem's "chief fault, if I might say so, was the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader as a principle or cause of action in a work of pure imagination." Yet in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* Coleridge not only seems to deplore "moral sentiment"; in this work of pure imagination, he seems to want to baffle the effort to discover any principle of action. Indeed, he continues his remarks by declaring that his poem "ought to have no more moral than the *Arabian Nights'* tale of the merchant's sitting down to eat dates by the side of a well and throwing the shells aside, and lo! a genie starts up and says he *must* kill the aforesaid merchant *because* one of the date shells had, it seems, put out the eye of the genie's son." Coleridge emphasizes the causal vocabulary with knowing irony, for to the mind of the date-eater, the genie

Nineteenth-century print of a scene from "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" by Samuel Taylor Cooleridge

has produced moral necessity from a chance event and consequence.

But before considering what kind of moral paradigm that tale offers to the reader of Coleridge's poem, we need to turn to the Mariner himself, who finds moral uncertainties in the central circumstance of his "Rime." The world he describes, as readers from Wordsworth to the present have noted, is one informed by inscrutable forces; nature is unpredictably solicitous or persecutory, benevolent or tyrannous. As in "Dejection," the language that can be read from nature's appearances often seems barely more than the fiction of a desperate imagination. Indeed, the foggy atmosphere from which the Albatross emerges, and which always surrounds its presence, suggests both inner and outer weather:

> At length did cross an Albatross,
> Thorough the fog it came;
> As if it had been a Christian soul,
> We hailed it God's name.

Despite the appealing rhyme of "Albatross" with "cross" (here and subsequently), the Mariner's "As if" has the effect of raising a question about what "principle or cause of action" (if any) is actually involved. For the conjecture, uttered in fog-bound misery, seems to describe primarily the hopes of an anxious crew, rather than anything positive about the bird itself. The Mariner and crew attempt repeatedly to convert conjecture into a syntax of event and consequence that can join the Albatross to the fate of their ship: when the splitting of the ice and the rising of a good south wind follow the advent of the bird, they hail it as the agent of their release; when the fog disperses (along with the ice and snow) after the Mariner kills the bird, the crewmen reinterpret the Albatross as the cause of the fog, and their release into sunshine and fair breezes as a consequence of its death; and when the same breezes fail and the "glorious" sun becomes "bloody," the crewmen imagine themselves plagued by the Mariner's killing of the Albatross and rue that act. What are we to make of this continual shuffling of logic? Even Wordsworth, usually not averse to making the reader "struggle," sides with Coleridge's perplexed readers and against his "Friend" in the "Note to the Ancient Mariner" he wrote for the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. He cites, among other difficulties, the "defect" "that the events having no necessary connection do not produce each other." The arbitrary interpretations that gather around the Albatross are a case in point. Each new scheme of causality does not clarify any "necessary connection" between the bird and the state of the weather, as much as all together expose the fiction of interpretive acts: ascertainment of the bird's value emerges after the fact, as a logic of cause and effect is imposed on a mere sequence of events. As in the tale of the genie and the date-eater, cause and effect are matters of convenient collation rather than of inevitable connection. We begin to sense that if the Albatross signifies anything, it is the very ambiguity of signs—that is, the ambiguity with which the external world vexes a desire for interpretive certainty.

The language of cause and consequence not only surrounds the Albatross but is the very principle upon which a narrative must proceed, and so the problem of collation and connection extends to the listener of the Mariner's tale. How is one supposed to coordinate the two key events upon which his story depends: the killing of the Albatross and the blessing of the snakes? The way the Mariner himself represents these acts makes more of their irrationality than of their moral dimensions: "I shot the ALBATROSS" merely joins subject and predicate, rather than explains the act; and even when that act is apparently redeemed by the blessing of the water-snakes, this, too, is given without reference to a conscious motivation: "I blessed them unaware." The parallel syntax of "I shot" and "I blessed" does make a neat pattern for the sampler homily with which the Mariner caps his tale: "He prayeth best, who loveth best / All things both great and small: / For the dear God who loveth us, / He made and loveth all." Nonetheless, a listener cannot escape awareness that this moral is for its bearer embedded in a self-denying context: the Mariner is doomed to eternal exclusion from the love and prayer he preaches. Ironically, he isolates and terrifies his auditors more than he consoles them with any sense of God's inclusive love. The would-be Wedding-Guest's "wiser" state notwithstanding, that listener at least is also left "sadder" for having heard the "Rime"—perhaps more "stunned" than instructed by the Mariner's will over him. Denied the "goodly company" of the marriage feast, the Wedding-Guest's very name is rendered meaningless. Left "of sense forlorn," this student of the Mariner's lesson finds himself, instead, a participant in the Mariner's alienation: listener and tale-teller alike seem at the end of their encounter "forlorn" of common "sense"—the comfort of living in a world of rational cause and consequence. As Coleridge remarks in the "Conclusion" of his own biography, "there is always a consolatory feeling that accompanies the sense of a proportion between antecedents and consequents . . . giv[ing], as it were,

a substratum of permanence, of identity, and therefore of reality, to the shadowy flux of Time."

What denies the Mariner and all his listeners this sense of proportion is that the question that is the efficient cause of his narration—"What manner of man art thou?"—eludes certain answering. What is his "substratum" of identity? Is he a killer of an Albatross, a blesser of water-snakes, a preacher of God's love, or an agent of contamination? The question is voiced originally by the Mariner's first auditor, the Hermit, and as we learn, it wrenches the Mariner "With a woful agony" that requires nothing less than a retelling of all the events of his ordeal. Yet as tortured and elaborate as the Mariner's response is, it remains indeterminate: the question generates his "Rime," and his "Rime" regenerates the question. Its conclusion, in fact, gestures toward its perpetual rehearsal in the shadowy flux of time:

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

Endlessly navigating about a core of mysterious events, the Mariner can never capture their informing logic: his text circles about this absent center but always begins and concludes in agonizing uncertainty. Nor does Coleridge's ballad itself secure the tidy closure of "moral sentiment," ending instead with a register of the aftereffect of the Mariner's tale in the mind of his stunned, forlorn auditor. If the Mariner himself "Is gone," he leaves the trace of his mystery in that interior realm, making the truest issue of his "ghastly tale" the way it haunts a listener's imagination. "I was never so affected with any human Tale," Charles Lamb wrote to Wordsworth; "After first reading it, I was totally possessed with it for many days... the feelings of the man under the operation of such scenery dragged me along like Tom Piper's magic Whistle.—" Another listener confessed to feeling "insulated" in the wake of hearing the poem recited by its author: "a sea of wonder and mystery flows round [me] as round the spell-stricken ship itself."

The effect of the Mariner's "Rime" in leaving its readers thus "possessed," despite the patent moral at its close, is amplified by the interpretive apparatus with which Coleridge surrounds the text of the "Rime." The "Argument" at the head of the 1798 poem is primarily descriptive, concerned mainly with the course of the Mariner's ship and alluding only briefly to "the strange things that befell" as if by chance, accident, or inscrutable agency. With the "Argument" of 1800, however, Coleridge introduces terms of moral logic and potential instruction: "the Ancient Mariner cruelly and in contempt of the laws of hospitality killed a Sea-bird and ... was followed by many and strange Judgements." Yet in the 1802 and 1805 editions of *Lyrical Ballads* Coleridge dropped the "Argument" altogether, as if he had decided not to prejudice his reader with authorial signals, but to let his poem work its own effect. The next publication of the poem in *Sibylline Leaves* (1817) strikes a compromise, supplying a marginal gloss instead of an argument. Like the "Argument" of 1800, the Gloss often brings a moral interpretation to bear on the Mariner's story. Unlike the "Argument," however, the Gloss is a parallel text, in effect competing with the "Rime" for the reader's attention, rather than supervising it. It presumes to order the Mariner's ordeal with a logic that his own "Rime" does not disclose—if supplying the "necessary connection[s]" whose absence Wordsworth, among others, regretted. "And lo! the Albatross proveth a bird of good omen," it declares with the authority of biblical exegesis. "The ancient Mariner inhospitably killeth the pious bird of good omen," it avers, judgment in its every other word. Or taking as a cue the Mariner's fervent hope that "Sure my kind saint took pity on me," the Gloss confidently interprets a necessary connection: "By grace of the holy Mother, the ancient Mariner is refreshed with rain." The voice of the Gloss confronts the reader as the genie does the date-eater, starting up to declare moral necessity at every turn. Yet far from clarifying whatever connections between events the "Rime" may have left obscure, the very presence of a Gloss emphasizes their absence and points to the need for explicit terms of instruction in a circumstance where all is interrogative ("Why look'st thou so?" "wherefore stopp'st thou me?" "What manner of man art thou?"). Indeed the final marginal comment, "an agony constraineth . . . [the Mariner] to teach, by his own example, love and reverence to all things that God made and loveth," gives the rehearsal of that lesson a psychological urgency ("agony") even as it declares a moral principle. Despite the faith readers such as Robert Penn Warren have placed in the authority of the Gloss, it persists as another fiction—a parallel account of the ordeal recounted by the Mariner's "Rime," or an account of another ordeal: the attempt to make sense of the Mariner's language.

There is one frame, however, that Coleridge retains in every edition, namely, the voice of the anonymous balladeer with which the poem begins

and ends. Readers tend, as Lionel Stevenson does, to treat this frame voice as no more than a "perfunctory" device. Yet in a poem so fundamentally involved with issues of tale-telling and tale-listening, this view deserves reconsideration. The relative situation of the Mariner's "Rime" is what lyricizes the ballad, making it as much about the feelings the "Rime" develops in its tellers and listeners as about the supernatural character of its events or the moral wisdom of its instruction. Its concluding focus on the Wedding-Guest suggests, furthermore, the frame narrator's muted but overall interest in the relation between "forced" tale-telling and "forced" tale-listening. The Wedding-Guest, now possessed with the "Rime," may have found a motive for narrative similar in power to that which possesses the Mariner with his ordeal. The poem leaves open to question whether this newly haunted listener might himself become a haunted purveyor of the Rime's repetitive life: Will the Wedding-Guest rise the morrow morn, compelled to reach toward an audience of his own, to say in the manner of the ballad's frame narrator, "It is an ancient Mariner, / And he stoppeth one of three"? The ballad's opening word, "It," hears the same sense of perplexed indeterminacy with which the Mariner has left the Wedding-Guest, while the present tense of narration, both here and in the ballad's penultimate stanza ("The Mariner, whose eye is bright, / Whose beard with age is hoar, / Is gone"), suggests the perpetual presence of that figure in the mind that contains his "Rime." The affinity the balladeer's language bears to the psychology of the Mariner's haunted listener is further enhanced by the copresence of their voices in the poem's inaugural stanza, before the actual character of the Wedding-Guest is introduced. The opening two lines flow immediately into a question —"By thy long grey beard and glittering eye, / Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?"—in which the pattern of meter and rhyme and the as-yet-unspecified identity of the questioner momentarily create the sense of a single mind moving from observation to speech.

The self-circling energies of this narrative frame and the would-be containment offered by the poem's interpretive frame (the early Argument or later Gloss) suggest an extended rhetorical figure for the motions of a mind left stunned by the Mariner's "Rime" and attempting to sort out its mystery. Could the interpretive apparatus surrounding what Coleridge thought of as "A Poet's Reverie" be the textual signatures of a previously sense-forlorn auditor trying to make sense by obtruding (for himself and for his own audience) a "principle of action" on the intolerably inconclusive tale that has possessed his imagination? The Latin epigraph that in 1817 takes the place of earlier Arguments and subtitles indeed brings a problematic perspective to bear on the Mariner's mysterious experience. An excerpt from *Archaeologiae Philosophicae* by the Anglican divine, Thomas Burnet, it offers scholarly speculation on the existence of the invisible and the supernatural in the things of the universe. Yet Burnet cautions that in circling about but never attaining knowledge of the unknown, the mind must be vigilant for truth, careful to distinguish the certain from the uncertain. The action of circling about a center that defies final understanding describes the relation of the Mariner's "Rime" to its enigmatic core of events; it also figures the relation of the Gloss to that "Rime": each text surrounds a mystery, attempting to negotiate moral certainty in the face of what haunts and rouses the imagination. And the comprehensive text of Coleridge's 1817 ballad, equivocating between Marginal Gloss and Mariner's "Rime," now poses that problem to the reader. For the *apparatus criticus* and the "Rime" together shape a fuller text that, while denying unambiguous principles of instruction, offers an explicit figure for the ultimate uncertainty of interpretation.

III

In leaving its reader so "struggl[ing] with feelings of strangeness and aukwardness," *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* achieves one of the revolutionary goals of *Lyrical Ballads*. Deriding the "mere artifices of connection" that characterize the "falsity in the poetic style" of the day, Coleridge points to Wordsworth's contributions to their volume and praises the way such poems reveal compelling "resemblances between that state into which the reader's mind is thrown" by the "confusion of thought front an unaccustomed train of words and images" and "that state which is induced by the ... language of empassioned feeling." The reader's "confusion" in the presence of such language is the note on which *The Thorn* begins, and Wordsworth even supplies an interlocutor to give voice to the inevitable protests. The ballad opens plainly enough, with an unspecified speaker reporting a simple fact: "There is a thorn." But as in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the world of positive fact ("It is ...") dissolves rather quickly into the shadows of imagination: this is no mere bush, we find out, but one of a mysteriously charged constellation of objects that has taken possession of the

speaker's imagination. He hopes a village tale will supply terms by which he can explain "why" this "spot" should produce such impressive effects out of its simple elements. His initial gesture in this direction is to claim that he "saw" a "woman" at this spot, beside that thorn, crying to herself, "Oh misery! oh misery! / "Oh woe is me! oh misery!"—namely Martha Ray: betrothed, seduced, abandoned in pregnancy on her wedding day, bereaved of her child, and perhaps guilty of infanticide at "the spot." The interpretive appeal of this rural legend for the speaker is that it plots an objective chain of events that culminate in the affective power of "the spot," allowing him to displace his obsession with "the spot" to Martha Ray; he is merely an accidetal witness.

But as with the Gloss attached to the Mariner's "Rime," here too the very pressures that introduce the cause-and-effect logic of the tale call into question the validity of the proposed explanation. The speaker's insistence that it was Martha Ray whom he "found," "saw," and "heard" "Ere [he] had heard of Martha's name" may indicate no more than a desperate effort to release his imagination from the grip of a mist-bound panic on a lonely, stormy mountain ridge. Stephen Parrish argues persuasively that the credulous and superstitious speaker may have traced into his account of "the spot" the details of Martha Ray's history after the event of his own witnessing, converting mere objects into intelligible signs of her ordeal. A psychological urgency shades the explanation promised by the tale into language that expresses the reach for explanation by a mind invaded by mystery. The questioner in the speaker's audience may plead, "But what's the thorn? and what's the pond? / "And what's the hill of moss to her?" But that plea, despite its relentless repetition, fails to make the speaker clarify an account suspended uneasily between what he professes to know, or swears is true, and what he "do[es] not know," "cannot think" or "tell."

That the poem dramatizes the motions of interpretation as much as it displays the materials of interpretation constitutes what Geoffrey Hartman has, termed the "double plot" of *The Thorn*, in which "the action narrated and that of the narrator's mind run parallel." The question for the speaker is "why?": what is the connection between the "tale" and "the spot"? But for the reader, that question is compounded with another, about the agent of that second psychological order of action: "What manner of *mind* is this?" we may ask. Wordsworth himself takes up this last question in his own version of the Coleridgean Argument and Gloss: the long Note he appends to the poem in the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. Addressed to "Readers who are not accustomed to sympathize with men feeling in that manner or using such language," the Note supplies a sort of second text—that "Introductory Poem" Wordsworth felt he "ought" to have adduced to *The Thorn* "to give this Poem its full effect." But unlike Coleridge's Gloss, Wordsworth's Note is not concerned with clarifying a principle for the "action narrated"; he means instead to clarify his intent to exhibit what happens to the language of discourse in the absence of such a principle—particularly in the case of a "credulous and talkative" discourser with an imagination "prone to superstition." Wordsworth argues that the speaker's particular "manner," especially his "repetition of words" (a chief complaint among the poem's first readers), is meant to dramatize an effort "to communicate impassioned feelings"—an effort spurred by "something of an accompanying consciousness of the inadequateness of [his] powers, or the deficiencies of language" to do so.

The speaker's frustration of plot and his larger struggle with the language of cause and effect thus become a general struggle with all modes of articulation—except the repetition of verbal fragments "which appear successfully to communicate" a feeling, and "the interest" thereby "which the mind attaches to words, not only as symbols of the passion, but as *things*, active and efficient, which are of themselves part of the passion." "During such efforts," Wordsworth explains, "there will be a craving in the mind" which, to the extent that it remains "unsatisfied," will cause the speaker to "cling to the same words." Though Coleridge deplored this effect, the circumstances of his own Mariner's narrative suggest a certain amount of sympathy for its motivation. For the implicit repetition of the Mariner's "Rime," and the actual repetitions in *The Thorn* that play in the voices of both Martha Ray and the ballad's speaker, all describe motions of mind engaged with what is not too explicit: repetition becomes re-petition, re-asking. As such an interrogative attempt, repetition emerges as another version of the questions that provoke the telling of each tale, that "craving in the mind" for a certainty it cannot locate. Indeed, the voice that actually utters questions in *The Thorn* is itself a repetitive one. This voice never quarrels with the narrator but merely echoes his tentative discourse in interrogative tones. Both the echoing locution of this voice, as well as its indeterminate origin, suggest that Wordsworth may even be shading the poetics of

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dialogue into monologue, as if to represent a colloquy within one intelligence, between a voice seeking fact and reason ("But why. . .?"), and a write helplessly burdened with mystery ("I do not know"). The play of these voices, like that between Coleridge's "Rime" and his framing apparatus, becomes an extended figure for the mind's engagement with uncertainty. There is a difference, however, for in Wordsworth's poem the two writes we hear are scarcely distinguishable, and neither presumes interpretive authority.

IV

The effort of Wordsworth and Coleridge in these "lyrical ballads" to dramatize the uncertainties of interpretation opens a field of rhetorical activity in English Romanticism in which the play of interpretive strategies emerges as a primary subject—a "principle of action" in itself. Shelley writes an ode the whole point of which seems to be to question whether "the human mind's imaginings" work against a "vacancy" of information in the external world (*Mont Blanc*); Byron chants playfully: "Apologue, Fable, Poesy, and Parable, / Are false, but may be rendered also true, / By those who sow them in a land that's arable: / 'T is wonderful what Fable will not do! / 'T is said it makes Reality more bearable" (*Don Juan* XV:89). Keats's Odes are perhaps the consummate Romantic instance of a poetic design in which the primary principle of action is a psychological event—a mind exploring and testing its own fictions of interpretation. But narrative, too, becomes arable land for such testing in a poem such as "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," Keats's version of a lyrical ballad. As in *The Thorn* and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the central event (the perhaps fatal entanglement of a knight with an enigmatic woman of the meads) emerges only as a troubled memory, the primary action becoming instead the exchange between a perplexed questioner and a would-be tale-teller. The poem opens on an explicitly interrogative note, as a voice arrested by a strange impression queries its cause: "O what can ail thee, knight at arms, / Alone and palely loitering?"

Like the questioners of Wordsworth and Coleridge, Keats's balladeer seeks a reason for a peculiar phenomenon: what explains this unexpected sight on the meads, a knight absent from his wonted world of quest and romance? What sort of tale awaits the telling? The tone of the question reflects its speaker's uncertainty, for it suggests at once a moment of puzzled concern for an ailing countryman and a slightly chiding "what-ails-you?" reproach for the appearance of negligence. The description of the landscape that completes the stanza—"The sedge has wither'd from the lake, / And no birds sing"—extends the mood of inquiry by stressing the incongruity of figure and place. Yet there is a gap between the stanza's questions and its voice of description that raises a question for the reader: are the comments on the landscape a cryptic but potentially meaningful reply *to* the questioner or a further effort *by* the questioner to provoke a reply from the knight? That ambiguity, and its mysterious circumstance, persist in the second stanza:

> O what can ail thee, knight at arms,
> So haggard and so woe-begone?
> The squirrel's granary is full,
> And the harvest's done.

This stanza compounds rather than clarifies the indefinite relation between question and statement, an ambiguity to which I shall return. For now it is enough to note that both the landscape that frames the knight and the statements that frame the questions announce a world of depleted vitality, no longer productive of any harvest, even, apparently, the harvest of inquiry: the field is unyielding for all. The principle of *in*action seems the profoundest absence of all; indeed, the questioning voice is the singular movement in this otherwise barren circumstance.

The adjectives "haggard" and "woe-begone" (as well as the previous stanza's "Alone" and "loi-

tering") begin to play against this vacancy of information, however, by hinting at anterior events: "woe-begone" and "Alone" suggest diagnoses of an ailment for which "loitering" may be a symptom, while the etymology of "haggard," along with what Keats might describe as "its original and modern meaning combined and woven together, with all its shades of signification," suggests an intuition of cause. The modern meaning of "drawn, gaunt, exhausted" is enhanced by the status of "haggard" as an adjective derived from "hag," implying prior bewitchment. The word points even more specifically to the effects of commerce with a "haggard": "a wild or intractable female," and—with special relevance to Keats's La Belle Dame—with a "'wild' expression of the eyes." May the knight's present "haggard" appearance be the effect of a contagious encounter with some haggard's "wild wild eyes"? The latent efforts at interpretation stirring in these adjectives emerge in the overtly symbolic imagery that follows:

> I see a lily on thy brow
> With anguish moist and fever dew,
> And on thy cheeks a fading rose
> Fast withereth too.

As Earl Wasserman remarks, this stanza invites a "symbolic reading": the lily is the harbinger of death (Keats in fact wrote "death's lilly" in an earlier draft); the "fading rose" (also originally "death's fading rose") cannily surmises the fatal fading of romance, while the repetition of the verb "wither" in reference to the knight's appearance can now suggest an affinity between him and a heretofore incongruous circumstance. The elaboration of detail has begun to resonate with an obscure significance which promises a logical connection: the imagery of the whole reports a hollow center whose very vacancy has become significant. Everything speaks of absences, withdrawals, depletions, and abandonments.

The questioner has in effect entered the realm of latent narrative, for with the cue of this "symbolic reading," the knight produces a tale whose information confirms all these intuitions and imaginative surmises. Nonetheless, its sequence of events—far from elucidating the original mystery—only deepens its range, for here too details elude definite organization. Wasserman's study of the poem is particularly alert to "the dim sense of mystery and incompleteness" Keats's artistry arouses in us, along with the way certain "overtones" in the "affective and image-making energies of the poem" "drive the mind to ask questions of conceptual intent. What, one wonders, is the larger meaning couched in the absence of song? why a knight-at-arms and an elfin grot? and what are the significances of the cold hill side and the pale warriors?" Like the Marginal Editor of the Mariner's "Rime," Wasserman means to "penetrate [this] mystery", and he thinks he has the answer: La Belle Dame "is the ideal" that entices mortal man "towards heaven's bourne," but which must elude permanent possession in this world. Other readers surmise different causes and propose "Circe" as a more accurate key to interpretation.

Yet the knight's tale yields no certain logic either way, for like his questioner, he too is in struggle with indeterminate appearances. "She look'd at me as she did love," he reports, with a syntax that hovers between a confidently durational sense of "as" as "while" and that of less confident conjecture, "as if." His subsequent assertion, "And sure in language strange she said—/ I love thee true," bears no more certainty than the Mariner's hopefully proffered "Sure my kind saint took pity on me." In both cases the claim only accentuates the gap between the strangeness of signs and their proposed translations. La Belle Dame escapes logical explication even in retrospect—as the syntax of the knight's tale everywhere demonstrates: his narration merely accretes from "and" to "and"—a word sounded in fact in every stanza of the ballad, more than two dozen times throughout. As in *The Thorn*, the final stanza comes to rest on the original mystery, its terms now intensified by the intervening narrative:

> And this is why I sojourn here,
> Alone and palely loitering,
> Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake,
> And no birds sing.

Despite the withering of lush romance into a death-pale aftermath, the cause remains unknown. The knight's summation simply echoes on a syntactic level the absences noted by the questioner. Though he frames an answer in the syntax of explanation ("And this is why. . ."), it is an answer that doesn't produce much, beyond halting present tenses left wandering between two worlds, one dead and one powerless to be *re* born. Lacking a clear antecedent, its "this" belies the stress by voice and meter: there is, finally, no "why" to solve the mystery of La Belle Dame or to dispel its lingering effects. Indeed, the knight's final, haunting repetition of his questioner's voice only magnifies the interrogative mood of the whole, whose irresolution now involves the reader too.

We should not ascribe that questioning voice simply to ballad convention, however, even if it does perform the conventional service of prompting a tale. For the very presence of this questioner on the meads is itself questionable. As in *The Thorn*, the status of the poem's conversation remains ambiguous enough to suggest two voices playing in one intelligence, instead of two dramatically distinct speakers. We note, for instance, a curiously shared attraction to the landscape of barren meads, as well as a shared song—the knight reports being spellbound by "La Belle Dame sans Merci," and the balladeer repeats the spell of that language strange in the title of his own song. Keats enhances these provocative affinities by keeping the identity of the questioner anonymous (more a voice than a character) and by withholding any punctuation that might distinguish two separate speakers. There is a quality to the place and play of these voices, in other words, that implies the self-questioning motions of a divided consciousness examining its forlorn state. Even the knight's summary statement, "And I awoke and found me here," points to self-division and the need to heal it, with the location of "here" suspended between a situation in the landscape and a situation in the mind. Like *The Thorn*, Keats's lyrical ballad allows a reading of its voices as a dialogue of the mind with itself; by the end of the poem, the question that drew our attention to the knight has been utterly absorbed into his own voice. The status of the ballad's dialogue must of course remain part of its mystery—neither clearly an internal colloquy nor a conversation between distinct *dramatis personae*. But the ambiguity is suggestive, for it points toward the rhetorical play of the odes, which, as many readers remark, is one of internal dialogue and debate.

V

If "La Belle Dame sans Merci" foregrounds a probing question and a perplexed reply against a set of events that haunt about the shape of present speech, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" heightens that drama of interpretation. Instead of a narrative organization of tale, tale-teller, and listener (or reader), Keats concentrates the action of the poem on the motions of a single lyric intelligence engaged with an image: a tableau on an urn, which like "the spot" in *The Thorn* or the appearance of the knight on the meads seems to signify something beyond itself, but for which there is no "legend" forthcoming, problematic or not. Keats's field of action is that of a poet's mind beckoned to interpretation, and the drama he presents concerns the increasingly self-conscious attempts of that mind to describe the significance of the object before it.

Like "La Belle Dame," the Ode begins with a greeting that suggests there is a story to be told, a meaning to be expressed:

> Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,
> Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
> Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
> A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme.

All the vocatives—an "unravish'd bride," a "foster-child," a silent tale-teller—suggest an unfinished circumstance—or from a rhetorical point of view, information on the verge of expression. Keats brilliantly exploits that implication by following these invocations with a series of questions, the syntactic equivalent of these figures of provocative incompletion:

> What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
> Of deities or mortals, or of both,
> In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
> What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
> What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
> What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

If the speaker surmises the urn as a silent Grecian "historian," the questioning of his "rhyme" provides a particularly cooperative voice, for *historia* is the Grecian method of learning by inquiry. Yet the attempt to double the historians on this occasion produces an ironic counterplay in the language of poetic inquiry. Far from recovering the mysterious legend presumably harbored by this "Sylvan historian," the speaker's rhyme doubles back on itself to mirror his own perplexities: he barely launches his greeting before it branches into multiple "or"s, a kind of "wild ecstasy" of syntax that diagrams his "mad pursuit" of his own "maiden loth"—the unravished "what" that might supply the absent meaning of the images he riddles. As Keats's speaker pursues the significance of his object, Keats's rhyme mirrors the course of that pursuit.

Keats's Ode continues to elaborate this double plot, presenting a speaker in pursuit of interpretation in rhyme that expresses, primarily, the ardor of the pursuer. If, however, Keats's readers are inclined to exempt themselves from this mirror-play, they have unwittingly played into an even more subtle irony. For over the course of the Ode, Keats turns the behavior of his rhyme into a dilemma for the reader, fully analogous to the speaker's dilemma of interpretation before the urn. By the conclusion of the Ode, in fact, the reader may have the uneasy feeling that not only have these dilem-

mas converged, they may even have reversed, for Keats's speaker abandons us with an ambiguously toned "that is all" just before becoming as silent as the urn itself.

The dovetailing of the two dilemmas of interpretation—the speaker's of the urn and the reader's of the rhyme—begins as soon as the speaker stops questioning to muse on the freedom of the urn from any finite significance. If no "legend" can be read into the silent tableau, it may be because "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard / Are sweeter." With this new premise, the absent "legend" finds a productive counterpart in "unheard" melodies, those "ditties of no tone" played "Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd ... to the spirit." The language of Keats's poetry intensifies that paradox with a play of visual repetitions and half-heard echoes. The word "ear," for instance, reemerges enfolded in "end*ear*'d," as if that repetition were both a visual and auditory figure for the inner audience to which it refers. Furthermore, the sound (as well as the spelling) of "endear'd" resonates as "end ear'd," as if to signify audience beyond the bourn of "the sensual ear"—"just below the threshold of normal sound," as Cleanth Brooks puts it. The slant and sight rhyme of "endear'd" with "unheard" adds a further elaboration to the visual and auditory design of rhyme. As readers, we begin to attend to information that haunts about the shape of rhyme, as well as the information it expresses through the logic of paradox. Language itself becomes a provocative figure of nterpretation.

Yet that very elaboration of linguistic surface further perplexes these "ditties of no tone," for the speaker has a tone, or rather tones, that correspond ambivalently to the absences he notes:

> Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
> Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
> Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
> Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
> She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
> For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Any effort to evaluate the syntax of these judgments is thoroughly involved with the speaker's own perplexity before the arrested figures he contemplates. On the one hand, "Fair youth" and "Bold lover" present ideal images of mortals whose special stasis insulates them from the normal attritions of human passion and the vagaries of human inspiration; "the negation of these verbs," Earl Wasserman insists, "creates an infinity of mutable or chronological time." But the dependency of surmise on such negatives may be decreative as well, for the tone of the whole is poised between emphatic celebration and rueful irony: "do not grieve; / She cannot fade." The initially bold assurance of "therefore, ye soft pipes, play on" succumbs to the wavering balance of "Though ... yet ... though," while the expansive potential of figures seemingly poised on the verge of action yields figures trapped in an eternity of postponements.

The third stanza heightens these tensions of interpretation, both for the speaker and for us, not with syntactic equivocation this time, but with a univocal insistence on gradations of happiness, where the very repetition of positive value exposes the urgency with which it is being declared:

> Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
> Your leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu;
> And, happy melodist, unwearied,
> For ever piping songs for ever new;
> More happy love! more happy, happy love!
> For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd ...

Like the repetitions of Wordsworth's Sea Captain in *The Thorn*, here too "words" verge on becoming mere "things" of passionate speech, rather than "symbols:" They render a linguistic event that like the branching syntax of stanza 1 or the seesawing sentences of stanza 2 aligns the reader of Keats's "rhyme" ever more sharply with the interpretive dilemma of the beholder before the urn.

This third stanza concludes with a particularly intense convergence of situation and syntax that invariably trips Keats's readers:

> For ever panting, and for ever young;
> All breathing human passion far above,
> That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
> A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

On a first reading, "All breathing human passion far above" seems to be a summary phrase for the state of "More happy love! ... For ever panting, and for ever young": the semicolon after "young" perhaps marks a pause analogous to a comma, like the semicolons after "adieu" and "new" in the same stanza, while, conversely, the comma after "above" temporarily halts our reading in this field of happy surmise. Moreover, the stanza's syntax encourages us to feel that there is no problem in reading "breathing" as a continuation of those activities that the speaker has also described in present participles, "piping" and "panting"—activities that in fact involve kinds of "breathing." Wasserman puts the case this way: the line "is the syntactical analogue" of a visionary ideal where "breathing human passion" exists in a

state "far above," fusing "mortal and immortal, the temporal and the atemporal." We may even be inclined to read "All" as an inclusive noun for the melodist and the lovers, and "breathing" as a verb whose direct object is "human passion."

The comma keeps us reading, however, and as we do, we reject this last syntactic possibility. More important, we find that "far above" is not a place but a value judgment that separates "All breathing human passion" from the conditions of the "happy love" we have been imagining. The value of "breathing" does perplex that judgment with information that will emerge more fully in stanza 5's "Cold Pastoral!"—an obverse evaluation of the same condition. But at this point, "breathing" is realigned only with the "sorrowful" conditions of the immediately ensuing participles, "burning" and "parching," its situation distilled utterly from the possibility of mystical convergence with "for ever panting and for ever young."

What is striking about this line, and the stanza as a whole, is the "phenomenology of reading" it produces. The teetering syntax of "All breathing human passion far above"—first promoting, then subverting, a coordination between the "happy love" on the urn and the highest promise of "human passion"—becomes significant not only for what it would describe, but for the way it behaves. Just as the urn's art resists decisive interpretation, so that one line entangles nearly every reader who has studied Keats's Ode. The question of narrative legend ("What men or gods are these?") moves, in this stanza, into a question of grammar and syntax: "What nouns or verbs are these?" Ambiguity is now the common property of urn and rhyme, and the dilemma of interpretation, the common situation of Keats's speaker and Keats's reader.

The return of questions in stanza 4 can be only an ironic event after these doublings of dubious surmise. They seem deliberately calculated to demonstrate the futility of certain interpretation:

> Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
> To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
> Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
> And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?

This object of address is not the potentially intelligent "Sylvan historian" of stanza 1 but a "mysterious priest," whose knowledge (like his identity) is beyond possible knowing. Nor is there any possibility of discerning a historical context for this "sacrifice": origin and termination can be a matter of surmise only:

> What little town by river or sea shore,
> Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
> Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?

The question of "what little town" echoes the earlier inquiry for "what leaf-fring'd legend," but here the configuration of "or"s concerns one of those "Nothings" that have existence only in the "ardent pursuit" of imagination. The circumstance is without a representation and, significantly, without a voice:

> And, little town, thy streets for evermore
> Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
> Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

The connective "And" hardly breaks the flow of the question, for it produces a response that extends interrogative motion into an undoing of its very premises. In stanza 1, the urn as a "bride of quietness" or a "foster-child of silence" suggested a haunting indeterminacy, while the paradox of "unheard melodies" made that "silence" an elusive spiritual extension of sound. Stanza 4 reduces that potential to mere emptiness. Like the landscape in "La Belle Dame" where "no birds sing," here, too, is a tableau of absence: there is finally no "historian," "not a soul to tell/Why," and the voice of bold inquiry, eager to ravish the urn for its "what" and "why," finds itself ironically partnered to her silence. The final stanza completes this movement: all questions are absorbed by the object that had excited them, and the urn relapses to a mere "Attic shape"—the "attitude" of "silent form" that signals the silencing of inquiry.

Yet even as Keats's speaker appears to concede this consequence, Keats's rhyme redeems language by exploiting its multiplicity of interpretive signals. For the profusion of puns and shades of signification that play through the ode's final stanza at once speak of and enact the indeterminacy the ode has dramatized throughout. If the urn's art withholds its spectral legend, flattening illusory possibility to a merely opaque "Fair attitude! with brede / Of marble men and maidens overwrought," Keats takes advantage of the "heard melodies" of poetry to multiply the dimensions of its activity. "Brede," for instance, describes the quality of the urn's figured design, but its punning against "breed" and ironic half-echoes of "bride" and "breathe" subtly reject the "human passion" the speaker had projected onto the urn's fair attitudes. Indeed, "Fair attitude" refers both to the loveliness of the urn's art and to the fairness, or justice, of its silent seeming. "Overwrought" involves similar shadings, for while it refers to the lapidary quality

of the urn's design, it also criticizes an eternity where one may never, never kiss. And as a pun on over-"raught" (an archaic or Spenserian version of "reached"), it gently mocks the speaker's previous overreaching to idealize the urn's tableau, as well as implicates his view of the overwrought figures before him with his own overwrought postures of interpretation—that voice given to chanting, "Ah, happy, happy boughs!. . . More happy love! more happy, happy love!" "I found my Brain so overwrought that I had neither Rhyme nor reason in it—so was obliged to give up," Keats reports of one mood of composition in the midst of *Endymion*.

The transition from the "overwrought" brain to "giving up" is in fact the consequence Keats's final stanza enacts. The resistance of both urn and rhyme to any single pattern of significance is again underscored with the utterance, "Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought / As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!" "Cold Pastoral!" is, of course, the speaker's decisive revision of his previous surmise, "For ever warm": the epithet coolly extinguishes the ardor of that pursuit. More important, however, is the way this phrase not only juxtaposes the beholder's conflicting responses ("Cold" marble, "Pastoral" illusion), but translates that perplexity of signification into a compelling linguistic figure. "Cold Pastoral!" is no reconciliation but rather a tensed collation of opposites: a dynamic, because, unresolvable, oxymoron. The disjunctive effect of reading Coleridge's Marginal Gloss against his Mariner's "Rime" is something Keats's "Cold Pastoral" concentrates into a single phrase. It is Coleridge in fact who provides the most cogent Romantic argument for the imaginative value of oxymorons. To defend Shakespeare's attraction to the figure, he urges allowance for the way oxymoron reveals and perpetuates that

> effort of the mind, when it would describe what it cannot satisfy itself with the description of, to reconcile opposites and qualify contradictions, leaving a middle state of mind more strictly appropriate to the imagination than any other, when it is, as it were, hovering between images. As soon as it is fixed on one image, it becomes understanding; but while it is unfixed and wavering between them, attaching itself permanently to none, it is imagination. . . a strong working of the mind, still offering what is still repelled, and again creating what is again rejected.

Not only is this a provocative countertext to Coleridge's favored poetics of reconciliation, but it is the best reading of "Cold Pastoral" ever not written about the phrase, for it speaks to the way the voice of judgment Keats produces in stanza 5 keeps the mind of the reader working hard in a dialectic of constructions and deconstructions. However teasingly silent this "Sylvan historian" remains about its informing "legend," it becomes, through the very provocation of its silence, the historian of urn-readers and urn-reading, a historian of the speaker's activity and our own. The urn befriends its beholders the way Keats's rhyme does—by encouraging their imaginative activity. We come to value its artistry not so much by what it yields to thought as by what it does to thought—provoking questions and refusing to confirm any sure points and resting places for our reasonings.

The voice of the urn, were one to imagine it, is a perfect contrast to the voice that declares "Cold Pastoral!": "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" is such a piece of self-enclosed harmony that it merits separation by quotation marks from the rest of the rhyme. Its status is another matter, however. "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" emerges in part as the final, desperate surmise of a beholder not happy with an absent legend, nor with being so teased out of thought, and determined to tease the silent form into oracular utterance. And oracular utterance it seems—a rich, cryptic piece of *sententiae antiquae*. Yet despite the grace of its neatly balanced syntax, its language proves for some a cold comfort; for the ambiguous situation of this voice compromises its high philosophical tone, bringing a special kind of "woe" to "generations" of readers expecting something more accessible to interpretation. The phrase all but requires another "legend" to help us know what it means. Indeed, the words "Beauty" and "truth" seem so inscrutable as an abstract and brief chronicle of the urn's art that they sound its "ditties of no tone" with a vengeance. As with the marble brede of figures on the urn's surface, one may project whatever significance onto the aphorism one wishes: but as with those figures, this phrase contracts to mere opacity if its mystery is too irritably teased.

The statement "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" is a lofty answer that in effect plays ironically against the rhetoric of answering, for it simultaneously invites and repels the possibility of understanding, shaping a piece of "charactered language" that is partly like the "hieroglyphics" Keats celebrates in Kean's "music of elocution" and partly like the "{hie}*ragueglyphics* in Moor's almanack." The two poles of meaning, "Beauty" and "truth," slide across their marker of equivalence, "is," reverse positions at the comma, and so elude syntactic priority that, despite the elegant symmetry of

statement, its logic can only be wondered at, like the urn itself. Urn and aphorism together go round and round, each serenely self-enclosed, endlessly circular, resonating with mysterious promise, but "still unravish'd" at last.

The only consequence is a further mockery of the questioner: "—that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know." This statement, too, has the sound of stable wisdom, but the more one teases it, the more one discovers a tone that unsettles its terms of resolution. That "all" hints at sufficiency, even at mysterious plenitude, and yet it has a ring of dismissal, as if parodying anyone's effort to "know" "all." The irony against interpretation is as wry as Robert Frost's couplet: "We dance round in a ring and suppose, / But the Secret sits in the middle and knows." For Keats, however, there may be no "Secret"—only the effect of those dancing round and supposing. Whether the speaker imagines "that is all" as the urn's comment on its aphorism, or himself tells us this, the opacity of the pronoun "that" and the uncertain tone of the whole still leave us wanting to know "*what* is all?" Keats takes us only this far, then to relinquish us to an utterance that, like the contemplation of eternity, absorbs inquiry into silent thought. Here, a negotiation with "uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts" is not merely an act of mind we observe in another (be it Mariner, Marginal Editor, Sea Captain, knight, or poet), but one that the play of Keats's language has produced and sustained in the reader's own experience.

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Transcendentalism

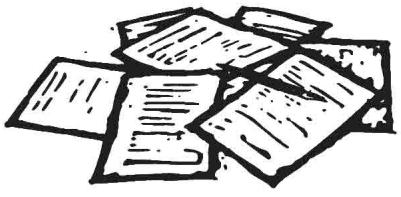
Movement Origin

c. 1835

A religious, philosophical and literary movement, Transcendentalism arose in New England in the middle of the nineteenth century. Critics generally cite 1836 to 1846 as the years when the movement flourished, although its influence continued to be felt in later decades, with some works considered part of the movement not being published until the 1850s. Transcendentalism began as a religious concept rooted in the ideas of American democracy. When a group of Boston ministers, one of whom was Ralph Waldo Emerson, decided that the Unitarian Church had become too conservative, they espoused a new religious philosophy, one which privileged the inherent wisdom in the human soul over church doctrine and law.

Among Transcendentalism's followers were writers Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and Walt Whitman; educator Bronson Alcott; and social theorists and reformers Theodore Parker and William Ellery Channing. Authors Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Emily Dickinson, and Edgar Allen Poe also felt the influence of Transcendentalism. Important works from the movement include Emerson's *Nature*, "The American Scholar," and "Self Reliance"; Thoreau's *Walden*; Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*; and Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. Novels such as Melville's *Moby Dick* and Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* also had transcendentalist leanings.

It is no coincidence that this movement took off just as the American literary tradition was beginning



to blossom. Transcendentalism—though inspired by German and British Romanticism—was a distinctly American movement in that it was tied into notions of American individualism. In addition to the theme of American democracy, transcendentalist literature also promotes the idea of nature as divine and the human soul as inherently wise. Transcendentalism also had a political dimension, and writers such as Thoreau put their transcendentalist beliefs into action through acts of civil disobedience to the government. The nineteenth century was a volatile one, beginning with the hope and promise of democracy and the development of an American identity and moving towards mass devastation and division by the middle of the century. Slavery and the Civil War, women's rights, growing industrialism and class division—all of these events were influential and each had a role to play in the transcendentalist movement.

Representative Authors

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882)

Writer and thinker Ralph Waldo Emerson was born May 25, 1803, in Boston, Massachusetts. Emerson is widely regarded as a key figure in transcendentalist thought and literature. After graduating from Harvard University in 1821, Emerson served as the pastor of the historic Old North Church (Second Unitarian) in Boston, but left after only three and one-half years. In an introduction to Emerson's essays, literary critic Edward Ericson sums up Emerson's philosophy of religion: "His Transcendentalist philosophy was a religion of the spiritually emancipated mind and heart, unbounded by church or party." Emerson came to believe that human beings had inherent wisdom in their souls and that worship should not be constrained to church or religious convention. His religious ideas were also deeply rooted in American democracy.

After leaving his appointment as a pastor, Emerson traveled widely in Europe. He was influenced by European philosophy, particularly the writings of Immanuel Kant, who challenged Locke's idea that wisdom was gained only through experience. Kant and the transcendentalists believed that wisdom was inherent in the soul of each human being. In 1836, Emerson became a founding member of the Hedge Club, later named the Transcendental Club by outsiders. Emerson biographer Robert D. Richardson, Jr., explains: "The club was a forum for new ideas, a clearinghouse, full of yeast and ferment, informal, open-ended, far from the usual exclusive social clique conveyed by the word 'club.'" The formation of this club in 1836 in many ways marks the beginning of the transcendentalist movement. Later that same year Emerson wrote his seminal essay *Nature*. This was followed in 1837 by the essay "The American Scholar," which was actually a commencement address at Harvard.

Emerson continued to write and travel to Europe long after the transcendentalist movement ended. He greatly influenced many writers, including one of his most famous disciples, Thoreau. Emerson died April 27, 1882, in Concord, Massachusetts.

Margaret Fuller (1810–1850)

Born May 23, 1810, in Cambridgeport, Massachusetts, Sarah Margaret Fuller was both an influential figure in Transcendentalism and an early feminist years ahead of her time in terms of her vision of a woman's place in society. Fuller wrote extensively about gender issues, incorporating Emersonian principles of self-reliance into her essays on women's struggles for social, economic, and intellectual equality. Educated in the classics by her father, Fuller developed a keen intellect from an early age. Unlike her male contemporaries Emerson and Thoreau, Fuller was not able to attend Harvard. (Women were not allowed.) Instead, Fuller faced the social reality of having to support herself. She taught for several years, including a stint at fellow transcendentalist Alcott's experimental, coeducational Temple School. However, Fuller did not think of herself as a transcendentalist until she became good friends with Emerson and joined the Transcendental Club.

Fuller is perhaps best known for her groundbreaking book *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, published in 1845. She was very much a radical of her time for her assertions about women. In an introduction to *The Portable Margaret Fuller*, critic Mary Kelley writes:

> During a century in which America divided the world on the basis of gender and made marriage and motherhood a female's sole occupation, Fuller insisted that women be able to develop their potential, not only as wives and mothers whose lives were defined by domesticity, but as individuals, each of whom had particular inclinations, desires and talents.

Fuller's writings were embraced by female activists and suffragists of the day and helped propel the women's rights movement forward, acting as a major influence for such events as the first women's rights conference in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York. Within the literary world, Fuller was

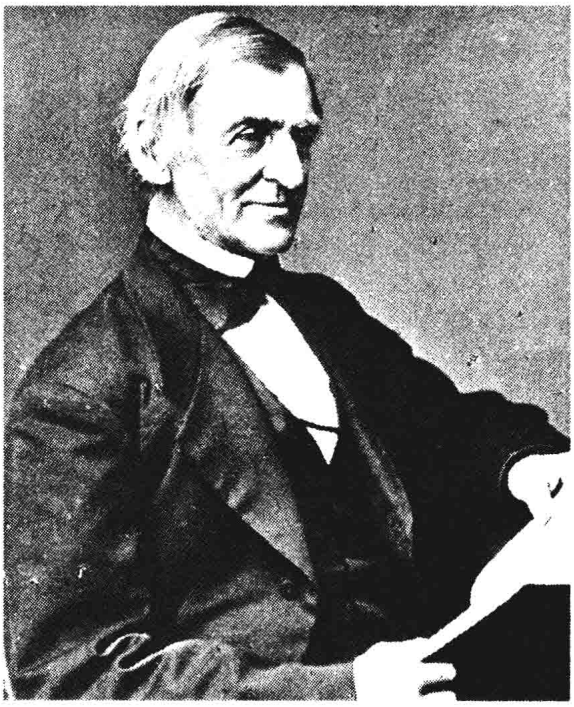
also a major voice. She edited the transcendentalist publication *The Dial* for two years before turning it over to Emerson, at which time she became a columnist and correspondent for the *New York Daily Tribune*. She traveled extensively in Europe, meeting such literary greats as George Sand, William Wordsworth, and Elizabeth and Robert Browning. Fuller was only forty years old when she died on July 19, 1850, in a shipwreck during a hurricane off the coast of Fire Island near New York. She was returning to America from Italy with her husband and two-year-old son.

Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862)

Henry David Thoreau was born July 12, 1817, in Concord, Massachusetts. He spent most of his life in Concord, dying there on May 6, 1862, at only forty-four years of age. Though Thoreau had only two books published in his lifetime, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849) and *Walden* (1854), his influence was far-reaching, even into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. A follower of Emerson, Thoreau graduated from Harvard University in 1837. A prolific journal writer, Thoreau wrote daily about his observations of the natural world. In fact, Thoreau is often considered one of America's great environmentalists. Like Emerson, he believed nature to be divine. He took Emerson's principles of self-reliance and put them into practice when, in 1845, he moved to Walden Pond (on Emerson's property) to live the rustic, simple life.

Thoreau stayed at Walden for two years and wrote the book *Walden* in 1854, after the transcendentalist movement had lost its steam in literary circles. Thoreau took Emerson's philosophy of nature as divine a step further; he believed that nature was infused with wildness, and he saw in nature the roots for his concept of "civil disobedience"—about which he wrote the essay "Resistance to Civil Government" (this essay is often called "Civil Disobedience") in 1849. Like other transcendentalist writers, Thoreau was a champion of American democracy, but he also grew frustrated by what he saw as the modern world's way of alienating people from nature. He was guided by his moral principles, which had political implications as well. In an essay introducing Thoreau in the *Heath Anthology of American Literature*, critic Wendell P. Glick summarizes:

> Thoreau's 'Transcendental' premises led him to take a negative view of the dominant values of pre-Civil-War-America. He wrote disparagingly of the destruction to the natural environment . . . he deplored the implications of the rise of industrialism . . . he condemned the institution of black slavery.



Ralph Waldo Emerson

Thoreau's writings on civil disobedience continue to be widely read long after their original publication and are known to have directly influenced such civil rights leaders as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Walt Whitman (1819–1892)

Poet Walt Whitman was born May 13, 1819, in West Hills, New York. Unlike the other writers involved in the transcendentalist movement, Whitman was not a New Englander. He lived most of his life in and around New York City, a city that greatly impacted his writing and view of humanity. Before writing the work he is best known for, *Leaves of Grass*, he worked as a schoolteacher and journalist, writing for several of the New York newspapers.

Whitman did not begin as a transcendentalist, nor was the free-spirited free verse with which he was associated always his style. His writing style developed along with his political sense, and as the country became more and more divided with the approaching Civil War, Whitman used his poetry to extol democracy and American populism. In his introduction to *Walt Whitman: A Historical Guide*,

nineteenth-century literary scholar David S. Reynolds explains:

> By the mid-1850s, [he] had become capable of writing all-encompassing poetry as a gesture of healing and togetherness to a nation he felt was on the verge of collapse. He had a messianic vision of his poems, as though by reading them, America would be magically healed.

With his poetry, Whitman also made a conscious decision to cast off the conventions of Victorian literature and society. In the volume *Leaves of Grass*, his language is openly sexual in places. It is reported that after Emerson and Whitman became friends, Emerson asked Whitman to tone down the sexuality in his poetry. Whitman, however, refused. He believed that the essence of humankind was wild and that sexuality was part of that essence and part of the soul. Though Whitman was opposed to slavery, he was not strong in the abolitionist movement. He did, however, love and admire Abraham Lincoln, and in 1865 he wrote the oft-recited poem "O Captain! My Captain!" after Lincoln was assassinated. At times, Whitman was on the periphery of the transcendentalist movement, and at other times he was very closely associated with it. Emerson and Thoreau were great admirers of his poetry. Whitman died on March 26, 1892, in Camden, New Jersey.

Representative Works

The Blithedale Romance

Hawthorne's novel *The Blithedale Romance*, published in 1852, came on the heels of the transcendentalist movement. A key American author, Hawthorne was on the periphery of Transcendentalism, but his work was informed by transcendentalist ideals, and he is often grouped with transcendentalist writers. *The Blithedale Romance* is key to the transcendentalist movement in that it depicts—loosely perhaps—the story of Brook Farm, an experimental socialist community populated by various transcendentalist thinkers and writers. Hawthorne lived only briefly at Brook Farm, but he came away disillusioned. *The Blithedale Romance* fictionalizes his experiences there, embodied in characters such as intellectual feminist Xenobia (thought to represent Fuller), philanthropist Hollingsworth, and Miles Coverdale (the narrator). Coverdale explains:

> It was our purpose . . . to give up whatever we had heretofore attained, for the sake of showing mankind the example of a life governed by other than the false and cruel principles, on which human society has all along been based.

By the end of the novel, however, the Blithedale experiment has failed because of betrayals and complications, and Xenobia ends up drowning (as Fuller drowned in a shipwreck). Critics at the time debated how accurate Hawthorne intended his fictionalized account to be and whether or not Coverdale was his stand-in; they also debated, and continue to debate, Hawthorne's judgement of socialism—whether or not he felt it to be a viable alternative to the growing industrialism and poverty of the nineteenth century.

Leaves of Grass

When Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* was published in 1855, it was unlike any collection of poems published by an American poet in the history of the nation. Characterized by long, twisting sentences combined in a free, liberated poetic form, the poems of *Leaves of Grass* were bold statements about love, desire, nature, and poetics. Though Whitman might be considered less of a central figure in the transcendentalist movement than, say, Emerson, there is no doubt that *Leaves of Grass* was inspired by, and indeed born out of, the transcendentalist movement. In these poems, Whitman offers a celebration of nature and of the soul and the soul's innate connection to God through nature. The title *Leaves of Grass* belies the central metaphor of the collection: that something as small as a single blade of grass contains the divinity of God and at the same time is a small part of the world at large.

In poems such as "Song of Myself" and "I Sing the Body Electric," Whitman pushes the envelope of Transcendentalism in his discussion of the body and sexuality. In "Song of Myself," he proclaims, "I am the poet of the Body, / and I am the poet of the soul." "I Sing the Body Electric" begins with the bold statement, "The armies of those I love engirth me, and I engirth them." Whitman's language is very physical, even sexually explicit in places, expressing both heterosexual and homosexual desire. Critic M. Jimmie Killingsworth in his essay "Whitman and the Gay American Ethos," explains:

> The centrality of sex in *Leaves of Grass* and Whitman's experimentation in language, above all his free verse . . . and his audacity in exploring metaphors and other tropes, earned him the contempt of many reviewers in his own time but also made him a hero among less conventional contemporaries and among later critics.

Emerson and Thoreau were fans of Whitman, as was the circle of radical social reformers and freethinkers with whom he involved himself. A poetic pioneer, Whitman inspired many modern poets, especially in the 1960s during the time of social protest and political reform.

Nature

Nature, by Emerson, lays out the fundamental ideas of the transcendentalist movement in America. Published in 1836, *Nature* came at the beginning of the movement, sparking a literary outpouring over the next decade by various transcendentalist authors. The work is, as its title suggests, a study of nature and humanity's relationship to nature. Part philosophical treatise, part prose poem, *Nature* attempts to outline the pathway to spiritual enlightenment, which begins with not only the praise and appreciation of nature but also the belief that it is divine.

Emerson opens this essay with a call to develop an American intellectual tradition—something about which he was very passionate. He says:

> The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. . . .Why should we not have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs?

While Emerson and his fellow transcendentalists were very much influenced by British Romanticism and German philosophy, they were espousing a new kind of thinking, which they saw as distinctly American. They wanted to break free from any traditions that put up barriers between humans and God. Emerson preached a religion of democracy and connectedness, in which every human has equal access to spiritual enlightenment. He writes:

> Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God.

Many critics have read the image of the transparent eyeball as a key symbol for Transcendentalism in that Transcendentalism is about the ability to see the divine and to "transcend" the soul. Nature is very much an active character in this essay. Emerson breathes life into such intangible concepts as reason, understanding, love, truth and freedom, naming them as if they were characters in a play. He interacts with them and tries to delineate the relationship between them. *Nature* is an intense read, but the transcendentalist movement itself was intense, dealing with lofty ideals and philosophical meanders. Soon after it was published, *Nature* became a cornerstone of the movement.

Margaret Fuller

Walden

Thoreau's *Walden*, published in 1854, is one of the most cherished pieces of American literature. Though published after the height of Transcendentalism, *Walden* was written during the twenty-six-month period when Thoreau lived at Walden Pond. A detailed record of Thoreau's life there, *Walden* takes Emerson's philosophy of self-reliance and puts it into practice.

While living at Walden, Thoreau built his own cabin from trees he lumbered himself, farmed and grew his own food, and generally lived a life of self-sufficiency. In addition to providing a detailed log of his expenses and budget for his time at Walden, he writes at great length in the first chapter, "Economy," about the state of labor in America. Thoreau recognized that industrialization had a grip on the country and that people's labor was being exploited to feed the system. His answer was deliberate living, and *Walden* can be read as a manual for this type of living. Thoreau explains his

reasons for his Walden experiment in the oft-quoted and treasured lines:

> I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

This type of simple, poetic style characterizes much of *Walden*. Like Emerson's *Naure*, *Walden* is very much a document in celebration of nature and the spiritual answers nature provides. If *Nature* outlines the theory of such living, then *Walden* puts it into practice. This is one of the reasons why *Walden* has endured and sounds fresh even to modern readers.

Woman in the Nineteenth Century

Published in 1845, Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* is a political and philosophical treatise that gives voice to women in history and envisions a new way of conceiving of women's place within society. It is an essay that, according to literary critic Mary Kelley, proposed "an alternative system of gender relations." Fuller wrote *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* during a time in history when women could not yet vote, file for divorce, or be taken seriously if they entered the public sphere to earn a living alongside men. She was keenly aware of women's lack of economic and political power and aligned herself with the suffragists of the day, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, to secure the vote for women.

Woman in the Nineteenth Century is certainly politically charged. It is also a philosophical rethinking of gender relations. Fuller writes:

> We would have every path laid open to Woman as freely as to Man. Were this done . . . we should see crystallizations more pure and of more various beauty. We believe the divine energy would pervade nature to a degree unknown in the history of former ages, and . . . a ravishing harmony of the spheres would ensue.

In this essay, Fuller advocates harmony and balance between the public and private, the marketplace and the household, instead of strict separation. Fuller's argument is filled with literary and classical allusions; she was writing to an educated audience, very much trying to appeal to the readership of works such as Emerson's *Nature*. *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* was received very positively among transcendentalists and women's rights advocates and is most certainly a pillar of first-wave feminism.

Themes

Self-Wisdom

Quite simply, Transcendentalism is based on the belief that human beings have self-wisdom and may gain this knowledge or wisdom by tuning in to the ebb and flow of nature. Transcendentalism revolves around the self, specifically the betterment of the self. Where Emerson and his followers differed from earlier philosophical and religious beliefs was in the idea that human beings had innate knowledge and could connect with God directly rather than through an institution such as organized religion. Transcendentalism celebrated the self, an important step in the construction of American identity, better understood as the notion of American individualism—one of the cornerstones of American democracy.

Different writers conceived of the search for self-knowledge in different ways. Whitman's response was a grand celebration of the self in all its complexity and beauty and contradictions. He begins the poem "Song of Myself" with the bold line, "I celebrate myself." He offers up to his readers, "I loafe and invite my Soul, / I lean and loafe at my ease ... observing a spear of summer grass." *Leaves of Grass* is filled with such celebration.

Thoreau took a slightly different path toward self-knowledge. *Walden* is a study of solitude. He says, "I find it wholesome to be alone the greater part of the time. . . . I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude." For him, self-discovery comes as the result of intense reflection. Self-knowledge has political implications as well. Once the individual has established a moral code, it becomes his or her duty to peacefully protest and engage in civil disobedience against the government should governmental policies violate that code. Thoreau's opposition to slavery led to his refusal to pay a poll tax supporting the Mexican War, an act that landed him in jail for a night. For Thoreau, self-discovery was not simply an intangible concept, it was a way of living.

Nature and Its Meaning

Nature is the focal point for much transcendentalist thought and writing. As a theme, it is so central to the movement that Emerson's cornerstone essay is entitled *Nature* and serves as an investigation into nature and its relationship to the soul. For transcendentalists, nature and the soul were inextricably linked. In the rhythms and seasons of the natural world, transcendentalists found

comfort and divinity. In the increasingly industrialized and fragmented world in which they lived, the search for meaning in nature was of great importance. Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Hawthorne, Fuller, Melville, and others saw possibility, liberation, and beauty in nature.

Emerson writes in *Nature*, "Let us interrogate the great apparition, that shines so peacefully around us. Let us inquire, to what end is nature?" For Emerson, nature is a direct line to God, and its "meaning" is directly linked to God's "meaning." His definition of God and meaning is clearly different than that of the conservative Unitarian Church from which he split.

A follower of Emerson, Thoreau took ideas from Emerson's work and put them into practice. He saw nature as not just an awe-inspiring force but a way of life. Thoreau offers up the following advice in *Walden*: "Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature, and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails." For Thoreau, nature is pure because it is free from commercialization and industrialization. It is both a respite and a teacher. The transcendentalists were not reactionary or opposed to the modernization of the world; they were, however, concerned that such modernization could lead to alienation. Nature provided a way to keep humans in touch with their souls and with their spiritual foundations.

Social Reform

Regarding social issues, transcendentalists were considered visionaries in their attitudes toward such issues as social protest, elimination of slavery, women's rights, creative and participatory education for children, and labor reform. Transcendentalism became a venue for social reform because it revolved around the idea of liberation. Transcendentalist writers may have had as their immediate goal the liberation of the soul, but that goal expanded to social liberation as more and more thinkers joined the transcendentalist school of thought.

Founded as an alternative to conservative, organized religion, Transcendentalism had countercultural tendencies from its inception. From the free flowing, free verse of Whitman to the civil disobedience of Thoreau to Fuller's radical notion that men and women were social and intellectual equals, the movement was engaged in many controversial social arenas.

Media Adaptations

- Robert D. Richardson, author of *Emerson: The Mind on Fire*, discusses his book and Emerson's life on CSPAN's *Booknotes* series. The interview aired August 13, 1995. For tape, transcript, or real-audio clip, visit http://www.booknotes.org.
- Musician Ken Pederson produced a new-age CD entitled *Walden*, inspired by Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*. Pederson produced it himself and released it in 1997.
- Audio Partners Publishing Corporation released *Thoreau and Emerson: Nature and Spirit*, a double audiocassette, in 1997. The cassettes include passages from the authors' works relating to nature and spirituality.
- *The Spiritual Light of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, a double audiocassette, was released in 1992 by Audio Literature. The work contains passages from Emerson's writings.
- *Voices and Visions: Walt Whitman*, released by Winstar in 1999, is a VHS videocassette. It features poets of the twentieth century reading from Whitman's poems.
- Originally produced for PBS in 1998, the VHS videocassette *Walt Whitman and the Civil War* is available from Monterey Video. It includes Whitman's poetry set against the backdrop of the Civil War.

As the editor of the transcendentalist publication *The Dial*, Fuller often published controversial pieces. As the author of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, she invited debate and controversy. Her essay is a call to action for women and men to change society. She laments:

> The lot of Woman is sad. She is constituted to expect and need happiness that cannot exist on earth. She must stifle such aspirations within her secret heart, and fit herself, as well as she can, for a life of resignations and consolations.

Clearly this is not an acceptable life to Fuller, just as slavery is unacceptable to Thoreau. In "Resistance to Civil Government," Thoreau states, "Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once?" Thoreau's answer was to transgress, and go to jail if necessary, for as he says, "Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison."

Along with slavery and gender issues, class issues also came to the forefront in the nineteenth century, revealing a new kind of slavery—wage slavery. Transcendentalists experimented with socialist communes, such as George Ripley's Brook Farm and Alcott's Fruitlands. These experiments were short lived. The legacy of civil disobedience served America and the world well, as it went on to inspire Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., to lead peaceful social protests. In addition, Fuller is often read as a precursor to modern feminism and is seen as a woman ahead of her time.

Style

Free Verse

Though many transcendentalist writers used the essay form to express their ideas, Whitman used poetry, specifically free verse. Characterized by irregular line length and a lack of rhyme or regular rhythm, free verse breaks conventional rules of poetic rhyme and meter. Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* builds its own rhythms with the repetition of words and phrases, sometimes called "cataloging." Lines, ideas, and images flow freely, unbroken by regular stanzas or set rules. Free verse was suitable for a transcendentalist poet such as Whitman because the content of his poems matched the freedom of the form. The themes Whitman embraced in poems such as "Song of Myself"—a celebration of the soul, of love, desire, sexuality, and pleasure—were better expressed in a more radical style versus a conventional style. Both the form and the content caught critics' and readers' attention (some for the better, some for the worse). Whitman's use of free verse at that time in the nation's history made him a lasting name in the American literary canon.

Romanticism

An outgrowth of English Romanticism (1789–1832), yet still strong in its own right, American Romanticism is often called the American Renaissance because it marked a rebirth in American literature. Critics identify this period of American rebirth as beginning with the Jacksonian era in 1828 and lasting to the Civil War in 1865. This era produced authors such as Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, Hawthorn, Fuller, Dickinson, and Poe, along with a whole host of popular writers of serialized fiction, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe. American literature was, for the first time, held in high esteem in this country and taken seriously in Europe. American Romanticism certainly had a European heritage, borrowing some key elements. First, the English romantics focused on nature, viewing it as a catalyst for thinking and deep reflection. American transcendentalists took this idea and built upon it. Secondly, English Romanticism was about overflowing, powerful emotions. The overflow of powerful emotions characterized such pieces as Emerson's *Nature* and Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. Romanticism is also humanistic in its view of the world. Transcendentalists embraced humanity and the human spirit, believing strongly in democratic ideals and human potential.

Tone

The tone of Transcendentalism is, in a word, exalted. The feelings expressed by transcendentalist writers are intense, the ideas serious, the reflection deep and meaningful. Transcendentalism was an intellectual movement, led by highly educated people. It was not a movement of the masses, though it certainly had an effect on the masses in the long run. The tone of the writing might be best understood in comparison to other writing of the day. At the same time that transcendentalists were writing, popular fiction was gaining ground with the American reading public. Dime novels, serialized novels, sentimental fiction, tales of the city—there were literally dozens of different types of novels circulating and claiming large reading audiences. In fact, Hawthorne is famous for complaining in a letter to his publisher about the "damned mob of scribbling women" writing popular fiction and affecting his book sales. Transcendentalists wanted to create an intellectual tradition, rooted in spirituality and American democracy. The argument can certainly be made that popular fiction commanded an intellectual debate as well and tackled serious issues of the day. But transcendentalists were attempting to create an American aesthetic, and this is reflected in their language and tone.

Movement Variations

Education

Transcendentalism extended into many areas of social reform, including the educational system. When Alcott came to Boston in 1828, he had definite ideas about children's education. An idealist and visionary, he became involved in the transcendentalist movement, with a passion for educating young children. Alcott believed the key to a better society was education—an idea still dominant in the twenty-first century. Alcott's focus on very young children was ahead of its time in the nineteenth century, when the popular belief was that young children were simply tiny adults.

Alcott developed his educational model using the ideas of Plato. Plato held that before birth, a person's soul resided in a spiritual realm, together with all of the other souls waiting to be born. When a person was born, his/her soul was "called" to him/her. Hence, Alcott reasoned that children were closest to birth and therefore closest to that preexisting spiritual state. Young children had better intuition, he believed, and their minds were more open and less cluttered than those of adults. Paul F. Boller, in his book *American Transcendentalism, 1830–1860*, summarizes Alcott's philosophy thus: "Education, then, should be directed to the very young, and it should be centered on drawing out of them the moral and spiritual truths latent in the intuitive Reason they all possess." In 1834, Alcott opened a school in the Masonic temple in Boston, which came to be known as Temple School. Fuller also taught there. Thirty preteen boys and girls attended the school. Alcott used the Socratic method of teaching, that is, asking questions to elicit answers he believed the children already held within them. They read stories and poems and had lively discussions. Alcott also believed in the importance of physical exercise for young children, and so part of their time was devoted to that as well.

The downfall of Temple School was the publication of a book of "conversations" held at the school. These conversations were religious in nature, and considered radical, even sacrilegious, because Alcott dared to speak of scripture and scriptural interpretation with young children. While many of his fellow transcendentalists supported him, he was attacked in the newspapers, and enrollment greatly suffered. By the late 1830s, the school had shut down, with the final straw being Alcott's acceptance of a black child into the school. While Alcott was certainly ahead of his time in his thinking, 1830s Boston was not fully prepared for him. He went on to establish an experimental community near Boston called Fruitlands; it was a very small community, never attracting more than a handful of people. Alcott's daughter, Louisa May Alcott, went on to write books for adults and young people, including *Little Women*.

Topics for Further Study

- Write an essay discussing the ways in which American democracy played a role in transcendentalist thought. Explain why democracy was important to the transcendentalists.
- Transcendentalism was a philosophical movement in many ways. Research the main differences between the theories of philosopher John Locke and the theories of philosopher Immanuel Kant, and write a speech discussing their philosophies and how Kant's ideas contributed to the transcendentalist ideals.
- Transcendentalism was a regional movement, located mostly in Boston and Concord, Massachusetts. Research the history of New England at the time the transcendentalists were writing. Explain the ways in which transcendentalists reflect New England culture of the time. How did New England culture differ from culture in the South?

The Transcendental Club

Transcendentalism was an intellectual movement, characterized by lively philosophical and moral debates. The Transcendental Club was a loose gathering of intellectuals who discussed everything from truth, reason, and spirituality to social reform and slavery. The first meeting was in 1836 at George Ripley's home in Boston. Emerson, Alcott, Fuller, Thoreau, James Freeman Clarke, Parker, Orestes Brownson, Channing, and Frederic Hedge were some of the regular attendees. Critic Boller says, "Alcott, along with Ralph Waldo Emerson . . . described it as 'a company of earnest persons enjoying conversations on high themes and

having much in common.'" The formation of the club marked the beginning of the transcendentalist movement. Though the meetings of the club declined after a few years and eventually ceased to exist, the ideas discussed and debated in the meetings continued to shape the movement not just in literary ways but in philosophical and religious ways as well.

Historical Context

The Rise of Industry

While critics generally assign Transcendentalism to the ten-year period between 1836 and 1846, the movement was tied to a much larger chunk of the middle part of that century, beginning with the election of Andrew Jackson to the United States presidency in 1829 and extending through the Civil War period (1860–1865). Jackson and his fellow Democrats claimed to represent the common person and fought against large corporations and excesses of wealth. Industry boomed as the nineteenth century began, with many technological innovations coming to fruition. The century saw huge population gains, with an influx of immigrants from Europe and Asia; the expansion of territories westward, which led to the displacement of thousands of Native Americans; improvements to the printing press; the development of hundreds of miles of railroads; and the continual transformation from a nation of farmers to a nation of industry and urbanization. In cities, poverty and crime skyrocketed. Union organizers worked tirelessly against wage slavery, while many Americans made their fortunes. Textile mills were built in the Northeast, sparking controversy about whether they represented a way for women to earn a living or a pathway into wage slavery with no escape.

For a time, the economy seemed to boom, until 1837, when recession set in. The panic of 1837 is, in many ways, comparable to the Great Depression of the 1930s. The recession meant lean times for many Americans, and it led writers such as Thoreau to question industrialization. "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation," he wrote in *Walden*. Writers and thinkers debated meaning and material goods. Thoreau made his position clear: "Most of the luxuries, and many of the so-called comforts of life, are not only not indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind." Although the recession certainly impacted the American economy, the middle class continued to grow and develop during the middle of the century.

Reform

A lot was happening in the middle of the century that divided the country. The slavery issue was a major hotbed of debate, especially once the Fugitive Slave Law was passed in 1850, which stated that escaped slaves in the North could be caught and taken back to the South, and into slavery. The law sparked much controversy, a debate further fueled by publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852. Stowe was one of many authors writing about slavery, with abolitionist literature prevalent in the North along with slave narratives by such authors as Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs. Slavery was opposed on moral, philosophical, and economic grounds.

Transcendentalist writers had a curious position in relation to abolitionism. Whitman opposed slavery but never took a strong abolitionist stance. Writers like Emerson and Hawthorne were not focused strongly on the issue, though it certainly informs their work in both subtle and overt ways. Thoreau had the strongest sentiment against slavery and wrote about it in his essay "Resistance to Civil Government."

The antislavery movement and the women's rights movement overlapped in many ways. Women could not vote, or seek divorce from their husbands. Women's rights activists and antislavery activists saw parallels in their causes in that slavery added an extra burden for black women: not only were they considered property, their bodies were subject to sexual exploitation at the hands of their white masters. Antislavery activists such as Stowe appealed to white women of the North to see the horror of the situation. Women were becoming more and more vocal and rallying support for their cause. The 1848 Seneca Falls convention held in New York was the largest gathering of women's rights advocates the nation had seen. Frederick Douglass spoke, along with dozens of other women's rights advocates. Women's rights activists were fighting laws that held women back as well as fighting to change attitudes. Antebellum America (or pre-Civil War America) was separated into two distinct spheres: the public and the private. The marketplace (where men worked and made a living) was the public sphere, and the private sphere (the home) was relegated to women. The "cult of true womanhood" was the prevailing notion of the day, preaching that women should be pure, pious,

Compare & Contrast

- **Mid-Nineteenth Century:** Black Americans are still held in slavery. Several laws are passed in relation to slavery, which escalate the debate in the United States. Abolitionists in the North actively fight against slavery, while escaped slaves write narratives chronicling their experiences. The nation ultimately goes to war over the issue, resulting in the emancipation of all slaves.

  Today: Slavery has been abolished for almost 150 years in America, though African Americans face continuing discrimination and are still fighting for equal access to economic resources.

- **Mid-Nineteenth Century:** The 1830s see the flowering of the American literary tradition. American literature has not been taken seriously abroad before this time. Emerson argues that America needs to develop an intellectual and philosophical tradition of its own in his essay "The American Scholar."

  Today: American literature is a respected discipline in academia, and several authors have won Nobel prizes for their work. The American literary tradition is rich and varied today, including voices from many cultures representing various races, ethnicities, religions, social classes, and sexual orientations.

- **Mid-Nineteenth Century:** America is seeing a wave of technological innovations. Railroads are being built, the steam engine is developed, the printing press is imporved—the world is changing. The country is making the transformation from a rural base to an urban one, with the population in cities rising rapidly and the population expanding westward.

  Today: The pace of technology has not slowed down since the nineteenth century. The world is completely transformed in the twentieth century, with the development of the airplane, television, computer, and a whole host of other modern conveniences.

domestic, and obedient to their husbands. Writers such as Fuller wrote against the notion of "true womanhood" and the strict separation of spheres. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Lucretia Mott, Lydia Maria Child, and dozens of other women—some famous, some not—fought for women's rights long after the Seneca Falls convention and the Civil War.

Critical Overview

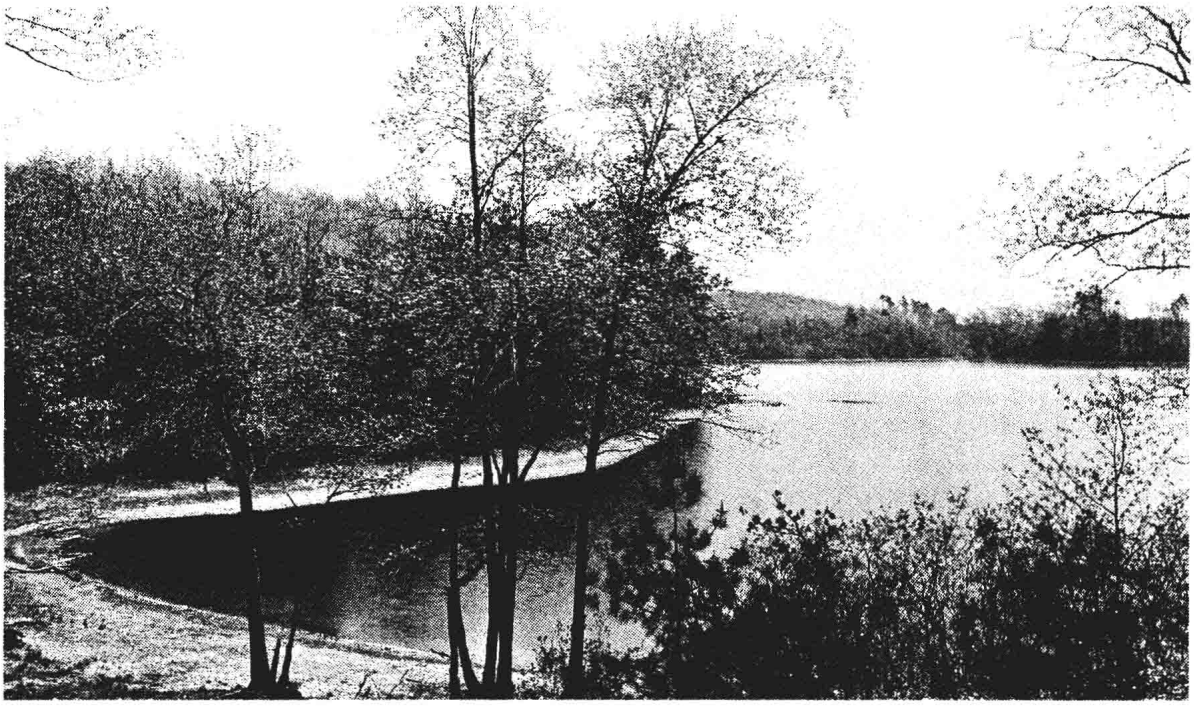
Critically speaking, Transcendentalism was not exactly a cohesive movement. In other words, it was a collection of varied ideas and aims that existed among various thinkers, writers, and philosophers. Emerson biographer Richardson says:

> Whatever Transcendentalism was, it was not suited to institutionalizing. It gave birth to no academy; it flourished in no college or seminary. It had two collective expressions during its heyday (the club and the magazine called *The Dial*) but could only manage one at a time.

Emerson is regarded as the center of the movement, but he encouraged his followers to think for themselves. While the movement may not have been a cohesive whole, it was very influential for several American writers.

Critics have responded in varied ways to transcendentalist works. Perhaps Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* garnered the strongest responses. Critic Reynolds points out that while there were more positive than negative views of Whitman's poetry collection, the negative views were very strong:

> Some vigorously denounced its sexual explicitness and its egotistical tone. One reviewer blasted the volume as a "mass of filth," and another insisted that its author must be "some escaped lunatic raving in pitiable delusion."



Henry David Thoreau's Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts

Fuller's critics could also be harsh. She faced the dual challenge of being a woman and writing about controversial issues. Fuller scholar Donna Dickenson explains, "The best of Fuller's female defenders lacked all conviction, while the worst of her attackers—male and female alike—were full of passionate intensity."

It is not unusual that radical ideas would not be well received by the keepers of culture—the role that critics tend to play. Texts such as *Walden*, which did not seem as overtly radical as *Leaves of Grass*, tended to receive rave reviews.

Twenty-first-century literary critics are still writing about transcendentalist works and see continuing transcendentalist influence in modern literature.

Criticism

Judi Ketteler

Ketteler has taught literature and composition. In this essay, Ketteler discusses the political dimension of the transcendentalist movement, particularly the way transcendentalist writers address race and gender issues.

The literary, philosophical, and religious movement known as Transcendentalism sprung up in America in the mid-1830s, during a time when the country was headed towards a major political crisis. Transcendentalism is as much a literary movement as it is a political one, and some of the key players—Emerson, Fuller, Thoreau, and Whitman—interwove politics into their intellectual musings. To speak of race, gender, or class—issues which revolve around power relations or unequal distribution of power—as all of these writers did, is a political move. To say these writers were "liberals" by twenty-first century standards is not quite right; however, they were all ahead of their time in their ideas about liberation and equality for all people.

Perhaps the biggest divide in the early to mid-nineteenth century was the issue of slavery. An economic, social, and political issue, slavery was divisive from the very beginning. Slavery was never supposed to last. Scholar Paul Lauter explains in his introduction to early nineteenth-century literature in the *Heath Anthology of American Literature*: "The Founders had mainly assumed that slavery would in the course of time atrophy and that slaveholders, Constitutionally prevented from importing additional slaves, would ultimately turn to other, free

sources of labor." But the invention of the cotton gin changed this way of thinking, reinforcing the institution of slavery and making the use of slaves to pick cotton highly lucrative. The tension mounted in America as several court cases and compromises came into being: the Missouri Compromise in 1820, which prohibited slavery in the new territories; the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850, which made it legal for slave catchers to come to the North to reclaim escaped slaves; and the Dred Scott decision in 1857, which held that African Americans were not citizens of the United States and that slaveholding could not be excluded from any state or territory. At the same time there were slave revolts led by Nat Turner (1831) and John Brown (1859), as well as a huge abolitionist network of writers, activists, and Underground Railroad conductors. Slavery was on the minds of Americans, and the writers of the day were certainly not exempt.

So why, then, would a small, highly educated and liberal group of New England writers, philosophers, and ministers choose to turn to nature in this time of impending crisis? Transcendentalism represented a turning inward in many aspects; it focused on the individual, on the human spirit and the human soul. For Emerson, nature was divine; it contained the answers to all the mysteries of life. Everyone had access to nature, yet few could really grasp the divine potential of it. He says in *Nature*:

> To speak truly, few adult persons can see nature. . . . At least they have a very superficial seeing. . . . The lover of nature is he whose inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of his infancy even into the era of manhood.

This passage suggests that to really "see" nature, one must think with the imagination of a child. Emerson and his fellow transcendentalists, especially educator Alcott, believed that children saw the world with fresher eyes and that since they were closer to birth, they were closer to their prebirth spiritual state. Children are not full participants in the capitalist system because they are not yet driven by money; their minds are less "crowded" with worries of the modern world.

In this way, Transcendentalism advocates an almost regressive state. If one of the tenets of Transcendentalism is to see with the eyes of a child, another tenet is the quest for individualism. Emerson and Thoreau were very much proponents of American individualism; they eschewed conformity and convention. This forms the basis for Emerson's essay "Self-Reliance." In this essay, he explains:

If one of the tenets of Transcendentalism is to see with the eyes of a child, another tenet is the quest for individualism."

> Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion.

The idea of self-reliance sets up an interesting paradox. The "joint-stock company" Emerson speaks of represents the backbone of American capitalism. No longer was America a nation of farmers; it was instead a nation of industry, of mills, factories, and stockholders. What does it mean then to be an individual? As an individual, can one still believe in the American system of capitalism? And how does one understand self-reliance in relation to slavery?

Thoreau has an answer for Emerson in his essay "Resistance to Civil Government". (The essay is often called "Civil Disobedience".) The philosophy of Transcendentalism and the institution of slavery are diametrically opposed. Transcendentalism is about liberation; slavery is about bondage. Transcendentalism is about rising above commodity and the commodification of nature; slavery is about buying and selling humans as commodities. Transcendentalism is about democracy; slavery is fundamentally antidemocratic. For Thoreau, to espouse an abolitionist philosophy in theory was not enough; he advocated action. He explains in "Resistance to Civil Government":

> I do not hesitate to say those that call themselves Abolitionists should at once effectually withdraw their support, both in person and property, from the government of Massachusetts, and not wait till they constitute a majority of one, before they suffer the right to prevail through them.

If the government is perpetrating crimes against humanity, as Thoreau thought slavery to be, then citizens have the right, the duty even, to disobey the laws that support such crimes. In

What Do I Study Next?

- The nineteenth century offers a rich variety in literature, much of it influenced by transcendentalist writers. The novels of Melville, including what critics have regarded as his greatest, *Moby Dick*, originally published in 1851, provide an example of transcendentalist influence.
- In poetry, Emily Dickinson is an interesting figure for study. *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1997) contains all of her poems, which were originally published by Paul Johnson in a three-volume set in 1955. While Dickinson's short, concise lines stand in sharp contrast to Whitman's, she was greatly influenced by transcendentalist thought, particularly in her focus on nature and desire.
- In terms of British Romanticism, reading the poetry of William Wordsworth can inform any understanding of American Transcendentalism, since the movements are intertwined. His *Poems in Two Volumes* was originally published in 1807.
- Some of the best-selling "sentimental" novels of the day, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (first published serially in 1851 and 1852), provide a contrast to Transcendentalism in both style and content.
- *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr.* (1998), edited by Clayborne Carson, provides an opportunity to trace the trail of "civil disobedience" in America started by Thoreau.

Thoreau's case, he refused to pay a poll tax supporting the Mexican War (which he saw as an effort to extend slavery) and consequently spent a night in jail.

Like Thoreau and Emerson, Fuller actively opposed slavery. In addition to speaking out against slavery, she also spoke out against the subjugation of women, seeing this as another kind of slavery. She does not argue against marriage, she argues against a strict separation of the public and private spheres, envisioning marriage as a fruitful and intellectual partnership. Her view of gender is one of harmony and sharing, as described in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*:

> Male and female represent the two sides of the great radical dualism. But, in fact, they are perpetually passing into one another. Fluid hardens to solid, solid rushes to fluid. There is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman.

Fuller's theory of mutual dependence also applies to race relations. Instead of the strict separation of the public and private spheres, the institution of slavery was based on the strict separation of black and white. It was very important to be able to define who was black and who was white, because otherwise the system would crumble. Miscegenation, or the mixing of the races, was considered a crime in the South, yet white masters repeatedly raped their black female slaves, creating offspring whom they then disowned and immediately sold into slavery. The fluidity of transcendentalist thought was in itself a challenge to the rigid views of race and gender held by many Americans in the early to middle nineteenth century.

If fluidity was a challenge to the conventional thinking of the day, then poet Whitman was certainly radical. His free-verse poetry was not only radical in its form—breaking free from traditional rhyme schemes and poetic rhythms—but its content was groundbreaking as well. Whitman's poetry represented a fundamental challenge to Victorian notions of gender. In *Leaves of Grass*, he asks, "What is a man, anyhow? What am I? What are you? / All I mark as my own, you shall offset it with your own / Else it were time lost listening to me." He continues to question notions of American identity, particularly white American identity, in the poem "I Sing the Body Electric." In this poem, Whitman imagines a slave on the auction block, and asks:

How do you know who shall come from the offspring of his offspring through the centuries?
Who might you find you have come from yourself if you could trace back through the centuries?

In a way, Whitman is echoing Emerson. In nature, all is fluid. The systems of power humans build around natural distinctions, such as race or gender, are all, in fact, unnatural and easily challenged.

Transcendentalism did represent a challenge to American thought. It might seem almost anti-political in the way it advocates a turning inward to examine the self. But for the transcendentalist writers, this inner examination represented a pathway to liberation, both personal liberation and political liberation. Before the Civil War, American democracy held a fundamental contradiction within itself. The ideals about equality set forth in the Declaration of Independence were not yet realized. Transcendentalists were strong supporters of American democracy, and in pointing out the flaws and contradictions, they helped to shape American intellectual and literary thought.

Source: Judi Ketteler, Critical Essay on Transcendentalism, in *Literary Movements for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Donald N. Koster

In the following essay, Koster examines the effect the transcendental movement had on American culture and on writers outside its milieu well after its heyday.

No one can say with assurance just when the Transcendental Movement, that began with the publication of Emerson's *Nature* and the founding of the Transcendental Club in 1836, reached its high-water mark and started to ebb. The years of greatest excitement appear, however, to extend from 1836 through about 1843. By the latter date the meetings of the Club had ceased, Brook Farm came to the end of its purely Transcendental phase and began its transition to Fourierist Phalanx, Alcott's Fruitlands began and ended, *The Dial* was straining to continue publication, Brownson was on the verge of his conversion to Roman Catholicism, and other advocates of the movement were increasingly devoting themselves to particular reform causes such as Abolition and women's rights or to their own private ends. We may recall that Parker strove to rekindle the old enthusiasm in 1853 by calling for renewed meetings of the Transcendental Club but that his call went unanswered.

Although the movement as such may have been of relatively short duration, its influence has continued to be felt in a variety of ways down to the present day. And two of its three greatest literary statements—*Walden* and *Leaves of Grass*—were published after the crest, in 1854 and 1855 respectively.

In the present chapter we shall examine first the influence of Transcendentalism as it affected certain aspects of American civilization in the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. Then we shall look at its impact on particular American writers of distinction other than such widely recognized Transcendentalists as Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. For, as Simon and Parsons have remarked, "A movement [Transcendental Movement] that resisted definition at the start has been pervasive enough to have influenced subsequent movements as disjunct as Naturalism and Neo-Humanism and to have affected writers as opposed in their loyalties as Irving Babbitt and Eugene O'Neill."

There was, of course, a body of men who quite consciously thought of themselves as Transcendentalists and who tried to carry on the ideals and ideas of the earlier generation into post Civil War America. Samuel Johnson, John Weiss, Samuel Longfellow, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, David A. Wasson, Moncure Conway, Octavius B. Frothingham—these were among the best known. Worthy as they were, they seemed to lack the spark of those who had generated the movement. And some of the ancient sages lingered on, creating in Concord itself what Brooks has referred to as an "afterglow of Transcendentalism." For example, there was the Concord School of Philosophy that Alcott and William T. Harris of the St. Louis Hegelians founded in 1879 to combat the materialistic trend of scientific thinking. For nine summers young students, mostly from the West, where Alcott had indefatigably lectured, flocked there to take the courses on Emerson, Plato, Dante, Goethe, or Oriental religions, and to listen to William James lecture on psychology or Harrison Blake read from his friend Thoreau's unpublished journals.

Of far wider-ranging importance, however, was the gathering movement of mind cure through the power of positive thinking that resulted in such phenomena as New Thought and Christian Science. Phineas Parkhurst Quimby pioneered both in his search for a way to cure the sick. Born a year before Emerson, he came to manhood as the Transcendental Movement was just beginning to stir. No intellectual, he was nonetheless plainly touched by the basic idea of the movement, for he came to

Book cover illustration for Song of Myself: Walt Whitman

consider himself as an agent "revealing that the power of curing was the divine wisdom in all of us accessible through intuition."

Quimby died in 1866, and following his death a split in the religious faith-healing movement occurred, with Mary Baker Eddy establishing the Christian Science Church and Warren F. Evans, a Swedenborgian minister, combining New Thought with the Hegelian idea that thought is the greatest creative force in the world.

Huber distinguishes Christian Science from New Thought thus:

> Christian Science is closely organized and rigidly centralized with a unified doctrine and an absolute discipline over its practitioners. In matters of faith, the absolute idealism of Christian Science denies the existence of matter and the reality of suffering. The New Thought movement consists of independent sects loosely organized ... and centering authority in no book or person ... it does not deny the existence of sickness, sin and poverty, but asserts that these evils can be overcome by right thinking.

Donald Meyer opines that "mind cure conventionalized lyric transcendentalism into a prosy pragmatism. . ." Indeed, the mind cure theologists made the inevitable connection with Emerson and the Transcendentalists. With no real philosophers among them, they had a tendency to plunder Emerson's works in particular for those ideas that fitted nicely into their theories of health, wealth, and power through mind, which is God. It was doubtless the metaphysics of practical idealism that they taught which fascinated William James, who saw that "the heart of mind cure was its psychology, and the heart of that psychology was its displacement of consciousness. Consciousness could not be trusted." In developing his theory of the subconscious and its importance to human behavior, James seems to have credited it with almost magical powers that needed only to be obeyed. As Meyer remarks, "Much of his description of the subconscious amounted to no more than a new label for the famous faculty of transcendental reason or intuition celebrated in New England sixty years earlier." Meyer goes on to point out that in its poetic-philosophic form the transcendental idea of intuition was not acceptable to scientific psychologists, but that essentially the same idea wearing the cloak of the "subconscious" was acceptable because it appeared to be more open to study and explanation. Nonetheless it was characterized by traits associated with the religious faculty, traits that facilitated the individual's spiritual experience most directly in its best and fullest form.

The connection between Emerson's doctrines and the new mind-cure religion quite plainly existed, even though it might be somewhat tenuous. After all, Transcendental doctrine seemed to deny the reality of matter and stressed the power of mind. And Emerson had contended that sickness should not be named; for it was a kind of evil which, being negative, could scarcely be said to exist. Robert Peel has shown the warm reception accorded Mary Baker Glover Eddy's *Science and Health* in 1876 on its publication, and surely her refusal to accept disease, pain, old age, and death as realities, because such notions are applicable to matter rather than to spirit, which is the true reality, suggest at least a dim reflection of Emersonian attitudes. That Mrs. Eddy's ideas attracted at least some of the Transcendentalists is shown, for example, by Alcott's active interest in her book, which led him to visit her classes in Lynn and lecture to them. What made her new church particularly attractive to many members of the upper middle class was its tight discipline and its apparent rejection of New

Thought's religious pragmatism that "guaranteed sick people health, poor people riches, and troubled people happiness." Unlike New Thought it did not embrace the "success" idea.

It is, of course, not only through religious or mental healing movements that American Transcendentalism has continued to exert an influence in the United States, and in other parts of the world as well. Carpenter, for example, has suggested that its influence in India, through Gandhi's extensive reading of Emerson and Thoreau, is considerable. He has also produced evidence of the practical impact of their thought on the leaders of modern India. And Lyons has advanced the view that the Austrian educator and social philosopher Rudolf Steiner and his Waldorf Schools—of which there are eight in the United States and some eighty in seventeen countries—show an affinity with Alcott's experiments in education and also with the basic ideals of Transcendentalism. For Steiner's Anthroposophy was to be "a way of knowledge that would lead the spiritual in man to the spiritual in the universe."

In the United States the New Humanism of the scholars Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More was at least partly traceable to the Transcendental influence. Babbitt's studies of Indian philosophy would have been unlikely without the initial inspiration of the Orientalism of the American Transcendentalists, including Emerson, of whom Babbitt was, according to René Wellek, at times a conscious disciple. He disapproved, however, of Emerson's undue optimism and of the romantic enterprise of reconciling man and nature. Nevertheless he felt the need of the "pure supernatural light" that he saw in Transcendentalism.

In the first half of the present century the influence of Transcendentalism in America, with the exception of its effect on a number of writers whom we shall discuss shortly, appeared largely dissipated. With the almost total triumph of materialism in an increasingly mechanized society, the Transcendental ideals seemed to have no place. The cumulative experience of two World Wars, a Great Depression, a Korean war and a Southeast Asian war has, however, brought about a resurgence of those ideals from about 1950 to the present. In the 50s the emergence of the "Beat" protest was a first straw in the wind. With its rebellion against the tyranny of possessions, of highly organized social structure, of the encroachments of the police state mentality, it was, despite the leftist radicalism of many of its members, an essentially apolitical movement, "a last-ditch stand for individualism and against conformity."

"In the 50s the emergence of the 'Beat' protest was a first straw in the wind. . . . By the 1960s and early 1970s many young Americans . . . were engaged in a spontaneous movement of dissent from the success creed that had motivated their parents."

By the 1960s and early 1970s many young Americans whom Huber calls the New Romantics were engaged in a spontaneous movement of dissent from the success creed that had motivated their parents. Rebelling against the work ethic that had led the Puritans to embrace work rather than leisure in the name of God's will and that had led their parents to prefer work over leisure in behalf of the God of national security proclaimed by their government, they "turned their backs," in Huber's words, "on the American goals of mobility and crass achievement." Clad in the unisex uniform of blue jeans, they wore their hair long and smoked their marijuana joints short. Again to quote Huber, they "were social evolutionists engaged in a peaceful, non-political protest against the competitive ethic of success. Dropouts from the traditional values of steady work, competition, and status-seeking (with its anxieties), they proclaimed a life of meditation, cooperation, sensory gratification, and pleasure now."

Some of them involved themselves in "transcendental meditation" as taught by gurus oriental and occidental; many went to live in communes where cooperation and doing one's own thing went hand in hand; and all were concerned about what they viewed as the rapidly deteriorating quality of life in America. In these ways they were logical descendants of the Transcendentalists; however, they

seemed largely to lack the urge to reform that was so much a part of the earlier movement. And they were, by and large, far less philosophically or intellectually inclined. But the Thoreauvian advice to simplify one's life and to live in harmony with nature rather than as nature's adversary appeared to be at the root of their concept.

Turning now to the influence of Transcendentalism on American writers, we shall observe that it has been fairly constant since the early days of the movement. Of course, it is more difficult to discern in some than in others, but it would be scarcely an exaggeration to say that few of our foremost literary figures have been untouched by it.

In the preceding chapter attention was paid to the criticism of Transcendentalism by Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville at a time when the movement was at or near its peak. Despite the predominantly adverse attitude that we examined there, each one of them may also be seen as reflective in one way or another of at least certain aspects of the Transcendentalist rationale.

Poe, for example, has been viewed by more than one astute critic as adopting the Transcendentalist position particularly in his *Eureka*, where he bridges the gap between truth and poetry (beauty) he had so frequently insisted on. Arnold Smithline sees him as advocating in this poem the intuitive over the rational approach:

> Thus we see that Poe's ideas in *Eureka* are very close indeed to Transcendentalism... In his assertion of the unity of man and the cosmos, and of reliance upon intuition as the best means of realizing that ultimate Truth, Poe is following the main tenets of the Transcendentalists. His final vision is not a descent into the maelstrom of nothingness but a positive assertion of man's divinity.

Conner agrees that *Eureka* has a transcendental conclusion although he does not see the entire work in that light. For Conner, Poe pushed his mechanistic attitude "to the conclusion that God is all, and in so doing pushed himself at least part way into the camp of the scorned transcendentalists." In like manner Conner views Longfellow as distrustful of all transcendentalism but accepting and molding some transcendental doctrines to his conservative Unitarian Christianity.

Marjorie Elder has devoted an entire volume to establishing with voluminous documentation Hawthorne's debt to the Transcendentalists' aesthetic theories, which she also sees as influencing many other critics of Transcendentalism, such as Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, and Melville. Tellingly, she quotes Longfellow: "The highest exercise of imagination is not to devise what has no existence, but rather to perceive what really exists, though unseen by the outward eye,—not creation, but insight." Here he is surely at one with Emerson.

Hawthorne speaks specifically in such works as "The Hall of Fantasy," "The Old Manse," and the preface to "Rappaccini's Daughter" of the influence of the Transcendentalist aesthetic theories as carefully formulated and written by Emerson. Indeed Elder believes that "Hawthorne, like Emerson, saw Reality shadowed in the Actual; the Perfect in the Imperfect—in Nature and Man. Hawthorne's Artist, like Emerson's, was the last best touch of the Creator, enabled by Faith, Intuition, the pursuit of Beauty and by Nature's revelations to him to create an image of the Ideal." In fact she sees Hawthorne as carrying out the Transcendentalist aesthetic by mingling the Actual and the Imaginative throughout his tales. He is, she holds, using Transcendental symbolism by doing so in his assertion of Truth as well as by arranging scenes in correspondence with Nature. In like manner, she believes that "Melville's symbolic method of striking through the mask was thoroughly Transcendental."

That Melville was opposed to Emersonian Transcendentalism as a philosophy we have already remarked, but that there are echoes of that philosophy too numerous to mention in such books as *Mardi* and *Moby-Dick* the most casual reader may discern. Indeed in his last work, *Billy Budd*, written long after the movement was at its height, Melville seems to accept an essential tenet of the Transcendentalists, and most certainly of Emerson, namely, that society everywhere is conspiring against the manhood of its members. For Captain Vere, who condemns the Christ-like Billy, is the very symbol of that conformity that makes of the human being not a man but a uniformed robot. Vere's tragedy is that he is sensitive enough to know it.

Even the "Genteel Poets" of the latter part of the nineteenth century were touched by the Transcendental concepts. As Conner has shown, the broker-poet E.C. Stedman in *Nature and Elements* and in such a poem as "Fin de Siècle" displays his interpretation of the divine immanence as the private soul universalized, a distinctly Transcendental concept. And Richard Watson Gilder thought of the material universe after the Transcendental fashion as simply an expression or manifestation of God! "His God both was and was not the universe, was transcendent as well as immanent."

As for the greatest American poet of the latter half of the nineteenth century other than Whitman, Dickinson, there is ample evidence that she absorbed Transcendental ideas as well as the Emersonian spirit and thus became, in the words of Clark Griffith, a "post-Emersonian, or, still more accurately perhaps, a sort of Emersonian-in-reverse."

Such poems as 632, "The Brain is Wider than the Sky," composed perhaps in 1862, and 1510, "How happy is the little Stone," written perhaps in 1881, suggest quite clearly the Transcendental inspiration. The first, stating the unlimited measurements of the human mind—"wider than the sky," "deeper than the sea," and "just the weight of God"—implies the divinity of man and his identification with the universal being, a fundamental Transcendental tenet. And the second, about the happy little stone "That rambles in the Road alone," not concerned with fashioning a career or with fearsome exigencies, created by universal force to be "independent as the Sun," and "Fulfilling absolute Decree in casual simplicity" reflects the Transcendental ideals of individual freedom, closeness to nature, simplicity in living, and the divinely ordered universe.

Still other poems with a distinct Transcendental thrust are 501, "This World is not Conclusion"; 668, "'Nature' is what we see"; 669, "No Romance sold unto"; 1176, "We never know how high we are"; 1354, "The Heart is the Capital of the Mind"; and 1355, "The Mind lives on the Heart."

As Cambon has pointed out, Dickinson was, however, ambivalent in her transcendentalism, apparently feeling at times, as in 280, that she has no over-soul to rely on in her existential plight. The poem describes the funeral in her brain as she realizes her desperate isolation as an earthbound member of the human race. "And then a Plank in Reason [the Transcendentalist intuitive wisdom], broke, she says, letting her drop terrifyingly from world to world until, ambiguously, she "Finished knowing—then—" as the poem ends.

Even such a relatively sophisticated literary practitioner as William Dean Howells, author of almost forty novels, esteemed critic, and editor of such influential journals as *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Harpers*, is seen to have a kinship with the New England Transcendentalists because of his Swedenborgian background, a kinship most marked during his period of Utopian social reform. It may be discerned in such novels as *The World of Chance* (1893) in which we meet an old socialist, David Hughes, who had once been a member of the Brook Farm community and who serves as Howells's spokesman in suggesting that society is not to be reformed by individuals who are simply interested in improving themselves, but by those who will work together to reconstruct its institutions. *A Traveller from Altruria* (1894) and its sequel, *Through the Eye of the Needle* (1907), present Howells's social idealism by contrasting the growing inequities of American life and its laissez-faire economic system to his utopian view that reiterates the Transcendental vision of the potential value of each man and the perfectibility of human society.

The Transcendental influence extends into the present century in the thought of such eminent poets as Frost and Stevens, such a dramatist as O'Neill, and such voices of the "Beat Generation" as those of Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder.

That Robert Frost had a lifelong interest in Emerson is attested not only by much of his poetry but also by his biographer, Lawrance Thompson. William Chamberlain in his essay "The Emersonianism of Robert Frost" sees it as "central to an understanding of the core of Frost's philosophy of poetry, the concept of a 'momentary stay against confusion.'" Chamberlain presents such poems as "West-Running Brook" and "Directive" as prime evidence. The former poem contains a conversation between husband and wife about the brook that runs west contrary to all the other country brooks that run east to reach the ocean. The husband explains toward the end of the poem:

> It is this backward motion toward the source,
> Against the stream, that most we see ourselves in,
> the tribute of the current to the source.
> It is from this in nature we are from.
> It is most us.

This seeming identification of the human being's origin with a common natural source, a universal being, is thoroughly transcendental as is the somewhat more obscure admonition in "Directive" in which the poet directs us back to a hidden brook that once provided water for a farm house long gone and tells us to "drink and be whole again beyond confusion." Nor should we overlook the thoroughly Transcendental rejection of thoughtless adherence to tradition that forms the basis of one of Frost's bestknown poems, "Mending Wall."

Frost, brought up in a Swedenborgian household, was a self-proclaimed mystic who believed in symbols and who, through their use, suggests again and again in his poems the Emersonian,

Thoreauvian requirement that man must establish a primary contact with nature in order to give any meaning to his life. It is scarcely surprising, then, to find him listing Emerson's *Essays* and *Poems* and Thoreau's *Walden* among the ten books he believed should be in every public library.

Although a transcendental influence may seem far from surprising in a "country" poet like Frost, its presence in a poet so urbane and sophisticated as Wallace Stevens may be unexpected. But, as Nina Baym has fully demonstrated, it is there in full measure. Contrary to the frequently expressed idea that Stevens rejected Transcendentalism, she finds that "line by line. . .his kinship manifests itself." Noting that the Transcendentalists, despite their insistence on a universal mind, recognized that each human being continued to apprehend, conceive, and perceive through his own mind, she observes that Stevens, however he may insist "that each man's perception is discrete and cannot be related back to an overarching unity, believes very strongly that the experience of any one mind is common to all minds." Thus she finds in Stevens' poetry a modern version of Transcendentalism.

Baym further notes that Stevens' poetry may be interpreted as a modern attempt to articulate the Transcendental moment of ecstasy proclaimed so strikingly by Emerson. She finds, however, that it is Thoreau more than Emerson or any other Transcendentalist that Stevens resembles. The reason is their sharing of "an overwhelming love for landscape, which leads them both to dedicate themselves to nature in poetry with the same sort of novitiate intensity." Beyond sharing this love of nature, she sees Thoreau and Stevens formulating their principal emotions—joy and despair—in much the same way. Both are also seen as preoccupied with change as an immutable fact of the universe (perhaps the Platonic doctrine of flux?). "From 'Sunday Morning' on through all his works," she says, "Stevens asserted that although we *think* we love stability, in fact everything in the world that we love, and even love itself, originates from change. 'Death is the mother of beauty'. . . *Walden*, as much as 'Sunday Morning,' is an attempt to show the world enduring through change . . ."

Many examples can be found among Stevens' poems to illustrate his transcendental point of view. For example, in "The Planet on the Table" he writes of the poet:

> His self and the sun were one
> And his poems, although makings of his self,
> Were no less makings of the sun.

Here we see the identification of the self with divinity (the Sun) and the Emersonian notion of poetry all existing in nature before time was.

In what is perhaps Stevens' most famous poem, "Sunday Morning," we observe the modern woman unable to devote herself to the conventional worship of dead gods. The poet asks

> Why should she give her bounty to the dead?
> What is divinity if it can come
> Only in silent shadows and in dreams?
> Shall she not find in comforts of the sun,
> In pungent fruit and bright, green wings, or else
> In any balm or beauty of the earth,
> Things to be cherished like the thought of heaven?
> Divinity must live within herself. . .

Here Stevens has brilliantly encapsulated three main tenets of Transcendentalist doctrine: that the God of the established churches is a dead, historical God who can no longer inspire faith; that religious ecstasy is to be found through contact with nature; and that the living God can be found only within the self. The poem further emphasizes Stevens' rejection of the sterile, changeless, conventionalized Heaven in favor of the everchanging beauties of the earthly here and now.

Or again, in such a poem as "Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour" we see the suggestion of the individual mind being one with a central mind (like the Transcendental over-soul) as part of a dimly divined order that we know through feeling or intuition. The final three stanzas say it best:

> Here, now, we forget each other and ourselves,
> We feel the obscurity of an order, a whole,
> A knowledge, that which arranged the rendezvous.
>
> Within its vital boundary, in the mind.
> We say God and the imagination are one. . .
> How high that highest candle lights the dark.
>
> Out of this same light, out of the central mind,
> We make a dwelling in the evening air,
> In which being there together is enough.

In American drama Eugene O'Neill, currently undergoing a great revival of interest, is the only significant playwright to have reflected something of the Transcendental attitude. As he once wrote to the drama critic George Jean Nathan, "The playwright of today must dig at the roots of the sickness of today as he feels it—the death of the old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfactory new one for the surviving primitive, religious instinct to find a meaning for life in, and to comfort its fears of death with." This is indeed what the Transcendentalists of a hundred years before had felt that they must do. The dif-

ference between them and an O'Neill lies in their belief that they had discovered a cure for the pervasive sickness.

O'Neill is seen by Carpenter as ambivalent in his feelings toward the Transcendentalists. Like him they had been "rebels against the materialism of their times, but their idealism had also been the product of a Yankee and Puritan society," a society that O'Neill scorned for its narrow hypocrisies (in, e.g., *Beyond the Horizon* and *Desire Under the Elms*). Emerson and Thoreau, says Carpenter, never scorned material things but sought go ameliorate the actual situation, and appealed to the future. O'Neill, on the other hand, had no belief in the future or any hope for it. Tragedy he considered essential to the nature of things. Thus, in a sense, Carpenter finds him even more transcendental than the optimistic Emerson.

"Historic Transcendentalism," Carpenter comments, "has, in fact, divided into two streams. The first has become active, scientific, and pragmatic. The second has become passive, mystical, and psychological. Emerson's thought flowed largely in the first stream, toward modern pragmatism. O'Neill's thought tended towards modern, nonrational psychology." Thus O'Neill's marked interest in, and use of, Freudian probings into the less accessible reaches of the human psyche as a means of comprehending the mysterious behavior of his fellow travelers on the planet Earth.

Turning to the more immediate scene, we find such poets as Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder carrying on, each in his own way, the tradition of Whitman and Thoreau. Ginsberg quite plainly accepts Whitman's concept of the poet as teacher, prophet, and seer. And he writes his verse in the same free and irregular lines, with a vocabulary geared to the colloquial diction of his own time and place. Although his view of America lacks the optimistic note of the author of *Leaves of Grass*, he shares the Transcendental will to protest against an established majority that is leveling the nation into a deadly mediocrity.

As Ginsberg was the Beat Generation's approximation of Whitman, so has Snyder been its latter-day version of Thoreau. Intensely interested, as was Thoreau, in the literature and philosophy of the Orient, he learned Chinese and Japanese and even lived for a time in a Buddhist monastery. And like Thoreau he has been intensely concerned with the physical environment of America. Nor can the preoccupation in his verse with the need to be free and on the move be overlooked, so much is it in the tradition of Thoreau.

In conclusion, it is impossible not to agree with Edwin Gittleman's view that "contrary to the commonplace assertion that the Civil War effectively destroyed the transcendental ambiance in America, the magical Circle of Concord has never really been broken. Rather, it has been expanded to where now it seems to touch (if not embrace) a perplexing demi-world consisting of Allen Ginsberg, the Beatles, S.D.S., Abbie Hoffman, sexual freedoms, Black Power, lysergic acid diethylamide, and miscellaneous esoterica and erotica." Even though Gay Wilson Allen may be right in remarking that the main difficulty for one today trying to teach the Transcendentalists is that their goal of a deeper spiritual life has become "an almost meaningless abstraction," his further observation that they were trying to find a more satisfying life here and now on this lovely earth is perhaps equally true of many of those mentioned in Gittleman's catalogue of the contemporary underground that cannot accept the values of the American establishment.

To close this book on American Transcendentalism without giving the last word to its foremost spokesman, Emerson, would seem almost an act of heresy. In his journal for 1841 he said of it, "That it has a necessary place in history is a fact not to be overlooked, not possibly to be prevented, and however discredited to the heedless & to the moderate & conservative persons by the foibles or inadequacy of those who partake the movement yet is it the pledge & the herald of all that is dear to the human heart, grand & inspiring to human faith."

Source: Donald N. Koster, "Influences of Transcendentalism on American Life and Literature," in *Transcendentalism in America*, Twayne Publishers, 1975, pp. 84–98.

Tony Tanner

In the following essay, Tanner explores the transcendentalist creed: using an "innocent" eye to "see God in all things."

A hostile American reviewer of Wordsworth noted that 'he tries to look on nature as if she had never been looked on before' and he bemoaned that fact that the poet seemed to be attracting an 'ever increasing school of devoted disciples' in America. Now, what he blames Wordsworth for accurately sums up the ambition of many of the Transcendentalists. There is no need here to disentangle the indigenous emotional drive from the imported European ideas in Transcendentalist thought. But it is

It was such a release from tradition that the Transcendentalists sought to achieve so that they might indulge a proper admiration for a present America neither subservient nor inferior to Europe. And the most forceful concept with which to challenge the traditional eye was clearly the innocent eye."

important to stress how eager the Transcendentalists were to develop a new attitude towards nature, a new point of view. Picking up the Wordsworthian hint they developed it for their own purposes. Thus Parker echoes Wordsworth in describing the correct way to respond to the world. He is discussing terrestial beauty.

> Now to many men, who have but once felt this; when heaven lay about them, in their infancy, before the world was too much with them, and they laid waste their powers, getting and spending, when they look back upon it across the dreary gulf, where Honor, Virtue, Religion have made shipwreck and perished with their youth, it seems visionary, a shadow, dream-like, unreal. They count it a phantom of their experience; the vision of a child's fancy, raw and unused to the world. Now they are wiser. They cease to believe in inspiration. They can only credit the saying of the priests, that long ago there were inspired men; but none now; that you and I must bow our faces to the dust, groping like the Blind-worm and the Beetle; nor turn our eyes to the broad, free heaven; that we cannot walk by the great central and celestial light that God made to guide all that come into the world, but only by the farthing-candle of tradition... Alas for us if this be all.

An awareness of the divine beauty of the world should not be made dependent on 'tradition', nor on any inherited and institutionalized modes of thought or belief. It would be apprehended directly by any one who could maintain the requisite reverence of attitude and recapture a personal conviction that the world was 'instinct with the Divine Spirit'. 'When this day comes, man will look on Nature with the same eye, as when in the Eden of primitive innocence and joy.' It was the privilege of unmediated admiration and response which the Transcendentalists were determined to secure for their age. It was for this reason they took issue with the Unitarians with their Lockean materialism and passionless contention that only through the biblical miracles was God revealed to man. Such an attitude seemed to impoverish the present world.

> It is negative, cold, lifeless, and all advanced minds among Unitarians are dissatisfied with it, and are craving something higher, better, more living and lifegiving... Society as it is, is a lie, a sham, a charnelhouse, a valley of dry bones. O that the Spirit of God would once more pass by, and say unto these dry bones, 'Live!' So I felt, and so felt others.

Thus Orestes Brownson described the original thrust behind the movement. The Transcendentalists refused to see the world as 'a mute and dead mass of material forms': rather, it was 'a living image, speaking forth the glory of God'. At least, it was that if it was looked at properly. The eye which was 'purified of the notes of tradition' would see God in all things. Here. Now. That thralldom to old and cramping ways of thought, which inhibited and policed the individual response, would be broken. It was such a release from tradition that the Transcendentalists sought to achieve so that they might indulge a proper admiration for a present America neither subservient nor inferior to Europe. And the most forceful concept with which to challenge the traditional eye was clearly the innocent eye.

> Innocent, the soul is quick with instincts of unerring aim; then she knows by intuition what lapsed reason defines by laborious inference; her appetites and affections are direct and trustworthy... By reasoning the soul strives to recover her lost intuitions; groping amidst the obscure darkness of sense, by means of the fingers of logic, for treasures present always and available to the eye of conscience. Sinners must needs reason: saints behold.

So Alcott summed up the extremity of his position. For him 'thought disintegrates and breaks' the unity of soul a child enjoys with the world. The prescribed cure was obvious: unlearn reason and behold the world with child-like passive admiration. The word recurred in much Transcendentalist writing. 'Wisdom does not inspect but behold' wrote Thoreau; while Emerson recommended for the 'habitual posture of the mind—beholding'. Saints behold, and so do children. The way back into a divine nature was through the innocent eye. Alcott himself was an educational experimenter of

some audacity and he took his beliefs to their logical conclusion. He held conversations with children on the gospels and made their response a test of the validity of Christianity. 'If these *testimonies of children*, confirm the views of adults—that *Christianity is grounded in the essential Nature of Man*—than shall I add to its claim upon our faith.' It is hard to imagine Wordsworth making so literal an application of his poetic assertion that the child was a prophet and philosopher. There was much more interest in the child's point of view in America than in Europe at the time. It was revered to an unusual degree. Thus Miss Peabody, who worked in Alcott's experimental school, could observe:

> It was very striking to see how much nearer the kingdom of heaven ... were the little children, than those who had begun to pride themselves on knowing something. We could not but often remark to each other, how unworthy the name of knowledge was that superficial acquirement, which has nothing to do with self-knowledge; and how much more susceptible to the impressions of genius, as well as how much more apprehensive of general truths, were those who had not been hackneyed by a false education.

There is knowing and knowing. The knowledge which is a mere accumulation of data will tend to support the *tabula rasa* theories of the psychological sensationalists and make man the sport of matter. But the knowledge which seems to deliver itself as unharassed intuition, which seems to be the result of a generous impressionability and an out-reaching sense of spiritual qualities shared by perceiver and perceived, this knowledge will justify the Transcendentalists in their assertions. 'The mind must grow, not from external accretion, but from an internal principle', in the words of Sampson Reed. Given this emphasis on the 'internal principle', the process of true knowing, and the diminished concentration on the thing known, then clearly the child's mind can be expected to attract novel focus. The interest, that is to say, is in a cognitive stance, a stance of reverent response and assimilation. There is far less interest in the end results of analysis and prolonged inquiry, such as finished doctrine, intricate theology, or logical demonstration. For the Transcendentalists the central question was: how should a man look at the world to recover and retain a sense of its 'actual glory'? And for many of them the answer was—behold it with wonder, like a child.

Just as the child was used as a positive image to set up against the claims of tradition, so the claims and rights of the uneducated vernacular type were pushed against the aristocratic hegemony of Europe over American thought. 'We are now the literary vassals of England, and continue to do homage to the mother country. Our literature is tame and servile, wanting in freshness, freedom, and originality. We write as Englishmen, not as Americans. . . Moreover, excellent as is the English literature, it is not exactly the literature for young republicans. England is tile most aristocratic country in the world.' Orestes Brownson continuously stressed the democratic implications of transcendentalist thought. He insisted that 'the light which shines out from God's throne, shines into the heart of every man'. The relevance of this for the writer was brought out by George Ripley: 'The most sublime contemplations of the philosopher can be translated into the language of the market.' So he instructs the American writer: 'He is never to stand aloof from the concerns of the people; he is never to view them in the pride of superior culture or station as belonging to a distinct order from himself.' Clearly a totally new perspective, disregardful of the past and the accumulated precedents of culture, was being sought and required. The call was for the point of view of the uninstructed: the eye of the child, the language of the market. The optimism involved in this idealization of the untutored need not be underlined. But there is one further implication of Transcendentalist thought which should be brought out. Many of the Transcendentalists were Unitarians who became dissatisfied with the mere observance of orthodox and seemly forms. They were more interested in sentiment than institutions and there was current enmity between them. So Brownson wrote: 'The sentiment now breaks away from that form, which, if one may so speak, has become petrified.' Perhaps this attitude was most significantly dramatized by Emerson's resignation from the Unitarian ministry in 1832. 'I am not engaged to Christianity by decent forms' he explained later, 'what I revere and obey in it is its reality, its boundless charity, its deep interior life... Its institutions should be as flexible as the wants of man. That form from which the life and suitableness have departed should be as worthless in its eyes as the dead leaves that are falling around us.' I think one may take this as a more general apostasy from all formalism—in art as well as in religion. Because if all nature is good and the unmediated inner impulse of man reliable, then there is no need for life to be transmuted and reworked into art: art must rather emulate nature; flow with it, grow like it. Such an art—it is characteristic of much American writing—can display an almost unique breadth of hospitality, a spontaneous

generosity of inclusion, a free-ranging wonder and compassionate attention which more than justify its daring neglect of accredited forms. For indeed there are forms which the instinct of health will cry out to scatter and demolish; forms which condone mental sloth, which perpetuate habitual responses, which flatter old complacencies, which smother all emerging novelty. But if we may adapt Emerson's words a little and say that the Transcendentalist felt that form could afford to be, indeed ought to be, as flexible as sentiment, then we could fairly point out that this might involve them in problems of organization. The vivifying enthusiasm and stimulus of the Transcendentalists provided the essential impetus for the development of a genuine American literature. But their own well-warranted animus against forms has often, for subsequent writers, changed into the real and often arresting problem of how to assemble and contain their material. An excess of flexibility may well let everything in, but at the cost of not being able to hold very much together.

The Transcendentalists themselves could hold everything together by mystical generalizations. They disliked Unitarianism because 'it cannot pass from the Particular to the General'. Transcendentalism could do exactly this, with effortless confidence. But it should here be pointed out that the Transcendentalist, by relying so much for his poise and faith on fervent but vague feelings and generalizations, does expose himself to the risk of a shockingly abrupt disillusion, a very sudden sense of blighting deprivation, an impotent gloom which is the residue of an evaporated enthusiasm. And indeed the Transcendentalists at times revealed the precariousness of their position. Consider these two quotations from George Ripley.

> The creation in itself, without reference to the Almighty Spirit from which it sprung, is formless and without order—a mass of chaotic objects, of whose uses we are ignorant, and whose destiny we cannot imagine. It is only when its visible glory leads our minds to its unseen Author, and we regard it as a manifestation of Divine Wisdom, that we can truly comprehend its character and designs. To the eye of sense, what does the external creation present? Much less than we are generally apt to suppose... Merely the different arrangements of matter, the various degrees and directions in which the light falls on the object admired, and the change of position with regard to space. This is all that is seen. The rest is felt. The forms are addressed to the eye, but the perception of beauty is in the soul. And the highest degree of this is perceived, when the outward creation suggests the wisdom of the Creator. Without that, it is comparatively blank and cold and lifeless.

Without that—everything depends on religious conviction. There are no compromise assurances, no working rules, no limited certainties, no veracities attainable by the senses alone. It is all or nothing. Again:

> Without religion, we are buried in this world as in a living tomb. Mystery—Darkness—Death—Despair —these are the inscriptions which are born on the portals of our gloomy prison-house. Doomed and unhappy orphans, we know not whence we came, why we are here, nor whither we go... All is blank, and desolate, and lifeless, for to our darkened eye no God is present there. And God, my friends, is necessary to man.

Some of these images have a prophetic air. The lost child becomes a frequent figure in American literature, and images of confinement and imprisonment obtrude themselves in the works of writers as remote as Poe and Sherwood Anderson. The journey of which the path and destination are no longer sure becomes a common theme (it is in Melville and Mark Twain), and the material world as chaos instead of God's order is the insistent tenor of the work of Henry Adams. One could say that Pragmatism was a necessary solution to the dangerous extremism of response countenanced by Transcendentalist thought.

Perhaps the simplest definition of what Transcendentalism meant to those who embraced it is given by Ripley: 'It thirsts after the primitive, absolute, all pervading Truth. It is not contented with the knowledge of barren insulated facts.' They believed you could take a single discrete fact and infer from it some absolute truth: hence the continual shift from particularization to generalization in their writing. But take away that all-maintaining confidence in God, and man is left surrounded by 'barren insulated facts' with only the 'eye of sense' to help him. The Transcendentalists asserted that a man who could not see God everywhere was blind. The blind men of a later age duly had to return to a braille-like reading of the world.

> No sentimentalist . . . no stander above men and women or apart from them . . . no more modest than immodest.

This was the character—as much persona as person—who tried to see what America was by looking around him as though for the first time. Effectively he brought a continent to life. We have perhaps lost some of the sense of the audacity of that undertaking and yet his first poem makes a gesture which is in fact one of the perennial gestures of art: a gesture of passionate attention towards vast

stretches of ignored reality. He is, as he confesses, not the explorer of life; neither is he the arranger, the describer, the analyser of life; nor is he the improver of life: he is 'the reminder of life' and the strange but persistently true thing is how often humanity needs such reminders, such reminding.

Source: Tony Tanner, "Saints Behold: The Transcendentalist Point of View," in *The Reign of Wonder: Naivety and Reality in American Literature*, Cambridge University Press, 1965, pp. 19–25.

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This work includes *Walden*, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, eighteen poems, and several essays and journal entries. Bode presents Thoreau's work, as well as the controversies of Thoreau's life in this comprehensive collection.

Cameron, Kenneth Walter, *Young Emerson's Transcendental Vision: An Exposition of His World View with an Analysis of the Structure, Backgrounds and Meaning of "Nature,"* Transcendentalist Books, 1971.

This books provides a wealth of information about Transcendentalism and Emerson's relationship to it. It also includes a reprinting of works by authors relevant to Emerson's work, such as British romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

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This work discusses the influence of European Romanticism on the authors of the American Renaissance, including German and British writers and philosophers.

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This book discusses the transcendentalist periodical *The Dial*, including information on the publication and reception of the periodical as well as a discussion of the Transcendental Club.

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This work discusses the influence of Transcendentalism on the reform movements of the nineteenth century, including an in-depth historical background on the movement.

Glossary

A

Abstract: Used as a noun, the term refers to a short summary or outline of a longer work. As an adjective applied to writing or literary works, abstract refers to words or phrases that name things not knowable through the five senses. Examples of abstracts include the *Cliffs Notes* summaries of major literary works. Examples of abstract terms or concepts include "idea," "guilt" "honesty," and "loyalty."

Absurd, Theater of the: See *Theater of the Absurd*

Absurdism: See *Theater of the Absurd*

Act: A major section of a play. Acts are divided into varying numbers of shorter scenes. From ancient times to the nineteenth century plays were generally constructed of five acts, but modern works typically consist of one, two, or three acts. Examples of five-act plays include the works of Sophocles and Shakespeare, while the plays of Arthur Miller commonly have a three-act structure.

Acto: A one-act Chicano theater piece developed out of collective improvisation. *Actos* were performed by members of Luis Valdez's Teatro Campesino in California during the mid-1960s.

Aestheticism: A literary and artistic movement of the nineteenth century. Followers of the movement believed that art should not be mixed with social, political, or moral teaching. The statement "art for art's sake" is a good summary of aestheticism. The movement had its roots in France, but it gained widespread importance in England in the last half of the nineteenth century, where it helped change the Victorian practice of including moral lessons in literature. Oscar Wilde is one of the best-known "aesthetes" of the late nineteenth century.

Age of Johnson: The period in English literature between 1750 and 1798, named after the most prominent literary figure of the age, Samuel Johnson. Works written during this time are noted for their emphasis on "sensibility," or emotional quality. These works formed a transition between the rational works of the Age of Reason, or Neoclassical period, and the emphasis on individual feelings and responses of the Romantic period. Significant writers during the Age of Johnson included the novelists Ann Radcliffe and Henry Mackenzie, dramatists Richard Sheridan and Oliver Goldsmith, and poets William Collins and Thomas Gray. Also known as Age of Sensibility

Age of Reason: See *Neoclassicism*

Age of Sensibility: See *Age of Johnson*

Agrarians: A group of Southern American writers of the 1930s and 1940s who fostered an economic and cultural program for the South based on agriculture, in opposition to the industrial society of the North. The term can refer to any group that promotes the value of farm life and agricultural society. Members of the original Agrarians included

John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren.

Alexandrine Meter: See *Meter*

Allegory: A narrative technique in which characters representing things or abstract ideas are used to convey a message or teach a lesson. Allegory is typically used to teach moral, ethical, or religious lessons but is sometimes used for satiric or political purposes. Examples of allegorical works include Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress.*

Allusion: A reference to a familiar literary or historical person or event, used to make an idea more easily understood. For example, describing someone as a "Romeo" makes an allusion to William Shakespeare's famous young lover in *Romeo and Juliet.*

Amerind Literature: The writing and oral traditions of Native Americans. Native American literature was originally passed on by word of mouth, so it consisted largely of stories and events that were easily memorized. Amerind prose is often rhythmic like poetry because it was recited to the beat of a ceremonial drum. Examples of Amerind literature include the autobiographical *Black Elk Speaks,* the works of N. Scott Momaday, James Welch, and Craig Lee Strete, and the poetry of Luci Tapahonso.

Analogy: A comparison of two things made to explain something unfamiliar through its similarities to something familiar, or to prove one point based on the acceptedness of another. Similes and metaphors are types of analogies. Analogies often take the form of an extended simile, as in William Blake's aphorism: "As the caterpillar chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys."

Angry Young Men: A group of British writers of the 1950s whose work expressed bitterness and disillusionment with society. Common to their work is an anti-hero who rebels against a corrupt social order and strives for personal integrity. The term has been used to describe Kingsley Amis, John Osborne, Colin Wilson, John Wain, and others.

Antagonist: The major character in a narrative or drama who works against the hero or protagonist. An example of an evil antagonist is Richard Lovelace in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa,* while a virtuous antagonist is Macduff in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth.*

Anthropomorphism: The presentation of animals or objects in human shape or with human characteristics. The term is derived from the Greek word for "human form." The fables of Aesop, the animated films of Walt Disney, and Richard Adams's *Watership Down* feature anthropomorphic characters.

Anti-hero: A central character in a work of literature who lacks traditional heroic qualities such as courage, physical prowess, and fortitude. Anti-heros typically distrust conventional values and are unable to commit themselves to any ideals. They generally feel helpless in a world over which they have no control. Anti-heroes usually accept, and often celebrate, their positions as social outcasts. A well-known anti-hero is Yossarian in Joseph Heller's novel *Catch-22.*

Antimasque: See *Masque*

Anti-novel: A term coined by French critic Jean-Paul Sartre. It refers to any experimental work of fiction that avoids the familiar conventions of the novel. The anti-novel usually fragments and distorts the experience of its characters, forcing the reader to construct the reality of the story from a disordered narrative. The best-known anti-novelist is Alain Robbe-Grillet, author of *Le voyeur.*

Antithesis: The antithesis of something is its direct opposite. In literature, the use of antithesis as a figure of speech results in two statements that show a contrast through the balancing of two opposite ideas. Technically, it is the second portion of the statement that is defined as the "antithesis"; the first portion is the "thesis." An example of antithesis is found in the following portion of Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address"; notice the opposition between the verbs "remember" and "forget" and the phrases "what we say" and "what they did": "The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here."

Apocrypha: Writings tentatively attributed to an author but not proven or universally accepted to be their works. The term was originally applied to certain books of the Bible that were not considered inspired and so were not included in the "sacred canon." Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare, Thomas Kyd, Thomas Middleton, and John Marston all have apocrypha. Apocryphal books of the Bible include the Old Testament's Book of Enoch and New Testament's Gospel of Peter.

Apollonian and Dionysian: The two impulses believed to guide authors of dramatic tragedy. The

Apollonian impulse is named after Apollo, the Greek god of light and beauty and the symbol of intellectual order. The Dionysian impulse is named after Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and the symbol of the unrestrained forces of nature. The Apollonian impulse is to create a rational, harmonious world, while the Dionysian is to express the irrational forces of personality. Friedrich Nietzche uses these terms in *The Birth of Tragedy* to designate contrasting elements in Greek tragedy.

Apostrophe: A statement, question, or request addressed to an inanimate object or concept or to a nonexistent or absent person. Requests for inspiration from the muses in poetry are examples of apostrophe, as is Marc Antony's address to Caesar's corpse in William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*: "O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth, That I am meek and gentle with these butchers!... Woe to the hand that shed this costly blood!..."

Apprenticeship Novel: See *Bildungsroman*

Archetype: The word archetype is commonly used to describe an original pattern or model from which all other things of the same kind are made. This term was introduced to literary criticism from the psychology of Carl Jung. It expresses Jung's theory that behind every person's "unconscious," or repressed memories of the past, lies the "collective unconscious" of the human race: memories of the countless typical experiences of our ancestors. These memories are said to prompt illogical associations that trigger powerful emotions in the reader. Often, the emotional process is primitive, even primordial. Archetypes are the literary images that grow out of the "collective unconscious." They appear in literature as incidents and plots that repeat basic patterns of life. They may also appear as stereotyped characters. Examples of literary archetypes include themes such as birth and death and characters such as the Earth Mother.

Argument: The argument of a work is the author's subject matter or principal idea. Examples of defined "argument" portions of works include John Milton's *Arguments* to each of the books of *Paradise Lost* and the "Argument" to Robert Herrick's *Hesperides.*

Aristotelian Criticism: Specifically, the method of evaluating and analyzing tragedy formulated by the Greek philosopher Aristotle in his *Poetics.* More generally, the term indicates any form of criticism that follows Aristotle's views. Aristotelian criticism focuses on the form and logical structure of a work, apart from its historical or social context, in contrast to "Platonic Criticism," which stresses the usefulness of art. Adherents of New Criticism including John Crowe Ransom and Cleanth Brooks utilize and value the basic ideas of Aristotelian criticism for textual analysis.

Art for Art's Sake: See *Aestheticism*

Aside: A comment made by a stage performer that is intended to be heard by the audience but supposedly not by other characters. Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* is an extended use of the aside in modern theater.

Audience: The people for whom a piece of literature is written. Authors usually write with a certain audience in mind, for example, children, members of a religious or ethnic group, or colleagues in a professional field. The term "audience" also applies to the people who gather to see or hear any performance, including plays, poetry readings, speeches, and concerts. Jane Austen's parody of the gothic novel, *Northanger Abbey,* was originally intended for (and also pokes fun at) an audience of young and avid female gothic novel readers.

Autobiography: A connected narrative in which an individual tells his or her life story. Examples include Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* and Henry Adams's *The Education of Henry Adams.* Compare with Biography. See also Diary and Memoirs.

Automatic Writing: Writing carried out without a preconceived plan in an effort to capture every random thought. Authors who engage in automatic writing typically do not revise their work, preferring instead to preserve the revealed truth and beauty of spontaneous expression. Automatic writing was employed by many of the Surrealist writers, notably the French poet Robert Desnos. See also Surrealism.

Avant-garde: A French term meaning "vanguard." It is used in literary criticism to describe new writing that rejects traditional approaches to literature in favor of innovations in style or content. Twentieth-century examples of the literary *avant-garde* include the Black Mountain School of poets, the Bloomsbury Group, and the Beat Movement.

B

Ballad: A short poem that tells a simple story and has a repeated refrain. Ballads were originally intended to be sung. Early ballads, known as folk bal-

lads, were passed down through generations, so their authors are often unknown. Later ballads composed by known authors are called literary ballads. An example of an anonymous folk ballad is "Edward," which dates from the Middle Ages. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and John Keats's "La Belle Dame sans Merci" are examples of literary ballads.

Baroque: A term used in literary criticism to describe literature that is complex or ornate in style or diction. Baroque works typically express tension, anxiety, and violent emotion. The term "Baroque Age" designates a period in Western European literature beginning in the late sixteenth century and ending about one hundred years later. Works of this period often mirror the qualities of works more generally associated with the label "baroque" and sometimes feature elaborate conceits. Examples of Baroque works include John Lyly's *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit,* Luis de Gongora's *Soledads,* and William Shakespeare's *As You Like It.*

Baroque Age: See *Baroque*

Baroque Period: See *Baroque*

Beat Generation: See *Beat Movement*

Beat Movement: A period featuring a group of American poets and novelists of the 1950s and 1960s—including Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, William S. Burroughs, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti—who rejected established social and literary values. Using such techniques as stream of consciousness writing and jazz-influenced free verse and focusing on unusual or abnormal states of mind—generated by religious ecstasy or the use of drugs—the Beat writers aimed to create works that were unconventional in both form and subject matter. Kerouac's *On the Road* is perhaps the best-known example of a Beat Generation novel, and Ginsberg's *Howl* is a famous collection of Beat poetry.

Beats, The: See *Beat Movement*

Belles-lettres: A French term meaning "fine letters" or "beautiful writing." It is often used as a synonym for literature, typically referring to imaginative and artistic rather than scientific or expository writing. Current usage sometimes restricts the meaning to light or humorous writing and appreciative essays about literature. Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* epitomizes the realm of *belles-lettres.*

Bildungsroman: A German word meaning "novel of development." The *bildungsroman* is a study of the maturation of a youthful character, typically brought about through a series of social or sexual encounters that lead to self-awareness. *Bildungsroman* is used interchangeably with *erziehungsroman,* a novel of initiation and education. When a *bildungsroman*is concerned with the development of an artist (as in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*), it is often termed a *kunstlerroman.* Well-known *bildungsromane* include J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye,* Robert Newton Peck's *A Day No Pigs Would Die,* and S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders.* Also known as Apprenticeship Novel, Coming of Age Novel, Erziehungsroman, or Kunstlerroman.

Biography: A connected narrative that tells a person's life story. Biographies typically aim to be objective and closely detailed. James Boswell's *The Life of Samuel Johnson,* LL.D is a famous example of the form. Compare with Autobiography and Memoirs.

Black Aesthetic Movement: A period of artistic and literary development among African Americans in the 1960s and early 1970s. This was the first major African-American artistic movement since the Harlem Renaissance and was closely paralleled by the civil rights and black power movements. The black aesthetic writers attempted to produce works of art that would be meaningful to the black masses. Key figures in black aesthetics included one of its founders, poet and playwright Amiri Baraka, formerly known as LeRoi Jones; poet and essayist Haki R. Madhubuti, formerly Don L. Lee; poet and playwright Sonia Sanchez; and dramatist Ed Bullins. Works representative of the Black Aesthetic Movement include Amiri Baraka's play *Dutchman,* a 1964 Obie award-winner; *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing,* edited by Baraka and playwright Larry Neal and published in 1968; and Sonia Sanchez's poetry collection *We a BaddDDD People,* published in 1970. Also known as Black Arts Movement.

Black Arts Movement: See *Black Aesthetic Movement*

Black Comedy: See *Black Humor*

Black Humor: Writing that places grotesque elements side by side with humorous ones in an attempt to shock the reader, forcing him or her to laugh at the horrifying reality of a disordered world. Joseph Heller's novel *Catch-22* is considered a superb example of the use of black humor. Other

well-known authors who use black humor include Kurt Vonnegut, Edward Albee, Eugene Ionesco, and Harold Pinter. Also known as Black Comedy.

Blank Verse: Loosely, any unrhymed poetry, but more generally, unrhymed iambic pentameter verse (composed of lines of five two-syllable feet with the first syllable accented, the second unaccented). Blank verse has been used by poets since the Renaissance for its flexibility and its graceful, dignified tone. John Milton's *Paradise Lost* is in blank verse, as are most of William Shakespeare's plays.

Bloomsbury Group: A group of English writers, artists, and intellectuals who held informal artistic and philosophical discussions in Bloomsbury, a district of London, from around 1907 to the early 1930s. The Bloomsbury Group held no uniform philosophical beliefs but did commonly express an aversion to moral prudery and a desire for greater social tolerance. At various times the circle included Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, Clive Bell, Lytton Strachey, and John Maynard Keynes.

Bon Mot: A French term meaning "good word." A *bon mot* is a witty remark or clever observation. Charles Lamb and Oscar Wilde are celebrated for their witty *bon mots.* Two examples by Oscar Wilde stand out: (1) "All women become their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his." (2) "A man cannot be too careful in the choice of his enemies."

Breath Verse: See *Projective Verse*

Burlesque: Any literary work that uses exaggeration to make its subject appear ridiculous, either by treating a trivial subject with profound seriousness or by treating a dignified subject frivolously. The word "burlesque" may also be used as an adjective, as in "burlesque show," to mean "striptease act." Examples of literary burlesque include the comedies of Aristophanes, Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote,*, Samuel Butler's poem "Hudibras," and John Gay's play *The Beggar's Opera.*

C

Cadence: The natural rhythm of language caused by the alternation of accented and unaccented syllables. Much modern poetry—notably free verse—deliberately manipulates cadence to create complex rhythmic effects. James Macpherson's "Ossian poems" are richly cadenced, as is the poetry of the Symbolists, Walt Whitman, and Amy Lowell.

Caesura: A pause in a line of poetry, usually occurring near the middle. It typically corresponds to a break in the natural rhythm or sense of the line but is sometimes shifted to create special meanings or rhythmic effects. The opening line of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" contains a caesura following "dreary": "Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary...."

Canzone: A short Italian or Provencal lyric poem, commonly about love and often set to music. The *canzone* has no set form but typically contains five or six stanzas made up of seven to twenty lines of eleven syllables each. A shorter, five-to ten-line "envoy," or concluding stanza, completes the poem. Masters of the *canzone* form include Petrarch, Dante Alighieri, Torquato Tasso, and Guido Cavalcanti.

Carpe Diem: A Latin term meaning "seize the day." This is a traditional theme of poetry, especially lyrics. A *carpe diem* poem advises the reader or the person it addresses to live for today and enjoy the pleasures of the moment. Two celebrated *carpe diem* poems are Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" and Robert Herrick's poem beginning "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may...."

Catharsis: The release or purging of unwanted emotions—specifically fear and pity—brought about by exposure to art. The term was first used by the Greek philosopher Aristotle in his *Poetics* to refer to the desired effect of tragedy on spectators. A famous example of catharsis is realized in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex,* when Oedipus discovers that his wife, Jacosta, is his own mother and that the stranger he killed on the road was his own father.

Celtic Renaissance: A period of Irish literary and cultural history at the end of the nineteenth century. Followers of the movement aimed to create a romantic vision of Celtic myth and legend. The most significant works of the Celtic Renaissance typically present a dreamy, unreal world, usually in reaction against the reality of contemporary problems. William Butler Yeats's *The Wanderings of Oisin* is among the most significant works of the Celtic Renaissance. Also known as Celtic Twilight.

Celtic Twilight: See *Celtic Renaissance*

Character: Broadly speaking, a person in a literary work. The actions of characters are what constitute the plot of a story, novel, or poem. There are numerous types of characters, ranging from simple, stereotypical figures to intricate, multifaceted ones. In the techniques of anthropomorphism and personification, animals—and even places or things—can assume aspects of character. "Characterization"

is the process by which an author creates vivid, believable characters in a work of art. This may be done in a variety of ways, including (1) direct description of the character by the narrator; (2) the direct presentation of the speech, thoughts, or actions of the character; and (3) the responses of other characters to the character. The term "character" also refers to a form originated by the ancient Greek writer Theophrastus that later became popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is a short essay or sketch of a person who prominently displays a specific attribute or quality, such as miserliness or ambition. Notable characters in literature include Oedipus Rex, Don Quixote de la Mancha, Macbeth, Candide, Hester Prynne, Ebenezer Scrooge, Huckleberry Finn, Jay Gatsby, Scarlett O'Hara, James Bond, and Kunta Kinte.

Characterization: See *Character*

Chorus: In ancient Greek drama, a group of actors who commented on and interpreted the unfolding action on the stage. Initially the chorus was a major component of the presentation, but over time it became less significant, with its numbers reduced and its role eventually limited to commentary between acts. By the sixteenth century the chorus—if employed at all—was typically a single person who provided a prologue and an epilogue and occasionally appeared between acts to introduce or underscore an important event. The chorus in William Shakespeare's *Henry V* functions in this way. Modern dramas rarely feature a chorus, but T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge* are notable exceptions. The Stage Manager in Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* performs a role similar to that of the chorus.

Chronicle: A record of events presented in chronological order. Although the scope and level of detail provided varies greatly among the chronicles surviving from ancient times, some, such as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* feature vivid descriptions and a lively recounting of events. During the Elizabethan Age, many dramas—appropriately called "chronicle plays"—were based on material from chronicles. Many of William Shakespeare's dramas of English history as well as Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II* are based in part on Raphael Holinshead's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland.*

Classical: In its strictest definition in literary criticism, classicism refers to works of ancient Greek or Roman literature. The term may also be used to describe a literary work of recognized importance (a "classic") from any time period or literature that exhibits the traits of classicism. Classical authors from ancient Greek and Roman times include Juvenal and Homer. Examples of later works and authors now described as classical include French literature of the seventeenth century, Western novels of the nineteenth century, and American fiction of the mid-nineteenth century such as that written by James Fenimore Cooper and Mark Twain.

Classicism: A term used in literary criticism to describe critical doctrines that have their roots in ancient Greek and Roman literature, philosophy, and art. Works associated with classicism typically exhibit restraint on the part of the author, unity of design and purpose, clarity, simplicity, logical organization, and respect for tradition. Examples of literary classicism include Cicero's prose, the dramas of Pierre Corneille and Jean Racine, the poetry of John Dryden and Alexander Pope, and the writings of J. W. von Goethe, G. E. Lessing, and T. S. Eliot.

Climax: The turning point in a narrative, the moment when the conflict is at its most intense. Typically, the structure of stories, novels, and plays is one of rising action, in which tension builds to the climax, followed by falling action, in which tension lessens as the story moves to its conclusion. The climax in James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* occurs when Magua and his captive Cora are pursued to the edge of a cliff by Uncas. Magua kills Uncas but is subsequently killed by Hawkeye.

Colloquialism: A word, phrase, or form of pronunciation that is acceptable in casual conversation but not in formal, written communication. It is considered more acceptable than slang. An example of colloquialism can be found in Rudyard Kipling's *Barrack-room Ballads:* When 'Omer smote 'is bloomin' lyre He'd 'eard men sing by land and sea; An' what he thought 'e might require 'E went an' took—the same as me!

Colonialism: The literature of several ages reflects concerns about Colonialism in depictions of encounters with native peoples and foreign landscapes and in vague allusions to distant plantations. Rough boundaries for the literary movement of Colonialism begin c. 1875, when historians date the start of a "New Imperialism," through the waning empires of World War I and up to the beginning of World War II, around 1939. Colonialism is primarily a feature of British literature, given that the British dominated the imperial age. The literature

of Colonialism is characterized by a strong sense of ambiguity: uncertainty about the morality of imperialism, about the nature of humanity, and about the continuing viability of European civilization. Colonial literature is also full of high adventure, romance, and excitement. Examples of colonial literature are Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm*, E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, the adventure tales of H. Rider Haggard, and Isak Dinesen's memoirs, including *Out of Africa.*

Comedy: One of two major types of drama, the other being tragedy. Its aim is to amuse, and it typically ends happily. Comedy assumes many forms, such as farce and burlesque, and uses a variety of techniques, from parody to satire. In a restricted sense the term comedy refers only to dramatic presentations, but in general usage it is commonly applied to nondramatic works as well. Examples of comedies range from the plays of Aristophanes, Terrence, and Plautus, Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy,* Francois Rabelais's *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua,* and some of Geoffrey Chaucer's tales and William Shakespeare's plays to Noel Coward's play *Private Lives* and James Thurber's short story "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty."

Comedy of Manners: A play about the manners and conventions of an aristocratic, highly sophisticated society. The characters are usually types rather than individualized personalities, and plot is less important than atmosphere. Such plays were an important aspect of late seventeenth-century English comedy. The comedy of manners was revived in the eighteenth century by Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Brinsley Sheridan, enjoyed a second revival in the late nineteenth century, and has endured into the twentieth century. Examples of comedies of manners include William Congreve's *The Way of the World* in the late seventeenth century, Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* and Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* in the eighteenth century, Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* in the nineteenth century, and W. Somerset Maugham's *The Circle* in the twentieth century.

Comic Relief: The use of humor to lighten the mood of a serious or tragic story, especially in plays. The technique is very common in Elizabethan works, and can be an integral part of the plot or simply a brief event designed to break the tension of the scene. The Gravediggers' scene in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a frequently cited example of comic relief.

Coming of Age Novel: See *Bildungsroman*

Commedia dell'arte: An Italian term meaning "the comedy of guilds" or "the comedy of professional actors." This form of dramatic comedy was popular in Italy during the sixteenth century. Actors were assigned stock roles (such as Pulcinella, the stupid servant, or Pantalone, the old merchant) and given a basic plot to follow, but all dialogue was improvised. The roles were rigidly typed and the plots were formulaic, usually revolving around young lovers who thwarted their elders and attained wealth and happiness. A rigid convention of the *commedia dell'arte* is the periodic intrusion of Harlequin, who interrupts the play with low buffoonery. Peppino de Filippo's *Metamorphoses of a Wandering Minstrel* gave modern audiences an idea of what *commedia dell'arte* may have been like. Various scenarios for *commedia dell'arte* were compiled in Petraccone's *La commedia dell'arte, storia, technica, scenari,* published in 1927.

Complaint: A lyric poem, popular in the Renaissance, in which the speaker expresses sorrow about his or her condition. Typically, the speaker's sadness is caused by an unresponsive lover, but some complaints cite other sources of unhappiness, such as poverty or fate. A commonly cited example is "A Complaint by Night of the Lover Not Beloved" by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. Thomas Sackville's "Complaint of Henry, Duke of Buckingham" traces the duke's unhappiness to his ruthless ambition.

Conceit: A clever and fanciful metaphor, usually expressed through elaborate and extended comparison, that presents a striking parallel between two seemingly dissimilar things—for example, elaborately comparing a beautiful woman to an object like a garden or the sun. The conceit was a popular device throughout the Elizabethan Age and Baroque Age and was the principal technique of the seventeenth-century English metaphysical poets. This usage of the word conceit is unrelated to the best-known definition of conceit as an arrogant attitude or behavior. The conceit figures prominently in the works of John Donne, Emily Dickinson, and T. S. Eliot.

Concrete: Concrete is the opposite of abstract, and refers to a thing that actually exists or a description that allows the reader to experience an object or concept with the senses. Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* contains much concrete description of nature and wildlife.

Concrete Poetry: Poetry in which visual elements play a large part in the poetic effect. Punctuation marks, letters, or words are arranged on a page to form a visual design: a cross, for example, or a bumblebee. Max Bill and Eugene Gomringer were among the early practitioners of concrete poetry; Haroldo de Campos and Augusto de Campos are among contemporary authors of concrete poetry.

Confessional Poetry: A form of poetry in which the poet reveals very personal, intimate, sometimes shocking information about himself or herself. Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath, Robert Lowell, and John Berryman wrote poetry in the confessional vein.

Conflict: The conflict in a work of fiction is the issue to be resolved in the story. It usually occurs between two characters, the protagonist and the antagonist, or between the protagonist and society or the protagonist and himself or herself. Conflict in Theodore Dreiser's novel *Sister Carrie* comes as a result of urban society, while Jack London's short story "To Build a Fire" concerns the protagonist's battle against the cold and himself.

Connotation: The impression that a word gives beyond its defined meaning. Connotations may be universally understood or may be significant only to a certain group. Both "horse" and "steed" denote the same animal, but "steed" has a different connotation, deriving from the chivalrous or romantic narratives in which the word was once often used.

Consonance: Consonance occurs in poetry when words appearing at the ends of two or more verses have similar final consonant sounds but have final vowel sounds that differ, as with "stuff" and "off." Consonance is found in "The curfew tolls the knells of parting day" from Thomas Grey's "An Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard." Also known as Half Rhyme or Slant Rhyme.

Convention: Any widely accepted literary device, style, or form. A soliloquy, in which a character reveals to the audience his or her private thoughts, is an example of a dramatic convention.

Corrido: A Mexican ballad. Examples of *corridos* include "Muerte del afamado Bilito," "La voz de mi conciencia," "Lucio Perez," "La juida," and "Los presos."

Couplet: Two lines of poetry with the same rhyme and meter, often expressing a complete and self-contained thought. The following couplet is from Alexander Pope's "Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady": 'Tis Use alone that sanctifies Expense, And Splendour borrows all her rays from Sense.

Crime Literature: A genre of fiction that focuses on the environment, behavior, and psychology of criminals. Prominent writers of crime novels include John Wainwright, Colin Watson, Nicolas Freeling, Ruth Rendell, Jessica Mann, Mickey Spillane, and Patricia Highsmith.

Criticism: The systematic study and evaluation of literary works, usually based on a specific method or set of principles. An important part of literary studies since ancient times, the practice of criticism has given rise to numerous theories, methods, and "schools," sometimes producing conflicting, even contradictory, interpretations of literature in general as well as of individual works. Even such basic issues as what constitutes a poem or a novel have been the subject of much criticism over the centuries. Seminal texts of literary criticism include Plato's *Republic,* Aristotle's *Poetics,* Sir Philip Sidney's *The Defence of Poesie,* John Dryden's *Of Dramatic Poesie,* and William Wordsworth's "Preface" to the second edition of his *Lyrical Ballads.* Contemporary schools of criticism include deconstruction, feminist, psychoanalytic, post-structuralist, new historicist, postcolonialist, and reader-response.

D

Dactyl: See *Foot*

Dadaism: A protest movement in art and literature founded by Tristan Tzara in 1916. Followers of the movement expressed their outrage at the destruction brought about by World War I by revolting against numerous forms of social convention. The Dadaists presented works marked by calculated madness and flamboyant nonsense. They stressed total freedom of expression, commonly through primitive displays of emotion and illogical, often senseless, poetry. The movement ended shortly after the war, when it was replaced by surrealism. Proponents of Dadaism include Andre Breton, Louis Aragon, Philippe Soupault, and Paul Eluard.

Decadent: See *Decadents*

Decadents: The followers of a nineteenth-century literary movement that had its beginnings in French aestheticism. Decadent literature displays a fascination with perverse and morbid states; a search for novelty and sensation—the "new thrill"; a preoc-

cupation with mysticism; and a belief in the senselessness of human existence. The movement is closely associated with the doctrine Art for Art's Sake. The term "decadence" is sometimes used to denote a decline in the quality of art or literature following a period of greatness. Major French decadents are Charles Baudelaire and Arthur Rimbaud. English decadents include Oscar Wilde, Ernest Dowson, and Frank Harris.

Deconstruction: A method of literary criticism developed by Jacques Derrida and characterized by multiple conflicting interpretations of a given work. Deconstructionists consider the impact of the language of a work and suggest that the true meaning of the work is not necessarily the meaning that the author intended. Jacques Derrida's *De la grammatologie* is the seminal text on deconstructive strategies; among American practitioners of this method of criticism are Paul de Man and J. Hillis Miller.

Deduction: The process of reaching a conclusion through reasoning from general premises to a specific premise. An example of deduction is present in the following syllogism: Premise: All mammals are animals. Premise: All whales are mammals. Conclusion: Therefore, all whales are animals.

Denotation: The definition of a word, apart from the impressions or feelings it creates in the reader. The word "apartheid" denotes a political and economic policy of segregation by race, but its connotations—oppression, slavery, inequality—are numerous.

Denouement: A French word meaning "the unknotting." In literary criticism, it denotes the resolution of conflict in fiction or drama. The *denouement* follows the climax and provides an outcome to the primary plot situation as well as an explanation of secondary plot complications. The *denouement* often involves a character's recognition of his or her state of mind or moral condition. A well-known example of *denouement* is the last scene of the play *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare, in which couples are married, an evildoer repents, the identities of two disguised characters are revealed, and a ruler is restored to power. Also known as Falling Action.

Description: Descriptive writing is intended to allow a reader to picture the scene or setting in which the action of a story takes place. The form this description takes often evokes an intended emotional response—a dark, spooky graveyard will evoke fear, and a peaceful, sunny meadow will evoke calmness. An example of a descriptive story is Edgar Allan Poe's *Landor's Cottage,* which offers a detailed depiction of a New York country estate.

Detective Story: A narrative about the solution of a mystery or the identification of a criminal. The conventions of the detective story include the detective's scrupulous use of logic in solving the mystery; incompetent or ineffectual police; a suspect who appears guilty at first but is later proved innocent; and the detective's friend or confidant—often the narrator—whose slowness in interpreting clues emphasizes by contrast the detective's brilliance. Edgar Allan Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue" is commonly regarded as the earliest example of this type of story. With this work, Poe established many of the conventions of the detective story genre, which are still in practice. Other practitioners of this vast and extremely popular genre include Arthur Conan Doyle, Dashiell Hammett, and Agatha Christie.

Deus ex machina: A Latin term meaning "god out of a machine." In Greek drama, a god was often lowered onto the stage by a mechanism of some kind to rescue the hero or untangle the plot. By extension, the term refers to any artificial device or coincidence used to bring about a convenient and simple solution to a plot. This is a common device in melodramas and includes such fortunate circumstances as the sudden receipt of a legacy to save the family farm or a last-minute stay of execution. The *deus ex machina* invariably rewards the virtuous and punishes evildoers. Examples of *deus ex machina* include King Louis XIV in Jean-Baptiste Moliere's *Tartuffe* and Queen Victoria in *The Pirates of Penzance* by William Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan. Bertolt Brecht parodies the abuse of such devices in the conclusion of his *Threepenny Opera.*

Dialogue: In its widest sense, dialogue is simply conversation between people in a literary work; in its most restricted sense, it refers specifically to the speech of characters in a drama. As a specific literary genre, a "dialogue" is a composition in which characters debate an issue or idea. The Greek philosopher Plato frequently expounded his theories in the form of dialogues.

Diary: A personal written record of daily events and thoughts. Asprivate documents, diaries are supposedly not intended for an audience, but some, such as those of Samuel Pepys and Anais Nin, are known for their high literary quality. *The Diary of Anne Frank* is an example of a well-known diary discovered and published after the author's death. Many writers have used the diary

form as a deliberate literary device, as in Nikolai Gogol's story "Diary of a Madman." Compare with Autobiography.

Diction: The selection and arrangement of words in a literary work. Either or both may vary depending on the desired effect. There are four general types of diction: "formal," used in scholarly or lofty writing; "informal," used in relaxed but educated conversation; "colloquial," used in everyday speech; and "slang," containing newly coined words and other terms not accepted in formal usage.

Didactic: A term used to describe works of literature that aim to teach some moral, religious, political, or practical lesson. Although didactic elements are often found in artistically pleasing works, the term "didactic" usually refers to literature in which the message is more important than the form. The term may also be used to criticize a work that the critic finds "overly didactic," that is, heavy-handed in its delivery of a lesson. Examples of didactic literature include John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress,* Alexander Pope's *Essay on Criticism,* Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile,* and Elizabeth Inchbald's *Simple Story.*

Dimeter: See *Meter*

Dionysian: See *Apollonian and Dionysian*

Discordia concours: A Latin phrase meaning "discord in harmony." The term was coined by the eighteenth-century English writer Samuel Johnson to describe "a combination of dissimilar images or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike." Johnson created the expression by reversing a phrase by the Latin poet Horace. The metaphysical poetry of John Donne, Richard Crashaw, Abraham Cowley, George Herbert, and Edward Taylor among others, contains many examples of *discordia concours.* In Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," the poet compares the union of himself with his lover to a draftsman's compass: If they be two, they are two so, As stiff twin compasses are two: Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show To move, but doth, if the other do; And though it in the center sit, Yet when the other far doth roam, It leans, and hearkens after it, And grows erect, as that comes home.

Dissonance: A combination of harsh or jarring sounds, especially in poetry. Although such combinations may be accidental, poets sometimes intentionally make them to achieve particular effects. Dissonance is also sometimes used to refer to close but not identical rhymes. When this is the case, the word functions as a synonym for consonance. Robert Browning, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and many other poets have made deliberate use of dissonance.

Doppelganger: A literary technique by which a character is duplicated (usually in the form of an alter ego, though sometimes as a ghostly counterpart) or divided into two distinct, usually opposite personalities. The use of this character device is widespread in nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature, and indicates a growing awareness among authors that the "self" is really a composite of many "selves." A well-known story containing a *doppelganger* character is Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* which dramatizes an internal struggle between good and evil. Also known as The Double.

Double Entendre: A corruption of a French phrase meaning "double meaning." The term is used to indicate a word or phrase that is deliberately ambiguous, especially when one of the meanings is risque or improper. An example of a *double entendre* is the Elizabethan usage of the verb "die," which refers both to death and to orgasm.

Double, The: See *Doppelganger*

Draft: Any preliminary version of a written work. An author may write dozens of drafts which are revised to form the final work, or he or she may write only one, with few or no revisions. Dorothy Parker's observation that "I can't write five words but that I change seven" humorously indicates the purpose of the draft.

Drama: In its widest sense, a drama is any work designed to be presented by actors on a stage. Similarly, "drama" denotes a broad literary genre that includes a variety of forms, from pageant and spectacle to tragedy and comedy, as well as countless types and subtypes. More commonly in modern usage, however, a drama is a work that treats serious subjects and themes but does not aim at the grandeur of tragedy. This use of the term originated with the eighteenth-century French writer Denis Diderot, who used the word *drame* to designate his plays about middle-class life; thus "drama" typically features characters of a less exalted stature than those of tragedy. Examples of classical dramas include Menander's comedy *Dyscolus* and Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus Rex.* Contemporary dramas include Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh,* Lillian Hellman's *Little Foxes,* and August Wilson's *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom.*

Dramatic Irony: Occurs when the audience of a play or the reader of a work of literature knows something that a character in the work itself does not know. The irony is in the contrast between the intended meaning of the statements or actions of a character and the additional information understood by the audience. A celebrated example of dramatic irony is in Act V of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet,* where two young lovers meet their end as a result of a tragic misunderstanding. Here, the audience has full knowledge that Juliet's apparent "death" is merely temporary; she will regain her senses when the mysterious "sleeping potion" she has taken wears off. But Romeo, mistaking Juliet's drug-induced trance for true death, kills himself in grief. Upon awakening, Juliet discovers Romeo's corpse and, in despair, slays herself.

Dramatic Monologue: See *Monologue*

Dramatic Poetry: Any lyric work that employs elements of drama such as dialogue, conflict, or characterization, but excluding works that are intended for stage presentation. A monologue is a form of dramatic poetry.

Dramatis Personae: The characters in a work of literature, particularly a drama. The list of characters printed before the main text of a play or in the program is the *dramatis personae.*

Dream Allegory: See *Dream Vision*

Dream Vision: A literary convention, chiefly of the Middle Ages. In a dream vision a story is presented as a literal dream of the narrator. This device was commonly used to teach moral and religious lessons. Important works of this type are *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri, *Piers Plowman* by William Langland, and *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan. Also known as Dream Allegory.

Dystopia: An imaginary place in a work of fiction where the characters lead dehumanized, fearful lives. Jack London's *The Iron Heel,* Yevgeny Zamyatin's *My,* Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World,* George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four,* and Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* portray versions of dystopia.

E

Eclogue: In classical literature, a poem featuring rural themes and structured as a dialogue among shepherds. Eclogues often took specific poetic forms, such as elegies or love poems. Some were written as the soliloquy of a shepherd. In later centuries, "eclogue" came to refer to any poem that was in the pastoral tradition or that had a dialogue or monologue structure. A classical example of an eclogue is Virgil's *Eclogues,* also known as *Bucolics.* Giovanni Boccaccio, Edmund Spenser, Andrew Marvell, Jonathan Swift, and Louis MacNeice also wrote eclogues.

Edwardian: Describes cultural conventions identified with the period of the reign of Edward VII of England (1901-1910). Writers of the Edwardian Age typically displayed a strong reaction against the propriety and conservatism of the Victorian Age. Their work often exhibits distrust of authority in religion, politics, and art and expresses strong doubts about the soundness of conventional values. Writers of this era include George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, and Joseph Conrad.

Edwardian Age: See *Edwardian*

Electra Complex: A daughter's amorous obsession with her father. The term Electra complex comes from the plays of Euripides and Sophocles entitled *Electra,* in which the character Electra drives her brother Orestes to kill their mother and her lover in revenge for the murder of their father.

Elegy: A lyric poem that laments the death of a person or the eventual death of all people. In a conventional elegy, set in a classical world, the poet and subject are spoken of as shepherds. In modern criticism, the word elegy is often used to refer to a poem that is melancholy or mournfully contemplative. John Milton's "Lycidas" and Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Adonais" are two examples of this form.

Elizabethan Age: A period of great economic growth, religious controversy, and nationalism closely associated with the reign of Elizabeth I of England (1558-1603). The Elizabethan Age is considered a part of the general renaissance—that is, the flowering of arts and literature—that took place in Europe during the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries. The era is considered the golden age of English literature. The most important dramas in English and a great deal of lyric poetry were produced during this period, and modern English criticism began around this time. The notable authors of the period—Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Francis Bacon, and John Donne—are among the best in all of English literature.

Elizabethan Drama: English comic and tragic plays produced during the Renaissance, or more

narrowly, those plays written during the last years of and few years after Queen Elizabeth's reign. William Shakespeare is considered an Elizabethan dramatist in the broader sense, although most of his work was produced during the reign of James I. Examples of Elizabethan comedies include John Lyly's *The Woman in the Moone,* Thomas Dekker's *The Roaring Girl, or, Moll Cut Purse,* and William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night.* Examples of Elizabethan tragedies include William Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra,* Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy,* and John Webster's *The Tragedy of the Duchess of Malfi.*

Empathy: A sense of shared experience, including emotional and physical feelings, with someone or something other than oneself. Empathy is often used to describe the response of a reader to a literary character. An example of an empathic passage is William Shakespeare's description in his narrative poem *Venus and Adonis* of: the snail, whose tender horns being hit, Shrinks backward in his shelly cave with pain. Readers of Gerard Manley Hopkins's *The Windhover* may experience some of the physical sensations evoked in the description of the movement of the falcon.

English Sonnet: See *Sonnet*

Enjambment: The running over of the sense and structure of a line of verse or a couplet into the following verse or couplet. Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" is structured as a series of enjambments, as in lines 11-12: "My vegetable love should grow/Vaster than empires and more slow."

Enlightenment, The: An eighteenth-century philosophical movement. It began in France but had a wide impact throughout Europe and America. Thinkers of the Enlightenment valued reason and believed that both the individual and society could achieve a state of perfection. Corresponding to this essentially humanist vision was a resistance to religious authority. Important figures of the Enlightenment were Denis Diderot and Voltaire in France, Edward Gibbon and David Hume in England, and Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson in the United States.

Epic: A long narrative poem about the adventures of a hero of great historic or legendary importance. The setting is vast and the action is often given cosmic significance through the intervention of supernatural forces such as gods, angels, or demons. Epics are typically written in a classical style of grand simplicity with elaborate metaphors and allusions that enhance the symbolic importance of a hero's adventures. Some well-known epics are Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* Virgil's *Aeneid,* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost.*

Epic Simile: See *Homeric Simile*

Epic Theater: A theory of theatrical presentation developed by twentieth-century German playwright Bertolt Brecht. Brecht created a type of drama that the audience could view with complete detachment. He used what he termed "alienation effects" to create an emotional distance between the audience and the action on stage. Among these effects are: short, self-contained scenes that keep the play from building to a cathartic climax; songs that comment on the action; and techniques of acting that prevent the actor from developing an emotional identity with his role. Besides the plays of Bertolt Brecht, other plays that utilize epic theater conventions include those of Georg Buchner, Frank Wedekind, Erwin Piscator, and Leopold Jessner.

Epigram: A saying that makes the speaker's point quickly and concisely. Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote an epigram that neatly sums up the form: What is an Epigram? A Dwarfish whole, Its body brevity, and wit its soul.

Epilogue: A concluding statement or section of a literary work. In dramas, particularly those of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the epilogue is a closing speech, often in verse, delivered by an actor at the end of a play and spoken directly to the audience. A famous epilogue is Puck's speech at the end of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

Epiphany: A sudden revelation of truth inspired by a seemingly trivial incident. The term was widely used by James Joyce in his critical writings, and the stories in Joyce's *Dubliners* are commonly called "epiphanies."

Episode: An incident that forms part of a story and is significantly related to it. Episodes may be either self-contained narratives or events that depend on a larger context for their sense and importance. Examples of episodes include the founding of Wilmington, Delaware in Charles Reade's *The Disinherited Heir* and the individual events comprising the picaresque novels and medieval romances.

Episodic Plot: See *Plot*

Epistolary Novel: A novel in the form of letters. The form was particularly popular in the eighteenth century. Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* is considered the first fully developed English epistolary novel.

Epitaph: An inscription on a tomb or tombstone, or a verse written on the occasion of a person's death. Epitaphs may be serious or humorous. Dorothy Parker's epitaph reads, "I told you I was sick."

Epithalamion: A song or poem written to honor and commemorate a marriage ceremony. Famous examples include Edmund Spenser's "Epithalamion" and e. e. cummings's "Epithalamion." Also spelled Epithalamium.

Epithalamium: See *Epithalamion*

Epithet: A word or phrase, often disparaging or abusive, that expresses a character trait of someone or something. "The Napoleon of crime" is an epithet applied to Professor Moriarty, arch-rival of Sherlock Holmes in Arthur Conan Doyle's series of detective stories.

Erziehungsroman: See *Bildungsroman*

Essay: A prose composition with a focused subject of discussion. The term was coined by Michel de Montaigne to describe his 1580 collection of brief, informal reflections on himself and on various topics relating to human nature. An essay can also be a long, systematic discourse.

An example of a longer essay is John Locke's *An Essay concerning Human Understanding.*

Exempla: See *Exemplum*

Exemplum: A tale with a moral message. This form of literary sermonizing flourished during the Middle Ages, when *exempla* appeared in collections known as "example-books." The works of Geoffrey Chaucer are full of *exempla.*

Existentialism: A predominantly twentieth-century philosophy concerned with the nature and perception of human existence. There are two major strains of existentialist thought: atheistic and Christian. Followers of atheistic existentialism believe that the individual is alone in a godless universe and that the basic human condition is one of suffering and loneliness. Nevertheless, because there are no fixed values, individuals can create their own characters—indeed, they can shape themselves—through the exercise of free will. The atheistic strain culminates in and is popularly associated with the works of Jean-Paul Sartre. The Christian existentialists, on the other hand, believe that only in God may people find freedom from life's anguish. The two strains hold certain beliefs in common: that existence cannot be fully understood or described through empirical effort; that anguish is a universal element of life; that individuals must bear responsibility for their actions; and that there is no common standard of behavior or perception for religious and ethical matters. Existentialist thought figures prominently in the works of such authors as Eugene Ionesco, Franz Kafka, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Simone de Beauvoir, Samuel Beckett, and Albert Camus.

Expatriates: See *Expatriatism*

Expatriatism: The practice of leaving one's country to live for an extended period in another country. Literary expatriates include English poets Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats in Italy, Polish novelist Joseph Conrad in England, American writers Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Gertrude Stein, and Ernest Hemingway in France, and Trinidadian author Neil Bissondath in Canada.

Exposition: Writing intended to explain the nature of an idea, thing, or theme. Expository writing is often combined with description, narration, or argument. In dramatic writing, the exposition is the introductory material which presents the characters, setting, and tone of the play. An example of dramatic exposition occurs in many nineteenth-century drawing-room comedies in which the butler and the maid open the play with relevant talk about their master and mistress; in composition, exposition relays factual information, as in encyclopedia entries.

Expressionism: An indistinct literary term, originally used to describe an early twentieth-century school of German painting. The term applies to almost any mode of unconventional, highly subjective writing that distorts reality in some way. Advocates of Expressionism include dramatists George Kaiser, Ernst Toller, Luigi Pirandello, Federico Garcia Lorca, Eugene O'Neill, and Elmer Rice; poets George Heym, Ernst Stadler, August Stramm, Gottfried Benn, and Georg Trakl; and novelists Franz Kafka and James Joyce.

Extended Monologue: See *Monologue*

F

Fable: A prose or verse narrative intended to convey a moral. Animals or inanimate objects with human characteristics often serve as characters in fables. A famous fable is Aesop's "The Tortoise and the Hare."

Fairy Tales: Short narratives featuring mythical beings such as fairies, elves, and sprites. These tales

originally belonged to the folklore of a particular nation or region, such as those collected in Germany by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. Two other celebrated writers of fairy tales are Hans Christian Andersen and Rudyard Kipling.

Falling Action: See *Denouement*

Fantasy: A literary form related to mythology and folklore. Fantasy literature is typically set in nonexistent realms and features supernatural beings. Notable examples of fantasy literature are *The Lord of the Rings* by J. R. R. Tolkien and the Gormenghast trilogy by Mervyn Peake.

Farce: A type of comedy characterized by broad humor, outlandish incidents, and often vulgar subject matter. Much of the "comedy" in film and television could more accurately be described as farce.

Feet: See *Foot*

Feminine Rhyme: See *Rhyme*

Femme fatale: A French phrase with the literal translation "fatal woman." A *femme fatale* is a sensuous, alluring woman who often leads men into danger or trouble. A classic example of the *femme fatale* is the nameless character in Billy Wilder's *The Seven Year Itch,* portrayed by Marilyn Monroe in the film adaptation.

Festschrift: A collection of essays written in honor of a distinguished scholar and presented to him or her to mark some special occasion. Examples of *festschriften* are *Worlds of Jewish Prayer: A Festschrift in Honour of Rabbi Zalman M. Schachter-Shalomi* and *The Organist as Scholar: Essays in Memory of Russell Saunders.*

Fiction: Any story that is the product of imagination rather than a documentation of fact. characters and events in such narratives may be based in real life but their ultimate form and configuration is a creation of the author. Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales,* Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy,* and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* are examples of fiction.

Figurative Language: A technique in writing in which the author temporarily interrupts the order, construction, or meaning of the writing for a particular effect. This interruption takes the form of one or more figures of speech such as hyperbole, irony, or simile. Figurative language is the opposite of literal language, in which every word is truthful, accurate, and free of exaggeration or embellishment. Examples of figurative language are tropes such as metaphor and rhetorical figures such as apostrophe.

Figures of Speech: Writing that differs from customary conventions for construction, meaning, order, or significance for the purpose of a special meaning or effect. There are two major types of figures of speech: rhetorical figures, which do not make changes in the meaning of the words, and tropes, which do. Types of figures of speech include simile, hyperbole, alliteration, and pun, among many others.

Fin de siecle: A French term meaning "end of the century." The term is used to denote the last decade of the nineteenth century, a transition period when writers and other artists abandoned old conventions and looked for new techniques and objectives. Two writers commonly associated with the *fin de siecle* mindset are Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw.

First Person: See *Point of View*

Flashback: A device used in literature to present action that occurred before the beginning of the story. Flashbacks are often introduced as the dreams or recollections of one or more characters. Flashback techniques are often used in films, where they are typically set off by a gradual changing of one picture to another.

Foil: A character in a work of literature whose physical or psychological qualities contrast strongly with, and therefore highlight, the corresponding qualities of another character. In his Sherlock Holmes stories, Arthur Conan Doyle portrayed Dr. Watson as a man of normal habits and intelligence, making him a foil for the eccentric and wonderfully perceptive Sherlock Holmes.

Folk Ballad: See *Ballad*

Folklore: Traditions and myths preserved in a culture or group of people. Typically, these are passed on by word of mouth in various forms—such as legends, songs, and proverbs—or preserved in customs and ceremonies. This term was first used by W. J. Thoms in 1846. Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* is the record of English folklore; myths about the frontier and the Old South exemplify American folklore.

Folktale: A story originating in oral tradition. Folktales fall into a variety of categories, including legends, ghost stories, fairy tales, fables, and anecdotes based on historical figures and events. Examples of folktales include Giambattista Basile's *The Pentamerone,* which contains the tales of Puss in Boots, Rapunzel, Cinderella, and Beauty and the Beast, and Joel Chandler Harris's Uncle

Remus stories, which represent transplanted African folktales and American tales about the characters Mike Fink, Johnny Appleseed, Paul Bunyan, and Pecos Bill.

Foot: The smallest unit of rhythm in a line of poetry. In English-language poetry, a foot is typically one accented syllable combined with one or two unaccented syllables. There are many different types of feet. When the accent is on the second syllable of a two syllable word (con- *tort*), the foot is an "iamb"; the reverse accentual pattern (*tor* -ture) is a "trochee." Other feet that commonly occur in poetry in English are "anapest", two unaccented syllables followed by an accented syllable as in inter-*cept*, and "dactyl", an accented syllable followed by two unaccented syllables as in *su*-i- cide.

Foreshadowing: A device used in literature to create expectation or to set up an explanation of later developments. In Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations,* the graveyard encounter at the beginning of the novel between Pip and the escaped convict Magwitch foreshadows the baleful atmosphere and events that comprise much of the narrative.

Form: The pattern or construction of a work which identifies its genre and distinguishes it from other genres. Examples of forms include the different genres, such as the lyric form or the short story form, and various patterns for poetry, such as the verse form or the stanza form.

Formalism: In literary criticism, the belief that literature should follow prescribed rules of construction, such as those that govern the sonnet form. Examples of formalism are found in the work of the New Critics and structuralists.

Fourteener Meter: See *Meter*

Free Verse: Poetry that lacks regular metrical and rhyme patterns but that tries to capture the cadences of everyday speech. The form allows a poet to exploit a variety of rhythmical effects within a single poem. Free-verse techniques have been widely used in the twentieth century by such writers as Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Carl Sandburg, and William Carlos Williams. Also known as *Vers libre.*

Futurism: A flamboyant literary and artistic movement that developed in France, Italy, and Russia from 1908 through the 1920s. Futurist theater and poetry abandoned traditional literary forms. In their place, followers of the movement attempted to achieve total freedom of expression through bizarre imagery and deformed or newly invented words. The Futurists were self-consciously modern artists who attempted to incorporate the appearances and sounds of modern life into their work. Futurist writers include Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Wyndham Lewis, Guillaume Apollinaire, Velimir Khlebnikov, and Vladimir Mayakovsky.

G

Genre: A category of literary work. In critical theory, genre may refer to both the content of a given work—tragedy, comedy, pastoral—and to its form, such as poetry, novel, or drama. This term also refers to types of popular literature, as in the genres of science fiction or the detective story.

Genteel Tradition: A term coined by critic George Santayana to describe the literary practice of certain late nineteenth-century American writers, especially New Englanders. Followers of the Genteel Tradition emphasized conventionality in social, religious, moral, and literary standards. Some of the best-known writers of the Genteel Tradition are R. H. Stoddard and Bayard Taylor.

Gilded Age: A period in American history during the 1870s characterized by political corruption and materialism. A number of important novels of social and political criticism were written during this time. Examples of Gilded Age literature include Henry Adams's *Democracy* and F. Marion Crawford's *An American Politician.*

Gothic: See *Gothicism*

Gothic Literature: See *Gothicism*

Gothic Novel: See *Gothicism*

Gothicism: In literary criticism, works characterized by a taste for the medieval or morbidly attractive. A gothic novel prominently features elements of horror, the supernatural, gloom, and violence: clanking chains, terror, charnel houses, ghosts, medieval castles, and mysteriously slamming doors. The term "gothic novel" is also applied to novels that lack elements of the traditional Gothic setting but that create a similar atmosphere of terror or dread. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is perhaps the best-known English work of this kind.

Great Chain of Being: The belief that all things and creatures in nature are organized in a hierarchy from inanimate objects at the bottom to God at the top. This system of belief was popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A summary of the concept of the great chain of being can be found in the first epistle of Alexander Pope's *An*

Essay on Man, and more recently in Arthur O. Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea.*

Greek Drama: Greek drama consists primarily of the surviving texts of four major playwrights from the fifth century B.C.. Three of these—Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides—were tragedians. The early works focused on the good and evil that existed simultaneously in the world as well as the other contradictory forces of human nature and the outside world. All three tragic playwrights drew their material from Greek myths and legends; they each brought new developments to the art form. Examples of Greek tragedies include the *Oresteia* trilogy of Aeschylus, *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles, and the *Medea* of Euripides. Comedy most likely also developed out of the same religious rituals as tragedy. Aristophanes was the greatest writer of comedies in the early period known as Old Comedy, using biting satire in plays such as *Birds* and *Lysistrata* to ridicule prominent Athenian figures and current events. Later comedy relied less on satire and mythology and more on human relations among the Greek common people.

Grotesque: In literary criticism, the subject matter of a work or a style of expression characterized by exaggeration, deformity, freakishness, and disorder. The grotesque often includes an element of comic absurdity. Early examples of literary grotesque include Francois Rabelais's *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua* and Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller,* while more recent examples can be found in the works of Edgar Allan Poe, Evelyn Waugh, Eudora Welty, Flannery O'Connor, Eugene Ionesco, Gunter Grass, Thomas Mann, Mervyn Peake, and Joseph Heller, among many others.

H

Haiku: The shortest form of Japanese poetry, constructed in three lines of five, seven, and five syllables respectively. The message of a *haiku* poem usually centers on some aspect of spirituality and provokes an emotional response in the reader. Early masters of *haiku* include Basho, Buson, Kobayashi Issa, and Masaoka Shiki. English writers of *haiku* include the Imagists, notably Ezra Pound, H. D., Amy Lowell, Carl Sandburg, and William Carlos Williams. Also known as *Hokku.*

Half Rhyme: See *Consonance*

Hamartia: In tragedy, the event or act that leads to the hero's or heroine's downfall. This term is often incorrectly used as a synonym for tragic flaw. In Richard Wright's *Native Son,* the act that seals Bigger Thomas's fate is his first impulsive murder.

Harlem Renaissance: The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s is generally considered the first significant movement of black writers and artists in the United States. During this period, new and established black writers published more fiction and poetry than ever before, the first influential black literary journals were established, and black authors and artists received their first widespread recognition and serious critical appraisal. Among the major writers associated with this period are Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Arna Bontemps, Nella Larsen, and Zora Neale Hurston. Works representative of the Harlem Renaissance include Arna Bontemps's poems "The Return" and "Golgotha Is a Mountain," Claude McKay's novel *Home to Harlem,* Nella Larsen's novel *Passing,* Langston Hughes's poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," and the journals *Crisis* and *Opportunity,* both founded during this period. Also known as Negro Renaissance and New Negro Movement.

Harlequin: A stock character of the *commedia dell'arte* who occasionally interrupted the action with silly antics. Harlequin first appeared on the English stage in John Day's *The Travailes of the Three English Brothers.* The San Francisco Mime Troupe is one of the few modern groups to adapt Harlequin to the needs of contemporary satire.

Hellenism: Imitation of ancient Greek thought or styles. Also, an approach to life that focuses on the growth and development of the intellect. "Hellenism" is sometimes used to refer to the belief that reason can be applied to examine all human experience. A cogent discussion of Hellenism can be found in Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy.*

Heptameter: See *Meter*

Hero/Heroine: The principal sympathetic character (male or female) in a literary work. Heroes and heroines typically exhibit admirable traits: idealism, courage, and integrity, for example. Famous heroes and heroines include Pip in Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations,* the anonymous narrator in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man,* and Sethe in Toni Morrison's *Beloved.*

Heroic Couplet: A rhyming couplet written in iambic pentameter (a verse with five iambic feet). The following lines by Alexander Pope are an example: "Truth guards the Poet, sanctifies the line,/ And makes Immortal, Verse as mean as mine."

Heroic Line: The meter and length of a line of verse in epic or heroic poetry. This varies by language and time period. For example, in English poetry, the heroic line is iambic pentameter (a verse with five iambic feet); in French, the alexandrine (a verse with six iambic feet); in classical literature, dactylic hexameter (a verse with six dactylic feet).

Heroine: See *Hero/Heroine*

Hexameter: See *Meter*

Historical Criticism: The study of a work based on its impact on the world of the time period in which it was written. Examples of postmodern historical criticism can be found in the work of Michel Foucault, Hayden White, Stephen Greenblatt, and Jonathan Goldberg.

Hokku: See *Haiku*

Holocaust: See *Holocaust Literature*

Holocaust Literature: Literature influenced by or written about the Holocaust of World War II. Such literature includes true stories of survival in concentration camps, escape, and life after the war, as well as fictional works and poetry. Representative works of Holocaust literature include Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet,* Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl,* Jerzy Kosinski's *The Painted Bird,* Arthur Miller's *Incident at Vichy,* Czeslaw Milosz's *Collected Poems,* William Styron's *Sophie's Choice,* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus.*

Homeric Simile: An elaborate, detailed comparison written as a simile many lines in length. An example of an epic simile from John Milton's *Paradise Lost* follows: Angel Forms, who lay entranced Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks In Vallombrosa, where the Etrurian shades High over-arched embower; or scattered sedge Afloat, when with fierce winds Orion armed Hath vexed the Red-Sea coast, whose waves o'erthrew Busiris and his Memphian chivalry, While with perfidious hatred they pursued The sojourners of Goshen, who beheld From the safe shore their floating carcasses And broken chariot-wheels. Also known as Epic Simile.

Horatian Satire: See *Satire*

Humanism: A philosophy that places faith in the dignity of humankind and rejects the medieval perception of the individual as a weak, fallen creature. "Humanists" typically believe in the perfectibility of human nature and view reason and education as the means to that end. Humanist thought is represented in the works of Marsilio Ficino, Ludovico Castelvetro, Edmund Spenser, John Milton, Dean John Colet, Desiderius Erasmus, John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Matthew Arnold, and Irving Babbitt.

Humors: Mentions of the humors refer to the ancient Greek theory that a person's health and personality were determined by the balance of four basic fluids in the body: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. A dominance of any fluid would cause extremes in behavior. An excess of blood created a sanguine person who was joyful, aggressive, and passionate; a phlegmatic person was shy, fearful, and sluggish; too much yellow bile led to a choleric temperament characterized by impatience, anger, bitterness, and stubbornness; and excessive black bile created melancholy, a state of laziness, gluttony, and lack of motivation. Literary treatment of the humors is exemplified by several characters in Ben Jonson's plays *Every Man in His Humour* and *Every Man out of His Humour.* Also spelled Humours.

Humours: See *Humors*

Hyperbole: In literary criticism, deliberate exaggeration used to achieve an effect. In William Shakespeare's *Macbeth,* Lady Macbeth hyperbolizes when she says, "All the perfumes of Arabia could not sweeten this little hand."

I

Iamb: See *Foot*

Idiom: A word construction or verbal expression closely associated with a given language. For example, in colloquial English the construction "how come" can be used instead of "why" to introduce a question. Similarly, "a piece of cake" is sometimes used to describe a task that is easily done.

Image: A concrete representation of an object or sensory experience. Typically, such a representation helps evoke the feelings associated with the object or experience itself. Images are either "literal" or "figurative." Literal images are especially concrete and involve little or no extension of the obvious meaning of the words used to express them. Figurative images do not follow the literal meaning of the words exactly. Images in literature are usually visual, but the term "image" can also refer to the representation of any sensory experience. In his poem "The Shepherd's Hour," Paul Verlaine presents the following image: "The Moon

is red through horizon's fog;/ In a dancing mist the hazy meadow sleeps." The first line is broadly literal, while the second line involves turns of meaning associated with dancing and sleeping.

Imagery: The array of images in a literary work. Also, figurative language. William Butler Yeats's "The Second Coming" offers a powerful image of encroaching anarchy: Turning and turning in the widening gyre The falcon cannot hear the falconer; Things fall apart....

Imagism: An English and American poetry movement that flourished between 1908 and 1917. The Imagists used precise, clearly presented images in their works. They also used common, everyday speech and aimed for conciseness, concrete imagery, and the creation of new rhythms. Participants in the Imagist movement included Ezra Pound, H. D. (Hilda Doolittle), and Amy Lowell, among others.

In medias res: A Latin term meaning "in the middle of things." It refers to the technique of beginning a story at its midpoint and then using various flashback devices to reveal previous action. This technique originated in such epics as Virgil's *Aeneid.*

Induction: The process of reaching a conclusion by reasoning from specific premises to form a general premise. Also, an introductory portion of a work of literature, especially a play. Geoffrey Chaucer's "Prologue" to the *Canterbury Tales,* Thomas Sackville's "Induction" to *The Mirror of Magistrates,* and the opening scene in William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* are examples of inductions to literary works.

Intentional Fallacy: The belief that judgments of a literary work based solely on an author's stated or implied intentions are false and misleading. Critics who believe in the concept of the intentional fallacy typically argue that the work itself is sufficient matter for interpretation, even though they may concede that an author's statement of purpose can be useful. Analysis of William Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* based on the observations about poetry he makes in his "Preface" to the second edition of that work is an example of the intentional fallacy.

Interior Monologue: A narrative technique in which characters' thoughts are revealed in a way that appears to be uncontrolled by the author. The interior monologue typically aims to reveal the inner self of a character. It portrays emotional experiences as they occur at both a conscious and unconscious level. images are often used to represent sensations or emotions. One of the best-known interior monologues in English is the Molly Bloom section at the close of James Joyce's *Ulysses.* The interior monologue is also common in the works of Virginia Woolf.

Internal Rhyme: Rhyme that occurs within a single line of verse. An example is in the opening line of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven": "Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary." Here, "dreary" and "weary" make an internal rhyme.

Irish Literary Renaissance: A late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century movement in Irish literature. Members of the movement aimed to reduce the influence of British culture in Ireland and create an Irish national literature. William Butler Yeats, George Moore, and Sean O'Casey are three of the best-known figures of the movement.

Irony: In literary criticism, the effect of language in which the intended meaning is the opposite of what is stated. The title of Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" is ironic because what Swift proposes in this essay is cannibalism—hardly "modest."

Italian Sonnet: See *Sonnet*

J

Jacobean Age: The period of the reign of James I of England (1603-1625). The early literature of this period reflected the worldview of the Elizabethan Age, but a darker, more cynical attitude steadily grew in the art and literature of the Jacobean Age. This was an important time for English drama and poetry. Milestones include William Shakespeare's tragedies, tragi-comedies, and sonnets; Ben Jonson's various dramas; and John Donne's metaphysical poetry.

Jargon: Language that is used or understood only by a select group of people. Jargon may refer to terminology used in a certain profession, such as computer jargon, or it may refer to any nonsensical language that is not understood by most people. Literary examples of jargon are Francois Villon's *Ballades en jargon,* which is composed in the secret language of the *coquillards,* and Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange,* narrated in the fictional characters' language of "Nadsat."

Journalism: Writing intended for publication in a newspaper or magazine, or for broadcast on a radio or television program featuring news, sports, entertainment, or other timely material. The essays and reviews written by H. L. Mencken for the *Baltimore Morning Herald* and collected in his *Prejudices* are an example of journalism. See also New Journalism.

Juvenalian Satire: See *Satire*

K

Knickerbocker Group: A somewhat indistinct group of New York writers of the first half of the nineteenth century. Members of the group were linked only by location and a common theme: New York life. Two famous members of the Knickerbocker Group were Washington Irving and William Cullen Bryant. The group's name derives from Irving's *Knickerbocker's History of New York.*

Kunstlerroman: See *Bildungsroman*

L

Lais: See *Lay*

Lay: A song or simple narrative poem. The form originated in medieval France. Early French *lais* were often based on the Celtic legends and other tales sung by Breton minstrels—thus the name of the "Breton lay." In fourteenth-century England, the term "lay" was used to describe short narratives written in imitation of the Breton lays. The most notable of these is Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Minstrel's Tale."

Leitmotiv: See *Motif*

Literal Language: An author uses literal language when he or she writes without exaggerating or embellishing the subject matter and without any tools of figurative language. To say "He ran very quickly down the street" is to use literal language, whereas to say "He ran like a hare down the street" would be using figurative language.

Literary Ballad: See *Ballad*

Literature: Literature is broadly defined as any written or spoken material, but the term most often refers to creative works. Literature includes poetry, drama, fiction, and many kinds of nonfiction writing, as well as oral, dramatic, and broadcast compositions not necessarily preserved in a written format, such as films and television programs.

Lost Generation: A term first used by Gertrude Stein to describe the post-World War I generation of American writers: men and women haunted by a sense of betrayal and emptiness brought about by the destructiveness of the war. The term is commonly applied to Hart Crane, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and others.

Lyric Poetry: A poem expressing the subjective feelings and personal emotions of the poet. Such poetry is melodic, since it was originally accompanied by a lyre in recitals. Most Western poetry in the twentieth century may be classified as lyrical. Examples of lyric poetry include A. E. Housman's elegy "To an Athlete Dying Young," the odes of Pindar and Horace, Thomas Gray and William Collins, the sonnets of Sir Thomas Wyatt and Sir Philip Sidney, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Rainer Maria Rilke, and a host of other forms in the poetry of William Blake and Christina Rossetti, among many others.

M

Magic Realism: A form of literature that incorporates fantasy elements or supernatural occurrences into the narrative and accepts them as truth. Gabriel García Márquez and Laura Esquivel are two writers known for their works of magic realism.

Mannerism: Exaggerated, artificial adherence to a literary manner or style. Also, a popular style of the visual arts of late sixteenth-century Europe that was marked by elongation of the human form and by intentional spatial distortion. Literary works that are self-consciously high-toned and artistic are often said to be "mannered." Authors of such works include Henry James and Gertrude Stein.

Masculine Rhyme: See *Rhyme*

Masque: A lavish and elaborate form of entertainment, often performed in royal courts, that emphasizes song, dance, and costumery. The Renaissance form of the masque grew out of the spectacles of masked figures common in medieval England and Europe. The masque reached its peak of popularity and development in seventeenth-century England, during the reigns of James I and, especially, of Charles I. Ben Jonson, the most significant masque writer, also created the "antimasque," which incorporates elements of humor and the grotesque into the traditional masque and achieved greater dramatic quality. Masque-like interludes appear in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest.*

One of the best-known English masques is John Milton's *Comus.*

Measure: The foot, verse, or time sequence used in a literary work, especially a poem. Measure is often used somewhat incorrectly as a synonym for meter.

Medieval Mystics: Mysticism flourished in many parts of Europe, including Germany, Italy, the Low Countries, and England, from the middle of the thirteenth century to the middle of the fifteenth. The greatest figures in Germany were Meister Eckhart, a Dominican friar of formidable intellectual gifts, and his pupils, also Dominicans, Johannes Tauler and Henry Suso. In the Low Countries, John Ruusbroec developed a Trinitarian mysticism that owed much to Eckhart, despite his apparent disagreement with the earlier teacher. In Italy, the Franciscan scholar Bonaventure, St. Catherine of Siena, and St. Catherine of Genoa upheld the mystical flame, and there was also a mystical outpouring in England, associated with the names Julian of Norwich, Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, and the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing.* Many of the continental mystics were members of the Friends of God, a movement that worked for the spiritual revival of people at a time when the worldliness of the Church, the ravages of the Black Death, and the cracks in the traditional social order created a desire in many to develop a deeper spirituality. Although some of the mystics were hermits, like Rolle, others combined their mysticism with practical concerns such as preaching, administrative duties, and caring for the poor and the sick.

Melodrama: A play in which the typical plot is a conflict between characters who personify extreme good and evil. Melodramas usually end happily and emphasize sensationalism. Other literary forms that use the same techniques are often labeled "melodramatic." The term was formerly used to describe a combination of drama and music; as such, it was synonymous with "opera." Augustin Daly's *Under the Gaslight* and Dion Boucicault's *The Octoroon, The Colleen Bawn,* and *The Poor of New York* are examples of melodramas. The most popular media for twentieth-century melodramas are motion pictures and television.

Metaphor: A figure of speech that expresses an idea through the image of another object. Metaphors suggest the essence of the first object by identifying it with certain qualities of the second object. An example is "But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?/ It is the east, and Juliet is the sun" in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet.* Here, Juliet, the first object, is identified with qualities of the second object, the sun.

Metaphysical Conceit: See *Conceit*

Metaphysical Poetry: The body of poetry produced by a group of seventeenth-century English writers called the "Metaphysical Poets." The group includes John Donne and Andrew Marvell. The Metaphysical Poets made use of everyday speech, intellectual analysis, and unique imagery. They aimed to portray the ordinary conflicts and contradictions of life. Their poems often took the form of an argument, and many of them emphasize physical and religious love as well as the fleeting nature of life. Elaborate conceits are typical in metaphysical poetry. Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" is a well-known example of a metaphysical poem.

Metaphysical Poets: See *Metaphysical Poetry*

Meter: In literary criticism, the repetition of sound patterns that creates a rhythm in poetry. The patterns are based on the number of syllables and the presence and absence of accents. The unit of rhythm in a line is called a foot. Types of meter are classified according to the number of feet in a line. These are the standard English lines: Monometer, one foot; Dimeter, two feet; Trimeter, three feet; Tetrameter, four feet; Pentameter, five feet; Hexameter, six feet (also called the Alexandrine); Heptameter, seven feet (also called the "Fourteener" when the feet are iambic). The most common English meter is the iambic pentameter, in which each line contains ten syllables, or five iambic feet, which individually are composed of an unstressed syllable followed by an accented syllable. Both of the following lines from Alfred, Lord Tennyson's "Ulysses" are written in iambic pentameter: Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Mise en scene: The costumes, scenery, and other properties of a drama. Herbert Beerbohm Tree was renowned for the elaborate *mises en scene* of his lavish Shakespearean productions at His Majesty's Theatre between 1897 and 1915.

Modernism: Modern literary practices. Also, the principles of a literary school that lasted from roughly the beginning of the twentieth century until the end of World War II. Modernism is defined by its rejection of the literary conventions of the nineteenth century and by its opposition to conventional morality, taste, traditions, and economic values. Many writers are associated with the con-

cepts of Modernism, including Albert Camus, Marcel Proust, D. H. Lawrence, W. H. Auden, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, William Butler Yeats, Thomas Mann, Tennessee Williams, Eugene O'Neill, and James Joyce.

Monologue: A composition, written or oral, by a single individual. More specifically, a speech given by a single individual in a drama or other public entertainment. It has no set length, although it is usually several or more lines long. An example of an "extended monologue"—that is, a monologue of great length and seriousness—occurs in the one-act, one-character play *The Stronger* by August Strindberg.

Monometer: See *Meter*

Mood: The prevailing emotions of a work or of the author in his or her creation of the work. The mood of a work is not always what might be expected based on its subject matter. The poem "Dover Beach" by Matthew Arnold offers examples of two different moods originating from the same experience: watching the ocean at night. The mood of the first three lines—The sea is calm tonight The tide is full, the moon lies fair Upon the straights.... is in sharp contrast to the mood of the last three lines—And we are here as on a darkling plain Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Motif: A theme, character type, image, metaphor, or other verbal element that recurs throughout a single work of literature or occurs in a number of different works over a period of time. For example, the various manifestations of the color white in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* is a "specific" *motif,* while the trials of star-crossed lovers is a "conventional" *motif* from the literature of all periods. Also known as *Motiv* or *Leitmotiv.*

Motiv: See *Motif*

Muckrakers: An early twentieth-century group of American writers. Typically, their works exposed the wrongdoings of big business and government in the United States. Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* exemplifies the muckraking novel.

Muses: Nine Greek mythological goddesses, the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne (Memory). Each muse patronized a specific area of the liberal arts and sciences. Calliope presided over epic poetry, Clio over history, Erato over love poetry, Euterpe over music or lyric poetry, Melpomene over tragedy, Polyhymnia over hymns to the gods, Terpsichore over dance, Thalia over comedy, and Urania over astronomy. Poets and writers traditionally made appeals to the Muses for inspiration in their work. John Milton invokes the aid of a muse at the beginning of the first book of his Paradise Lost: Of Man's First disobedience, and the Fruit of the Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste Brought Death into the World, and all our woe, With loss of Eden, till one greater Man Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat, Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed, In the Beginning how the Heav'ns and Earth Rose out of Chaos....

Mystery: See *Suspense*

Myth: An anonymous tale emerging from the traditional beliefs of a culture or social unit. Myths use supernatural explanations for natural phenomena. They may also explain cosmic issues like creation and death. Collections of myths, known as mythologies, are common to all cultures and nations, but the best-known myths belong to the Norse, Roman, and Greek mythologies. A famous myth is the story of Arachne, an arrogant young girl who challenged a goddess, Athena, to a weaving contest; when the girl won, Athena was enraged and turned Arachne into a spider, thus explaining the existence of spiders.

N

Narration: The telling of a series of events, real or invented. A narration may be either a simple narrative, in which the events are recounted chronologically, or a narrative with a plot, in which the account is given in a style reflecting the author's artistic concept of the story. Narration is sometimes used as a synonym for "storyline." The recounting of scary stories around a campfire is a form of narration.

Narrative: A verse or prose accounting of an event or sequence of events, real or invented. The term is also used as an adjective in the sense "method of narration." For example, in literary criticism, the expression "narrative technique" usually refers to the way the author structures and presents his or her story. Narratives range from the shortest accounts of events, as in Julius Caesar's remark, "I came, I saw, I conquered," to the longest historical or biographical works, as in Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* as well as diaries, travelogues, novels, ballads, epics, short stories, and other fictional forms.

Narrative Poetry: A nondramatic poem in which the author tells a story. Such poems may be of any length or level of complexity. Epics such as *Beowulf* and ballads are forms of narrative poetry.

Narrator: The teller of a story. The narrator may be the author or a character in the story through whom the author speaks. Huckleberry Finn is the narrator of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.*

Naturalism: A literary movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The movement's major theorist, French novelist Emile Zola, envisioned a type of fiction that would examine human life with the objectivity of scientific inquiry. The Naturalists typically viewed human beings as either the products of "biological determinism," ruled by hereditary instincts and engaged in an endless struggle for survival, or as the products of "socioeconomic determinism," ruled by social and economic forces beyond their control. In their works, the Naturalists generally ignored the highest levels of society and focused on degradation: poverty, alcoholism, prostitution, insanity, and disease. Naturalism influenced authors throughout the world, including Henrik Ibsen and Thomas Hardy. In the United States, in particular, Naturalism had a profound impact. Among the authors who embraced its principles are Theodore Dreiser, Eugene O'Neill, Stephen Crane, Jack London, and Frank Norris.

Negritude: A literary movement based on the concept of a shared cultural bond on the part of black Africans, wherever they may be in the world. It traces its origins to the former French colonies of Africa and the Caribbean. Negritude poets, novelists, and essayists generally stress four points in their writings: One, black alienation from traditional African culture can lead to feelings of inferiority. Two, European colonialism and Western education should be resisted. Three, black Africans should seek to affirm and define their own identity. Four, African culture can and should be reclaimed. Many Negritude writers also claim that blacks can make unique contributions to the world, based on a heightened appreciation of nature, rhythm, and human emotions—aspects of life they say are not so highly valued in the materialistic and rationalistic West. Examples of Negritude literature include the poetry of both Senegalese Leopold Senghor in *Hosties noires* and Martiniquais Aime-Fernand Cesaire in *Return to My Native Land.*

Negro Renaissance: See *Harlem Renaissance*

Neoclassical Period: See *Neoclassicism*

Neoclassicism: In literary criticism, this term refers to the revival of the attitudes and styles of expression of classical literature. It is generally used to describe a period in European history beginning in the late seventeenth century and lasting until about 1800. In its purest form, Neoclassicism marked a return to order, proportion, restraint, logic, accuracy, and decorum. In England, where Neoclassicism perhaps was most popular, it reflected the influence of seventeenth-century French writers, especially dramatists. Neoclassical writers typically reacted against the intensity and enthusiasm of the Renaissance period. They wrote works that appealed to the intellect, using elevated language and classical literary forms such as satire and the ode. Neoclassical works were often governed by the classical goal of instruction. English neoclassicists included Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, Joseph Addison, Sir Richard Steele, John Gay, and Matthew Prior; French neoclassicists included Pierre Corneille and Jean-Baptiste Moliere. Also known as Age of Reason.

Neoclassicists: See *Neoclassicism*

New Criticism: A movement in literary criticism, dating from the late 1920s, that stressed close textual analysis in the interpretation of works of literature. The New Critics saw little merit in historical and biographical analysis. Rather, they aimed to examine the text alone, free from the question of how external events—biographical or otherwise—may have helped shape it. This predominantly American school was named "New Criticism" by one of its practitioners, John Crowe Ransom. Other important New Critics included Allen Tate, R. P. Blackmur, Robert Penn Warren, and Cleanth Brooks.

New Journalism: A type of writing in which the journalist presents factual information in a form usually used in fiction. New journalism emphasizes description, narration, and character development to bring readers closer to the human element of the story, and is often used in personality profiles and in-depth feature articles. It is not compatible with "straight" or "hard" newswriting, which is generally composed in a brief, fact-based style. Hunter S. Thompson, Gay Talese, Thomas Wolfe, Joan Didion, and John McPhee are well-known New Journalists. See also Journalism.

New Journalists: See *New Journalism*

New Negro Movement: See *Harlem Renaissance*

Noble Savage: The idea that primitive man is noble and good but becomes evil and corrupted as he becomes civilized. The concept of the noble savage originated in the Renaissance period but is more closely identified with such later writers as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Aphra Behn. First described in John Dryden's play *The Conquest of Granada,* the noble savage is portrayed by the various Native Americans in James Fenimore Cooper's "Leatherstocking Tales," by Queequeg, Daggoo, and Tashtego in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick,* and by John the Savage in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World.*

Novel: A long fictional narrative written in prose, which developed from the novella and other early forms of narrative. A novel is usually organized under a plot or theme with a focus on character development and action. The novel emerged as a fully evolved literary form in the mid-eighteenth century in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded.* Compare with Fiction, Narrative, and Novella.

Novella: An Italian term meaning "story." This term has been especially used to describe fourteenth-century Italian tales, but it also refers to modern short novels. The tales comprising Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* are examples of the novella. Modern novellas include Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilich,* Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground,* Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,* and Henry James's "The Aspern Papers." Compare with Novel. See also Tale.

Novel of Ideas: A novel in which the examination of intellectual issues and concepts takes precedence over characterization or a traditional storyline. Examples of novels of ideas include Aldous Huxley's *Crome Yellow, Point Counter Point,* and *After Many a Summer.*

Novel of Manners: A novel that examines the customs and mores of a cultural group. The novels of Jane Austen and Edith Wharton are widely considered novels of manners. Compare with Comedy of Manners.

O

Objective Correlative: An outward set of objects, a situation, or a chain of events corresponding to an inward experience and evoking this experience in the reader. The term frequently appears in modern criticism in discussions of authors' intended effects on the emotional responses of readers. This term was originally used by T. S. Eliot in his 1919 essay "Hamlet."

Objectivity: A quality in writing characterized by the absence of the author's opinion or feeling about the subject matter. Objectivity is an important factor in criticism. The novels of Henry James and, to a certain extent, the poems of John Larkin demonstrate objectivity, and it is central to John Keats's concept of "negative capability." Critical and journalistic writing usually are or attempt to be objective.

Occasional Verse: poetry written on the occasion of a significant historical or personal event. *Vers de societe* is sometimes called occasional verse although it is of a less serious nature. Famous examples of occasional verse include Andrew Marvell's "Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from England," Walt Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd"—written upon the death of Abraham Lincoln—and Edmund Spenser's commemoration of his wedding, "Epithalamion."

Octave: A poem or stanza composed of eight lines. The term octave most often represents the first eight lines of a Petrarchan sonnet. An example of an octave is taken from a translation of a Petrarchan sonnet by Sir Thomas Wyatt: The pillar perisht is whereto I leant, The strongest stay of mine unquiet mind; The like of it no man again can find, From East to West Still seeking though he went. To mind unhap! for hap away hath rent Of all my joy the very bark and rind; And I, alas, by chance am thus assigned Daily to mourn till death do it relent.

Ode: Name given to an extended lyric poem characterized by exalted emotion and dignified style. An ode usually concerns a single, serious theme. Most odes, but not all, are addressed to an object or individual. Odes are distinguished from other lyric poetic forms by their complex rhythmic and stanzaic patterns. An example of this form is John Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale."

Oedipus Complex: A son's amorous obsession with his mother. The phrase is derived from the story of the ancient Theban hero Oedipus, who unknowingly killed his father and married his mother. Literary occurrences of the Oedipus complex include Andre Gide's *Oedipe* and Jean Cocteau's *La Machine infernale,* as well as the most famous, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex.*

Omniscience: See *Point of View*

Onomatopoeia: The use of words whose sounds express or suggest their meaning. In its simplest sense, onomatopoeia may be represented by words that mimic the sounds they denote such as "hiss" or "meow." At a more subtle level, the pattern and rhythm of sounds and rhymes of a line or poem may be onomatopoeic. A celebrated example of onomatopoeia is the repetition of the word "bells" in Edgar Allan Poe's poem "The Bells."

Opera: A type of stage performance, usually a drama, in which the dialogue is sung. Classic examples of opera include Giuseppi Verdi's *La traviata,* Giacomo Puccini's *La Boheme,* and Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde.* Major twentieth-century contributors to the form include Richard Strauss and Alban Berg.

Operetta: A usually romantic comic opera. John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera,* Richard Sheridan's *The Duenna,* and numerous works by William Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan are examples of operettas.

Oral Tradition: See *Oral Transmission*

Oral Transmission: A process by which songs, ballads, folklore, and other material are transmitted by word of mouth. The tradition of oral transmission predates the written record systems of literate society. Oral transmission preserves material sometimes over generations, although often with variations. Memory plays a large part in the recitation and preservation of orally transmitted material. Breton lays, French *fabliaux,* national epics (including the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf,* the Spanish *El Cid,* and the Finnish *Kalevala*), Native American myths and legends, and African folktales told by plantation slaves are examples of orally transmitted literature.

Oration: Formal speaking intended to motivate the listeners to some action or feeling. Such public speaking was much more common before the development of timely printed communication such as newspapers. Famous examples of oration include Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech.

Ottava Rima: An eight-line stanza of poetry composed in iambic pentameter (a five-foot line in which each foot consists of an unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable), following the abababcc rhyme scheme. This form has been prominently used by such important English writers as Lord Byron, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and W. B. Yeats.

Oxymoron: A phrase combining two contradictory terms. Oxymorons may be intentional or unintentional. The following speech from William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* uses several oxymorons: Why, then, O brawling love! O loving hate! O anything, of nothing first create! O heavy lightness! serious vanity! Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming forms! Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health! This love feel I, that feel no love in this.

P

Pantheism: The idea that all things are both a manifestation or revelation of God and a part of God at the same time. Pantheism was a common attitude in the early societies of Egypt, India, and Greece—the term derives from the Greek *pan* meaning "all" and *theos* meaning "deity." It later became a significant part of the Christian faith. William Wordsworth and Ralph Waldo Emerson are among the many writers who have expressed the pantheistic attitude in their works.

Parable: A story intended to teach a moral lesson or answer an ethical question. In the West, the best examples of parables are those of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, notably "The Prodigal Son," but parables also are used in Sufism, rabbinic literature, Hasidism, and Zen Buddhism.

Paradox: A statement that appears illogical or contradictory at first, but may actually point to an underlying truth. "Less is more" is an example of a paradox. Literary examples include Francis Bacon's statement, "The most corrected copies are commonly the least correct," and "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" from George Orwell's *Animal Farm.*

Parallelism: A method of comparison of two ideas in which each is developed in the same grammatical structure. Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Civilization" contains this example of parallelism: Raphael paints wisdom; Handel sings it, Phidias carves it, Shakespeare writes it, Wren builds it, Columbus sails it, Luther preaches it, Washington arms it, Watt mechanizes it.

Parnassianism: A mid nineteenth-century movement in French literature. Followers of the movement stressed adherence to well-defined artistic forms as a reaction against the often chaotic expression of the artist's ego that dominated the work of the Romantics. The Parnassians also rejected the moral, ethical, and social themes exhibited in the

works of French Romantics such as Victor Hugo. The aesthetic doctrines of the Parnassians strongly influenced the later symbolist and decadent movements. Members of the Parnassian school include Leconte de Lisle, Sully Prudhomme, Albert Glatigny, Francois Coppee, and Theodore de Banville.

Parody: In literary criticism, this term refers to an imitation of a serious literary work or the signature style of a particular author in a ridiculous manner. A typical parody adopts the style of the original and applies it to an inappropriate subject for humorous effect. Parody is a form of satire and could be considered the literary equivalent of a caricature or cartoon. Henry Fielding's *Shamela* is a parody of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela.*

Pastoral: A term derived from the Latin word "pastor," meaning shepherd. A pastoral is a literary composition on a rural theme. The conventions of the pastoral were originated by the third-century Greek poet Theocritus, who wrote about the experiences, love affairs, and pastimes of Sicilian shepherds. In a pastoral, characters and language of a courtly nature are often placed in a simple setting. The term pastoral is also used to classify dramas, elegies, and lyrics that exhibit the use of country settings and shepherd characters. Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Adonais" and John Milton's "Lycidas" are two famous examples of pastorals.

Pastorela: The Spanish name for the shepherds play, a folk drama reenacted during the Christmas season. Examples of *pastorelas* include Gomez Manrique's *Representacion del nacimiento* and the dramas of Lucas Fernandez and Juan del Encina.

Pathetic Fallacy: A term coined by English critic John Ruskin to identify writing that falsely endows nonhuman things with human intentions and feelings, such as "angry clouds" and "sad trees." The pathetic fallacy is a required convention in the classical poetic form of the pastoral elegy, and it is used in the modern poetry of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and the Imagists. Also known as Poetic Fallacy.

Pelado: Literally the "skinned one" or shirtless one, he was the stock underdog, sharp-witted picaresque character of Mexican vaudeville and tent shows. The *pelado* is found in such works as Don Catarino's *Los effectos de la crisis* and *Regreso a mi tierra.*

Pen Name: See *Pseudonym*

Pentameter: See *Meter*

Persona: A Latin term meaning "mask." *Personae* are the characters in a fictional work of literature. The *persona* generally functions as a mask through which the author tells a story in a voice other than his or her own. A *persona* is usually either a character in a story who acts as a narrator or an "implied author," a voice created by the author to act as the narrator for himself or herself. *Personae* include the narrator of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Marlow in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness.*

Personae: See *Persona*

Personal Point of View: See *Point of View*

Personification: A figure of speech that gives human qualities to abstract ideas, animals, and inanimate objects. William Shakespeare used personification in *Romeo and Juliet* in the lines "Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,/ Who is already sick and pale with grief." Here, the moon is portrayed as being envious, sick, and pale with grief—all markedly human qualities. Also known as *Prosopopoeia.*

Petrarchan Sonnet: See *Sonnet*

Phenomenology: A method of literary criticism based on the belief that things have no existence outside of human consciousness or awareness. Proponents of this theory believe that art is a process that takes place in the mind of the observer as he or she contemplates an object rather than a quality of the object itself. Among phenomenological critics are Edmund Husserl, George Poulet, Marcel Raymond, and Roman Ingarden.

Picaresque Novel: Episodic fiction depicting the adventures of a roguish central character ("picaro" is Spanish for "rogue"). The picaresque hero is commonly a low-born but clever individual who wanders into and out of various affairs of love, danger, and farcical intrigue. These involvements may take place at all social levels and typically present a humorous and wide-ranging satire of a given society. Prominent examples of the picaresque novel are *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes, *Tom Jones* by Henry Fielding, and *Moll Flanders* by Daniel Defoe.

Plagiarism: Claiming another person's written material as one's own. Plagiarism can take the form of direct, word-for-word copying or the theft of the substance or idea of the work. A student who copies an encyclopedia entry and turns it in as a report for school is guilty of plagiarism.

Platonic Criticism: A form of criticism that stresses an artistic work's usefulness as an agent of social engineering rather than any quality or value

of the work itself. Platonic criticism takes as its starting point the ancient Greek philosopher Plato's comments on art in his *Republic.*

Platonism: The embracing of the doctrines of the philosopher Plato, popular among the poets of the Renaissance and the Romantic period. Platonism is more flexible than Aristotelian Criticism and places more emphasis on the supernatural and unknown aspects of life. Platonism is expressed in the love poetry of the Renaissance, the fourth book of Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier,* and the poetry of William Blake, William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Friedrich Holderlin, William Butler Yeats, and Wallace Stevens.

Play: See *Drama*

Plot: In literary criticism, this term refers to the pattern of events in a narrative or drama. In its simplest sense, the plot guides the author in composing the work and helps the reader follow the work. Typically, plots exhibit causality and unity and have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Sometimes, however, a plot may consist of a series of disconnected events, in which case it is known as an "episodic plot." In his *Aspects of the Novel,* E. M. Forster distinguishes between a story, defined as a "narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence," and plot, which organizes the events to a "sense of causality." This definition closely mirrors Aristotle's discussion of plot in his *Poetics.*

Poem: In its broadest sense, a composition utilizing rhyme, meter, concrete detail, and expressive language to create a literary experience with emotional and aesthetic appeal. Typical poems include sonnets, odes, elegies, *haiku,* ballads, and free verse.

Poet: An author who writes poetry or verse. The term is also used to refer to an artist or writer who has an exceptional gift for expression, imagination, and energy in the making of art in any form. Well-known poets include Horace, Basho, Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Edmund Spenser, John Donne, Andrew Marvell, Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, George Gordon, Lord Byron, John Keats, Christina Rossetti, W. H. Auden, Stevie Smith, and Sylvia Plath.

Poetic Fallacy: See *Pathetic Fallacy*

Poetic Justice: An outcome in a literary work, not necessarily a poem, in which the good are rewarded and the evil are punished, especially in ways that particularly fit their virtues or crimes. For example, a murderer may himself be murdered, or a thief will find himself penniless.

Poetic License: Distortions of fact and literary convention made by a writer—not always a poet—for the sake of the effect gained. Poetic license is closely related to the concept of "artistic freedom." An author exercises poetic license by saying that a pile of money "reaches as high as a mountain" when the pile is actually only a foot or two high.

Poetics: This term has two closely related meanings. It denotes (1) an aesthetic theory in literary criticism about the essence of poetry or (2) rules prescribing the proper methods, content, style, or diction of poetry. The term poetics may also refer to theories about literature in general, not just poetry.

Poetry: In its broadest sense, writing that aims to present ideas and evoke an emotional experience in the reader through the use of meter, imagery, connotative and concrete words, and a carefully constructed structure based on rhythmic patterns. Poetry typically relies on words and expressions that have several layers of meaning. It also makes use of the effects of regular rhythm on the ear and may make a strong appeal to the senses through the use of imagery. Edgar Allan Poe's "Annabel Lee" and Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* are famous examples of poetry.

Point of View: The narrative perspective from which a literary work is presented to the reader. There are four traditional points of view. The "third person omniscient" gives the reader a "godlike" perspective, unrestricted by time or place, from which to see actions and look into the minds of characters. This allows the author to comment openly on characters and events in the work. The "third person" point of view presents the events of the story from outside of any single character's perception, much like the omniscient point of view, but the reader must understand the action as it takes place and without any special insight into characters' minds or motivations. The "first person" or "personal" point of view relates events as they are perceived by a single character. The main character "tells" the story and may offer opinions about the action and characters which differ from those of the author. Much less common than omniscient, third person, and first person is the "second person" point of view, wherein the author tells the story as if it is happening to the reader. James Thurber employs the omniscient point of view in his short story "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." Ernest Hemingway's "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" is a short story told from the third person point of view. Mark Twain's novel *Huck Finn* is presented from the first person viewpoint. Jay McInerney's *Bright Lights,*

Big City is an example of a novel which uses the second person point of view.

Polemic: A work in which the author takes a stand on a controversial subject, such as abortion or religion. Such works are often extremely argumentative or provocative. Classic examples of polemics include John Milton's *Aeropagitica* and Thomas Paine's *The American Crisis.*

Pornography: Writing intended to provoke feelings of lust in the reader. Such works are often condemned by critics and teachers, but those which can be shown to have literary value are viewed less harshly. Literary works that have been described as pornographic include Ovid's *The Art of Love,* Margaret of Angouleme's *Heptameron,* John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure; or, the Life of Fanny Hill,* the anonymous *My Secret Life,* D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* and Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita.*

Post-Aesthetic Movement: An artistic response made by African Americans to the black aesthetic movement of the 1960s and early '70s. Writers since that time have adopted a somewhat different tone in their work, with less emphasis placed on the disparity between black and white in the United States. In the words of post-aesthetic authors such as Toni Morrison, John Edgar Wideman, and Kristin Hunter, African Americans are portrayed as looking inward for answers to their own questions, rather than always looking to the outside world. Two well-known examples of works produced as part of the post-aesthetic movement are the Pulitzer Prize-winning novels *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker and *Beloved* by Toni Morrison.

Postcolonialism: The term "Postcolonialism" refers broadly to the ways in which race, ethnicity, culture, and human identity itself are represented in the modern era, after many colonized countries gained their independence. However, some critics use the term to refer to *all* culture and cultural products influenced by imperialism from the moment of colonization until today. Postcolonial literature seeks to describe the interactions between European nations and the peoples they colonized. By the middle of the twentieth century, the vast majority of the world was under the control of European countries. At one time, Great Britain, for example, ruled almost 50 percent of the world. During the twentieth century, countries such as India, Jamaica, Nigeria, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Canada, and Australia won independence from their European colonizers. Examples of Postcolonial writings include Edward Said's *Orientalism,* Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children,* Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart,* Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient,* Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth,* Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place,* Isabelle Allende's *The House of the Spirits,* J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Disgrace,* Derek Walcott's *Omeros,* and Eavan Boland's *Outside History: Selected Poems, 1980–1990.*

Postmodernism: Writing from the 1960s forward characterized by experimentation and continuing to apply some of the fundamentals of modernism, which included existentialism and alienation. Postmodernists have gone a step further in the rejection of tradition begun with the modernists by also rejecting traditional forms, preferring the anti-novel over the novel and the anti-hero over the hero. Postmodern writers include Alain Robbe-Grillet, Thomas Pynchon, Margaret Drabble, John Fowles, Adolfo Bioy-Casares, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Pre-Raphaelites: A circle of writers and artists in mid nineteenth-century England. Valuing the pre-Renaissance artistic qualities of religious symbolism, lavish pictorialism, and natural sensuousness, the Pre-Raphaelites cultivated a sense of mystery and melancholy that influenced later writers associated with the Symbolist and Decadent movements. The major members of the group include Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Christina Rossetti, Algernon Swinburne, and Walter Pater.

Primitivism: The belief that primitive peoples were nobler and less flawed than civilized peoples because they had not been subjected to the tainting influence of society. Examples of literature espousing primitivism include Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko: Or, The History of the Royal Slave,* Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Julie ou la Nouvelle Heloise,* Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village,* the poems of Robert Burns, Herman Melville's stories *Typee, Omoo,* and *Mardi,* many poems of William Butler Yeats and Robert Frost, and William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies.*

Projective Verse: A form of free verse in which the poet's breathing pattern determines the lines of the poem. Poets who advocate projective verse are against all formal structures in writing, including meter and form. Besides its creators, Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan, and Charles Olson, two other well-known projective verse poets are Denise Levertov and LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka). Also known as Breath Verse.

Prologue: An introductory section of a literary work. It often contains information establishing the situation of the characters or presents information about the setting, time period, or action. In drama, the prologue is spoken by a chorus or by one of the principal characters. In the "General Prologue" of *The Canterbury Tales,* Geoffrey Chaucer describes the main characters and establishes the setting and purpose of the work.

Prose: A literary medium that attempts to mirror the language of everyday speech. It is distinguished from poetry by its use of unmetered, unrhymed language consisting of logically related sentences. Prose is usually grouped into paragraphs that form a cohesive whole such as an essay or a novel. Recognized masters of English prose writing include Sir Thomas Malory, William Caxton, Raphael Holinshed, Joseph Addison, Mark Twain, and Ernest Hemingway.

Prosopopoeia: See *Personification*

Protagonist: The central character of a story who serves as a focus for its themes and incidents and as the principal rationale for its development. The protagonist is sometimes referred to in discussions of modern literature as the hero or anti-hero. Well-known protagonists are Hamlet in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Jay Gatsby in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby.*

Protest Fiction: Protest fiction has as its primary purpose the protesting of some social injustice, such as racism or discrimination. One example of protest fiction is a series of five novels by Chester Himes, beginning in 1945 with *If He Hollers Let Him Go* and ending in 1955 with *The Primitive.* These works depict the destructive effects of race and gender stereotyping in the context of interracial relationships. Another African American author whose works often revolve around themes of social protest is John Oliver Killens. James Baldwin's essay "Everybody's Protest Novel" generated controversy by attacking the authors of protest fiction.

Proverb: A brief, sage saying that expresses a truth about life in a striking manner. "They are not all cooks who carry long knives" is an example of a proverb.

Pseudonym: A name assumed by a writer, most often intended to prevent his or her identification as the author of a work. Two or more authors may work together under one pseudonym, or an author may use a different name for each genre he or she publishes in. Some publishing companies maintain "house pseudonyms," under which any number of authors may write installations in a series. Some authors also choose a pseudonym over their real names the way an actor may use a stage name. Examples of pseudonyms (with the author's real name in parentheses) include Voltaire (Francois-Marie Arouet), Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg), Currer Bell (Charlotte Bronte), Ellis Bell (Emily Bronte), George Eliot (Maryann Evans), Honorio Bustos Donmecq (Adolfo Bioy-Casares and Jorge Luis Borges), and Richard Bachman (Stephen King).

Pun: A play on words that have similar sounds but different meanings. A serious example of the pun is from John Donne's "A Hymne to God the Father": Sweare by thyself, that at my death thy sonne Shall shine as he shines now, and hereto fore; And, having done that, Thou haste done; I fear no more.

Pure Poetry: poetry written without instructional intent or moral purpose that aims only to please a reader by its imagery or musical flow. The term pure poetry is used as the antonym of the term "didacticism." The poetry of Edgar Allan Poe, Stephane Mallarme, Paul Verlaine, Paul Valery, Juan Ramoz Jimenez, and Jorge Guillen offer examples of pure poetry.

Q

Quatrain: A four-line stanza of a poem or an entire poem consisting of four lines. The following quatrain is from Robert Herrick's "To Live Merrily, and to Trust to Good Verses": Round, round, the root do's run; And being ravisht thus, Come, I will drink a Tun To my *Propertius.*

R

Raisonneur: A character in a drama who functions as a spokesperson for the dramatist's views. The *raisonneur* typically observes the play without becoming central to its action. *Raisonneurs* were very common in plays of the nineteenth century.

Realism: A nineteenth-century European literary movement that sought to portray familiar characters, situations, and settings in a realistic manner. This was done primarily by using an objective narrative point of view and through the buildup of accurate detail. The standard for success of any realistic work depends on how faithfully it transfers common experience into fictional forms. The

realistic method may be altered or extended, as in stream of consciousness writing, to record highly subjective experience. Seminal authors in the tradition of Realism include Honore de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, and Henry James.

Refrain: A phrase repeated at intervals throughout a poem. A refrain may appear at the end of each stanza or at less regular intervals. It may be altered slightly at each appearance. Some refrains are nonsense expressions—as with "Nevermore" in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven"—that seem to take on a different significance with each use.

Renaissance: The period in European history that marked the end of the Middle Ages. It began in Italy in the late fourteenth century. In broad terms, it is usually seen as spanning the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, although it did not reach Great Britain, for example, until the 1480s or so. The Renaissance saw an awakening in almost every sphere of human activity, especially science, philosophy, and the arts. The period is best defined by the emergence of a general philosophy that emphasized the importance of the intellect, the individual, and world affairs. It contrasts strongly with the medieval worldview, characterized by the dominant concerns of faith, the social collective, and spiritual salvation. Prominent writers during the Renaissance include Niccolo Machiavelli and Baldassare Castiglione in Italy, Miguel de Cervantes and Lope de Vega in Spain, Jean Froissart and Francois Rabelais in France, Sir Thomas More and Sir Philip Sidney in England, and Desiderius Erasmus in Holland.

Renaissance Literature: See *Renaissance*

Repartee: Conversation featuring snappy retorts and witticisms. Masters of *repartee* include Sydney Smith, Charles Lamb, and Oscar Wilde. An example is recorded in the meeting of "Beau" Nash and John Wesley: Nash said, "I never make way for a fool," to which Wesley responded, "Don't you? I always do," and stepped aside.

Resolution: The portion of a story following the climax, in which the conflict is resolved. The resolution of Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* is neatly summed up in the following sentence: "Henry and Catherine were married, the bells rang and every body smiled."

Restoration: See *Restoration Age*

Restoration Age: A period in English literature beginning with the crowning of Charles II in 1660 and running to about 1700. The era, which was characterized by a reaction against Puritanism, was the first great age of the comedy of manners. The finest literature of the era is typically witty and urbane, and often lewd. Prominent Restoration Age writers include William Congreve, Samuel Pepys, John Dryden, and John Milton.

Revenge Tragedy: A dramatic form popular during the Elizabethan Age, in which the protagonist, directed by the ghost of his murdered father or son, inflicts retaliation upon a powerful villain. Notable features of the revenge tragedy include violence, bizarre criminal acts, intrigue, insanity, a hesitant protagonist, and the use of soliloquy. Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* is the first example of revenge tragedy in English, and William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is perhaps the best. Extreme examples of revenge tragedy, such as John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi,* are labeled "tragedies of blood." Also known as Tragedy of Blood.

Revista: The Spanish term for a vaudeville musical revue. Examples of *revistas* include Antonio Guzman Aguilera's *Mexico para los mexicanos,* Daniel Vanegas's *Maldito jazz,* and Don Catarino's *Whiskey, morfina y marihuana* and *El desterrado.*

Rhetoric: In literary criticism, this term denotes the art of ethical persuasion. In its strictest sense, rhetoric adheres to various principles developed since classical times for arranging facts and ideas in a clear, persuasive, appealing manner. The term is also used to refer to effective prose in general and theories of or methods for composing effective prose. Classical examples of rhetorics include *The Rhetoric of Aristotle,* Quintillian's *Institutio Oratoria,* and Cicero's *Ad Herennium.*

Rhetorical Question: A question intended to provoke thought, but not an expressed answer, in the reader. It is most commonly used in oratory and other persuasive genres. The following lines from Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" ask rhetorical questions: Can storied urn or animated bust Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath? Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust, Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?

Rhyme: When used as a noun in literary criticism, this term generally refers to a poem in which words sound identical or very similar and appear in parallel positions in two or more lines. Rhymes are classified into different types according to where they fall in a line or stanza or according to the degree of similarity they exhibit in their spellings and sounds. Some major types of rhyme are "masculine" rhyme,

"feminine" rhyme, and "triple" rhyme. In a masculine rhyme, the rhyming sound falls in a single accented syllable, as with "heat" and "eat." Feminine rhyme is a rhyme of two syllables, one stressed and one unstressed, as with "merry" and "tarry." Triple rhyme matches the sound of the accented syllable and the two unaccented syllables that follow: "narrative" and "declarative." Robert Browning alternates feminine and masculine rhymes in his "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister": Gr-r-r—there go, my heart's abhorrence! Water your damned flower-pots, do! If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence, God's blood, would not mine kill you! What? Your myrtle-bush wants trimming? Oh, that rose has prior claims—Needs its leaden vase filled brimming? Hell dry you up with flames! Triple rhymes can be found in Thomas Hood's "Bridge of Sighs," George Gordon Byron's satirical verse, and Ogden Nash's comic poems.

Rhyme Royal: A stanza of seven lines composed in iambic pentameter and rhymed *ababbcc.* The name is said to be a tribute to King James I of Scotland, who made much use of the form in his poetry. Examples of rhyme royal include Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Parlement of Foules,* William Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece,* William Morris's *The Early Paradise,* and John Masefield's *The Widow in the Bye Street.*

Rhyme Scheme: See *Rhyme*

Rhythm: A regular pattern of sound, time intervals, or events occurring in writing, most often and most discernably in poetry. Regular, reliable rhythm is known to be soothing to humans, while interrupted, unpredictable, or rapidly changing rhythm is disturbing. These effects are known to authors, who use them to produce a desired reaction in the reader. An example of a form of irregular rhythm is sprung rhythm poetry; quantitative verse, on the other hand, is very regular in its rhythm.

Rising Action: The part of a drama where the plot becomes increasingly complicated. Rising action leads up to the climax, or turning point, of a drama. The final "chase scene" of an action film is generally the rising action which culminates in the film's climax.

Rococo: A style of European architecture that flourished in the eighteenth century, especially in France. The most notable features of *rococo* are its extensive use of ornamentation and its themes of lightness, gaiety, and intimacy. In literary criticism, the term is often used disparagingly to refer to a decadent or over-ornamental style. Alexander Pope's "The Rape of the Lock" is an example of literary *rococo.*

Roman a clef: A French phrase meaning "novel with a key." It refers to a narrative in which real persons are portrayed under fictitious names. Jack Kerouac, for example, portrayed various real-life beat generation figures under fictitious names in his *On the Road.*

Romance: A broad term, usually denoting a narrative with exotic, exaggerated, often idealized characters, scenes, and themes. Nathaniel Hawthorne called his *The House of the Seven Gables* and *The Marble Faun* romances in order to distinguish them from clearly realistic works.

Romantic Age: See *Romanticism*

Romanticism: This term has two widely accepted meanings. In historical criticism, it refers to a European intellectual and artistic movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that sought greater freedom of personal expression than that allowed by the strict rules of literary form and logic of the eighteenth-century neoclassicists. The Romantics preferred emotional and imaginative expression to rational analysis. They considered the individual to be at the center of all experience and so placed him or her at the center of their art. The Romantics believed that the creative imagination reveals nobler truths—unique feelings and attitudes—than those that could be discovered by logic or by scientific examination. Both the natural world and the state of childhood were important sources for revelations of "eternal truths." "Romanticism" is also used as a general term to refer to a type of sensibility found in all periods of literary history and usually considered to be in opposition to the principles of classicism. In this sense, Romanticism signifies any work or philosophy in which the exotic or dreamlike figure strongly, or that is devoted to individualistic expression, self-analysis, or a pursuit of a higher realm of knowledge than can be discovered by human reason. Prominent Romantics include Jean-Jacques Rousseau, William Wordsworth, John Keats, Lord Byron, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

Romantics: See *Romanticism*

Russian Symbolism: A Russian poetic movement, derived from French symbolism, that flourished between 1894 and 1910. While some Russian Symbolists continued in the French tradition, stressing aestheticism and the importance of sug-

gestion above didactic intent, others saw their craft as a form of mystical worship, and themselves as mediators between the supernatural and the mundane. Russian symbolists include Aleksandr Blok, Vyacheslav Ivanovich Ivanov, Fyodor Sologub, Andrey Bely, Nikolay Gumilyov, and Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov.

S

Satire: A work that uses ridicule, humor, and wit to criticize and provoke change in human nature and institutions. There are two major types of satire: "formal" or "direct" satire speaks directly to the reader or to a character in the work; "indirect" satire relies upon the ridiculous behavior of its characters to make its point. Formal satire is further divided into two manners: the "Horatian," which ridicules gently, and the "Juvenalian," which derides its subjects harshly and bitterly. Voltaire's novella *Candide* is an indirect satire. Jonathan Swift's essay "A Modest Proposal" is a Juvenalian satire.

Scansion: The analysis or "scanning" of a poem to determine its meter and often its rhyme scheme. The most common system of scansion uses accents (slanted lines drawn above syllables) to show stressed syllables, breves (curved lines drawn above syllables) to show unstressed syllables, and vertical lines to separate each foot. In the first line of John Keats's *Endymion,* "A thing of beauty is a joy forever:" the word "thing," the first syllable of "beauty," the word "joy," and the second syllable of "forever" are stressed, while the words "A" and "of," the second syllable of "beauty," the word "a," and the first and third syllables of "forever" are unstressed. In the second line: "Its loveliness increases; it will never" a pair of vertical lines separate the foot ending with "increases" and the one beginning with "it."

Scene: A subdivision of an act of a drama, consisting of continuous action taking place at a single time and in a single location. The beginnings and endings of scenes may be indicated by clearing the stage of actors and props or by the entrances and exits of important characters. The first act of William Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* is comprised of two scenes.

Science Fiction: A type of narrative about or based upon real or imagined scientific theories and technology. Science fiction is often peopled with alien creatures and set on other planets or in different dimensions. Karel Capek's *R.U.R.* is a major work of science fiction.

Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature: See *Science Fiction* and *Fantasy*

Second Person: See *Point of View*

Semiotics: The study of how literary forms and conventions affect the meaning of language. Semioticians include Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Pierce, Claude Levi-Strauss, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, and Julia Kristeva.

Sestet: Any six-line poem or stanza. Examples of the sestet include the last six lines of the Petrarchan sonnet form, the stanza form of Robert Burns's "A Poet's Welcome to his love-begotten Daughter," and the sestina form in W. H. Auden's "Paysage Moralise."

Setting: The time, place, and culture in which the action of a narrative takes place. The elements of setting may include geographic location, characters' physical and mental environments, prevailing cultural attitudes, or the historical time in which the action takes place. Examples of settings include the romanticized Scotland in Sir Walter Scott's "Waverley" novels, the French provincial setting in Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary,* the fictional Wessex country of Thomas Hardy's novels, and the small towns of southern Ontario in Alice Munro's short stories.

Shakespearean Sonnet: See *Sonnet*

Short Story: A fictional prose narrative shorter and more focused than a novella. The short story usually deals with a single episode and often a single character. The "tone," the author's attitude toward his or her subject and audience, is uniform throughout. The short story frequently also lacks *denouement,* ending instead at its climax. Well-known short stories include Ernest Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants," Katherine Mansfield's "The Fly," Jorge Luis Borge's "Tlon, Uqbar,Orbis Tertius," Eudora Welty's "Death of a Travelling Salesman," Yukio Mishima's "Three Million Men," and Milan Kundera's "The Hitchhiking Game." Compare with Novel and Novella.

Signifying Monkey: A popular trickster figure in black folklore, with hundreds of tales about this character documented since the 19th century. Henry Louis Gates Jr. examines the history of the signifying monkey in *The Signifying Monkey: Towards a Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism,* published in 1988.

Simile: A comparison, usually using "like" or "as", of two essentially dissimilar things, as in "coffee as cold as ice" or "He sounded like a broken record." The title of Ernest Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants" contains a simile.

Slang: A type of informal verbal communication that is generally unacceptable for formal writing. Slang words and phrases are often colorful exaggerations used to emphasize the speaker's point; they may also be shortened versions of an often-used word or phrase. Examples of American slang from the 1990s include "yuppie" (an acronym for Young Urban Professional), "awesome" (for "excellent"), wired (for "nervous" or "excited"), and "chill out" (for relax).

Slant Rhyme: See *Consonance*

Slave Narrative: Autobiographical accounts of American slave life as told by escaped slaves. These works first appeared during the abolition movement of the 1830s through the 1850s. Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African* and Harriet Ann Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* are examples of the slave narrative.

Social Realism: See *Socialist Realism*

Socialist Realism: The Socialist Realism school of literary theory was proposed by Maxim Gorky and established as a dogma by the first Soviet Congress of Writers. It demanded adherence to a communist worldview in works of literature. Its doctrines required an objective viewpoint comprehensible to the working classes and themes of social struggle featuring strong proletarian heroes. A successful work of socialist realism is Nikolay Ostrovsky's *Kak zakalyalas stal (How the Steel Was Tempered*). Also known as Social Realism.

Soliloquy: A monologue in a drama used to give the audience information and to develop the speaker's character. It is typically a projection of the speaker's innermost thoughts. Usually delivered while the speaker is alone on stage, a soliloquy is intended to present an illusion of unspoken reflection. A celebrated soliloquy is Hamlet's "To be or not to be" speech in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet.*

Sonnet: A fourteen-line poem, usually composed in iambic pentameter, employing one of several rhyme schemes. There are three major types of sonnets, upon which all other variations of the form are based: the "Petrarchan" or "Italian" sonnet, the "Shakespearean" or "English" sonnet, and the "Spenserian" sonnet. A Petrarchan sonnet consists of an octave rhymed *abbaabba* and a "sestet" rhymed either *cdecde, cdccdc,* or *cdedce.* The octave poses a question or problem, relates a narrative, or puts forth a proposition; the sestet presents a solution to the problem, comments upon the narrative, or applies the proposition put forth in the octave. The Shakespearean sonnet is divided into three quatrains and a couplet rhymed *abab cdcd efef gg.* The couplet provides an epigrammatic comment on the narrative or problem put forth in the quatrains. The Spenserian sonnet uses three quatrains and a couplet like the Shakespearean, but links their three rhyme schemes in this way: *abab bcbc cdcd ee.* The Spenserian sonnet develops its theme in two parts like the Petrarchan, its final six lines resolving a problem, analyzing a narrative, or applying a proposition put forth in its first eight lines. Examples of sonnets can be found in Petrarch's *Canzoniere,* Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti,* Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese,* Rainer Maria Rilke's *Sonnets to Orpheus,* and Adrienne Rich's poem "The Insusceptibles."

Spenserian Sonnet: See *Sonnet*

Spenserian Stanza: A nine-line stanza having eight verses in iambic pentameter, its ninth verse in iambic hexameter, and the rhyme scheme ababbcbcc. This stanza form was first used by Edmund Spenser in his allegorical poem *The Faerie Queene.*

Spondee: In poetry meter, a foot consisting of two long or stressed syllables occurring together. This form is quite rare in English verse, and is usually composed of two monosyllabic words. The first foot in the following line from Robert Burns's "Green Grow the Rashes" is an example of a spondee: Green grow the rashes, O

Sprung Rhythm: Versification using a specific number of accented syllables per line but disregarding the number of unaccented syllables that fall in each line, producing an irregular rhythm in the poem. Gerard Manley Hopkins, who coined the term "sprung rhythm," is the most notable practitioner of this technique.

Stanza: A subdivision of a poem consisting of lines grouped together, often in recurring patterns of rhyme, line length, and meter. Stanzas may also serve as units of thought in a poem much like paragraphs in prose. Examples of stanza forms include the quatrain, *terza rima, ottava rima,* Spenserian, and the so-called *In Memoriam* stanza from Alfred, Lord Tennyson's poem by that title. The following

is an example of the latter form: Love is and was my lord and king, And in his presence I attend To hear the tidings of my friend, Which every hour his couriers bring.

Stereotype: A stereotype was originally the name for a duplication made during the printing process; this led to its modern definition as a person or thing that is (or is assumed to be) the same as all others of its type. Common stereotypical characters include the absent-minded professor, the nagging wife, the troublemaking teenager, and the kind-hearted grandmother.

Stream of Consciousness: A narrative technique for rendering the inward experience of a character. This technique is designed to give the impression of an ever-changing series of thoughts, emotions, images, and memories in the spontaneous and seemingly illogical order that they occur in life. The textbook example of stream of consciousness is the last section of James Joyce's *Ulysses.*

Structuralism: A twentieth-century movement in literary criticism that examines how literary texts arrive at their meanings, rather than the meanings themselves. There are two major types of structuralist analysis: one examines the way patterns of linguistic structures unify a specific text and emphasize certain elements of that text, and the other interprets the way literary forms and conventions affect the meaning of language itself. Prominent structuralists include Michel Foucault, Roman Jakobson, and Roland Barthes.

Structure: The form taken by a piece of literature. The structure may be made obvious for ease of understanding, as in nonfiction works, or may obscured for artistic purposes, as in some poetry or seemingly "unstructured" prose. Examples of common literary structures include the plot of a narrative, the acts and scenes of a drama, and such poetic forms as the Shakespearean sonnet and the Pindaric ode.

Sturm und Drang: A German term meaning "storm and stress." It refers to a German literary movement of the 1770s and 1780s that reacted against the order and rationalism of the enlightenment, focusing instead on the intense experience of extraordinary individuals. Highly romantic, works of this movement, such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Gotz von Berlichingen,* are typified by realism, rebelliousness, and intense emotionalism.

Style: A writer's distinctive manner of arranging words to suit his or her ideas and purpose in writing. The unique imprint of the author's personality upon his or her writing, style is the product of an author's way of arranging ideas and his or her use of diction, different sentence structures, rhythm, figures of speech, rhetorical principles, and other elements of composition. Styles may be classified according to period (Metaphysical, Augustan, Georgian), individual authors (Chaucerian, Miltonic, Jamesian), level (grand, middle, low, plain), or language (scientific, expository, poetic, journalistic).

Subject: The person, event, or theme at the center of a work of literature. A work may have one or more subjects of each type, with shorter works tending to have fewer and longer works tending to have more. The subjects of James Baldwin's novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain* include the themes of father-son relationships, religious conversion, black life, and sexuality. The subjects of Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* include Anne and her family members as well as World War II, the Holocaust, and the themes of war, isolation, injustice, and racism.

Subjectivity: Writing that expresses the author's personal feelings about his subject, and which may or may not include factual information about the subject. Subjectivity is demonstrated in James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,* Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh,* and Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel.*

Subplot: A secondary story in a narrative. A subplot may serve as a motivating or complicating force for the main plot of the work, or it may provide emphasis for, or relief from, the main plot. The conflict between the Capulets and the Montagues in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is an example of a subplot.

Surrealism: A term introduced to criticism by Guillaume Apollinaire and later adopted by Andre Breton. It refers to a French literary and artistic movement founded in the 1920s. The Surrealists sought to express unconscious thoughts and feelings in their works. The best-known technique used for achieving this aim was automatic writing—transcriptions of spontaneous outpourings from the unconscious. The Surrealists proposed to unify the contrary levels of conscious and unconscious, dream and reality, objectivity and subjectivity into a new level of "super-realism." Surrealism can be found in the poetry of Paul Eluard, Pierre Reverdy, and Louis Aragon, among others.

Suspense: A literary device in which the author maintains the audience's attention through the

buildup of events, the outcome of which will soon be revealed. Suspense in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is sustained throughout by the question of whether or not the Prince will achieve what he has been instructed to do and of what he intends to do.

Syllogism: A method of presenting a logical argument. In its most basic form, the syllogism consists of a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion. An example of a syllogism is: Major premise: When it snows, the streets get wet. Minor premise: It is snowing. Conclusion: The streets are wet.

Symbol: Something that suggests or stands for something else without losing its original identity. In literature, symbols combine their literal meaning with the suggestion of an abstract concept. Literary symbols are of two types: those that carry complex associations of meaning no matter what their contexts, and those that derive their suggestive meaning from their functions in specific literary works. Examples of symbols are sunshine suggesting happiness, rain suggesting sorrow, and storm clouds suggesting despair.

Symbolism: This term has two widely accepted meanings. In historical criticism, it denotes an early modernist literary movement initiated in France during the nineteenth century that reacted against the prevailing standards of realism. Writers in this movement aimed to evoke, indirectly and symbolically, an order of being beyond the material world of the five senses. Poetic expression of personal emotion figured strongly in the movement, typically by means of a private set of symbols uniquely identifiable with the individual poet. The principal aim of the Symbolists was to express in words the highly complex feelings that grew out of everyday contact with the world. In a broader sense, the term "symbolism" refers to the use of one object to represent another. Early members of the Symbolist movement included the French authors Charles Baudelaire and Arthur Rimbaud; William Butler Yeats, James Joyce, and T. S. Eliot were influenced as the movement moved to Ireland, England, and the United States. Examples of the concept of symbolism include a flag that stands for a nation or movement, or an empty cupboard used to suggest hopelessness, poverty, and despair.

Symbolist: See *Symbolism*

Symbolist Movement: See *Symbolism*

Sympathetic Fallacy: See *Affective Fallacy*

T

Tale: A story told by a narrator with a simple plot and little character development. Tales are usually relatively short and often carry a simple message. Examples of tales can be found in the work of Rudyard Kipling, Somerset Maugham, Saki, Anton Chekhov, Guy de Maupassant, and Armistead Maupin.

Tall Tale: A humorous tale told in a straightforward, credible tone but relating absolutely impossible events or feats of the characters. Such tales were commonly told of frontier adventures during the settlement of the west in the United States. Tall tales have been spun around such legendary heroes as Mike Fink, Paul Bunyan, Davy Crockett, Johnny Appleseed, and Captain Stormalong as well as the real-life William F. Cody and Annie Oakley. Literary use of tall tales can be found in Washington Irving's *History of New York,* Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi,* and in the German R. F. Raspe's *Baron Munchausen's Narratives of His Marvellous Travels and Campaigns in Russia.*

Tanka: A form of Japanese poetry similar to *haiku.* A *tanka* is five lines long, with the lines containing five, seven, five, seven, and seven syllables respectively. Skilled *tanka* authors include Ishikawa Takuboku, Masaoka Shiki, Amy Lowell, and Adelaide Crapsey.

Teatro Grottesco: See *Theater of the Grotesque*

Terza Rima: A three-line stanza form in poetry in which the rhymes are made on the last word of each line in the following manner: the first and third lines of the first stanza, then the second line of the first stanza and the first and third lines of the second stanza, and so on with the middle line of any stanza rhyming with the first and third lines of the following stanza. An example of *terza rima* is Percy Bysshe Shelley's "The Triumph of Love": As in that trance of wondrous thought I lay This was the tenour of my waking dream. Methought I sate beside a public way Thick strewn with summer dust, and a great stream Of people there was hurrying to and fro Numerous as gnats upon the evening gleam,...

Tetrameter: See *Meter*

Textual Criticism: A branch of literary criticism that seeks to establish the authoritative text of a literary work. Textual critics typically compare all known manuscripts or printings of a single work in order to assess the meanings of differences and revisions. This procedure allows them to arrive at a

definitive version that (supposedly) corresponds to the author's original intention. Textual criticism was applied during the Renaissance to salvage the classical texts of Greece and Rome, and modern works have been studied, for instance, to undo deliberate correction or censorship, as in the case of novels by Stephen Crane and Theodore Dreiser.

Theater of Cruelty: Term used to denote a group of theatrical techniques designed to eliminate the psychological and emotional distance between actors and audience. This concept, introduced in the 1930s in France, was intended to inspire a more intense theatrical experience than conventional theater allowed. The "cruelty" of this dramatic theory signified not sadism but heightened actor/audience involvement in the dramatic event. The theater of cruelty was theorized by Antonin Artaud in his *Le Theatre et son double* (*The Theatre and Its Double*), and also appears in the work of Jerzy Grotowski, Jean Genet, Jean Vilar, and Arthur Adamov, among others.

Theater of the Absurd: A post-World War II dramatic trend characterized by radical theatrical innovations. In works influenced by the Theater of the absurd, nontraditional, sometimes grotesque characterizations, plots, and stage sets reveal a meaningless universe in which human values are irrelevant. Existentialist themes of estrangement, absurdity, and futility link many of the works of this movement. The principal writers of the Theater of the Absurd are Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, and Harold Pinter.

Theater of the Grotesque: An Italian theatrical movement characterized by plays written around the ironic and macabre aspects of daily life in the World War I era. Theater of the Grotesque was named after the play *The Mask and the Face* by Luigi Chiarelli, which was described as "a grotesque in three acts." The movement influenced the work of Italian dramatist Luigi Pirandello, author of *Right You Are, If You Think You Are.* Also known as *Teatro Grottesco.*

Theme: The main point of a work of literature. The term is used interchangeably with thesis. The theme of William Shakespeare's *Othello*—jealousy—is a common one.

Thesis: A thesis is both an essay and the point argued in the essay. Thesis novels and thesis plays share the quality of containing a thesis which is supported through the action of the story. A master's thesis and a doctoral dissertation are two theses required of graduate students.

Thesis Novel: See *Thesis*

Thesis Play: See *Thesis*

Third Person: See *Point of View*

Three Unities: See *Unities*

Tone: The author's attitude toward his or her audience may be deduced from the tone of the work. A formal tone may create distance or convey politeness, while an informal tone may encourage a friendly, intimate, or intrusive feeling in the reader. The author's attitude toward his or her subject matter may also be deduced from the tone of the words he or she uses in discussing it. The tone of John F. Kennedy's speech which included the appeal to "ask not what your country can do for you" was intended to instill feelings of camaraderie and national pride in listeners.

Tragedy: A drama in prose or poetry about a noble, courageous hero of excellent character who, because of some tragic character flaw or *hamartia*, brings ruin upon him- or herself. Tragedy treats its subjects in a dignified and serious manner, using poetic language to help evoke pity and fear and bring about catharsis, a purging of these emotions. The tragic form was practiced extensively by the ancient Greeks. In the Middle Ages, when classical works were virtually unknown, tragedy came to denote any works about the fall of persons from exalted to low conditions due to any reason: fate, vice, weakness, etc. According to the classical definition of tragedy, such works present the "pathetic"—that which evokes pity—rather than the tragic. The classical form of tragedy was revived in the sixteenth century; it flourished especially on the Elizabethan stage. In modern times, dramatists have attempted to adapt the form to the needs of modern society by drawing their heroes from the ranks of ordinary men and women and defining the nobility of these heroes in terms of spirit rather than exalted social standing. The greatest classical example of tragedy is Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex.* The "pathetic" derivation is exemplified in "The Monk's Tale" in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales.* Notable works produced during the sixteenth century revival include William Shakespeare's *Hamlet, Othello,* and *King Lear.* Modern dramatists working in the tragic tradition include Henrik Ibsen, Arthur Miller, and Eugene O'Neill.

Tragedy of Blood: See *Revenge Tragedy*

Tragic Flaw: In a tragedy, the quality within the hero or heroine which leads to his or her downfall. Examples of the tragic flaw include Othello's

jealousy and Hamlet's indecisiveness, although most great tragedies defy such simple interpretation.

Transcendentalism: An American philosophical and religious movement, based in New England from around 1835 until the Civil War. Transcendentalism was a form of American romanticism that had its roots abroad in the works of Thomas Carlyle, Samuel Coleridge, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. The Transcendentalists stressed the importance of intuition and subjective experience in communication with God. They rejected religious dogma and texts in favor of mysticism and scientific naturalism. They pursued truths that lie beyond the "colorless" realms perceived by reason and the senses and were active social reformers in public education, women's rights, and the abolition of slavery. Prominent members of the group include Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau.

Trickster: A character or figure common in Native American and African literature who uses his ingenuity to defeat enemies and escape difficult situations. Tricksters are most often animals, such as the spider, hare, or coyote, although they may take the form of humans as well. Examples of trickster tales include Thomas King's *A Coyote Columbus Story,* Ashley F. Bryan's *The Dancing Granny* and Ishmael Reed's *The Last Days of Louisiana Red.*

Trimeter: See *Meter*

Triple Rhyme: See *Rhyme*

Trochee: See *Foot*

U

Understatement: See *Irony*

Unities: Strict rules of dramatic structure, formulated by Italian and French critics of the Renaissance and based loosely on the principles of drama discussed by Aristotle in his *Poetics.* Foremost among these rules were the three unities of action, time, and place that compelled a dramatist to: (1) construct a single plot with a beginning, middle, and end that details the causal relationships of action and character; (2) restrict the action to the events of a single day; and (3) limit the scene to a single place or city. The unities were observed faithfully by continental European writers until the Romantic Age, but they were never regularly observed in English drama. Modern dramatists are typically more concerned with a unity of impression or emotional effect than with any of the classical unities. The unities are observed in Pierre Corneille's tragedy *Polyeuctes* and Jean-Baptiste Racine's *Phedre.* Also known as Three Unities.

Urban Realism: A branch of realist writing that attempts to accurately reflect the often harsh facts of modern urban existence. Some works by Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, Charles Dickens, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Emile Zola, Abraham Cahan, and Henry Fuller feature urban realism. Modern examples include Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land* and Ron Milner's *What the Wine Sellers Buy.*

Utopia: A fictional perfect place, such as "paradise" or "heaven." Early literary utopias were included in Plato's *Republic* and Sir Thomas More's *Utopia,* while more modern utopias can be found in Samuel Butler's *Erewhon,* Theodor Herzka's *A Visit to Freeland,* and H. G. Wells' *A Modern Utopia.*

Utopian: See *Utopia*

Utopianism: See *Utopia*

V

Verisimilitude: Literally, the appearance of truth. In literary criticism, the term refers to aspects of a work of literature that seem true to the reader. Verisimilitude is achieved in the work of Honore de Balzac, Gustave Flaubert, and Henry James, among other late nineteenth-century realist writers.

Vers de societe: See *Occasional Verse*

Vers libre: See *Free Verse*

Verse: A line of metered language, a line of a poem, or any work written in verse. The following line of verse is from the epic poem *Don Juan* by Lord Byron: "My way is to begin with the beginning."

Versification: The writing of verse. Versification may also refer to the meter, rhyme, and other mechanical components of a poem. Composition of a "Roses are red, violets are blue" poem to suit an occasion is a common form of versification practiced by students.

Victorian: Refers broadly to the reign of Queen Victoria of England (1837-1901) and to anything with qualities typical of that era. For example, the qualities of smug narrowmindedness, bourgeois materialism, faith in social progress, and priggish morality are often considered Victorian. This

stereotype is contradicted by such dramatic intellectual developments as the theories of Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud (which stirred strong debates in England) and the critical attitudes of serious Victorian writers like Charles Dickens and George Eliot. In literature, the Victorian Period was the great age of the English novel, and the latter part of the era saw the rise of movements such as decadence and symbolism. Works of Victorian literature include the poetry of Robert Browning and Alfred, Lord Tennyson, the criticism of Matthew Arnold and John Ruskin, and the novels of Emily Bronte, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Thomas Hardy. Also known as Victorian Age and Victorian Period.

Victorian Age: See *Victorian*

Victorian Period: See *Victorian*

W

Weltanschauung: A German term referring to a person's worldview or philosophy. Examples of *weltanschauung* include Thomas Hardy's view of the human being as the victim of fate, destiny, or impersonal forces and circumstances, and the disillusioned and laconic cynicism expressed by such poets of the 1930s as W. H. Auden, Sir Stephen Spender, and Sir William Empson.

Weltschmerz: A German term meaning "world pain." It describes a sense of anguish about the nature of existence, usually associated with a melancholy, pessimistic attitude. *Weltschmerz* was expressed in England by George Gordon, Lord Byron in his *Manfred* and *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* in France by Viscount de Chateaubriand, Alfred de Vigny, and Alfred de Musset, in Russia by Aleksandr Pushkin and Mikhail Lermontov, in Poland by Juliusz Slowacki, and in America by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Z

Zarzuela: A type of Spanish operetta. Writers of *zarzuelas* include Lope de Vega and Pedro Calderon.

Zeitgeist: A German term meaning "spirit of the time." It refers to the moral and intellectual trends of a given era. Examples of *zeitgeist* include the preoccupation with the more morbid aspects of dying and death in some Jacobean literature, especially in the works of dramatists Cyril Tourneur and John Webster, and the decadence of the French Symbolists.

Cumulative Author/Title Index

A

Adages (Erasmus)
Humanism: V1
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Twain)
Bildungsroman: V1
Aeneid (Vergil)
Classicism: V1
Aeschylus
Greek Drama: V1
Andromaque (Racine)
Classicism: V1
Anna Karenina (Tolstoy)
Realism: V1
Antigone (Sophocles)
Greek Drama: V1
Aristophanes
Greek Drama: V1
Austen, Jane
Romanticism: V1

B

Bacchae (Euripides)
Greek Drama: V1
"Ball of Fat" (Maupassant)
Realism: V1
Balzac, Honoré de
Realism: V1
Beckford, William
Gothic Literature: V1
The Bell Jar (Plath)
Bildungsroman: V1
Birds (Aristophanes)
Greek Drama: V1
Blake, William
Romanticism: V1
The Blithedale Romance (Hawthorne)
Transcendentalism: V1
Bonaventure, Giovanni
Medieval Mystics: V1
Book of Elegances, or Elegances of the Latin Language (Valla)
Humanism: V1
Book of the Courtier (Castiglione)
Humanism: V1
Brown, Charles Brockden
Gothic Literature: V1
Byron, Lord
Romanticism: V1

C

Candide (Voltaire)
Enlightenment: V1
Castiglione, Baldassare
Humanism: V1
The Castle of Otranto (Walpole)
Gothic Literature: V1
Catherine of Genoa
Medieval Mystics: V1
Catherine of Siena
Medieval Mystics: V1
Cervantes, Miguel de
Renaissance Literature: V1
Chapman, George
Elizabethan Drama: V1
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (Byron)
Romanticism: V1
The Cloud of Unknowing (Anonymous)
Medieval Mystics: V1
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor
Romanticism: V1
Conrad, Joseph
Colonialism: V1
Crates
Greek Drama: V1
Cratinus
Greek Drama: V1
Crime and Punishment (Dostoevsky)
Realism: V1

D

David Copperfield (Dickens)
Realism: V1
Declaration of Independence (Jefferson, et al)
Enlightenment: V1
Defoe, Daniel
Neoclassicism: V1
Dekker, Thomas
Elizabethan Drama: V1
Dickens, Charles
Bildungsroman: V1
Realism: V1
Diderot, Denis
Enlightenment: V1
Dinesen, Isak
Colonialism: V1
Don Quixote (Cervantes)
Renaissance Literature: V1
Dostoevsky, Fyodor
Realism: V1
Dryden, John
Neoclassicism: V1

Dyscolus (Menander)
Greek Drama: V1

E

Eckhart, Meister
Medieval Mystics: V1
Eliot, George
Realism: V1
Emerson, Ralph Waldo
Transcendentalism: V1
Émile (Rousseau)
Enlightenment: V1
Encyclopédie (Diderot)
Enlightenment: V1
Epicharmus
Greek Drama: V1
Erasmus, Desiderius
Humanism: V1
Renaissance Literature: V1
The Essays (Montaigne)
Renaissance Literature: V1
Eupolis
Greek Drama: V1
Euripides
Classicism: V1
Greek Drama: V1
Everyman in His Humour (Jonson)
Elizabethan Drama: V1
The Exemplar (Suso)
Medieval Mystics: V1

F

"The Fall of the House of Usher" (Poe)
Gothic Literature: V1
Familiar Letters (Petrarch)
Humanism: V1
Faust (Goethe)
Classicism: V1
Ficino, Marsilio
Humanism: V1
The Fire of Love (Rolle)
Medieval Mystics: V1
Flaubert, Gustave
Realism: V1
Forster, E. M.
Colonialism: V1
Frankenstein (Shelley)
Gothic Literature: V1
Romanticism: V1
Frogs (Aristophanes)
Greek Drama: V1
Fuller, Margaret
Transcendentalism: V1

G

Germinal (Zola)
Realism: V1
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von
Bildungsroman: V1
Classicism: V1
Great Expectations (Dickens)
Bildungsroman: V1
Gulliver's Travels (Swift)
Neoclassicism: V1

H

Haggard, H. Rider
Colonialism: V1
Hamlet (Shakespeare)
Elizabethan Drama: V1
Renaissance Literature: V1
A Hazard of New Fortunes (Howells)
Realism: V1
Heart of Darkness (Conrad)
Colonialism: V1
Heywood, Thomas
Elizabethan Drama: V1
Homer
Classicism: V1
Howells, William Dean
Realism: V1
The Human Comedy (Balzac)
Realism: V1
Hume, David
Enlightenment: V1

I

Iliad (Homer)
Classicism: V1
Invisible Man (Ellison)
Bildungsroman: V1

J

Jane Eyre (Brontë)
Bildungsroman: V1
The Jew of Malta (Marlowe)
Elizabethan Drama: V1
Johnson, Samuel
Neoclassicism: V1
Jonson, Ben
Elizabethan Drama: V1
Joyce, James
Bildungsroman: V1
Jude the Obscure (Hardy)
Bildungsroman: V1
Julian of Norwich
Medieval Mystics: V1

K

Keats, John
Romanticism: V1
Kim (Kipling)
Colonialism: V1
Kipling, Rudyard
Colonialism: V1
Kyd, Thomas
Elizabethan Drama: V1

L

Leaves of Grass (Whitman)
Transcendentalism: V1
Lewis, Matthew Gregory
Gothic Literature: V1
London (Johnson)
Neoclassicism: V1
Lord Jim (Conrad)
Colonialism: V1
Lysistrata (Arisophanes)
Greek Drama: V1

M

Machiavelli, Niccolò
Renaissance Literature: V1
Madame Bovary (Flaubert)
Realism: V1
Mann, Thomas
Bildungsroman: V1
Marlowe, Christopher
Elizabethan Drama: V1
Renaissance Literature: V1
Maturin, Charles Robert
Gothic Literature: V1
Maupassant, Guy de
Realism: V1
Medea (Euripides)
Classicism: V1
Greek Drama: V1
Meister Eckhart's Sermons (Eckhart)
Medieval Mystics: V1
Melmoth the Wanderer (Maturin)
Gothic Literature: V1
Menander
Greek Drama: V1
Middlemarch (Eliot)
Realism: V1
The Monk (Lewis)
Gothic Literature: V1
Montaigne, Michel de
Renaissance Literature: V1
More, Sir Thomas
Humanism: V1
Renaissance Literature: V1
The Mysteries of Udolpho (Radcliffe)
Gothic Literature: V1

N

Nature (Emerson)
Transcendentalism: V1

O

Oedipus at Colonus (Sophocles)
Greek Drama: V1

Oedupus the King (Sophocles)
Greek Drama: V1
Of Dramatick Poesie: An Essay (Dryden)
Neoclassicism: V1
Of Human Bondage (Maugham)
Bildungsroman: V1
Oration on the Dignity of Man (Pico della Mirandola)
Humanism: V1
Oresteia (Aeschylus)
Greek Drama: V1
Out of Africa (Dinesen)
Colonialism: V1

P

A Passage to India (Forster)
Colonialism: V1
Petrarch, Francesco
Humanism: V1
Phrynichus
Greek Drama: V1
Pico della Mirandola, Count Giovanni
Humanism: V1
Poe, Edgar Allan
Gothic Literature: V1
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (Joyce)
Bildungsroman: V1
The Praise of Folly (Erasmus)
Renaissance Literature: V1
Pride and Prejudice (Austen)
Romanticism: V1
The Prince (Machiavelli)
Renaissance Literature: V1
Prometheus Bound (Aeschylus)
Greek Drama: V1
Prometheus Unbound (Shelley)
Romanticism: V1

R

Rabelais, François
Renaissance Literature: V1
Racine, Jean
Classicism: V1
Radcliffe, Ann
Gothic Literature: V1
The Rape of the Lock (Pope)
Neoclassicism: V1
Revelations of Divine Love (Julian of Norwich)
Medieval Mystics: V1
Robinson Crusoe (Defoe)
Neoclassicism: V1
Rolle, Richard
Medieval Mystics: V1
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques
Enlightenment: V1
Ruusbroec, John
Medieval Mystics: V1

S

Savonarola, Girolamo
Humanism: V1
Shakespeare, William
Elizabethan Drama: V1
Renaissance Literature: V1
She (Haggard)
Colonialism: V1
Shelley, Mary
Gothic Literature: V1
Romanticism: V1
Shelley, Percy Bysshe
Romanticism: V1
The Shoemaker's Holiday (Dekker)
Elizabethan Drama: V1
The Social Contract (Rousseau)
Enlightenment: V1
Songs of Innocence and of Experience (Blake)
Romanticism: V1
Sons and Lovers (Lawrence)
Bildungsroman: V1
Sophocles
Greek Drama: V1
Sophron
Greek Drama: V1
The Soul's Journey into God (Bonaventure)
Medieval Mystics: V1
The Spanish Tragedy (Kyd)
Elizabethan Drama: V1
The Spiritual Dialogue (Catherine of Genoa)
Medieval Mystics: V1
The Spiritual Espousals (Ruusbroec)
Medieval Mystics: V1
The Story of an African Farm (Schreiner)
Colonialism: V1
Suso, Henry
Medieval Mystics: V1

T

Tamburlaine the Great (Marlowe)
Elizabethan Drama: V1
Tauler, Johannes
Medieval Mystics: V1
Theologia Germanica (Anonymous)
Medieval Mystics: V1
Thespis
Greek Drama: V1
Thoreau, Henry David
Transcendentalism: V1
"To Autumn" (Keats)
Romanticism: V1
Tolstoy, Leo
Realism: V1
Twain, Mark
Bildungsroman: V1

U

Utopia (More)
Humanism: V1
Renaissance Literature: V1

V

Valla, Lorenzo
Humanism: V1
Vathek (Beckford)
Gothic Literature: V1
Vergil
Classicism: V1
Voltaire
Enlightenment: V1

W

Walden (Thoreau)
Transcendentalism: V1
Walpole, Horace
Gothic Literature: V1
"The White Man's Burden" (Kipling)
Colonialism: V1
Whitman, Walt
Transcendentalism: V1
Wieland (Brown)
Gothic Literature: V1
Wieland, Christoph Martin
Bildungsroman: V1
Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship (Goethe)
Bildungsroman: V1
"The Woman at the Store" (Mansfield)
Colonialism: V1
Woman in the Nineteenth Century (Fuller)
Transcendentalism: V1
A Woman Killed with Kindness (Heywood)
Elizabethan Drama: V1
Wordsworth, William
Romanticism: V1

Z

Zola, Émile
Realism: V1

Nationality/Ethnicity Index

American

Brown, Charles Brockden
Gothic Literature: V1
Emerson, Ralph Waldo
Transcendentalism: V1
Fuller, Margaret
Transcendentalism: V1
Howells, William Dean
Realism: V1
Poe, Edgar Allan
Gothic Literature: V1
Thoreau, Henry David
Transcendentalism: V1
Twain, Mark
Bildungsroman: V1
Whitman, Walt
Transcendentalism: V1

Danish

Dinesen, Isak
Colonialism: V1

Dutch

Erasmus, Desiderius
Humanism: V1
Renaissance Literature: V1

English

Austen, Jane
Romanticism: V1
Beckford, William
Gothic Literature: V1
Blake, William
Romanticism: V1
Byron, Lord
Romanticism: V1
Chapman, George
Elizabethan Drama: V1
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor
Romanticism: V1
Conrad, Joseph
Colonialism: V1
Defoe, Daniel
Neoclassicism: V1
Dekker, Thomas
Elizabethan Drama: V1
Dickens, Charles
Bildungsroman: V1
Realism: V1
Dryden, John
Neoclassicism: V1
Eliot, George
Realism: V1
Forster, E. M.
Colonialism: V1
Haggard, H. Rider
Colonialism: V1
Heywood, Thomas
Elizabethan Drama: V1
Hume, David
Enlightenment: V1
Johnson, Samuel
Neoclassicism: V1
Jonson, Ben
Elizabethan Drama: V1
Julian of Norwich
Medieval Mystics: V1
Keats, John
Romanticism: V1
Kipling, Rudyard
Colonialism: V1
Kyd, Thomas
Elizabethan Drama: V1
Lewis, Matthew Gregory
Gothic Literature: V1
Marlowe, Christopher
Elizabethan Drama: V1
Renaissance Literature: V1
More, Sir Thomas
Humanism: V1
Renaissance Literature: V1
Radcliffe, Ann
Gothic Literature: V1
Rolle, Richard
Medieval Mystics: V1
Shakespeare, William
Elizabethan Drama: V1
Renaissance Literature: V1
Shelley, Mary
Gothic Literature: V1
Romanticism: V1
Shelley, Percy Bysshe
Romanticism: V1
Walpole, Horace
Gothic Literature: V1
Wordsworth, William
Romanticism: V1

Flemish

Ruusbroec, John
Medieval Mystics: V1

French

Balzac, Honoré de
Realism: V1
Bonaventure, Giovanni
Medieval Mystics: V1

Diderot, Denis
Enlightenment: V1
Flaubert, Gustave
Realism: V1
Maupassant, Guy de
Realism: V1
Montaigne, Michel de
Renaissance Literature: V1
Rabelais, François
Renaissance Literature: V1
Racine, Jean
Classicism: V1
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques
Enlightenment: V1
Voltaire
Enlightenment: V1
Zola, Émile
Realism: V1

German

Eckhart, Meister
Medieval Mystics: V1
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von
Bildungsroman: V1
Classicism: V1
Mann, Thomas
Bildungsroman: V1
Suso, Henry
Medieval Mystics: V1
Tauler, Johannes
Medieval Mystics: V1
Wieland, Christoph Martin
Bildungsroman: V1

Greek

Aeschylus
Greek Drama: V1
Aristophanes
Greek Drama: V1
Crates
Greek Drama: V1
Cratinus
Greek Drama: V1
Epicharmus
Greek Drama: V1
Eupolis
Greek Drama: V1
Euripides
Classicism: V1
Greek Drama: V1
Homer
Classicism: V1
Menander
Greek Drama: V1
Phrynichus
Greek Drama: V1
Sophocles
Greek Drama: V1
Sophron
Greek Drama: V1
Thespis
Greek Drama: V1

Irish

Joyce, James
Bildungsroman: V1
Maturin, Charles Robert
Gothic Literature: V1

Italian

Bonaventure, Giovanni
Medieval Mystics: V1
Castiglione, Baldassare
Humanism: V1
Catherine of Genoa
Medieval Mystics: V1
Catherine of Siena
Medieval Mystics: V1
Ficino, Marsilio
Humanism: V1
Machiavelli, Niccolò
Renaissance Literature: V1
Petrarch, Francesco
Humanism: V1
Pico della Mirandola, Count Giovanni
Humanism: V1
Savonarola, Girolamo
Humanism: V1
Valla, Lorenzo
Humanism: V1

Polish

Conrad, Joseph
Colonialism: V1

Roman

Vergil
Classicism: V1

Russian

Dostoevsky, Fyodor
Realism: V1
Tolstoy, Leo
Realism: V1

Scottish

Hume, David
Enlightenment: V1

Spanish

Cervantes, Miguel de
Renaissance Literature: V1

Swiss

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques
Enlightenment: V1

Subject/Theme Index

A

Abandonment: 61, 175, 180, 195, 197, 201, 206, 210, 294, 311, 313, 315
Heart of Darkness: 51
Lord Jim: 51
Meister Eckhart's Sermons: 203
The Spiritual Espousals: 204
Abuse: 109, 116
Candide: 107
Adultery: 253, 258, 259, 260
Madame Bovary: 251
Adulthood: 5, 6, 7, 11, 20, 247, 248, 257, 327, 331, 341
David Copperfield: 250
Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship: 5
Adventure and Exploration: 1, 15, 20, 21, 49, 50, 55, 57, 58, 65, 68, 69
Africa: 49, 50, 54, 55, 58, 64, 70, 71, 72, 73, 161, 166
Antigone: 158
Bacchae: 158
Heart of Darkness: 51
Oedipus at Colonus: 159
Oedupus the King: 159
Out of Africa: 52
She: 52
The Story of an African Farm: 52
Age of Johnson: 223, 226, 228, 229
Alienation: 2, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 15, 21, 34, 45, 46, 321, 325, 334, 337, 338
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: 5
Allegory: 14, 22, 148, 149, 151, 208
The Spiritual Dialogue: 204
The Spiritual Espousals: 204
Ambiguity: 48, 60, 61, 64, 308, 312, 314, 316
Lord Jim: 52
Ambition: 15, 20, 21, 22
The Bell Jar: 3
Jude the Obscure: 4
Sons and Lovers: 5
American Northeast: 248, 252, 253, 319, 320, 321, 322, 328, 331, 334, 337, 339
A Hazard of New Fortunes: 251
Ancient World: 32, 37, 38, 156, 164, 175, 176, 196, 197
Adages: 177
Familiar Letters: 178
Medea: 29
Oresteia: 159
Anger: 87, 91, 95, 97, 166
Apathy: 116, 119, 127
Arthurian Legend: 138, 145
Atheism: 78, 101, 102, 103, 182, 183, 186, 187, 189, 193
Atonement: 90, 92, 93, 94, 95, 97, 99, 200, 205, 209, 211, 295, 298, 301, 304, 308, 316
The Exemplar: 202
Revelations of Divine Love: 203
A Woman Killed with Kindness: 80
Australia: 49, 50, 56, 63
"The Woman at the Store": 53

B

Ballad: 307, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314
Beauty: 36, 39, 40, 41, 42, 50, 65, 72, 109, 110, 118, 120, 124, 235, 236, 241, 243, 283, 287, 289, 300, 303, 304, 316, 317, 324, 325, 336, 338, 339, 340, 342
Heart of Darkness: 51
Songs of Innocence and of Experience: 297
Woman in the Nineteenth Century: 324
Betrayal: 86, 92, 93, 100, 101
A Woman Killed with Kindness: 80
Bildungsroman: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: 3
The Bell Jar: 3
Great Expectations: 4
Invisible Man: 4
Jane Eyre: 4
Jude the Obscure: 4
Of Human Bondage: 5
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: 5
Sons and Lovers: 5
Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship: 5
Black Arts Movement: 8, 13
Blasphemy: 95, 96, 99
Bloomsbury Group: 48, 50
A Passage to India: 52

C

Catharsis: 162, 163, 166
Censorship: 104, 105, 111, 112, 113

Childhood: 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11
Christian Science: 333, 334, 335
Christianity: 54, 57, 72, 108, 114, 121, 124, 125, 176, 177, 179, 180, 183, 184, 185, 186, 189, 193, 194, 195, 200, 201, 205, 208, 211, 212, 213, 215, 277, 280, 281, 282, 283
The Fire of Love: 202
Oration on the Dignity of Man: 179
City Life: 184, 195, 224, 227
London: 225
Classicism: 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 98, 100, 101, 102, 140, 141, 142, 157, 168, 174, 175, 176, 177, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 221, 226, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 270, 275, 276, 278, 280, 285, 288, 289
Aeneid: 27
Andromaque: 28
Familiar Letters: 178
Faust: 29
Iliad: 29
Of Dramatick Poesie: An Essay: 224
Oration on the Dignity of Man: 178
The Praise of Folly: 274
The Rape of the Lock: 225
Robinson Crusoe: 225
Utopia: 179
Colonialism: 48, 49, 50, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 72, 73, 74
Heart of Darkness: 51
Kim: 51
Out of Africa: 52
The Story of an African Farm: 52
Comedy: 77, 78, 81, 89, 98, 156, 157, 160, 161, 162, 165, 167, 168, 222, 228, 229, 233
Birds: 158
Everyman in His Humour: 79
The Jew of Malta: 79
Lysistrata: 158
The Shoemaker's Holiday: 80
Coming of Age: 5, 7, 14
Couplet: 222, 224, 226, 228, 234
The Rape of the Lock: 225
Courage: 5, 7, 30, 50, 55, 95, 101, 123, 145, 147, 341, 342
Leaves of Grass: 322
Creativity: 2, 22, 23, 26, 36
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: 5
Crime and Criminals: 13, 16, 76, 83, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 96, 97, 99, 100, 150, 151, 249, 253, 262, 266, 328, 331, 332
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: 3
Crime and Punishment: 250
The Jew of Malta: 79
Wieland: 135
Cruelty: 57, 58, 60, 63, 66, 67, 68, 69, 81, 83, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 109, 113, 115, 116, 122, 123, 125, 126, 132, 136, 140, 144, 145, 147, 153, 304, 305, 306, 309
Candide: 107
The Mysteries of Udolpho: 135
The Spanish Tragedy: 80
Curiosity: 27, 39, 44, 45, 89, 90, 95, 96, 97, 118, 121, 124, 125, 130, 131, 139
Cynicism: 276, 282
The Essays: 273
Utopia: 275

D

Damnation: 280, 281, 283, 284
Dance: 84, 85, 88, 94, 160, 162, 164, 171, 172, 173
Oresteia: 159
Death: 1, 2, 3, 9, 18, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 33, 36, 37, 38, 41, 42, 47, 49, 50, 55, 58, 61, 62, 66, 69, 70, 72, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 82, 85, 87, 90, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 105, 106, 107, 109, 112, 114, 115, 117, 118, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 130, 131, 132, 133, 137, 139, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 149, 151, 156, 157, 161, 163, 165, 166, 169, 170, 175, 176, 177, 183, 185, 187, 190, 196, 199, 200, 201, 202, 205, 209, 222, 223, 224, 229, 232, 234, 241, 247, 248, 249, 255, 258, 270, 271, 272, 273, 278, 283, 284, 287, 288, 293, 294, 295, 301, 308, 313, 320, 321, 322, 334, 337, 338, 340, 341, 342
Aeneid: 27
Andromaque: 28
Antigone: 158
The Blithedale Romance: 322
The Castle of Otranto: 133
Don Quixote: 273
"The Fall of the House of Usher": 134
Frankenstein: 296
Iliad: 29
Jane Eyre: 4
Jude the Obscure: 4
Lord Jim: 51
The Monk: 135
The Prince: 274
Revelations of Divine Love: 203
The Social Contract: 108
The Spanish Tragedy: 80
The Spiritual Dialogue: 204
"To Autumn": 297
Walden: 324
A Woman Killed with Kindness: 81
Depression and Melancholy: 120, 124, 125, 127, 132, 133, 139, 308, 311
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: 295
Frankenstein: 296
Melmoth the Wanderer: 135
"To Autumn": 297
Description: 118, 119, 120, 124, 126, 127, 214, 216, 219, 263, 312, 317
David Copperfield: 250
"To Autumn": 297
Devil: 87, 95, 96, 102, 280, 282, 283, 284
Dialogue: 7, 25, 84, 88, 91, 100, 105, 123, 175, 193, 200, 218, 219, 242, 243, 246, 247, 254, 259, 260, 261, 262, 266, 312, 314
Book of the Courtier: 178
Medea: 29
Of Dramatick Poesie: An Essay: 224
Pride and Prejudice: 296
The Spiritual Dialogue: 204
Dictatorship: 113, 122, 123, 125
Disease: 49, 50, 68, 69, 73, 82, 85, 200, 202, 207, 209, 248, 249, 259, 260, 266
Drama: 25, 27, 30, 31, 32, 44, 46, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 171, 172, 173, 221, 226, 228, 230, 247, 255, 259, 260, 261, 262, 265, 267, 268
Andromaque: 28
Birds: 158
Frogs: 158
The Jew of Malta: 80
Lysistrata: 158
Medea: 29
Of Dramatick Poesie: An Essay: 224
The Spanish Tragedy: 80
Tamburlaine the Great: 80
A Woman Killed with Kindness: 80
Dreams and Visions: 13, 18, 19, 114, 117, 119, 122, 123, 128, 131, 133, 136, 139, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 149, 150, 152, 153, 200, 205, 209, 215, 219, 292, 293, 295, 297, 298, 303, 304, 315, 320, 322, 325, 327, 336, 337, 338, 340

The Exemplar: 202
Great Expectations: 4
Melmoth the Wanderer: 134
Prometheus Unbound: 297
The Spiritual Dialogue: 204

E

Emotions: 1, 8, 30, 36, 41, 43, 61, 63, 70, 81, 94, 106, 109, 116, 122, 127, 137, 139, 140, 145, 148, 153, 156, 162, 166, 179, 180, 196, 228, 255, 261, 263, 292, 298, 299, 301, 326, 338, 339
Andromaque: 28
English Restoration: 221, 222, 223, 226, 228, 229, 234
Epic: 27, 31, 32, 222, 223, 226, 228
Aeneid: 28
Iliad: 29
The Rape of the Lock: 225
Robinson Crusoe: 225
Eternity: 34, 44, 45, 46, 47, 62, 63, 87, 94, 97, 101, 200, 205, 206, 208, 213, 214, 215, 300, 304, 308, 315, 316, 317, 318
She: 52
Theologia Germanica: 204
Europe: 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 32, 33, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45, 49, 50, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 74, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 91, 94, 96, 97, 98, 99, 102, 105, 106, 108, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 118, 119, 122, 128, 131, 132, 133, 140, 141, 142, 149, 155, 156, 157, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 168, 169, 172, 175, 176, 177, 182, 183, 184, 185, 187, 194, 195, 196, 197, 199, 200, 201, 204, 205, 209, 210, 211, 216, 218, 222, 223, 224, 227, 228, 229, 230, 232, 246, 247, 248, 249, 252, 253, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 267, 270, 271, 272, 273, 278, 279, 280, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 293, 294, 295, 300, 301, 304, 306, 320, 321, 326, 328, 340, 341
Aeneid: 27
Andromaque: 28
The Bell Jar: 3
Birds: 158
Book of Elegances, or Elegances of the Latin Language: 178
Book of the Courtier: 178
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: 296
The Cloud of Unknowing: 202
David Copperfield: 250
Declaration of Independence: 107
Don Quixote: 273
Émile: 108
Faust: 28
Frogs: 158
Gulliver's Travels: 224
Hamlet: 79
Heart of Darkness: 51
Jane Eyre: 4
The Jew of Malta: 79
Kim: 51
London: 225
Lysistrata: 158
Medea: 159
Middlemarch: 251
The Mysteries of Udolpho: 135
Oedipus at Colonus: 159
Oration on the Dignity of Man: 178
Out of Africa: 52
Prometheus Unbound: 297
Robinson Crusoe: 224
The Shoemaker's Holiday: 80
The Social Contract: 108
The Spanish Tragedy: 80
The Spiritual Dialogue: 204
The Story of an African Farm: 52
Theologia Germanica: 204
Utopia: 179, 275
Vathek: 135
"The Woman at the Store": 53
Evil: 41, 85, 87, 90, 93, 94, 96, 97, 102, 121, 139, 141, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 155, 159, 166, 170, 182, 192, 193, 217, 253, 260, 276, 280, 282, 283, 284, 286, 287, 301, 302, 334
Heart of Darkness: 51
The Jew of Malta: 80
Melmoth the Wanderer: 135
The Monk: 135
The Mysteries of Udolpho: 135
She: 52
Wieland: 135
A Woman Killed with Kindness: 80
Execution: 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 99, 205, 211
Revelations of Divine Love: 203
Exile: 2, 17
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: 5
Existentialism: 114, 116, 117
Exploitation: 57, 65, 70, 71

F

Family Life: 161, 253, 259, 303, 320
Dyscolus: 158
Farm and Rural Life: 27, 30, 32, 36, 43, 49, 55, 64, 223, 229, 246, 253, 255, 267, 268, 293, 298, 300, 304, 311, 312, 326, 328, 331, 333, 337
The Blithedale Romance: 322
London: 225
Middlemarch: 251
Out of Africa: 52
Pride and Prejudice: 296
The Story of an African Farm: 52
Walden: 323
"The Woman at the Store": 53
Fate and Chance: 7, 8, 15, 17, 36, 37, 39, 45, 82, 86, 90, 92, 94, 99, 102, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 160, 161, 168, 170, 308, 309, 310
Andromaque: 28
Jude the Obscure: 4
Oedupus the King: 159
Pride and Prejudice: 296
Fear and Terror: 85, 94, 96, 105, 113, 114, 118, 121, 123, 130, 131, 132, 133, 136, 137, 139, 140, 141, 143, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149
"The Fall of the House of Usher": 134
Feminism: 57, 60, 63, 69, 70, 73
She: 52
Film: 49
A Passage to India: 52
Folklore: 42, 66, 121, 124, 139, 142, 146, 148, 153, 312
The Castle of Otranto: 133
Freedom: 113, 114, 121, 122, 125, 128, 294, 295, 299, 300, 315
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: 295
Prometheus Unbound: 297
French Revolution: 104, 106, 113, 140, 141, 142, 145, 253, 256
The Social Contract: 108

G

Gender Roles: 68
Ghost: 81, 82, 86, 133, 137, 145, 148, 149, 150, 151, 283, 284, 311, 313, 316
Hamlet: 79, 274
God: 93, 94, 95, 101, 102, 103, 104, 109, 111, 115, 116, 121, 122, 156, 157, 163, 164, 174, 177, 179, 180, 182, 183, 185, 187, 189, 190, 192, 193, 199, 200, 202, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 211, 213, 215, 216, 217, 219, 276, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 289, 292, 298, 299, 300, 301, 308, 309, 324, 325, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 340, 341, 342
Bacchae: 158
The Cloud of Unknowing: 202
The Exemplar: 202
The Fire of Love: 202

God (continued)
Frogs: 158
Leaves of Grass: 322
Meister Eckhart's Sermons: 203
Nature: 323
Prometheus Unbound: 297
Revelations of Divine Love: 203
The Soul's Journey into God: 203, 204
The Spiritual Dialogue: 204
The Spiritual Espousals: 204
Theologia Germanica: 204
Goodness: 104, 109, 111, 114, 121
Gothicism: 130, 131, 132, 133, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153
The Castle of Otranto: 133
"The Fall of the House of Usher": 134
Frankenstein: 134
Melmoth the Wanderer: 134, 135
The Monk: 135
The Mysteries of Udolpho: 135
Vathek: 135
Wieland: 135
Greed: 81, 97, 121, 124
Grief and Sorrow: 108, 119, 120, 125, 127, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317
"To Autumn": 297
Grotesque: 139, 147
Guilt: 66, 68, 72, 168, 170
The Story of an African Farm: 52

H

Happiness and Gaiety: 13, 16, 17, 93, 94, 95, 98, 108, 109, 111, 116, 120, 122, 127, 128, 205, 206, 207, 293, 298, 301, 314, 315, 316, 317, 325, 335, 337, 338, 340
The Bell Jar: 3
The Fire of Love: 202
Great Expectations: 4
Revelations of Divine Love: 203
Songs of Innocence and of Experience: 297
The Soul's Journey into God: 204
Hatred: 27, 32, 37, 44, 58, 62, 70, 72, 81, 82, 93, 95, 96, 99, 102, 113, 118, 126, 128, 129, 136, 142, 147, 150, 153, 166, 170, 258, 336, 339, 341, 342
"Ball of Fat": 250
Leaves of Grass: 322
Lysistrata: 158
A Passage to India: 52
The Social Contract: 108
"The White Man's Burden": 53
Heaven: 45, 95, 101, 121, 122, 124, 127, 182, 185, 192, 205, 208, 338, 340, 341
Revelations of Divine Love: 203
Hell: 282, 283, 284
Heritage and Ancestry: 137, 145, 149, 150, 152
Heroism: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 30, 31, 46, 49, 50, 63, 64, 70, 90, 91, 98, 101, 113, 122, 123, 126, 128, 137, 138, 143, 144, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 158, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 170, 293, 294
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: 3
Andromaque: 28
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: 295
Frankenstein: 134, 296
Great Expectations: 4
Iliad: 29
Jane Eyre: 4
Medea: 29
Melmoth the Wanderer: 135
Of Human Bondage: 5
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: 5
She: 52
The Social Contract: 108
Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship: 5
A Woman Killed with Kindness: 81
History: 2, 10, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 32, 33, 40, 42, 43, 45, 47, 48, 56, 57, 58, 61, 63, 64, 67, 68, 69, 73, 84, 85, 87, 90, 91, 98, 99, 101, 102, 104, 107, 113, 114, 120, 132, 139, 140, 142, 166, 168, 176, 180, 182, 183, 187, 194, 195, 196, 197, 213, 221, 222, 223, 228, 229, 231, 232, 253, 259, 270, 272, 273, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 295, 298, 299, 304, 311, 314, 316, 317, 326, 339
Encyclopédie: 108
Iliad: 29
Leaves of Grass: 322
Nature: 323
Out of Africa: 52
The Prince: 274
Prometheus Unbound: 297
Woman in the Nineteenth Century: 324
Homelessness: 60, 71, 73
Honor: 2, 5, 15, 16, 21, 34, 36, 38, 151, 152, 175, 200, 201, 211, 246, 247, 340
Frankenstein: 134
Great Expectations: 4
The Human Comedy: 251
Iliad: 29
A Woman Killed with Kindness: 80
Hope: 55, 61, 72, 82, 91, 92, 94, 95, 102, 115, 116, 122, 124, 128, 229, 243, 304, 306, 308, 309, 311, 320, 335, 339, 341
Candide: 107
Kim: 51
A Passage to India: 52
Songs of Innocence and of Experience: 297
Human Condition: 233
Humanism: 98, 99, 100, 102, 174, 175, 176, 177, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 271, 272, 273, 276, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 326, 333, 335
Book of Elegances, or Elegances of the Latin Language: 178
The Essays: 273
Hamlet: 273, 274
Oration on the Dignity of Man: 179
The Praise of Folly: 274
Utopia: 179
Humor: 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 77, 78, 81, 82, 89, 97, 100, 120, 122, 123, 124, 156, 160, 161, 162, 168, 232, 234, 241, 244, 316, 317
Everyman in His Humour: 79
Frogs: 158

I

Idealism: 327, 334, 337, 339
Ignorance: 37, 61, 77, 78, 100, 104, 105, 110, 117, 120, 122, 127, 137, 145, 149, 150, 190, 191, 193, 195, 218, 243, 301, 310, 313
"The Fall of the House of Usher": 134
Imagery and Symbolism: 15, 16, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 44, 46, 65, 68, 69, 72, 73, 140, 146, 148, 149, 150, 152, 207, 208, 209, 226, 227, 228, 235, 237, 238, 239, 240, 243, 263, 265, 267, 268, 292, 313, 336
Faust: 29
Germinal: 251
Invisible Man: 4
Leaves of Grass: 322
She: 52
"To Autumn": 297
Imagination: 17, 18, 35, 77, 91, 100, 101, 102, 133, 146, 149, 152, 153, 221, 228, 230, 231, 236, 240, 243, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 316, 317
The Castle of Otranto: 133

Imperialism: 48, 49, 50, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 60, 61, 63, 64, 67, 68, 69, 70, 73
Heart of Darkness: 51
Kim: 51
"The White Man's Burden": 53
Incest: 150, 151, 152, 153
"The Fall of the House of Usher": 134
The Individual and Society: 111, 190, 195
Individualism: 102, 103
Industrial Revolution: 298, 301, 304, 305, 306
Insanity: 131, 137, 140, 148
Wieland: 135
Intuition: 327, 334, 336, 337, 338, 340, 341
Irony: 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 273, 276, 293, 307, 314, 315, 316, 318

J

Jacobean Age: 78, 79, 84, 87, 92
Journalism: 222, 223, 224, 226, 231
Gulliver's Travels: 224
Judaism: 81, 176, 177, 180, 183
The Jew of Malta: 79, 80
Oration on the Dignity of Man: 179

K

Killers and Killing: 30, 33, 59, 66, 67, 68, 69, 83, 90, 95, 113, 114, 115, 116, 125, 126, 140, 141, 151, 152, 169, 170, 183, 200, 209, 252, 262, 276, 307, 308, 309
Bacchae: 158
Hamlet: 274
Medea: 29
Oedupus the King: 159
A Passage to India: 52
The Spanish Tragedy: 80
Wieland: 135
A Woman Killed with Kindness: 81
Kindness: 1, 7, 10, 11, 82, 91, 99, 100, 107, 116, 117, 118, 120, 192, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289
Book of the Courtier: 178
Great Expectations: 4
A Woman Killed with Kindness: 81
Knowledge: 6, 11, 13, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 26, 30, 31, 36, 39, 40, 43, 60, 62, 63, 66, 67, 71, 72, 105, 106, 111, 114, 116, 117, 120, 128, 137, 140, 147, 174, 175, 176, 179, 180, 182, 183, 189, 190, 192, 193, 195, 197, 201, 211, 213, 215, 216, 217, 219, 221, 226, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 241, 242, 243, 244, 271, 276, 280, 281, 284, 292, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 313, 315, 316, 318, 324, 325, 327, 335, 338, 340, 341, 342
Émile: 108
Encyclopédie: 108
Familiar Letters: 178
Faust: 29
Medea: 29

L

Landscape: 26, 32, 36, 43, 46, 47, 48, 49, 54, 56, 58, 61, 62, 64, 67, 68, 120, 121, 122, 126, 127, 128, 132, 133, 137, 139, 141, 144, 146, 149, 229, 234, 239, 294, 295, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 309, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 321, 337, 338, 340
"The Fall of the House of Usher": 134
Gulliver's Travels: 224
Of Dramatick Poesie: An Essay: 224
Robinson Crusoe: 225
She: 52
Walden: 323, 324
Law and Order: 2, 9, 17, 26, 27, 31, 41, 47, 76, 78, 79, 83, 84, 85, 86, 88, 91, 92, 93, 95, 96, 100, 105, 106, 111, 113, 114, 121, 122, 124, 125, 131, 133, 137, 151, 155, 156, 161, 165, 166, 168, 169, 170, 175, 176, 179, 183, 184, 185, 190, 191, 194, 195, 196, 197, 247, 248, 256, 257, 258, 266, 271, 272, 279, 285, 286, 287, 289, 319, 324, 326, 328, 330, 331, 332
Antigone: 158
Book of the Courtier: 178
Jude the Obscure: 4
Madame Bovary: 251
Oedipus at Colonus: 159
Oration on the Dignity of Man: 178
Oresteia: 159
The Shoemaker's Holiday: 80
Limitations and Opportunities: 5, 8, 12, 15, 17, 19, 20, 22, 54, 56, 58, 60, 63, 278, 281, 283, 284, 285
The Essays: 273
"The Woman at the Store": 53
Literary Criticism: 64, 70, 105, 132, 138, 142, 222, 231, 235, 248, 258, 263, 280, 285, 286, 289, 290, 302, 320, 330
Book of Elegances, or Elegances of the Latin Language: 178
Frogs: 158
Woman in the Nineteenth Century: 324
Literary Eras: 48
Loneliness: 67, 174, 180, 303, 308, 311
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: 295
Frankenstein: 296
"The Woman at the Store": 53
Love and Passion: 1, 6, 8, 14, 15, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 39, 40, 41, 44, 61, 62, 65, 66, 67, 68, 70, 77, 81, 82, 83, 89, 91, 94, 99, 105, 114, 115, 116, 117, 119, 121, 128, 130, 131, 132, 133, 141, 144, 145, 150, 152, 157, 160, 161, 165, 169, 170, 174, 175, 176, 177, 180, 193, 197, 200, 201, 204, 205, 206, 208, 209, 213, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 221, 229, 236, 242, 294, 304, 308, 309, 311, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 322, 326, 327, 330, 331, 338, 340, 342
Andromaque: 28
Book of the Courtier: 178
Candide: 107
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: 296
The Cloud of Unknowing: 202
The Exemplar: 202
The Fire of Love: 202
Jane Eyre: 4
Leaves of Grass: 322
Medea: 29, 159
Melmoth the Wanderer: 134
The Monk: 135
Nature: 323
Of Human Bondage: 5
Revelations of Divine Love: 203
The Spiritual Dialogue: 204
"To Autumn": 297
Vathek: 135
Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship: 5
Lower Class: 252, 253, 255, 257
Loyalty: 44, 81, 91, 95, 102, 140, 147, 152, 183, 184, 185, 193, 199, 201, 202, 211, 212, 215, 216, 217, 327, 333, 336, 338, 339
The Cloud of Unknowing: 202
The Fire of Love: 202
Iliad: 29
Theologia Germanica: 204

M

Marriage: 8, 11, 12, 15, 64, 65, 67, 69, 88, 90, 92, 131, 132, 144, 152, 161, 162, 253, 258, 259, 293, 294, 295, 308, 310, 311, 314, 316, 320, 332
The Castle of Otranto: 133
Jude the Obscure: 4
Out of Africa: 52

Marriage (continued)
Sons and Lovers: 5
Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship: 5
Masque: 78, 83, 84, 92
Materialism: 333, 335, 338, 339, 340
Mathematics: 239, 243, 244
Memoir: 49, 55, 57, 68, 69
Out of Africa: 52
Middle Ages: 130, 132, 133, 137, 138, 139, 140, 142, 145, 148, 149, 150, 153, 176, 179, 180, 185, 190, 192, 194, 195, 199, 200, 201, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 211, 212, 213, 215, 216, 219, 270, 275, 276, 278, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 289
The Castle of Otranto: 133
Don Quixote: 273
Melmoth the Wanderer: 134
The Mysteries of Udolpho: 135
The Praise of Folly: 274
Vathek: 135
Middle Class: 2, 6, 9, 10, 11, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 293, 294, 298, 300, 304
Pride and Prejudice: 296
Middle East: 49, 50, 55, 58, 59, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72
Kim: 51
A Passage to India: 52
Modernism: 49, 50, 55, 56, 57, 62
Heart of Darkness: 51
Kim: 51
Lord Jim: 52
Monarchy: 25, 27, 31, 36, 38, 45, 47, 76, 77, 78, 79, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 102, 103, 106, 113, 116, 119, 121, 123, 128, 138, 139, 140, 150, 151, 152, 161, 166, 170, 176, 185, 192, 193, 196, 197, 222, 223, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 238, 271, 272, 276, 277, 279, 280, 284, 285, 287, 288, 289, 290
Aeneid: 27
Andromaque: 28
Antigone: 158
Bacchae: 158
The Castle of Otranto: 133
Declaration of Independence: 107
Hamlet: 79, 274
The Jew of Malta: 80
Oedupus the King: 159
Prometheus Bound: 159
Tamburlaine the Great: 80
Money and Economics: 32, 34, 36, 37, 43, 45, 53, 57, 58, 60, 61, 67, 71, 74, 77, 94, 99, 106, 111, 113, 118, 121, 183, 185, 186, 192, 195, 209, 210, 222, 227, 238, 244, 251, 252, 259, 294, 298, 300, 301, 305, 306, 313, 320, 321, 325, 328, 330, 331, 337
"Ball of Fat": 250
The Blithedale Romance: 322
Crime and Punishment: 250
David Copperfield: 250
The Jew of Malta: 79
London: 226
Out of Africa: 52
Robinson Crusoe: 225
Walden: 323
Woman in the Nineteenth Century: 324
Monologue: 83, 122, 123
Mood: 139, 312, 313, 317
"The Fall of the House of Usher": 134
Morals and Morality: 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 37, 40, 43, 44, 46, 47, 48, 54, 55, 57, 60, 63, 67, 69, 71, 77, 84, 85, 86, 90, 91, 93, 94, 96, 98, 99, 101, 102, 106, 108, 109, 111, 117, 121, 122, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 131, 142, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 155, 160, 166, 170, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 201, 211, 215, 222, 227, 228, 233, 236, 237, 239, 242, 244, 252, 253, 254, 255, 258, 259, 262, 263, 265, 266, 267, 268, 272, 275, 276, 280, 282, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 294, 300, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 320, 321, 324, 327, 328, 331, 335, 339, 340
Anna Karenina: 249
Antigone: 158
Bacchae: 158
The Blithedale Romance: 322
Familiar Letters: 178
Faust: 28
Frogs: 158
Great Expectations: 4
Heart of Darkness: 51
Iliad: 29
Kim: 51
Leaves of Grass: 322
Lord Jim: 51, 52
Medea: 29
Oedipus at Colonus: 159
Of Dramatick Poesie: An Essay: 224
The Social Contract: 108
The Spiritual Espousals: 204
Utopia: 179
Wieland: 135
A Woman Killed with Kindness: 81
Murder: 81, 82, 90, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 137, 147, 149, 150, 152, 161, 163, 167, 169, 170, 253, 257, 267, 272, 282
Crime and Punishment: 250
Hamlet: 79, 274
The Monk: 135
Oresteia: 159
The Prince: 274
Music: 25, 26, 30, 32, 44, 46, 83, 85, 87, 95, 96, 106, 108, 119, 120, 122, 127, 128, 156, 160, 162, 164, 169, 172, 173, 201, 217, 262, 263, 265, 267, 268, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: 296
The Fire of Love: 202
Oresteia: 159
Mystery and Intrigue: 49, 50, 57, 61, 63, 69, 70, 78, 81, 84, 90, 295, 306, 307, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 316, 317, 318
Kim: 51
She: 52
The Shoemaker's Holiday: 80
Mysticism: 199, 200, 201, 206, 207, 208, 209, 211, 212, 213, 215
The Exemplar: 202
Myths and Legends: 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 36, 37, 40, 43, 45, 47, 60, 66, 67, 68, 73, 113, 114, 119, 120, 123, 127, 128, 131, 137, 139, 145, 146, 148, 152, 155, 156, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 172, 182, 183, 192, 193, 306, 311, 314, 315, 316, 317
Aeneid: 27
Andromaque: 28
Bacchae: 158
The Castle of Otranto: 133
Faust: 29
Frankenstein: 296
Frogs: 158
Iliad: 29
Medea: 29, 158, 159
Melmoth the Wanderer: 135
Oresteia: 159
Prometheus Bound: 159
Prometheus Unbound: 297
Utopia: 179
Wieland: 135

N

Narration: 6, 7, 8, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 31, 40, 55, 60, 62, 63, 68, 69, 74, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 98, 133, 136, 137, 138, 139, 142, 144, 145, 146, 149, 187, 189, 190, 227, 228,

253, 258, 262, 263, 264, 266, 268, 299, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 316
Aeneid: 28
Frankenstein: 134
Heart of Darkness: 51
Lord Jim: 51, 52
Madame Bovary: 251
Melmoth the Wanderer: 134
The Mysteries of Udolpho: 135
Nationalism and Patriotism: 49, 50, 59, 65, 68, 69, 71, 72, 73, 271, 273, 286, 287, 288
Heart of Darkness: 51
A Passage to India: 52
Naturalism: 39, 40, 43, 246, 248, 249, 254, 255, 259, 260, 261
Germinal: 251
Nature: 7, 21, 26, 27, 30, 34, 36, 39, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 54, 55, 56, 57, 61, 62, 63, 64, 67, 73, 93, 94, 96, 98, 100, 111, 119, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 128, 138, 141, 146, 147, 149, 150, 151, 153, 162, 168, 170, 171, 172, 173, 179, 183, 186, 189, 190, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 206, 215, 216, 222, 223, 228, 230, 233, 234, 241, 258, 262, 267, 280, 283, 288, 289, 294, 295, 298, 299, 300, 301, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 314, 316, 317, 320, 321, 324, 325, 326, 327, 331, 333, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341
Aeneid: 27
The Exemplar: 202
Frankenstein: 296
Leaves of Grass: 322
London: 225
Nature: 323
Oration on the Dignity of Man: 178, 179
Revelations of Divine Love: 203
The Spiritual Espousals: 204
"To Autumn": 297
Walden: 324
Woman in the Nineteenth Century: 324
Nightmare: 131, 139, 145, 146, 150
Nomadic Life: 144
Melmoth the Wanderer: 134, 135
North America: 2, 9, 11, 50, 57, 58, 60, 67, 74, 246, 248, 255, 257, 258, 328, 331, 335
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: 3
The Bell Jar: 3
"The White Man's Burden": 53
Nuclear War: 183, 187

O

Ode: 224, 226, 228, 230, 295, 299, 303, 306, 307, 312, 314, 316
"To Autumn": 297
Oedipus Complex: 161, 162, 170
Oedipus at Colonus: 159
Oedupus the King: 159

P

Pagan: 175, 176, 183, 185, 193
Painting: 27, 35, 36, 41, 42, 249, 255, 263, 265, 267, 268
Parody: 123, 124, 156, 160, 161
Perception: 5, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 76, 87, 88, 91, 95, 98, 106, 109, 111, 116, 117, 119, 121, 123, 125, 131, 146, 147, 149, 150, 151, 153, 176, 180, 182, 183, 194, 205, 206, 211, 213, 214, 215, 216, 218, 231, 237, 238, 241, 242, 262, 264, 265, 266, 268, 298, 301, 304, 306, 308, 316, 336, 337, 338, 340, 341, 342
The Cloud of Unknowing: 202
The Exemplar: 202
Nature: 323
Woman in the Nineteenth Century: 324
Permanence: 58, 68, 84, 85, 90, 91, 99, 199, 211, 213, 247, 254, 255, 287, 294, 300, 304, 309, 310, 313, 317, 332, 338
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: 295
David Copperfield: 250
The Fire of Love: 202
Out of Africa: 52
Persecution: 85, 86, 95, 96, 98, 108, 113, 115, 116, 124, 126, 127, 132, 137, 150, 201, 209, 254, 262, 265
Perseverance: 293, 303, 304, 309, 312
Personal Growth: 6, 14
Personal Identity: 1, 7, 12, 13, 53, 55, 63, 65, 143, 150, 151, 196, 215, 320, 324, 332
Invisible Man: 4
Sons and Lovers: 5
Personification: 15, 17, 20, 63, 67, 68, 111, 116, 128, 144, 145, 146, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 273, 275, 276
Declaration of Independence: 107
Encyclopédie: 108
Philosophical Ideas: 1, 2, 10, 18, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27, 30, 31, 32, 34, 40, 42, 43, 44, 86, 87, 97, 104, 105, 106, 107, 109, 111, 113, 115, 116, 118, 121, 123, 124, 125, 130, 140, 141, 145, 152, 156, 160, 166, 174, 175, 176, 177, 179, 180, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 189, 190, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 229, 235, 236, 238, 240, 243, 244, 247, 248, 252, 253, 258, 265, 284, 286, 288, 292, 294, 295, 298, 301, 305, 317, 319, 320, 321, 324, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 339, 341
Anna Karenina: 249
Book of Elegances, or Elegances of the Latin Language: 178
Candide: 107
Crime and Punishment: 250
Encyclopédie: 108
Familiar Letters: 178
Hamlet: 274
Nature: 323
Oration on the Dignity of Man: 179
The Social Contract: 108
Walden: 323
Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship: 5
Woman in the Nineteenth Century: 324
Phobias: 137, 139
"The Fall of the House of Usher": 134
Pleasure: 119, 123, 125, 126, 127, 128
Plot: 7, 9, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 30, 84, 92, 99, 130, 137, 149, 150, 161, 162, 163, 166, 167, 169, 233, 311, 314
Andromaque: 28
"The Fall of the House of Usher": 134
Gulliver's Travels: 224
Iliad: 29
The Monk: 135
Robinson Crusoe: 225
Poetry: 2, 15, 16, 17, 18, 26, 27, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 40, 41, 44, 50, 54, 65, 66, 68, 77, 78, 82, 91, 99, 100, 101, 107, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 133, 139, 144, 149, 157, 164, 166, 167, 168, 180, 181, 186, 191, 192, 193, 194, 196, 197, 221, 222, 223, 224, 226, 227, 228, 230, 232, 233, 234, 236, 243, 248, 255, 265, 267, 278, 280, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 292, 293, 294, 295, 297, 298, 299, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 318, 321, 322, 324, 325, 326, 329, 332, 336, 337, 338, 339, 342

Poetry (continued)
Aeneid: 28
The Bell Jar: 3
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: 295, 296
Familiar Letters: 178
Iliad: 29
Leaves of Grass: 322, 323
London: 225
Medea: 29
Nature: 323
Of Dramatick Poesie: An Essay: 224
Oresteia: 159
A Passage to India: 52
Prometheus Unbound: 297
Songs of Innocence and of Experience: 297
The Spanish Tragedy: 80
Tamburlaine the Great: 80
"To Autumn": 297
"The White Man's Burden": 53
Point of View: 11, 12, 18, 42, 43, 44, 55, 83, 91, 101, 124, 125, 338, 340, 341, 343
Lord Jim: 52
Politicians: 77, 88, 100, 176, 182, 195, 197, 248, 256, 257, 272, 273, 277, 288
The Jew of Malta: 79
The Praise of Folly: 274
The Shoemaker's Holiday: 80
Politics: 9, 11, 16, 18, 20, 25, 30, 31, 32, 33, 37, 43, 45, 46, 47, 53, 55, 58, 59, 60, 61, 64, 67, 69, 70, 71, 73, 74, 78, 83, 85, 86, 87, 91, 95, 97, 98, 102, 104, 105, 106, 108, 110, 111, 112, 113, 117, 125, 128, 130, 131, 132, 133, 140, 156, 157, 160, 162, 165, 166, 168, 169, 171, 175, 176, 183, 184, 185, 186, 188, 189, 190, 193, 194, 195, 197, 222, 226, 227, 228, 229, 248, 249, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 267, 269, 271, 272, 276, 278, 286, 288, 289, 290, 294, 298, 299, 300, 302, 306, 319, 320, 321, 324, 326, 328, 330, 331, 333, 335, 341
Aeneid: 28
Book of the Courtier: 177
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: 295
Declaration of Independence: 107
Émile: 108
Encyclopédie: 108
Faust: 29
Frogs: 158
Germinal: 251
Gulliver's Travels: 224
A Hazard of New Fortunes: 251
Kim: 51
Leaves of Grass: 323
London: 226
Lysistrata: 158
Madame Bovary: 251
Nature: 323
A Passage to India: 52
The Prince: 274, 275
Prometheus Unbound: 297
The Social Contract: 108
The Story of an African Farm: 52
Utopia: 275
Woman in the Nineteenth Century: 324
Postcolonialism: 49, 57, 63, 70, 73, 74
Postmodernism: 187, 189, 190
Poverty: 113, 121, 124
Pride: 81, 93, 95, 99, 102, 116, 120, 121, 122, 124
Prophecy: 146, 150, 151, 276, 284, 309, 313, 317
Prostitution:
"Ball of Fat": 250
Protestantism: 76, 85, 86, 87, 176, 183, 184, 185, 193, 211, 213, 222, 227, 228, 229, 238, 271, 272, 273, 280, 286
Psychology and the Human Mind: 1, 3, 5, 8, 9, 14, 15, 22, 23, 25, 41, 44, 45, 46, 47, 55, 61, 62, 63, 64, 70, 73, 81, 92, 97, 105, 111, 118, 130, 131, 142, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 155, 182, 183, 184, 190, 192, 206, 207, 211, 213, 216, 230, 231, 235, 236, 237, 240, 241, 242, 246, 247, 248, 249, 253, 254, 258, 260, 282, 286, 298, 306, 307, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 317, 318, 333, 334, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341
Aeneid: 28
Bacchae: 158
The Bell Jar: 3
Crime and Punishment: 250
Émile: 108
Hamlet: 274
Heart of Darkness: 51
The Human Comedy: 251
Madame Bovary: 251
Oedupus the King: 159
Pride and Prejudice: 296
She: 52
Sons and Lovers: 5
The Soul's Journey into God: 203
Wieland: 135
Punishment: 91, 96, 97, 98, 104, 112, 114, 121, 123, 160, 161, 168, 169, 170
Oresteia: 159
Prometheus Bound: 159
A Woman Killed with Kindness: 81

R

Race: 50, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 60, 64, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72
Kim: 51
Racism and Prejudice: 49, 53, 54, 60, 70, 73
Realism: 3, 10, 21, 22, 25, 27, 40, 43, 246, 247, 248, 249, 253, 254, 255, 258, 259, 260, 262, 264, 265, 266, 267
Aeneid: 28
Recreation: 83, 85, 91, 96, 97, 98, 101, 298, 304, 305
The Reformation: 175, 185, 211, 212
Regionalism: 246, 255
Religion and Religious Thought: 2, 25, 26, 30, 32, 33, 36, 40, 43, 46, 47, 60, 65, 72, 84, 85, 90, 102, 104, 105, 106, 108, 109, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 121, 124, 125, 126, 131, 132, 140, 145, 155, 156, 157, 160, 161, 163, 164, 166, 168, 169, 170, 171, 175, 176, 177, 180, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 189, 193, 197, 201, 204, 205, 206, 210, 215, 222, 227, 228, 229, 240, 248, 249, 252, 253, 258, 262, 271, 272, 273, 275, 282, 283, 284, 286, 294, 300, 301, 302, 310, 314, 316, 319, 320, 324, 325, 327, 328, 330, 333, 334, 335, 338, 340, 341, 342
Antigone: 158
Bacchae: 158
Birds: 158
Candide: 107
Crime and Punishment: 250
Émile: 108
Encyclopédie: 108
Faust: 29
The Fire of Love: 202
Frankenstein: 296
Frogs: 158
Iliad: 29
Jude the Obscure: 4
Kim: 51
Middlemarch: 251
Nature: 323
Oration on the Dignity of Man: 178
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: 5
The Praise of Folly: 274
Prometheus Bound: 159
Prometheus Unbound: 297
Robinson Crusoe: 225
Wieland: 135
Religious Drama: 77, 84
Religious Works: 201, 205, 206, 207, 210
The Renaissance: 174, 182, 183, 184, 186, 187, 191, 193, 270, 273,

275, 276, 278, 279, 280, 281, 285, 286, 288, 289
Adages: 177
Utopia: 275
Revenge: 81, 82, 83, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 150, 151, 155, 156, 166, 168, 169, 170
Bacchae: 158
Hamlet: 79
Medea: 158, 159
Oresteia: 159
A Woman Killed with Kindness: 80
Roman Catholicism: 185, 186, 193, 195, 196, 200, 209, 211, 270, 271, 273, 275, 279, 280, 283
Romanticism: 32, 34, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 224, 229, 230, 292, 299, 302, 303, 304, 306, 312, 320, 326
Nature: 323

S

Saints: 38, 45, 47, 185, 191, 202, 209, 216, 340, 343
Salvation: 95, 180, 183, 196
Satire: 31, 32, 77, 85, 107, 110, 117, 118, 119, 122, 156, 160, 222, 223, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 240, 271, 277
Birds: 158
Candide: 107
Gulliver's Travels: 224
The Jew of Malta: 79
London: 225
The Praise of Folly: 274
The Prince: 275
The Rape of the Lock: 225
Science and Technology: 2, 9, 13, 14, 57, 60, 61, 63, 68, 72, 74, 104, 106, 107, 108, 109, 111, 113, 123, 125, 126, 140, 145, 182, 183, 184, 186, 187, 189, 192, 193, 228, 238, 278, 282, 285, 294, 295, 299, 301, 328, 333, 334, 335, 338, 339
Encyclopédie: 108
Frankenstein: 134
The Prince: 275
Sculpture: 148, 150, 151, 152
Search For Knowledge: 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 25, 26, 38, 47, 54, 59, 64, 68, 71, 73, 95, 100, 101, 106, 109, 122, 175, 176, 177, 179, 181, 189, 190, 191, 194, 197, 271, 273, 275, 276, 278, 284, 285, 324, 325, 327, 331, 335, 341
Émile: 108
Kim: 51
Oration on the Dignity of Man: 178
Self-confidence: 94, 101, 174, 183, 187, 188, 189, 226, 227, 229, 230, 234, 276, 283, 284, 285
Oration on the Dignity of Man: 179
Tamburlaine the Great: 80
Self-realization: 3, 5, 7, 8, 15, 17, 18, 21, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 116, 117, 123, 124, 128, 136, 140, 145, 146, 150, 182, 186, 187, 193, 196, 204, 205, 206, 213, 219, 324, 341
Candide: 107
Declaration of Independence: 107
Encyclopédie: 108
The Fire of Love: 202
Nature: 323
Sons and Lovers: 5
Sentimentality: 146, 147, 149, 150, 153, 228, 229, 244
Setting: 5, 7, 11, 27, 30, 31, 39, 48, 50, 60, 132, 137, 139, 146, 148, 149, 150, 153, 246, 253, 255, 259, 293, 298, 300
"The Fall of the House of Usher": 134
Vathek: 135
Sex and Sexuality: 60, 61, 62, 65, 68, 70, 132, 144, 151, 152, 322, 326, 328, 329, 339
Frankenstein: 134
Leaves of Grass: 322
She: 52
Sexual Abuse: 68, 69
Sickness: 82, 92, 199, 200, 205, 206, 209, 293, 294, 312, 313
Revelations of Divine Love: 203
The Spiritual Dialogue: 204
Sin: 20, 26, 42, 63, 69, 70, 85, 87, 90, 93, 94, 97, 104, 109, 111, 113, 114, 116, 137, 139, 142, 144, 145, 150, 152, 175, 183, 185, 186, 193, 195, 204, 205, 209, 210, 211, 213, 227, 258, 275, 277, 286, 300, 324, 326, 334
The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn: 3
The Castle of Otranto: 133
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: 295
David Copperfield: 250
Declaration of Independence: 107
Frankenstein: 296
Madame Bovary: 251
The Praise of Folly: 274
Pride and Prejudice: 296
Revelations of Divine Love: 203
The Social Contract: 108
Utopia: 179
Vathek: 135
Slavery: 57, 61, 67, 69, 70, 257, 320, 321, 322, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 330, 331, 332
Social Order: 2, 72, 88, 123, 125, 164, 166, 300, 326
Social Protest: 320, 321, 324, 325, 326, 331
Leaves of Grass: 323
Solitude: 201, 205, 216, 294, 304
Soothsayer: 284
Soul: 94, 95, 97, 103, 145, 148, 176, 180, 192, 200, 205, 206, 208, 211, 215, 219, 280, 282, 283, 284, 287, 289, 319, 320, 322, 324, 325, 326, 327, 331, 336, 337, 338, 340, 342
The Cloud of Unknowing: 202
Leaves of Grass: 322
Meister Eckhart's Sermons: 203
Melmoth the Wanderer: 134, 135
The Monk: 135
Nature: 323
The Soul's Journey into God: 203, 204
The Spiritual Dialogue: 204
The Spiritual Espousals: 204
Space Exploration and Study: 292, 298, 306, 310
Prometheus Unbound: 297
Spanish Inquisition: 114, 115
Spiritual Leaders: 77, 84, 85, 88, 91, 92, 93, 100, 102, 112, 114, 116, 118, 119, 121, 124, 177, 183, 184, 185, 200, 201, 202, 209, 210, 211, 215, 224, 226, 228, 229, 230, 233, 234, 272, 273, 277, 278, 279, 283, 284, 293, 294, 299, 300, 301, 306, 309, 316, 319, 320, 331, 334, 340
The Cloud of Unknowing: 202
The Rape of the Lock: 225
The Spiritual Dialogue: 204
Spirituality: 86, 92, 94, 95, 102, 103, 114, 116, 122, 125, 126, 127, 174, 175, 176, 177, 182, 183, 185, 186, 187, 190, 192, 193, 195, 199, 200, 201, 205, 206, 211, 276, 277, 280, 283, 288, 300, 301, 303, 304, 308, 309, 316, 326, 327, 328, 334, 336, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342
Revelations of Divine Love: 203
The Soul's Journey into God: 203
A Woman Killed with Kindness: 80
Sports and the Sporting Life: 91, 96, 102, 103
Storms and Weather Conditions: 61, 64, 66, 131, 136, 146, 148, 149, 294, 295, 306, 308, 309, 311
The Castle of Otranto: 133
Structure: 6, 7, 10, 11, 30, 44, 45, 84, 85, 91, 96, 139, 142, 162, 166, 167, 172, 226, 227, 233, 289, 290, 292, 300, 303

Structure (continued)
The Essays: 273
The Mysteries of Udolpho: 135
Of Dramatick Poesie: An Essay: 224
The Sublime: 136, 139, 141, 149, 292, 295, 298, 299
Frankenstein: 296
The Mysteries of Udolpho: 135
Success and Failure: 49, 50
Out of Africa: 52
The Story of an African Farm: 52
Supernatural: 82, 130, 131, 132, 136, 139, 140, 142, 149, 150, 151, 152
Frankenstein: 134
Melmoth the Wanderer: 134
The Monk: 135
The Mysteries of Udolpho: 135
Wieland: 135
Suspense: 132, 136, 137, 139
The Mysteries of Udolpho: 135

T

Time and Change: 25, 45, 55, 58, 60, 61, 67, 68, 97, 98, 100, 105, 113, 123, 126, 130, 131, 137, 139, 141, 145, 150, 176, 177, 183, 187, 189, 190, 195, 253, 254, 258, 259, 267, 301, 315, 325, 328, 331, 335
"The Fall of the House of Usher": 134
Out of Africa: 52
Tone: 56, 57, 63, 227, 241, 242, 312, 315, 317, 318, 322, 326, 329
Tragedy: 30, 37, 45, 76, 77, 78, 82, 83, 88, 89, 92, 96, 97, 155, 156, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 164, 166, 167, 171, 223, 228, 232, 233
Birds: 158
Faust: 29
Hamlet: 79
The Jew of Malta: 79
Medea: 159
The Rape of the Lock: 225
The Spanish Tragedy: 80
A Woman Killed with Kindness: 80
Transcendentalism: 319, 320, 321, 322, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343
The Blithedale Romance: 322
Leaves of Grass: 322
Nature: 323
Walden: 323
Woman in the Nineteenth Century: 324

U

Uncertainty: 30, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 44, 47, 55, 56, 57, 61, 62, 63, 64, 69, 77, 91, 93, 94, 96, 101, 102, 206, 207, 215, 216, 218, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 312, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318
Meister Eckhart's Sermons: 203
Out of Africa: 52
Understanding: 7, 16, 21, 22, 34, 42, 43, 46, 47, 57, 61, 63, 69, 70, 88, 92, 101, 120, 140, 148, 179, 180, 189, 196, 204, 209, 211, 214, 216, 235, 237, 240, 242, 243, 266, 276, 284, 288, 289, 310, 317, 324, 337, 338, 339, 342
Aeneid: 28
Meister Eckhart's Sermons: 203
Nature: 323
The Soul's Journey into God: 203
"The Woman at the Store": 53
Upper Class: 25, 27, 46, 47, 76, 79, 83, 84, 85, 90, 94, 102, 106, 108, 112, 113, 161, 164, 168, 170, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290
Oresteia: 159
Utopianism: 276, 277, 294, 304
Utopia: 275

W

War, the Military, and Soldier Life: 2, 8, 9, 10, 17, 18, 19, 25, 27, 30, 31, 32, 33, 42, 48, 49, 58, 67, 68, 77, 78, 85, 90, 98, 102, 106, 113, 120, 126, 140, 145, 156, 157, 160, 161, 163, 166, 169, 187, 247, 248, 249, 253, 255, 256, 257, 259, 271, 276, 282, 288, 290, 293, 299, 300, 304, 320, 321, 324, 326, 328, 329, 332, 333, 335, 339
Aeneid: 27
Andromaque: 28
Anna Karenina: 249
"Ball of Fat": 249, 250
Birds: 158
Candide: 107
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: 295
Declaration of Independence: 107
Frogs: 158
Iliad: 29
Lysistrata: 158
Wealth: 55, 57, 61, 66, 68, 69, 70, 73
Wildlife: 13, 14, 15, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 304, 305, 308, 309, 312, 313, 316
Wisdom: 179, 180, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 247, 253, 255, 257, 258, 259, 261, 262, 263, 266, 294, 303, 304, 309, 310, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 324, 334, 337, 340, 342
Adages: 177
Middlemarch: 251
Pride and Prejudice: 296
World War I: 48, 58, 61
Kim: 51
Out of Africa: 52

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