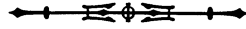


The Twentieth Century



Ways In

The instructor who turns to this last section of the instructor's manual, devoted to the twentieth century, will either be fresh and sparkling as a new semester or a year-long course unfolds, or else catching a second wind after traversing prior centuries or periods. You may be teaching a course with the relative luxury of being focussed on the twentieth century alone, as for example in surveys of Modern British prose and poetry, or in classes on modernist literature, both of which generally begin with Joseph Conrad or possibly let Oscar Wilde get in under the century's wire; or you may be perusing these pages rather breathlessly and short on time, with twentieth-century literature only part of a longer course with a syllabus encompassing several centuries—for you, this literary period, like the twentieth century itself, quickly draws to a close. Whether your course has the comparative freedom of the former in terms of time and pace, or if it is on the tight schedule of the latter, with no time to dawdle over lesser lights, there are a few general principles to keep in mind in addressing the twentieth-century section of the *Longman Anthology of British Literature*, and some common pedagogical goals on the fast track or the slower, leisurely path, that we hope will invigorate your teaching.

Modern British literature (that is, post-Victorian, twentieth-century British literature) rejoins or embraces world literature, in a way that British literature accomplished at several of its peak periods, but not at all. William Shakespeare is an English writer, to indicate the obvious, but Shakespearean drama and poetry have had and continue to have world-wide audiences, scholarship, and cultural implications. The epic poetry of John Milton has had similar, if slightly less powerful, reverberations across many other literatures and tongues; the British Romantic poets opened up Romanticism for Europe in general and then, as Romanticism spread as a movement, they created a literary style, and a cultural politics, which traveled across the globe. Twentieth-century British literature in many of its facets—its prose, poetry, and drama—has the same global distinction and global dissemination, and the same innovative stature, as these past exemplars. Stating this fact is not meant to create a hierarchy within British literature, labeling some of its periods or productions “greater” than others by virtue of their being more widely read, or more influential, outside Britain itself. All questions of value aside—and it would be absurd to judge Donne's poetry or Johnson's prose or Austen's novels as less great, or even less “universal,” than they manifestly are, only for not having

leapt over the divisions of language and nation quite as nimbly—it is still the case that twentieth-century British literature happens to contain many of the premier names in modernism regardless of nation or language: Conrad, Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, Beckett, Yeats, and Lawrence. They constitute a formidable line-up no other single country can match across the key genres—and genders—of modernism.

Teaching the twentieth-century section of the *Longman Anthology*, then, has as a great plus the chance to watch British literature set many of the standards that ultimately will count as “modernist art” around the world, and to see English literature in action as a foremost innovator on the world scene. One common thread in the following guides to teaching the individual works or authors of the last section will emphasize ways the selections from this period can stand alone as a study in modernism, a compact modernist lineage. The changes occurring in the novel, in poetry, and in drama in the twentieth century—how they become “modern” in formal terms—can all be witnessed at their height in the authors of this section, who offer a lexicon of modernist literature just as experimental, powerful, and influential as Picasso’s paintings or Einstein’s physics for the lexicon of modernist art and modern science, respectively. The most dynamic—and true—way to present the century’s literature is at that high level of technical innovation and lasting human import: British literature in the twentieth century alters the forms and the roles of art.

Modernist form is by no means the only hallmark of twentieth-century British literature, but it is to be meaningfully discerned even in writers whose works, however monumental, might appear to have more than one foot set in a previous century. The two extraordinary writers in the section who most bear this out are George Bernard Shaw and Thomas Hardy, both Victorianists by birth, education, and literary training, yet each of whom stakes a claim to modernism in unique ways: Shaw in the de-centered, ensemble nature of his drama, and Hardy in the old-fashioned echoes within his very modern poetry. What makes something “modern,” then, whether work of art, idea, or even person, is and should be a constant refrain in teaching the twentieth-century canon. One path through the *Anthology* selections, then, would involve extracting the modernist nugget—the works of Conrad, Hardy, Yeats, Eliot, Joyce, Woolf, Beckett, and Lawrence—and using the Perspectives sections as surrounding and deepening contexts: in other words, foregrounding the era’s literary experimentation and achievements. Exploring the modernist “nugget” just described need not be only a formal enterprise—if the basis for our anthology holds, aesthetic choices are never divorced from cultural, historical, and political roots. One of the most exciting approaches to the modernist canon embedded in the section would be to tease out the complex literary geographies modernism contains, starting with Conrad’s foreignness and tracing modernism through the diverse cultures, classes, genders and regions of its development. Another pathway to adopt as a supplement to the primarily literary-historical route would focus on key issues emerging in the period, which spill over into the literature and also arise from within it: one such issue is the encounter with difference and diversity brought about by the loss of empire, through the challenges of independence movements and struggles, including women’s suffrage and trade unionism. Under such scrutiny, “British” modernism quickly reveals its fragmentation and its “otherness”; consider a syllabus which inves-

tigates how modernism came to be such an off-center movement in cultural terms, and why the greatest modernist writers in its tradition are women, or Irish, or working-class, or foreign-born. Modernism stands revealed as a veritable encounter with difference—in some cases literally, as in encounters across race, culture, or class; in some cases metaphorically, as Virginia Woolf insists on the productive silences of women's voices and lives. Wyndham Lewis's work sketches a modernist recoil from the masses; D. H. Lawrence's writing explores the intertwining of sexuality and power in class terms. England's cultural "opposite" for six hundred years had been its colony Ireland; in the twentieth century, Irish writers are the fountain of British modernism. The writing of these modernist giants—Wilde, Shaw, Joyce, Yeats, Beckett—is itself an encounter with the Other, as their works hold up "the cracked looking-glass of a servant," in Joyce's phrase quoting Wilde's, in which to mirror the history of English literature and the legacy of colonialism. A course set up in this way, in other words one that took modernism as a complicated and a divided phenomenon, a series of rich encounters with differences inside and outside, would flow quite readily into the post-World War II and the contemporary parts of the *Anthology*: Conrad's modernist lineage could (and should) be traced through Naipaul, Rushdie, and Churchill, while Yeats's poetic modernism travels through to Auden, Larkin, the Irish poets Heany and Ni Dhomhnaill, ending with Derek Walcott's voyage back to Conrad.

At the heart of the twentieth-century section is Virginia Woolf's work: she is at the center of the volume because its editors see her writing as the quintessential representative of British modernism. Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* gives students the best example of the trajectory of the modernist novel, in a work that refers repeatedly to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, within a narrative that highlights the global predicament of modern Western societies, and underscores the place of women in modern culture. Moreover, Woolf's intricate prose and the audacious structuring of the novel stand as a model of modernist experimentation. In addition to including this novel, the *Anthology* provides an extensive selection from Woolf's well-known works of social thought, *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*, and several short fictions. The amplitude of the Woolf selections, allows an instructor to link Woolf's writing with the lineage of female writers who precede her in the anthology, and to connect her prose writing with the important documents of cultural thought—Milton, Johnson, Wollstonecraft, Mill, Carlyle, Arnold, Wilde, Pearse—that form a major current of British letters, sometimes oppositional, sometimes not. Gender is an explosive feature of the twentieth-century section and now has its own Perspectives section, *Regendering Modernism*; male writers like Bernard Shaw, who argues for women's equality no less passionately than Woolf does, D. H. Lawrence, whose story *The Horse Dealer's Daughter* centers on female sexuality, or Caryl Churchill, who depicts fluid sexualities and the pressures on immigrant women in particular, can be read with Woolf, West, Bowen, Mansfield, Rhys, Gordimer, and others for a multi-faceted exploration of gender and sexuality as a profound force in modern literature and life.

As any instructor knows, one of strongest techniques for teaching is the creation of cross-references, so that issues or themes or styles accumulate force as they are repeated with a difference in works that cross-reference or allude to others. The twen-

tieth-century section has a built-in engine for cross-reference in its first selection, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Critically accepted as the first modernist literary work, *Heart of Darkness* reverberates through all the prose fiction, much of the poetry, and some of the drama, even including the play, *Cloud 9*. Conrad's brief but monumental novella refers back to the travel writing of the nineteenth century in its narrative thrust, points forward to the postcolonial voices narrating their own further journeys, incorporates in its astonishing style of poetic density the developments in imagery and rhythm made by poets like Hopkins, Hardy and others, and draws on the visual sophistication of the modern painters revealed and revered in the art criticism of Ruskin, Pater, and, later, painters in the color illustrations such as Vanessa Bell. Most of the streams of critical interest in the twentieth century converge in Conrad's work, and those that seem to remain frustratingly outside it—for example, the modern awakening of women's self-awareness and self-determination—can be provocatively introduced by virtue of their absence in this rich text.

Britain is one of the few European countries to experience a revolution on its own soil during the twentieth century: the revolt for Irish independence reached its goal in the formation of the Irish Republic in 1922. The twentieth-century section of the *Anthology* provides ample selections from Irish literary and political documents—many of the latter works of literature in their own right—in order to allow the specificity of its Irishness to emerge from writing often lumped under the sanitized heading of British literature. The *Anthology* consistently emphasizes the linguistic, cultural, and political complexity of Great Britain from medieval times, and illustrates in its selections, commentaries, maps, and perspectives sections the complicated traffic between and among England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, and, later, farther-flung colonial possessions in Africa, the Caribbean, Southern Asia, Australia, and the subcontinent. The Irish case is perhaps the most fully developed one in the *Anthology*, and since it did lead to the formation of a separate nation in the twentieth century, a thoughtful literary case history centering on Irish/English literary relations could make a powerful, interesting, and coherent syllabus in and of itself. Wilde, Shaw, Parnell, Collins, Pearse, Yeats, Joyce, Bowen and Beckett could form an internal unit on modernism in art and politics. Wilde's defiant aestheticism and flouting of bourgeois norms takes on a different light when seen as a form of artistic polemic against English social norms and control; Yeats and Joyce offer two completely distinct paradigms of what political "action" might mean, and conceive of modernity in oppositional ways; Beckett's Irishness takes him to Paris and to a hiding place within the French language.

The relationship between literature and national identity, or between literature and politics, could also be a strong focus for teaching this section. Wyndham Lewis's *Manifesto* articulates a politics—verging on fascism—no less than an aesthetic program; Shaw's *Pygmalion* is a political essay in charming disguise, which counters Lewis with a form of pragmatic democratic socialism. The poetry of Owen, Sassoon, Rosenberg and others in response to the Great War is especially resonant seen in this light. The two *sui generis* memoirs of that section—David Jones's *In Parenthesis* and Robert Graves's *Goodbye to All That*—are luminous interconnections of the artistic and the political, the self and history. Evelyn Waugh's stories *Cruise* and *The Man*

Who Liked Dickens scathingly etch the decline of what he saw as England's natural aristocracy; P.G. Wodehouse vaults over social unrest to make class distinctions mostly a hilarious matter of language on holiday. George Orwell comments on the role of the committed or partisan writer, and the modern self in light of fractured or tormented histories, as do W. H. Auden, V. S. Naipaul, Ni Dhomhnaill and Heaney, in divergent ways. The vivid multiculturalism of Britain today, with its "Black British" citizens, its non-white immigrants, its openness to Europe as well as its Irish, Scottish, and Welsh communities, is signaled in works by Caryl Churchill, Angela Carter and James Kelman.

The above paragraphs have described several pathways into the rich materials of the section, suggesting modes of organization—literary language and form, cultural issues and themes, historical contexts and events, and their dynamic interaction around specific texts, writers, or even styles. In what follows, ideas for teaching individual works intersect with these broader agendas, even as they harken back to other periods or literary forebears.

Joseph Conrad

Heart of Darkness

This deceptively slim text was a fateful event in the history of fiction, a novel that set modern fiction on an entirely new course. To teach the novel is to examine what makes this a radically new narrative style, and how its innovations are linked to the historical circumstances of its production, to the story of how it came to be. The global history of imperialism that engenders this novel and pervades it is inseparable from the distinctive techniques of writing that distinguish it as a specifically modernist novel. The two tracks in pursuit of *Heart of Darkness* ultimately converge and tie together. Because the novella is so pivotal to the twentieth-century section, inaugurating post-Victorian literature, announcing British modernism, and reverberating in literary or thematic ways in virtually all the writing that follows it in the *Anthology*, this entry in the manual is longer than most, and includes a full-fledged interpretive reading of the text, as well as background for understanding it in critical and historical terms, to provide a possible paradigm for teachers of the text in the context of twentieth-century British literature.

Heart of Darkness is the story of a voice, of Marlow's voice as it issues forth from the gloom of the shipboard of the *Nellie* as she lies becalmed, waiting for the turn of the tide to begin traveling back to London, where she is moored. His voice seemingly issues from the darkness—first of all, because it is growing dark on ship, with night falling as the story unfolds. Moreover, Marlow is left in partial darkness as a character—never fully described, never given a personal history—so that human personality and character is shadowy and "flat," a silhouette. He has become nothing more, and nothing less, than a ribbon of sound. Conrad's tale moves back to one of the oldest forms of narrative, the personal tale, the story of the eyewitness, the testimony of memory, and in that sense *Heart of Darkness* certainly is a return to an old-fashioned mode, to what Walter Benjamin called "the art of the storyteller."

In that same move, however, Marlow's "living voice" is also directed toward an audience, the mostly silent companions he has on ship, the men who go by the names of their professions, the Director (a version of the CEO), the Lawyer, the Accountant. Tell students to imagine that Michael Eisner, Bill Gates, and Michael Jordan are all listening to Marlow on the deck of Steven Spielberg's yacht, to get the effect of power and privilege Conrad intends. Marlow's voice, then, is as halloved in narrative history as the voice around the campfire, telling tall tales, or the tradition of the seaman's "yarn" that begins in literature with Homer's *Odyssey*; Conrad intends these parallels too. Yet in being a voice out of the darkness, directed to a shadowy assemblage of the forces of power in modern society in the "greatest city in the world," Conrad also gives the ancient tradition a very modern twist: Marlow's voice is like the disembodied sound of the gramophone, Edison's new invention that was taking the world by storm. Marlow is an ancient mariner or a troubador type, but he is also a phonograph recording, a piece of modern technology, a technical "ghost." The ear is emphasized over the eye—just as it will be in other modernist writing, as for example in Joyce's *Dubliners* and *Ulysses*. As the narrator says, "we knew we were fated, before the ebb began to run, to hear about one of Marlow's inconclusive experiences." Hearing and telling are the ground of the story, while seeing is always a precarious achievement and a much less certain business. Marlow doesn't claim to be an eyewitness to Kurtz's and imperialism's crimes, although he was, because seeing is not believing. He relies on telling, listening, hearing.

Conrad's narrative "trick" is to make us, his readers, feel as if we are listening to the story, not reading it with our eyes. We have to "hear" its voice, just as Marlow's listeners did. One fascinating project for students is to trace the references to sight and sound, to the "oral" versus the "written" across the whole novel. The narrative, then, could be looked at abstractly as the alternation of presence and absence; the *presence* of spoken words in time makes absent their written version, or at least postpones the sense that they are written—that's the "trick"; a speaker takes over the narrative with his voice, and his voice overrides the fact that he is absent or unseen to his listeners as he speaks. Paradoxically, the goal here is "to make [us] see," as Conrad's famous preface states. "Only make them see," he yearns of his readers, who have to "hear" first in order to then "see" in their mind's eye, to transcend the absence of everything but words so that we may pass into a realm of vision beyond the words. Conrad tries to use prose in a negative fashion, in order to transcend writing and thereby embody direct utterance and vision—in other words, the voicing or sound that is so crucial to *Heart of Darkness* is a way of proposing a path out of words, written words with their inability to open out and to tell. Written words threaten to lie flat and inert and ignored on the page; spoken words can thrill, persuade, or horrify as they almost enter the body of the listener. Every experience begins with the relation of speaker to hearer and hearer to speaker: we are listening as much as we are reading, our reading is meant to take us through to a point where what we hear is Marlow's voice. Conrad's complex book leads us through sound to sight, taking the "long way around," in a sense, because the mark of modernity is a doubt that words can capture and reproduce re-

ality. The problem lies not only with words, which suddenly are seen to be much more than transparent windows onto ideas or thoughts—words are playing their own complicated game with us, as the philosopher Nietzsche among others discerned, whose thought about language was a strong influence on Conrad. “Reality” also is no longer felt to be certain, has vanished as a possibility. This arises partly because modern life makes reality hard—if not impossible—to determine: images are more real than real things at times, space and time are altered by technology, “reality” could be microscopic or telegraphic or x-rayed, or hidden in the unconscious. And, most perplexingly of all, a sense of what is real, or true, is not necessarily shared by people, whose perspectives or blindness can create their very reality. *Heart of Darkness* envisions a sharing of “truth” between speaker and listener that could escape some of the blindness of language. That attempt, though, seems bound to fail; Kurtz, for example, is reduced to a talking insubstantiality, rather than a man: “he was just a voice.” The darkness we are asked to enter in *Heart of Darkness* is a dark space where Conrad hopes that the language humans so excruciatingly use as a barrier to truth, and an obstacle to sharing what is real between ourselves, will somehow vanish, leaving in its place the complete absorption of teller and listener into an imaginative truth they share. This is one important sense of the darkness that so pervades *Heart of Darkness*: it is also a way of pushing beyond the constraints of language to suggest a shared substance, a negativity that becomes something, a darkness that can be inhabited as the shared space of memory and truth. And nonetheless, as is of course obvious, the novel is made up of words, and cannot escape using words to try to effect the very escape from them. This impasse or paradox begins to account for the importance of the voice, which helps to insist that the words are entering our minds in some other, almost telepathic way. “After *Heart of Darkness*,” the critic Marvin Mudrick says, “the recorded moment—the word—was irrecoverably symbol.”

Conrad embeds the method of this story into its own frame. Let’s step back for a moment and acknowledge how complex that frame is; we don’t have Marlow as a first-person narrator who takes over at the beginning of the story and operates ever after with authorial control, narrative certainty, perfect knowledge or at least self-knowledge. We’re taken off-balance from the start by the fact that the narrative of Marlow’s voice is framed by another narrator, never named, who sets up Marlow’s discourse for us. The narrative makes concentric circles, with Marlow’s in a sense being surrounded or circumscribed by that of the narrator. This invisible narrator is not a “voice,” but a presence on the page, and has no omniscience, no authority, no ability to testify that language can convey truth and total exposition. This narrator who establishes the opening for Marlow’s voice is not superior in knowledge to Marlow or to us; he is also a listener—and he is decidedly not Joseph Conrad. Students can be shown how unusual the lack of authorial omniscience is—the vanishing of the eighteenth-century asides like “Dear Reader,” and the nineteenth-century moral commentary of Eliot or Hardy or Dickens is decisive. In this way the novel thoroughly sets aside any internal claim to total knowledge, to capturing reality, to presenting a wholeness that can be completely revealed in the language of the work. Instead, we are insinuated into the text and reminded of its provisional-

ity. This move has many consequences: authorial omniscience is abandoned—even the text is seemingly dependent on what Marlow will say next. A passage has been made from the “closed text” of realism, as many literary critics have described it, i.e. the realist novel that can be finished, or summed up with a moral, or provided with a clearly tragic or happy ending, to the open text, where what is being told or narrated cannot be finalized, closed, or defined, since the meandering voice narrates a journey without a definitive ending, or final meaning.

The famous lines about how Marlow’s open-ended story differs from the “seaman’s tale,” a tale with a kernel of meaning inside it like a nut within a shell, are the best single source for explicating Conrad’s new method. A reader of *Heart of Darkness* can’t hope to bore in and extract a nugget of truth, to peel away a husk and extract the solid meaning within. The almost mystifying image Conrad’s narrator gives for the nature of Marlow’s storytelling is that of a moonlit glow bringing out a shimmering haze, where two insubstantialities are set in conjunction with one another. The meaning that surrounds what is being told like a vapor is, then, greater than the individual words within the sentences. The impression, in the sense of sensory impression, that is imparted by teller to listener, or reader, relies on the consciousness of the teller, not on some supposedly external reality, firm and fixed. When one probes this language, tries to open it up or make it a formula, one puts one’s hands into a retreating mist. This isn’t because Conrad is being opaque or deliberately difficult; his new mode of writing, which even his early readers recognized as “modern,” casts a net of words that fans out in a diaphanous way. To use another simile—Conrad’s style is like the many ripples passing over the surface of a pond when a stone has been thrown, because he conceives of language and knowledge in new ways. *Heart of Darkness* lodges us within a voice that knows that the teller is not separate from the tale, that what is told is the stream of consciousness. These impressions are not easily available, straightforward, complete, true or false. The Preface to *The Nigger of the “Narcissus”* included in the volume states some of these artistic intentions directly.

Every word, then, in *Heart of Darkness* becomes a kind of charged particle, receiving its valence from the words that surround it and also from its repetition over time. Individual words accrete meanings that shift and change in this work, that are as indeterminate as the misty halo, not because of some obscurity or desire to thwart the reader, but because the process of arriving at the “truth,” insofar as that is possible, must shake language, or words, from their fixed moorings, must let words open out the way a radiance surrounds a misty reflection. The words in the book are “symbolic,” but not in the older critical understanding of the symbol as a permanent meaning carried by a word or image throughout a work. Conrad’s words are incredibly important—none of them is chosen casually, none of them is “merely” descriptive. When we talk about symbols in the older way, we usually envision going on some kind of a symbol hunt, tracking down the meaning of a word or image and then fixing it in amber, or stuffing it and mounting it on the wall in order to say—yes, this symbol eluded us for a while, but we finally bagged it. The metaphor of charged particles opening the paragraph was meant to evade this sense of finitude or completion. For example, taking the images of light and dark that naturally sug-

gest themselves as vitally important to Conrad's text, one can see that they are indeterminate, unfixed, never resolving themselves into neat identifications or discrete meanings, but instead operating as fields of force in the text, moving in and through Marlow's account, where the "meaning" is never stated or defined, because it is being made, being spoken. "Dark" and "light," "white" and "black," seemingly clear-cut terms that are opposites to one another, in Conrad's lexicon reverse their meanings, or subtly exchange places. "Whiteness" can become an immensely dark moral blankness, while "blackness" can suggest revelation and truth. We have to hang on Marlow's every word, because with each word the story is created anew, the relations of the words and images to one another is altered and transformed.

The narrative form of *Heart of Darkness* makes a deliberate havoc of any simple scheme based on the quest, because the quest presupposes a final ending, reaching the goal or grail at some point. Marlow has set out on a quest of a sort—to make a trip up the river, incidentally encountering the Kurtz he has come to hear so much about—but the narrative doesn't rest on the unfolding of that search. Instead, the narrative becomes retrospective, a looking back over in memory, to find in memory an understanding of what the experience might have meant. Unlike a quest, where the hero finds what he is looking for, or at least, like Ulysses, finds his way back home, Marlow's journey is incomplete, fragmentary, and inconclusive. At the same time it is crucial for Marlow to make us see, as he sees or doesn't see. The journey of the telling takes precedence over and displaces the actual journey to Africa and back, because it is not a matter of recounting an incident and then producing a moral out of it, but rather exploring the nature of the perception and the memory of that event, whose moral is only achieved in group awareness. Marlow is as much in the dark as we his listeners are; what the novel is built out of, then, is its words. Just as the mist surrounds the halo, so will Marlow's words, his voice, become ghostly, until he is described as an ivory fetish, a blankness himself as he speaks the tale; just so will all aspects of the journey as they are described also take on a spectral glow, phantom-like at some level, unreal in the sense that their meaning is being made out of the ghostly medium of words. In that mist of interconnection we look to find what we can see behind the words of this text. Thus as one moves through it, much of the account can be read as having the unreality of a dream—"we live, as we dream, alone," Marlow says. The *Anthology* includes the song lyric "We Live, As We Dream, Alone," by the important punk band Gang of 4, in part to cite how widespread the cultural references to Conrad's masterwork are, in high art and in popular art, in fiction, film, and even popular music. The song zeroes in on one profoundly modern, or modernist, aspect of *Heart of Darkness*, which is the feeling of loneliness experienced by Marlow and, by extension, all modern people. No human community shares his, or our experiences, and Marlow, like the singer of Gang of 4's ballad, must provide whatever meaning or truth will emerge from his life on his own. Modern loneliness is summed up too in the phrase T. S. Eliot borrowed from Conrad for his poem on modern existence "The Hollow Men." In the absence of shared values and common goals, in the face of ambiguity, alienation, and solitude, human beings become hollow, become empty. Marlow, however, is not an example of a "hollow man"—he is still trying to

tell the story which, if his listeners hear it, will redeem such loneliness and replace the hollowness of amorality. The question for Marlow, as it is the question for Joseph Conrad, is whether artful language can draw people together long enough to accomplish ethical community.

The book spins out a ghostly line of narrative, with a shimmering, poetic surface of words, but is also completely rooted in historical detail—thoroughly realistic, if we want to use that word. In teaching the book in relation to the *Anthology* as a whole, emphasizing the historical particularities is as important as giving full recognition to Conrad's stylistic daring and modernist methods. Instructors should make use of the maps, which show the extent of the British empire by the turn of the century. The travel writing section of the nineteenth-century section is replete with the overtures to imperialism which bore fruit later in the century, and makes a strong companion piece with Conrad. Many of the subsequent selections—those by Forster, Waugh, Woolf, Greene, Bowen and Mansfield and Sackville-West no less than those by Naipaul, Rushdie, Rhys, Gordimer, Heaney and Walcott—are vital intertexts with the history and ideology recorded so enduringly in *Heart of Darkness*. For what Conrad writes about in *Heart of Darkness* is true history: Marlow's journey replicates the exact and horrifying conditions to be found in the Belgian Congo as they actually existed at the time, despite the fact that neither he nor Conrad ever names the country or its colonial rulers; every aspect down to the nuances of tribal differentiation is present in Conrad's work. How are these two aspects of the text compatible: its radical inconclusiveness and yet its precise realism, meticulously and subtly conveyed? Moreover, Conrad himself had made a voyage up the Congo nine years before the writing of *Heart of Darkness*, as a ship captain commissioned by a trading company in Belgium, much as Marlow happens to be given a job. Conrad's trip lasted six months, and involved bringing back a trader, Klein, who had become sick at his "station" and then died on board the ship Conrad commanded. The history of the so-called Congo Free State Conrad writes of but does not name is as follows: In 1876, King Leopold of Belgium who, in response to the smallness of his kingdom and the spirit of the age, had been looking around for an empire for some time, promoted the formation of the "International Association for the Suppression of Slavery and the Opening up of Central Africa." At its founding international conference in Brussels, he announced: "To open to civilization the only area of our globe to which it has not yet penetrated, to pierce the gloom which hangs over entire races, constitutes, if I may dare to put it this way, a Crusade worthy of this century of Progress."

Leopold had in mind a crusade in the only large area of Africa not already claimed by the chief colonial powers—England, France, Germany, and the Netherlands—and in the journalist-explorer Henry Morgan Stanley he found a comrade and co-conspirator to help him acquire it. Stanley set up a chain of stations along the upper reaches of the Congo River. The association's concern with free trade, human betterment and the abolition of slavery was purest propaganda; as soon as possible, Leopold used shameless economic and political exploitation to carve out this territory, setting the other great powers against each other, and then in Berlin in 1885 won international recognition as the sovereign ruler of the

Independent State of the Congo. He became the sole ruler of an empire of a million square miles; so ruthless was this empire that three million African lives were lost; finally, in 1906, Leopold was forced to divest himself personally of his holdings in the face of international outcry.

That is not to imply that there was a happy ending as a result, or self-determination for the Congo; merely that this style of individual or private imperialism was ended. Leopold had maintained the Congo Free State under completely different conditions than the other African colonies held by England, Germany, France and Holland. All exports from the Congo ports, and imports too, were so heavily taxed that trade could not be set up by any other countries; this turned the Congo into a warehouse of wealth for Leopold, whose intentions were not to colonize the Congo but essentially to strip it bare of all its resources, in particular ivory, wood, and important minerals. To accomplish this Leopold simply turned every "subject" into a slave; the men who Marlow sees dying under the trees in such numbers are those who had been rounded up as slave labor to create the railroad Leopold hoped would facilitate the emptying of the country: it had no use as a means of modernization, as there was no place to "go." The laborers were not fed, and so died in massive numbers when they had worked as long as they could. The very railroad Conrad describes in Marlow's reminiscences took eight years to build and was, interestingly, masterminded by a brilliant black engineer from the United States, George Washington Williams. Conrad, who was active in anti-imperialist circles, wrote often about the cause in journals and newspapers, and spoke in lectures before professional and humanitarian societies, was to call Leopold's sixteen-year reign "the vilest scramble for loot that ever disfigured the history of human consciousness." *Heart of Darkness* shows these slaves or workers dying of starvation and overwork, holding thin pieces of wire, whose meaning seems to mystify Marlow; Conrad knew well what he was writing about, as Leopold had established these lengths of wire as a form of fake currency, having bundles of wires handed out to the slaves, and thereby claiming to pay them as workers, when in fact there was no food to buy, and no value to the wire currency even if there had been any food. The tone of harsh irony Marlow adopts at the absurdity of these cruel manipulations of language—slaves as "workers," men who won't accept slavery as "criminals," useless wire as "money"—anticipates all modern critiques of politics and language, from Orwell to Rushdie. No settlements other than the stations were set up; other than these stations the primary force in the country was the militia sent out to conscript workers by burning their villages and destroying tribal living areas. The enormity of this genocidal process is hard to take in, hard to register, and it is that difficulty which Conrad speaks to in *Heart of Darkness*.

Marlow refers in a famous passage to the nature of the imperial project, that it is nothing more nor less than taking land away from those who have flatter noses than most white Westerners: "Only the idea redeems it." Recall that this is early on in his oral narrative, at a point when it is still crucial to keep the attention of his listeners, to draw them in by articulating a notion they might be thought to share. The first section of his tale is, in fact, an attempt to connect and then to reverse the trajectory of imperialism as it begins to be his subject; looking out over the Thames, he recalls

that England, too, now a seat of imperial power, was once a “place of darkness,” that it, too, was a wilderness conquered, invaded and penetrated by the Roman empire and civilization. He imagines two possible personas for this Roman stage, one a confident boat commander, the other a young citizen forced to travel out to wild Britain because of financial problems at home in Rome, and of their sense of the savagery and darkness of the England they visit. The unnamed narrator in the prologue articulates the glories of Britain in the first flush of imperialism, when adventurers and explorers like Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Francis Drake set sail to bring back loot, or to found colonies, when imperial exploits were part of dazzling personal adventures and discoveries. It is Marlow, and of course Conrad, who suggests that present-day imperialism bears little resemblance to those days of buccaneering glory, ironically reversing the terms of light and darkness so that the sheen of Renaissance golden treasure becomes the dark heart of modern British empire.

Conrad took great pains to differentiate the types of imperialism present in his time, the height of British empire-building, when Britain quite literally ruled the majority of the world. Leopold’s gangster imperialism he deemed the worst type, whereas he found somewhat better the colonial type practiced by Britain in India, for example, where British people settled, and cities, railroads, schools, and courts were built, ostensibly for the benefit of some of the native subjects, as well as the ruling British. At the time, the support for empire was near universal, so that by making such thoughtful distinctions Conrad was already branded a radical. Fifty years later, making any distinction whatsoever in the degrees of harm caused by imperialism struck many people as intolerable acceptance of a vile political practice, and Conrad received blame as an apologist for imperialism, even though he had worked so hard to confront it, study it, and criticize it. Historical hindsight is responsible for many such judgments, and these are understandable, especially when imperialism was being challenged and overthrown. Conrad’s book cannot be read as simple imperialist apology, though, if it is looked at in fairness as the extraordinary work of anti-imperialism it was in its day, and if its bitter ironies are fully understood. Class discussions which revolve around the simple binary of *Heart of Darkness* as imperialist and racist, or neither of those things, will probably not resolve much. A better approach arises in and through the literary selections which follow in the *Anthology*—especially those post-World War II—as they enter into vibrant dialogue with Conrad, sixty or more years later. It should be noted, too, that while the major African writer Chinua Achebe branded Conrad’s book “racist” in the 1950s, at the dawn of the African novel in English, on the grounds that Conrad had spoken for Africans but had not let them speak for themselves, subsequent African writers and theorists of postcolonial literature and culture have acknowledged that Conrad had little choice. He wrote in a vacuum, from the only possible “side” he could know. The many adaptations of *Heart of Darkness* by contemporary African and African-diaspora writers from Achebe to Ngugi wa-Thiongo, Soyinka and Emecheta among others, have been the most fruitful and productive response to the issue of voice.

Still, Marlow holds out the slim hope that those forms of imperialism that sincerely are motivated by an idea—of improvement, justice, or “civilizing mission”—

may be better than those forms awash in murder and hypocrisy. But if it is “the idea behind it [imperialism] that redeems it,” what is that idea, who has it, where is it confirmed? Marlow makes a distinction among imperialisms when he remarks on the colorful world map of empire hanging in the otherwise sepulchral offices of the Company that “a jolly lot of work gets done” in the red areas. Work is sacred to Marlow, and red is, of course, England’s color in the imperial banner sweepstakes—the very notion that the spaces on a map are colored according to whom they “belong” is an extraordinary inversion of the logic of color, and this paragraph about the map is, with the exception of the description of the Russian’s harlequin clothes, the only outburst of color in the somber chiaroscuro of the text. The book discriminates among imperialisms, not to support or admire one or the other, but to show the differences that exist, and perhaps to express hope that Britain will change its views on the efficacy of the “work” done in imperial contexts. Marlow describes his early boyhood relation to the map of the world and how he wanted to inscribe himself on the blankness at the heart of the imperial map. His desire to do so is also a fateful one; the snake-like river virtually uncoils itself from two-dimensionality and snares him, charms him, as he says. Here one can see the crossing over of the two tracks of analysis: the utter factuality of that imperial map, rendered precisely as it existed in history, and yet the dynamization of that map by the psychic forces of memory and consciousness at the same time. Conrad through Marlow shows us how seductive the very “blankness” was to Western eyes, who sought to know it in boyish innocence, leading to effects as grave and ghastly as the Belgian Congo takeover.

The railroad scene at the company station juxtaposes the crisply insane European clerk, who has made a fetish of whitening his laundry and wearing dazzlingly white garb no matter what the hardships on his African laundress, with the dying African men, diversely given the label of enemy or criminal by the Europeans at the station, one of whom has tied a bit of white yarn around his neck as a fetish or talisman, Marlow presumes. Marlow’s narrative shows that the white station clerk’s infernal whiteness is no less a “fetish” or primitive talisman than is the piece of yarn, which is no less ambiguous than any European self-decoration. He must move under the clichés of imperialism and racism, which would equate “black” with “savage,” tunnel into it by using these phrases ironically, as a way of getting to the heart of colonial language. The indeterminacy of darkness as the trope of Africa is the metaphor for its unknownness, the location of moral absence, the site of plenitude and discovery. Only against the darkness can one see the mist that makes the halo, or the spectral moonshine. The difficulty and the challenge to language in this first modernist work in English, is to make it at one and the same time both clear and fuzzy, both darkly ambiguous and brilliantly lucid, and brilliantly ambiguous and darkly apparent. Only out of a negativity can anything be revealed, a negativity so complex it shifts the entire terms of the modern novel. The people in the book, at least the Europeans, are negative too, as Marlow says of the bricklayer he meets, “empty inside, with nothing but a little loose dirt” there, or “they were nothing,” as he says of the pilgrims. Language takes on uncanny forms, or is described in talismanic or fetishistic ways, as if Conrad

were deliberately adopting the worst criticisms Europeans made against African natives and colonial others and turning them against Western customs; for example, when Marlowe describes the way the word ivory rings in the air “like a god to be prayed to”; or the way the “little smile of the manager of the inner station is a kind of seal set on his words”; or the ways that, since they have no shared language, Marlow regards the Africans as gestural hieroglyphs, whose every movement of the hand is a carefully wrought form of speech.

As Marlow makes his way along the river, heading toward Kurtz’s station, with several of the pilgrims irritably and gun-happily in tow, his crew made up of presumed cannibals and their dwindling stores of dead hippo meat, again and again the landscape that surrounds them, the wilderness, as Marlow thinks of it, is described as having a face, a face whose features cannot be seen, but a face nonetheless. The anthropomorphizing of the jungle, turning it into a human figure with an implacable face, is crucially related to the voice that is Kurtz’s “gift.” “I could see through a sombre gap glittering, glittering, as it flowed broadly by without a murmur. All this was great, expectant, mute, while the man jabbered about himself. I wondered whether the stillness on the face of the immensity looking at us two were meant as an appeal or a menace.” And a little later, “Somehow it didn’t bring any image with it.” The face that isn’t a face; this figural language begins to establish the wilderness as a mysterious place that will not speak itself, that refuses to reveal itself by any act of voice, and the silence that surrounds Marlow is not at all the silence of, let’s say, the proverbial forest when no one is there to hear the tree fall, but a silence that is utterly meaningful because it constitutes a refusal to speak. This form of silence is evidence that the wilderness could speak, because against its majestic and even pregnant pauses the speech of humans is a jabber, an irrelevance, a mistake. So desirous of breaking through to the meaning of that silence does Marlow become that the novel begins to use the words that derive from the vocabulary of truth and knowledge—there is a veil that Marlow wants to pierce, a veil that hides the face he wants to gaze upon for the truth that presumably lies behind. These aspects introduce the gender questions an instructor will want to highlight, and to connect to selections by Bowen, Woolf, Lawrence and others, in terms of the relationship between women and truth.

This dialectic of speech and silence, of darkness and revelation, is complexly mapped out in the novel; one place to look for its complication is in the painting Kurtz has left with the young aristocrat at the central station, which he shows to Marlow. This painting is an allegory, in the style of that period’s salon painting, but it is also an allegory that reverses expectations. “Then I noticed a small sketch in oils, on a panel, representing a woman, draped and blindfolded, carrying a lighted torch. The background was somber, almost black. The movement of the woman was stately, and the effect of the torch-light on the face was sinister.” Traditionally, it is the figure of Justice who is depicted blindfolded, carrying the scales, while the figure of Truth with her torch looks out with unfettered gaze from her representations in paint or in stone. Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals* pointed out that the icon of truth veiled as a woman was the impetus behind philosophical speculation; here that image is extraordinarily changed, the woman blindfolded

while her torch is nonetheless carried aloft. Something is awry with the “truth” of what Europeans, and Kurtz, are doing in Africa. A woman symbolizes truth (light) turned to blind darkness. The Western white women in the novel—Marlow’s Aunt, Kurtz’s Intended—are “blind” to the truth, because they have been prevented from seeing it. They live, blindfolded in a sense, within the “beautiful lies” of imperialism, never recognizing the actual truth revealed by the lit torch of Marlow’s story. Their very morality and goodness is a kind of screen or shield, keeping them from seeing “the horror, the horror” beyond.

The mask, too, is an important substitute for the desired speaking face of truth: a mask figures that possibility, but also implacably takes it away. As Marlow approaches the village where Kurtz has been living, under the guidance of Kurtz’s disciple, the young Russian seaman, he makes a visual discovery. Using a pair of binoculars, he scans the enclosure ahead, where he had seen a series of poles topped with what he thought were ivory balls, totems on a stick. As the super-visual acuity of the binoculars permits him to see, these balls are actually heads Kurtz has had impaled around his encampment, dead faces, if you will, all of whom—and the personal pronoun is unavoidable—have their heads turned away from Marlow’s gaze, withholding themselves from it. Except one. That head he does indeed gaze upon, but this head’s eyes are closed. However, it is smiling; “the shrunken dry lips showing a narrow white line of the teeth . . . smiling continually at some endless and jocose dream. . . .” Another dead end, in a sense: despite the aid of the binoculars, Marlow cannot succeed in entering that line of sight, and the head keeps its own secret, its own dreamy counsel. The binoculars too are not irrelevant to the dynamic of the entire book; almost cinematically, we are swept across Marlow’s line of vision, we see with him through these devices, distanced from what is to emerge by technological power.

In this anthropomorphic landscape, where the world refuses to speak itself, Kurtz’s voice is the sole source of truth; Kurtz *is* voice, is speech, is talk, against the stillness of the wilderness for Marlow and the others—whereas for those on the other side of the bank, the Africans, there is no wilderness, there is no silence. Again and again the text refers to the presence of the colonizers, to the pilgrims and even to Marlow himself as a “fantastic invasion.” Out of the jabber of their speech Kurtz, however, is said to be all eloquence, to have the gift of expression, and it is to this hope and indeed fetish that Marlow begins to cling. His world of rivets and hard work had kept him safe from the hallucinatory strangeness and indeed the horror of his encounter with what the company has made of this place, for a time; Marlow uses the Victorian ethos of the nobility of work to forget the silence; he vanishes into the world of rivets as long as he can, until that world is punctured as truly as the helmsman’s side is punctured by the spear. Marlow comes to suspect that even work is conforming to a system whose grasp is so vast it cannot be comprehended by individual effort, which holds out no redemption—what has Marlow’s devotion to the duty of repairing the ship’s bottom done but bring them to Kurtz’s outpost, to replace Kurtz’s “unsound methods” with the equally brutalizing corporate extractions of ivory the manager is going to institute? Kurtz, then, is not just a single “bad apple,” to be weeded out so that the merry work of

imperializing can go on. Kurtz is the voice of that imperial project speaking itself and knowing itself—he is the one person who will admit to the horrible truth of what is being done.

Kurtz is a voice—we need to take that very seriously. What he has done has consequences, yes, but they aren't neatly identifiable as timeless or universal patterns, and especially not as some kind of regression to "savagery." The novel explores the notion of regression, of going back in time to some primordial state, when, for example, it says: "we were wanderers on a prehistoric earth"; its use of such metaphors results from its collision with and against the theory of progress that had arisen out of Social Darwinism, a theory Darwin himself argued against. Kurtz is a mouth—the first time Marlow actually lays eyes on him, from afar, he is being carried on a stretcher, shouting, and his mouth is a black hole. "He wanted to swallow this, swallow all the air, swallow all the earth." Marlow can barely hear his voice, but it reaches him faintly, and he sees Kurtz physically as having become an ivory fetish, a piece of the ivory his gaping mouth has wanted to swallow.

One of the most famous quotes in the book addresses the nature of Kurtz: "All Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz." He is one-quarter English and one-quarter French, with the other halves of each parental side left mysteriously missing; all Europe has made him, though, because all of Europe's imperial discourses have combined in him. His eloquence consists in intermingling all the discourses of Sweetness and Light, Civilization, Power, Truth, and Good which the English, French, Germans and so on had employed to justify the progress of empire. Kurtz specialized in "burning noble words," a "magic current of phrases." These words belong, Marlow says, with the dustbin of progress, among the "sweepings and the dead cats of civilization." Marlow can scarcely remember what Kurtz says after he hears him talk, and can hardly remember the speech of Kurtz's he reads after the latter's death: it's all a cloud of verbiage. What he does remember, and so does everyone who reads Conrad's book, is what Kurtz scrawled as the postscript, so electrifying, simple, and "true" it is like a lightning bolt, a phrase that flashes up against the rhetoric and illuminates it: "Exterminate the brutes." Notice the postscript is in the grammatical form of a command, an exhortation, an order: Kurtz "forgot" to pretend that there was an idea behind it to redeem it—he just wrote what was happening—"kill them all." Marlow hates this postscript, but recognizes he must tell the story of extermination everyone else, besides himself and Kurtz, is denying. When this passage arrives in the story Marlow, sitting on the boat deck, lights a match, and it goes flickeringly out. And Marlow, too, as the bearer of this terrible news, yellows and withers and becomes ivory-like, a hard fetish, an idol before his listeners. The tale, and the novel, is a flickering illumination; Marlow is trying to tell the untellable, the catastrophic, where no one can believe it. Marlow describes his audience, as well as the readers of the text, when he refers to them as lodged "between the butcher and the policemen, afraid of the gallows, the insane asylum, and of scandal." Will they listen? Will we?

The Intended is described as "the echo of Kurtz"—she is the echo of his voice, not really a person. As Kurtz speaks his final words, "the horror, the horror," Marlow again experiences the tearing of the veil over truth, and pledges his loyalty

to Kurtz, because he has uttered the truth. After this, Marlow is an outcast among the other pilgrims, and he has to return to Europe, taking the relics and effects of Kurtz with him, as if in expiation. It is there he learns that Kurtz is, in a sense, the figment of an imperial imagination, a figment of language; no one can even tell him what Kurtz was famous for—journalism? painting? or for being a speaker, a fascist mass speaker without any particular politics except those of extremism? Marlow has gone to see the Intended; her apartment is as tomb-like as the Company offices, and as sinister: not because the Intended is evil, but because she is an allegory come to life. The Intended is the woman in the picture at the station, painted by Kurtz, blindfolded Truth in a glare of horrible whiteness. When Marlow yields to her pleas and tells her that Kurtz's last words were "her name," one might think that this is the lie Marlow hates to tell, a face-saving fiction that operates to keep a woman in the beautiful, blind world of truth. Marlow in fact tells the literal truth: her name—blindfolded Truth—is the horror; horror is the name for her. The horror isn't just in Africa, in the Congo, in Kurtz's outpost: the horror is back home, here in our language, in the words we use to name or to conceal what we are doing. Marlow temporizes for the sake of his audience, but it is as imperative that they hear, as well, what he has told the Intended and why. The Intended is "an ashy halo out of which dark eyes glowed"—she is the story itself, the glow around the haze, that "seems to lead into the heart of an immense darkness."

Conrad did not learn English until he was twenty, and yet we start the formation of the modern British novel with his work. Why? Because all Europe went into the making of it; because the linguistic exile or displacement effected on Conrad as a writer is in fact the displacement, the sundering, of speech that *Heart of Darkness* enacts. Marlow is one individual seaman, the most old-fashioned of narrators, the storyteller, and yet it is his burden to tell what is kept silent, to tell of a new world of immense power, exerted in language a world away. Joseph Conrad brings this new modern story into English, and correspondingly brings English literature into modernism.

(George) Bernard Shaw

Bernard Shaw's work almost teaches itself: the "didactic" tendency of all his writing draws its readers (and, in the case of his plays, his viewers) directly into the debates and issues he finds at the heart of art. The effervescent brilliance of his didactic streak makes Shaw's educational mission a delightful experience, and Shaw never writes as if he is preaching to the already converted. His writing seldom if ever devolves into simple moral admonitions, but Shaw did truly believe that the words of verbal art could make things happen in society. His plays, reviews, and essays put him at the forefront of a society in change. The Shaw section is rich with teaching opportunities that connect his work to other parts of the *Anthology*. A teacher will want to point out the subtlety of Shaw's arguments for art, and his careful adjudication of realism and Romanticism. Shaw should accompany Wilde, Yeats, and Joyce as an example of Irish writing in exile, or in extremis; Shaw's satirical gifts shine with

their truest glow when placed with Swift's essays, since Swift's passionate defense of Ireland in the face of its incredible poverty and misery was shared by Shaw.

Pygmalion

Pygmalion is an utterly fascinating play, and the teaching opportunities it sparks are as manifold as those of the twentieth century volume as a whole. Shaw's play is that rich: it is an important, indeed classic, commentary on modernity and gender, focusing as it does on the tutelage of Eliza Doolittle, flower girl turned cultivated, independent modern woman; it is as innovative in its own way about language, authorship, and the work of art as are the modernist experiments of Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Joyce's *Ulysses*, and Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. *Pygmalion* echoes the modernist form of those works as well by its use of the "mythic method"—after all, the story of the sculptor Pygmalion and his statue turned to life Galatea was a pivotal myth of art and its creation for more than a thousand years, and it resonates in the twentieth century both formally and in terms of its revised content: it begins to mean something new when the Galatea figure, in this case Eliza Doolittle, chooses not to marry her Pygmalion, Henry Higgins, and in fact is more necessary to him than he to her by the end of their relationship. And then there is the modern fact of Shaw's play and its transmutation from literature to film. Well within Shaw's lifetime, and with his ardent approval, *Pygmalion* was made into a celebrated film; even before that, though, Shaw's clever stage directions embrace the cinematic and underscore the modernist blurring between genres and media. Of course *Pygmalion* had yet another popular cultural incarnation in the stage musical and then hit film *My Fair Lady*, with Audrey Hepburn and Rex Harrison becoming the archetypal Liza and Henry Higgins in the public mind.

Pygmalion looks forward and backward in the anthology, and among the twentieth century offerings. It gives an uncanny glimpse into a London still beset by Victorian mores even into the Edwardian age, a city that has new motor-cars and buses on its streets and an underground railway, even as horse-drawn carriages continue to transport the aristocracy. The phonograph and the telephone are crucial to its plot, and even newer media like the cinema are apparent, just as class distinctions and accents are as rigidly drawn as before. Women are agitating for their freedom and independence (with Shaw's vociferous political support), and suffragettes and shop girls alike insist on moving around the city and earning their own income; *Pygmalion* reveals that at the very same time, women are considered to be a form of male property, passing from father to husband, whose independent acts cause them to be viewed as prostitutes or eccentrics. The first public performances of *Pygmalion* took place in German in Vienna, Austria in 1913, rather than in England in English, because Eliza's vehement curse "Not bloody likely" in Act III was so shocking for the period, and Shaw's whole point was to have a woman's voice articulate an "unwomanly" but commonplace oath for all to hear. Shaw's plays insist on displaying what is real, what people really say and do, not out of an old-fashioned "realism," but with as much boldness as the theater of Ibsen, Artaud, or Brecht. His anti-idealism was meant to uncover

in particular the gender and class oppression that keeping things “out of sight, out of mind” helped to further.

Eliza Doolittle is an adorable character most people find deeply endearing; Shaw’s play has her make as violent, unsentimental, and un-idealized a transformation as that of Nora’s slammed door in *The Doll’s House*. When times seemed ripe to present *Pygmalion* in London, the beginning of World War I prevented its opening, but by 1914 it had become a huge success. Students should be shown that Shaw’s play is as modern a “blast” as Wyndham Lewis’s *BLAST*, and that it is as much a manifesto, too. The difference between these manifestoes is that Shaw was dialectical—he liked to share power with his characters and his audiences, and he considered stage plays to be the occasion for a shared, even if conflicted, conversation.

Among the many things to get across to a class about *Pygmalion* is how much the text of the play subverts expectations. Shaw takes his readers and his audience into the play, and with great wit and incisive seriousness he withdraws as the authority figure. Shaw’s fingerprints seem to be all over *Pygmalion* and his other plays, but in fact this theatrical work is a philosophical experiment in undercutting the supposed absolute authority of the author, the stability and “truth” of the written text, and the inferiority of the reader or audience. On the contrary, *Pygmalion* is an interactive play, one that begins with a preface and ends with an extraordinary non-dramatic prophecy of how things will end after the events of the play. At times the stage directions almost give up, asserting that only the cinematic can convey the atmosphere of the scene; at other times, the page looks as graphically playful as a comic strip, as when Pickering and Higgins “speak together” in Act III in a point-counterpoint of dialogue that was later turned into one of *My Fair Lady*’s songs, because it is like spoken chamber music. There is no absolute ending, no closure, and no simple villains or virtuous characters. Students need to be shown that Shaw’s experiments with language and with form are radical and breathtaking, and the opposite of “didactic.” Instead, his play is a strange hybrid, a modernist work that although it bows to realism is as transgressive and eerie as a Beckett play.

The primary reason for this revolutionary effect is Shaw’s emphasis on the mutability of language. The core of *Pygmalion* is what various characters call “new speech.” This is an elastic term that encompasses a kind of speech that transcends class boundaries and gender roles, an imaginative, radical mode of self-expression. When students read the Preface to *Pygmalion*, its preoccupation with phonetics and pronunciation and new alphabets might seem dusty, fussy, or even crackpot. Persuade them to hold on, though; Shaw joined a line of nineteenth-century language experimenters who dreamed of a universal language, a common alphabet, or at least a global, shared dialect. This dream has never been realized, and perhaps it never could be. The point is, though, that Shaw’s interest in language and in “new speech” was revolutionary: he saw how much language created self, and the divisions between people, whether of class or gender or race. All of these were anathema to him, and so in the charming fable of a Cockney flower girl who learns to speak anew, and be someone new as a result, is a powerful critique of the idea of an unchanging “essence,” of fixed identities, and of levels of hierarchy.

That is at the heart of the play in the figure of Eliza Doolittle, whose speech change transforms her into an entirely different person. One theory of language prevailing until the twentieth century derives from Plato; it claims that truth is fixed and eternal, and that language merely mirrors or copies truth, but can never become it. Henry Higgins is a Platonist about language at some points in the play, as for example when he declares that Eliza was always a duchess underneath—it only took his art and his science to make that “visible” in her speech. Shaw’s play has neither pure heroes/heroines nor absolute villains: Henry Higgins is an example of this, in that he brings about a life-transforming event, and offers a brilliant contribution to modernity, yet remains something of a chauvinist brute, a snob, and a manipulator. Eliza sees through him, and protests his exploitation of her with all the passion Shaw advocated that the oppressed—whether workers, women, colonized peoples or the poor—draw upon in trying to change their circumstances. Nonetheless, Eliza must love Henry Higgins, in a daughterly way, it would seem. Audiences began to hope for and, in the film versions, to demand that Eliza and Henry become a romantic couple at the end of the play. A wonderful pedagogical tactic is to stage yet another debate wherein students argue for or against this kind of “happy” ending. Why did Shaw leave the matter unresolved in the stage play, yet add his long, almost short-story-like appendix recounting Eliza’s marriage to Freddie and her gradual success in all her endeavors? Here too, Shaw puts the emphasis on dialectics—on complex ideas that shift back and forth, rather than on absolutes or one, singular “truth.”

A facet of *Pygmalion* that ties it to almost all the selections in the twentieth century anthology, and that also makes it as modern and contemporary as it can be, is Shaw’s realization that fashion, style, performance and costume are the basis of modern personal and social identity. Instead, in play after play, with *Pygmalion* as perhaps the most lasting cultural example, (harmlessly apolitical in the later musical and film *My Fair Lady*), Shaw showed how women could aspire to modernity, equality, and self-fulfillment.

Shaw, despite his Fabian socialism and his prominent political role as a founder of the Labour Party, never believed that instant joy and harmony would emerge with the destruction of private property. Far from it—he saw that all the foibles, selfishness, desires, and aggressions people have in such abundance would always exist, and that we have to forgive each other for these. What is needed is a *modus vivendi*, a way of living whereby people can achieve the maximum amount of freedom without impinging on other people—and that means freedom for all, inside and outside the home. Shaw very perceptively viewed the modern world as too complex and layered for instantaneous revolutions, or for the triumph of the proletariat. Instead, he realized that changes would come by alterations in how the middle classes live, love, and work. This strand of Shaw’s thinking has affinities to the essays by Orwell which follow, and is the mirror opposite to Wyndham Lewis’s disgusted response to the masses and their tastes in his *Manifesto*. If one goal of modernism was to shock the everyday person, or to raise art to an elite, difficult plateau, Shaw’s writing refused to become modernist. He seems to have been confident that however “difficult” the art or the ideas behind it, it could be shaped so that ordinary people might understand it, or begin to. Dialogue, not manifesto, is the hallmark of his art.

Faith in dialogue led Shaw to his true calling, as a dramatist. In theater he saw the formal conditions for bringing language alive on stage, and for setting up confrontations in language that could explore the inherent conflict in ideas as dialogue. To bring the difference between Shavian drama, for all its magnificence, and modernist drama into the starkest perspective, teach Shaw's play with the theater work of his fellow Irishman, Samuel Beckett. While Shaw's drama is unsentimental, and is highly innovative in its lack of full-fledged "characters" and its decentered musicality, look to Beckett for a dramatist who questions Shaw's fundamental dramatic premise: that drama *is* dialogue, communication. Beckett's plays ask whether "communication" between people in general, between characters on stage, and even between a play and its audience is possible in any sense. Rather than the talky, dense fabric of Shaw's dramatic writing, he strips theater down to its silences, to the gaps in communication, and to the essential loneliness of human beings in language. If Shaw's plays are like symphonic music, with many dissonant sounds, Beckett's plays are like avant-garde jazz, each character condemned to an improvisatory solo the other characters may never understand, or even hear. Shaw's playwrighting style shows that he had a fundamental compact or contract with his audience: the argument of the play, however unresolvable or complex, would be transmitted in all its complexity. Beckett's theater illustrates a more somber view of the possibilities of art: we may feel trapped or stuck on stage, waiting for an argument that can never really begin. Surprisingly, though, the dark quixotic humor of Beckett's theatrical world owes a great debt to Shavian repartee—the cosmic comedy of being at cross-purposes was transmitted directly from one Irish playwright to the other.

Shaw's glorious humor is on display both in the play and in the letters included in the section, and it would be a loss not to explore the nature of his comedy by way of comparison. In the twentieth-century section the very different comic modes of Evelyn Waugh and P. G. Wodehouse could be compared to Shaw. Shaw's comedy is more Shakespearian, in fact—it embraces the world and hopes to revitalize it through laughter, while Waugh's admittedly hilarious work is an acid-tongued denunciation of what he saw as inferior and grotesque. Wodehouse's endlessly pleasing verbal mirth lacks a satirical or transformative thrust at all—one doesn't go out to change the world high on "Plum's" humor, whereas one very well might after a dose of Shavian wit. These comic pieces of Shaw's are rife with the most sophisticated intellectual and artistic theory, and yet they are staggeringly funny, perhaps because Shaw considers us all to be in the same human boat. If we can laugh at our common predicament, we may then be able to stop fighting long enough to change it.

Thomas Hardy

Thomas Hardy's poetry was far less formally bold or innovative than his fiction had been, or at least it seems so on the surface: the appearance is deceptive, however, and therein lies the challenge in teaching it. His poetry has a Victorian flavor,

even those poems he wrote late in his long life, penned simultaneously with the great modernist poems, such as Eliot's *The Wasteland*, which we know was tapped out on the typewriter, and which changed the poetic landscape. Why are Hardy's poems important, given their anachronistic quality? What makes Hardy a great poet of the twentieth century, when his fellow Victorian poets, Tennyson and Browning, had long since been replaced by poets mapping a new poetic territory? And perhaps most pressing for the instructor, how to best teach Hardy's poetry when it may strike a student reader as either quaint or hard to read?

One successful route of entry into Hardy's poetry might be to show students the extent to which it creates a self-sufficient world, a poetic universe following the natural laws of the imaginary countryside he invented in his masterful novels. His first collection, *Wessex Poems*, supposedly takes root in this same creative landscape. Help students get the lay of this land, and they are likely to sympathize with Hardy's poetic project: preservation and reclamation, almost ecological goals of recycling and nourishing a place and a tradition. The old-fashioned aspects of Hardy's poetry arise in homage to the old-fashioned aspects of England's rural countryside; the poetry preserves a vanishing age, a vanishing vocabulary, and a vanishing culture. To preserve a poetic past in the amber of one's own making is clearly a far different thing than to be a relic of a bygone poetic age. Hardy's poetry can look and read at first glance as if it were "left-over," traditional poetry that has been taken out of its author's drawer many years after composition. In fact, Hardy's poems deliberately hover in a past time, as his novels deliberately unfold in a past place.

A constant feature of the Wessex novels involves a character or characters walking across one of the myriad tracks or pathways devised for foot travel, a spiderweb of paths connecting obscure villages and solitary cottages with one another. Hardy invented his own geography for Wessex, but the footpaths really existed, and were the most important trails carved into the landscape by travelers over many years. Such footpaths are called ley lines in folk culture; ley lines are not only a means of getting from place to place on foot, they are thought to be lines of energy drawn across the land. Ley lines gather their energy over time, as hundreds of people gradually wear down a shared path, and leave traces of themselves in the form of memory and tradition. Ley lines are often celebrated in folk songs and in oral tales, and they are part of a religious or spiritual approach to the land itself. Referring to a pre-Christian folk mythology of spirits animating the land, ley lines are tracks of wisdom and sometimes even magic power. The pagan customs of worshipping land as a living being were sustained in rural England, as in virtually every rural region, even as late as the nineteenth century. When Hardy's characters walk the ley lines of Wessex, they are doing more than walking—they are communing with the gods of the earth.

We can circle back to Hardy's poems through the ley lines. Poetry has long had an association with walking, after all; the meter of a poetic line is measured by its *feet*, and the meter of a poem, or its rhythm, is often called its *gait*, as if the line itself were doing the walking. The lines of Hardy's poetry are extremely carefully measured, and cut with precision—Hardy is not a writer of "free verse" or blank verse. To unfold the metaphor of walking further is to imagine Hardy's carefully

designed lines (he was an architect once) as ley lines made of words. With architectural care, Hardy's words are wrapped into complicated structures, lines with precise foot counts, lines whose poetic paths are well-trodden and well-used.

And then there is the nature of the words Hardy uses. Many critics of Hardy's poetry comment on his "archaic diction" or the "ancient word-store" of his poems. An instructor should make sure that students are not put off by Hardy's use of "hath" and "doth" and so on, imagining these to be stilted remnants of upper-class British diction. Hardy's "haths" and so on were more often country speech, a gentler rural dialect. For a writer whose novels were accused of indecent subject-matter and undue frankness, this may seem paradoxical. However, if we take seriously Hardy's aim of preserving the key lines of his British rural past, by preserving them in literary form and by translating them into poetic stanzas, we can also see his impetus toward the preservation of the rural treasure-house of words. This does not mean, of course, that Hardy was a naive poet, or that Hardy was simply copying down folk poetry. His poetry is sophisticated and learned, and is part of the British Romantic tradition, with a strong influence by Wordsworth. Romantic poetry had privileged the usages of the vernacular too, as his famous collection of *Lyrical Ballads* makes clear: the "ballads" were an oral, sung folk poetry, turned into lyric poems by the alchemy of the poet's written words.

One of the monumental cultural events Hardy encountered as a young man in London was the controversy over Charles Darwin's revolutionary scientific text, *The Origin of Species*. Published in 1859, Darwin's book charted the development of species over time, which he famously termed evolution. His discovery altered forever the modern relation to time, and destroyed the narratives of divine providence and human uniqueness. In many ways, Hardy's novels register the Darwinian revolution, as these ideas (which Hardy, like most others, fundamentally accepted) set off on a collision course with older notions of a divine plan for individual human beings. Evolutionary ideas became pervasive in many fields of study; linguistics was one such field that also caught Hardy's attention. Linguists like Max Muller proposed that languages also underwent evolution, and that rural areas were places where adaptations in language could be seen as they happened. Industrialization and urban life changed what Muller and Hardy saw as the organic relationship of country language to country life. Thomas Hardy's poetry contains the words that once were as organic and vivid as the practices of country life, words whose energy has been altered by the passage of time and changes in a rural way of life. Show students the signs of Hardy's erudition—his scientific, architectural, technological and critical sophistication is apparent throughout his poetry. He juggles this scholarship and modern knowledge with the folk knowledges and the intense sense of animated, almost pagan wonder at life and landscape he found in country folk.

Hardy's magnificent body of poetry refers to a landscape (Wessex) whose counterpart is fast disappearing; leafing through the pages of Hardy's vast *Collected Poems* (1919), for example, one finds lyric poems predicated on hearthside embers (when, in London, electricity and coal were the fuels), thorn birds and vixens (rarely encountered in cities), circles of "elders," "sweet maids" in a time of women's suffrage and coquettish modern girls, "cyder" spelled in the old way, and

“hostelry.” The tight lines Hardy uses, the ley lines of yore, hold fast and bind up words that also threaten to vanish or lose their meaning outside the context of a living, thriving countryside.

An astonishing poem like *During Wind and Rain* exhibits all these features of Hardy’s wonderful poetry. In four symmetrical stanzas, with precise scansion and strict meter, the poem is built around a repeated line “Ah, no; the years O!” or “Ah, no; the years, the years.” Gesturing toward the song-form of a country reel, even the first line of the poem establishes lyric or song as the heart of an oral culture: “They sing their dearest songs—.” The action of the poem involves a host of quaint, outmoded activities, as “elders and juniors” and “men and maidens” interact in a landscape whose paths and gardens they collaborate on making “neat” and “gay.” Weather and the flight of storm-birds are the markers of time and place; summer trees and rotten roses delineate the passage of seasons and years, as they do for country folk. The very vocabulary of the poem sings of a communal life whose harmonizing voices are no match for the snatching hand of time, nor for the “high new house” whose furniture sits incongruously out on the lawn, even including the ominous clock, whose measurement of time had never been needed before, when the sun and the moon gave time its compass. The “brightest things that are theirs” cannot suspend the losses of time, and as the poem ends, its lament “Ah, no; the years, the years” segues into a picture of the carved names of the merry men and maids as raindrops trace their shapes on the gravestones marking their places in the earth: “Down their carved names the rain-drop ploughs.” It is not an accident that Hardy chooses “plough” as the word for the course of the raindrops. Ploughing is the agricultural labor which was the basis of this way of life, now gone along with its people. Ploughing also makes marks or inscriptions in the earth, as do ley lines or pathways, as do written words in the lines and feet of poetry. Hardy allows us to momentarily see these tombstones with their carved names as the substitute for the poem itself, and the poem, incorporating time, death, and loss into its words, as a tombstone. His poetry hallows what is gone, as it traces the names on the blank page before us.

Thomas Hardy’s poetry lyrically laments what time has done to England: made it unrecognizable. Because it performs this act of preserving the rhythms and the words of another time and place, turning away from modernity while knowing poetry is not strong enough to stop time, Hardy’s poetry became important for all the modern poets writing in English, especially those, like Thomas, Eliot, Larkin and Heaney, who emphasize landscape. The hallmarks of modern identity students have captured in reading Joseph Conrad are invoked in Hardy’s poetry, too: the lonely human subject, self-aware, floats over the poems, many of which are lyrics. That is, they are said (or sung) by an “I,” a self who takes stock of his impressions, an “I” who feels lonely in the universe. As Hardy’s novels make clear, his is a world without providence or faith, a secular vista whose scientific developments and scientific truths he accepts, but whose bleak rationality gives no comfort. Hardy’s poetry articulates the sense of loss and loneliness as human beings are thrown back onto themselves, in a universe whose machinery does not include their happiness, or even their significance. Hardy’s poetry may be most richly appreciated if his po-

etic forebears—Herbert, Donne, Cowper, Gray, even Clare—are referred back to by the instructor, and his inheritors, like Auden with his scrupulous poetic form and yet modern ease of diction, are set alongside his poems.

The poem *Convergence of the Twain* is a superb starting place in Hardy's corpus for today's students, since it is the greatest poem ever written about an event made topical and urgent again—the sinking of the Titanic in 1912. As a poetic subject it is perfect for Hardy's style, and as an event it captures the very issues which crystallize in all his work: the operation of blind fate or destiny, the inevitability of suffering, the inhuman reaches of technology, the need to commemorate what has been lost. Memory is the strongest human power, for Hardy the source of all creation, and Hardy the poet devotes his poetry to the task of remembering. This becomes achingly poignant in his war poetry, as in his elegies. Hardy was appreciated as a fine war poet, yet his verses on World War I are rarely taught in conjunction with the young English poets of our World War I section, many of whom were soldiers who died in the trenches. In part this is because Hardy's poetry does make a world—a world riven by the war, just as his society was, but a world able to encompass his specific war poems as part, not all, of its landscape. Thomas Hardy was elderly when World War I arrived, and could not himself have served. But his poetry, like his prose before it, had anticipated in its bleak rigor the mechanization of life and the absence of the gods that became so clear and so shocking to the society at large when war began. Hardy's poetry has the unenviable distinction of having known in advance how much would be lost—human lives, a way of life, a well-trodden human path. “Down their carved names the rain-drop ploughs.”

PERSPECTIVES

The Great War: Confronting the Modern

Blast

One way to begin talking about Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis's *Vorticist Manifesto* is to talk a little bit about manifestos generally, and literary manifestos more specifically. In this volume of the *Longman Anthology*, it is possible to trace a brief history of literary manifestos beginning with Wordsworth's *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* and Shelley's *A Defense of Poetry*, and including (later in the century) texts like Eliot's *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, Woolf's *Three Guineas*, and the debate across the years between Orwell and Rushdie, *Inside the Whale* and *Outside the Whale*. Among modernist manifestos that we did not have the space to include, most important would probably be the manifesto establishing the poetic movement called Imagism, also written by Pound (*A Retrospect*).

Manifestos always throw down the gauntlet, issue a kind of challenge: they announce that, according to the issuers of the manifesto at least, the rules of the game have changed. Part of the fun in the *Vorticist Manifesto* is that it takes advantage of

modern developments in typography and printing to make concrete its challenge to the British artistic establishment. To wit: the *Vorticist Manifesto* isn't simply a declaration of artistic revolution; in the audacity of its design, and the rhetorical excess of its language, it seeks to enact that very rebellion within its oversized pages.

While we have sought to reproduce *Blast's* striking design, students will appreciate the opportunity to see a copy of the genuine article. Fortunately, this is fairly simple since the Black Sparrow Press has produced an inexpensive, good-quality oversized facsimile, complete with puce covers and bold, blocky, broken type.

One piece of evidence that the challenge issued by Pound and Lewis has been taken up by later artists—and taken up only half-seriously, even as the manifesto itself has its tongue firmly in its cheek—can be found on Morrissey's solo debut, *Viva Hate* (Sire/Reprise, 1988). Morrissey, former front man of the influential '80s British band The Smiths, sings in "Hairdresser on Fire" about the emotional and metaphysical import of his hairdresser in terms that recall Pound and Lewis's praise in the manifesto:

Can you squeeze me
 Into an empty page of your diary
 And psychologically save me?
 I've got faith in you.
 I sense the power
 Within the fingers
 Within an hour the power
 Could totally destroy me
 (Or, it could save my life).

While Lewis and Pound praise the hairdresser because he is a working-class prototype of the new Vorticist artist, "trim[ming] aimless and retrograde growths / into CLEAN ARCHED SHAPES and / ANGULAR PLOTS," Morrissey at the same time turns the hairdresser into a kind of therapist/personal advisor.

Rupert Brooke The Great Lover

In this poem Brooke weds the delight in the sensual physicality of life, which he would have experienced in the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, with the celebration of earthly existence one finds in the early poetry of Yeats, in a poem like "The Stolen Child." Brooke rolls out a litany of life's blessings, or "benisons" as he describes them in the poem; in its overabundance of material detail, "The Great Lover" recalls as well the poetry of the American Walt Whitman, himself a great lover of life. The opening lines make clear that this celebration of life's gifts takes place under the shadow of death, and Brooke wrote it while shipping out to the military service which would claim his life; but the message of the poem is, in the phrase that another American poet, Ezra Pound, would later use in one of the most beautiful of his *Cantos*, "What thou lov'st well remains, / the rest is dross / What thou lov'st well shall not be reft from thee / What thou lov'st well is thy true heritage" (Canto LXXXI).

The Soldier

If you have discussed a number of other sonnets during the term, you will want to consider the implications of Brooke's use of the form for his tribute to the British Tommy. The insistent patriotism of the poem is perhaps its most noteworthy feature; it helps to suggest the zeal with which Britain entered into the war, and sets a high-water mark against which we can read the disillusionment and bitterness of the remainder of the section's poems.

Sigfried Sassoon

Glory of Women, They, The Rear Guard, Everyone Sang

While Lawrence's wartime writing is irreverent toward British pieties—he takes special delight in the disgust occasioned among the British officers by his “native” costume, for instance—Sassoon's poetry introduces a bitterly ironic note into the perspectives section. *Glory of Women* makes its ironic points about the inhumanity of modern warfare by attacking a group of faceless, naive women; one issue the class may want to discuss is whether or not the poem's misogyny is necessary for its success. Was it only women who misunderstood the true nature of the war, and unthinkingly prolonged it by celebrating a myth rather than reality? Is this misogyny the bitter harvest of what T. E. Lawrence calls *diathetics*—propaganda?

“They” is similar to “Glory of Women” in a couple of respects. First, it reiterates the complete separation of the rhetoric deployed on the home front from the realities of the Western front; in hearing the (presumably well-meant) information disseminated by the Bishop, we begin to have a better idea where the half-baked notions of the women in “Glory of Women” might have come from. And like that other poem, “They” depends on a mordant irony to make its point, only here it's more dramatically staged: one verse paragraph, without authorial intrusion, gives the propaganda view of the soldiers' experience, and the second—with no kind of transition furnished—gives the lie to the first.

“The Rear-Guard” consists primarily of the first-person narrative of a common foot soldier, making his way through underground tunnels rather than the more celebrated trenches. In the poem, Sassoon employs the symbolic journey through the underworld so important in much modernist literature—the most prominent example, perhaps, being Ezra Pound's “In a Station of the Metro” in which travel on London's underground subway is economically likened to Persephone's journey in the underworld. Part of what this short poem accomplishes is to make quite vivid the idea that “War is hell.”

Everyone Sang serves to balance somewhat the presentation of Sassoon; though hardly an upbeat poem, it does suggest the possibility of at least a momentary retreat from the horrors of war in nature, and places the “unnatural” military activity within a larger, natural context.

Wilfred Owen

Anthem for Doomed Youth, Strange Meeting, Disabled, Dulce et Decorum Est

Like *Glory of Women*, *Anthem for Doomed Youth* is a sonnet: but while Brooke's poem employs the form in a straightforward manner, Owen derives a certain ironic

charge by playing off the traditional associations (love, beauty) that cling to the form. Likewise, the poem plays traditional religious imagery off against the realities of war; church bells are usurped by machine-gun fire, bugles replace the choirs. The poem's closing lines do suggest, however, that though the anonymity of modern warfare threatens to reduce death to a simple beastly fact, nature herself keeps vigil and keeps (after a fashion) rites for the dead.

Strange Meeting borrows its macabre tone from the ancient tradition represented by Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead* (though the poem is properly a monologue), and recalls scenes like Odysseus's visit to Hades in the *Odyssey*. In a letter to his father, Ezra Pound had announced that "Live man goes down into world of Dead" was to be one of the three recurring motifs of his magnum opus, *The Cantos*; James Joyce, too, includes a "Hades" encounter in his twentieth-century versions of the *Odyssey*, *Ulysses*, and the opening section of T. S. Eliot's most famous poem, *The Waste Land*, closes with the image of a dog digging up the bodies of the dead. Clearly, something about this *topos* was powerful for modernist writers.

This wrenching poem should require little in the way of contextualization; the "disabled" war veteran—tucked away conveniently out of sight, so as not to make the civilian population uncomfortable—has become a common figure in subsequent literature, including the figures of Luke Martin (John Voight) in the 1978 film *Coming Home* and Lt. Dan (Gary Sinise) in the 1994 box-office smash *Forrest Gump*.

Perhaps the best-known of all the poems to emerge from World War I, *Dulce et Decorum Est* skillfully weaves together a brief but compelling battle narrative while at the same time seeking to impose an ethical imperative on its readers. Warfare, when it is not brutally violent and sadistic (as in the gas attack of stanza 2), is instead brutish and dreary. Again, T. E. Lawrence's enthusiastic support of the military use of propaganda (*diathetics*) has severe repercussions here—in part because the propaganda is most effective when not limited to the enemy, but used against one's own people as well. British singer/songwriter Kate Bush has explored these themes in a number of her songs—most notably "Experiment IV," in which the military experiments with musical propaganda: "They told us all they wanted was a sound / That could kill someone from a distance." This track, along with another song critical of British militarism, "Army Dreaming," is included in her "greatest hits" compilation *The Whole Story* (EMI, 1986). The British comedy troupe Monty Python presents a comic take on military propaganda in a sketch included in the very first episode of their television series *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, called "The Funniest Joke in the World" (*The Complete Monty Python's Flying Circus: All the Words* NY: Pantheon [1989], vol. 1, 10–14).

Isaac Rosenberg

Break of Day in the Trenches, Dead Man's Dump

The overriding tone of *Break of Day* is again irony, though an understated, situational irony, very different from the bitter tone of *Dulce et Decorum Est*, for instance. In the war to save civilization, apparently, it is only vermin that can act civilized; this rat's-eye view of the war (and of course, the speaker has been reduced to inhabiting dank muddy trenches, himself like a rat) suggests that while humankind is locked in a blind fury, only inhuman creatures retain any wisdom.

“Dead Man’s Dump” eschews the quiet understatement of “Break of Day in the Trenches” for a more aggressive, violent presentation. The scene again invokes, though indirectly, the tortures of the damned: a scene from Dante’s *Inferno*, seemingly, though set in Western Europe. The suffering of these men suggest one reason that T. S. Eliot chose as an epigraph to *The Waste Land*—a poem which, while set in a post-war Europe, is saturated with the war’s horrors—the words of the Sibyl of Cumae: “I want to die.”

David Jones *from In Parenthesis*

Jones’s piece is quite difficult for most beginning students to get a handle on; its mixture of “voices”—the voices of the military establishment, of British and Celtic mythology and legend, of factual newspaper reportage, etc.—makes the poem every bit as difficult for a first-time reader as Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, the poem to which it owes its most obvious debt. One way to help students through the textual confusion of the poem is to have the students “dissect” an especially dense passage: take a pen or pencil and draw angle brackets around the various voices or textual threads that make up a given paragraph. This exposure of the polyphonic nature of the text should lead quite naturally into a discussion of both the various sources that Jones employs, as well as the goals of such a strategy. Given Jones’s acknowledged use of Eliot’s poem, some side-by-side comparison may prove helpful; one possible result of such a procedure is not simply an explication of *In Parenthesis*, but simultaneously a discovery of just how much World War I imagery and anxiety is buried beneath Eliot’s classical façade.

Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*, published in the same year (1928) that Jones began working on *In Parenthesis*, uses the same image (the space of the war as a parenthesis, as Jones writes in the footnote to his title) in the novel’s middle chapter, “Time Passes.” A brief examination and discussion of Section VI of that chapter (198–202 in the Harcourt edition)—which includes, for instance, the rather clinical observation that “[A shell exploded. Twenty or thirty young men were blown up in France, among them Andrew Ramsay whose death, mercifully, was instantaneous.]”—may help to suggest what Jones was trying to accomplish both with this metaphor, and with the relatively distanced and flat affect that the poem largely adopts.

Finally, this may be the first opportunity of the semester to discuss the modernists’ use of what T. S. Eliot called the “mythical method”—“manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity” (“*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth”). This aspect of the poem suggests obvious links with *The Waste Land*, Joyce’s *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, and a number of Yeats’s poems.

Robert Graves *from Goodbye to All That*

If we might have jumped to the conclusion that the war seemed folly primarily to the enlisted men, Graves helps to correct that impression. The tone of these selections is “semi-facetious,” to use the term Graves employs to describe his lecture

to the troops on “How to be happy though in the trenches.” The writing is irreverent toward the pieties of the British propaganda effort, especially coming from one of the British army’s best and brightest; and Graves’s writing derives much of its power from the stark contrast between the life of an officer and that of a Tommy in the trenches. As he writes, “We [in the officer’s mess tent] talked more freely there than would have been possible either in England or in the trenches.”

The notion of propaganda, introduced explicitly in Lawrence’s writing, is again operative here; without labeling it as such, Graves quietly juxtaposes Western Front propaganda and reality, attempting to revisit some of the fictions visited upon the British public by the British war propaganda machine. Similarly, he damns the prejudice and brutality of British officers and soldiers not by outright condemnation, but rather through silent, dramatic presentation of the men’s thoughts and deeds, presented (seemingly) in their own words.

Speeches on Irish Independence

Charles Stuart Parnell

At Limerick (31 August 1879)

One of the great documents suggesting the impact of Parnell on early twentieth-century Irish thought and art is the famous Christmas dinner scene in Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*; in the characters of Mr. Dedalus and Mr. Casey, on the one side, and in the family friend Dante on the other, students will see quite dramatically what the two sides of the debate looked like, and sounded like. An audio recording of this scene is available on the Caedmon set *James Joyce: Readings* (Caedmon 71–6527).

This speech at Limerick is of course quite early in Parnell’s political career, but is remarkable for both its firm resolve and simultaneously the gentle tactics it urges upon the farmers of Limerick. Parnell is well on his way to becoming an imposing nationalist leader, but both the tenor and content of these remarks mark him as a gentleman. The strategy adopted is what we would now call “economic sanctions”; it is in fact that old Irish strategy of the boycott, which derives its name from Charles C. Boycott (1832–97), the English estate manager in Ireland against whom the practice was first put in place.

Before the House of Commons (23 February 1883), At Portsmouth, After the
Defeat of Mr. Gladstone’s Home Rule Bill (25 June 1886)

In the speech before the House of Commons, Parnell tries to defend himself against the campaign being waged against him by conservative MP’s; by branding him as an extremist, these opponents hoped to silence Parnell and stop the momentum enjoyed by his Home Rule movement. At this stage Parnell remains, as he had declared himself in the speech delivered at Limerick, “confident as to the future.”

In the speech delivered at Portsmouth Parnell, perhaps surprisingly, remains optimistic about the future of his Home Rule movement; while they have experienced a temporary setback, victory, he believes, will ultimately be theirs. The scandal over his affair with Kitty O’Shea, however, put a stop to all progress for some

time. In this address, Parnell rather cleverly addresses the British working citizen, and stresses, through coded language, the fact that members of the British working class have more in common with their Irish brothers than with their English masters (hence the strategic trotting out of titles: Lord Beaconsfield, Lord Carnarvon). This almost Marxist rhetoric was employed, much more explicitly, by participants in the Easter Rising, especially James Connolly.

Easter 1916. Proclamation of the Irish Republic

An obvious exercise here, for American students, is to compare the Irish declaration of independence to ours, one of its obvious sources and inspirations. While taking the courageous step of addressing itself to all Irishmen and Irishwomen—and explicitly insuring voting rights for women within its short compass—the document is at the same time a product of the Irish nationalist iconography which depicted Ireland as the *shan van vocht*, the “poor old woman” who must be rescued from British oppression and persecution by Irish martyrs, themselves always men; thus a very traditional gender hierarchy is reinscribed.

Padraic [Patrick Henry] Perse Kilmainham Prison (2 May 1916)

Perse’s speech is characterized most strongly by its courage, a feature no reader should need underscored. That courage is underwritten in part by Christian imagery of innocent sacrifice; whether consciously or no, Perse frames his discourse with references to the sacrificial lamb, even to the point of suggesting in the last sentence that if they kill him, the spirit of freedom which lives in him will be resurrected within the Irish people.

Michael Collins The Substance of Freedom (5 March 1922)

A wonderful tie-in for this selection is Neil Jordan’s 1996 film *Michael Collins*. The film is helpful not only for the light it casts on Collins himself, but it provides wonderful background for the independence movement as a whole; Liam Neeson, as Collins, delivers passages from this speech in the film. And for as long as it’s up, make sure to visit the Warner Brother’s Web site dedicated to the film: <http://www.MichaelCollins.com>. It’s beautifully put together, with a detailed biography, a photo archive of Collins’s life, as well as an illustrated tour of Dublin locales important to Collins’s life and career.

William Butler Yeats

The Lake Isle of Innisfree

One of Yeats’s best-known and most beautiful poems, *Innisfree* owes an obvious debt to Romantic poems like Wordsworth’s *Tintern Abbey* and Coleridge’s *This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison*, in which the poet laments the fact that he has been separated by

circumstance from the consolations of the natural landscape—only to discover, by poem’s end, that he has gained the power to travel there imaginatively. Yeats here begins to make something distinctly Irish of this English genre, introducing Irish vocabulary and geography to the England of the Romantic imagination.

Who Goes with Fergus?

In this poem, Yeats blends the torpid feel of the British poetry of the '90s—an artistic scene in which his father, John B. Yeats, was a minor participant—with Irish mythology, in the process making something vital and contemporary of Ireland’s founding narratives. In this project, he joined folklorists like Douglas Hyde and his friend Lady Augusta Gregory, attempting to instigate a Celtic Revival for Ireland—a literary and artistic project which was always meant to stir a nationalist political conscience within the Irish people, as well.

No Second Troy

Yeats here uses what T. S. Eliot would later call the “mythical method”—“manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity” (“*Ulysses*, *Order*, and *Myth*”)—to talk about his love for, and exasperation with, his obscure object of desire Maud Gonne. In this particular case, the mythic overlay serves to suggest a framework for understanding Gonne’s penchant for “rhetoric” and violence, and to hint as well that such a stance is a matter of fate rather than personal will. Yeats’s use of myth in the poem, though relatively simple, can be compared to similar strategies in *The Second Coming*, *Leda and the Swan*, and *Byzantium*, as well as texts by other authors like Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and Joyce’s *Ulysses*.

The Fascination of What’s Difficult

This poem from 1910 sounds a theme that Yeats will repeat with variations until he dies: the day-to-day concerns that keep the poet from his true work. His resolution to “find the stable and pull out the bolt,” however, was in retrospect premature: he continued to be involved in the common public life until the very end of his life, knowing in part that the myth of the ivory tower was no life at all.

September 1913, An Irish Airman Foresees His Death

Both these poems are deeply rooted in specific historical circumstances, which it will help students to have illuminated. “September 1913” is part of a sequence of five poems (the others being “To a Wealthy Man. . .,” “To a Friend Whose Work Has Come to Nothing,” “Paudeen,” and “To a Shade”) connected to a controversy involving the art dealer Hugh Lane, who was also a nephew of Yeats’s friend Lady Gregory. Lane wanted to donate his important collection of modern European painting to the city of Dublin, on the condition that the city would construct a suitable gallery for hanging the pictures; the city refused for a number of reasons,

not least of which the fact that Lane himself, the paintings, and the architect who had designed the gallery, were less than pure Irish. For Yeats, the controversy (like the Irish people's treachery against Charles Stewart Parnell) was yet another instance of the narrow parochialism of the Irish.

The Wild Swans at Coole

There is a logic for comparing this poem, too, with *Tintern Abbey*, for both articulate the poet's changing response to a beloved place over time; in both poems, the unchanging aspect of the landscape serves as a still point by which the growth, or aging, of the poet can be measured. When Yeats declares in lines 14–16 that “And now my heart is sore. / All's changed since I, hearing at twilight, / The first time on this shore . . .,” we can hear an echo of *Easter 1916*—a poem which, though written just before *Wild Swans*, was not published until a few years later; the similar wording suggests that the Easter Rising has changed Yeats—changed, changed utterly—while the natural beauty of Coole Park remains unchanged.

An Irish Airman Foresees His Death

“Irish Airman” is in a sense a belated WWI poem; the airman in question, Major Robert Gregory, was the son of Lady Gregory, who was shot down in Northern Italy in January 1918. The attitude of the Irish in general to WWI was somewhat distanced, and the rebels used the circumstance of the British being distracted to launch the Easter Rising; Major Gregory here represents for Yeats the kind of olympian indifference to one's fate best expressed in “Lapis Lazuli.” Hence the poem is both philosophically and politically polemical.

Easter 1916

Perhaps the best-known and best-loved text associated with Irish independence, there is no small irony in the fact that while the poem counsels against blind adherence to any ideology and myopic worship of any nationalist martyrs and heroes, these are the purposes for which the poem is most often recited. The poem is on one level about the ways in which Ireland was changed by the revolutionary violence of Easter 1916; but it is also about the human cost exacted by participation in such violence, where flesh-and-blood human beings are “Enchanted to a stone / To trouble the living stream.” The final “change” comes at the poem's conclusion, where Yeats predicts, with stunning accuracy, that the names of the rebels will be repeated as a litany by the Irish school-children of the future whom they helped to make free—and in being reduced to a simple honor roll, the human complexity of their lives, the contradictory motives that propelled them, are lost. The final irony, which Yeats perhaps could not foresee, is that it's not just the names of these patriots that are recited: it is, precisely, Yeats's poem which counsels against the unthinking “murmur[ing] of name upon name.”

The Second Coming

This short poem probably rivals Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as a source of phrases and metaphors with which we describe our experience of modernity. In this poem, of course, one is confronted head-on with the problem of Yeats's complicated mythology; *The Second Coming* is the first of Yeats's poems presented here which may appear virtually indecipherable without making some reference to Yeats's occult system, as enunciated in *A Vision* (1925). Two elements of that mythology will probably suffice to explicate the poems we've included here. First, Yeats understood human history to be constructed of alternating 2000-year cycles, each new cycle characterized by values and beliefs antithetical to those of its predecessor. One era runs from 2000 B.C. to 1 A.D.; it begins with Zeus's rape of Leda (see *Leda and the Swan*), and is brought to an end—and its successor, the Christian era, announced—by a structurally parallel “annunciation,” the conception of Christ in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, who comes to Mary in the form of a dove. In 1919 this Christian era is, according to Yeats's reckoning, nearing its end; the era to come, announced no doubt by some other kind of birth, will be of a nature completely antithetical to the values we currently hold near and dear. The second important point of Yeats's mythology for student readers of these poems is that Yeats envisioned these cycles of history as interlocking three-dimensional cones; students will benefit from looking at the illustration of “The Gyre & Its Images” in T. R. Henn's *The Lonely Tower: Studies in the Poetry of W. B. Yeats* (London: Methuen [1965]). Yeats's reliance on these cones suggests a good deal of the imagery of this poem in particular: the widening gyre, for instance, as well as the lack of a center.

A Prayer for My Daughter

It may be interesting to discuss with your students to what extent they find *A Prayer for My Daughter* a sexist, or even a misogynist, poem; one way to get at this would be to consider what Yeats might have said differently were the prayer instead for his son. According to a strange kind of logic, this poem about the birth of his daughter becomes gradually something like a eulogy, or elegy, for Maud Gonne. In effect, the best advice Yeats can give his young daughter is not to be like Gonne.

Sailing to Byzantium

Clearly a poem of Yeats's middle age, it might be interesting to contrast it to the earthy discourse of Crazy Jane, who is not ashamed, nor stoops to make apology, for her body—its wants, needs, desires.

Meditations in Time of Civil War

This poem is Yeats's great argument for the importance of tradition, and for the need for a monied and educated aristocracy that would keep such traditional values alive. Together with Yeats's peasant poems and plays, this suggests two impor-

tant poles in Yeats's thinking; and while he was Romantic in his interest in the life of common people, he was not so Romantic as to wish away all distinctions of class and merit. Like the poem that follows in the *Anthology*, the Civil War backdrop seems to have suggested to Yeats the possible annihilation of all that was best in Irish culture, in the name of a misguided "democracy."

Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen

The poem remains striking for its honesty: for Yeats the Civil War, as World War I that had preceded it, serves as a powerful reminder of the dark side of human nature—a potential, even penchant, for evil that Romantic philosophy had failed to account for. One of Yeats's most powerful poems, it is marred by an unnecessarily outré reference at the close: a concrete example for students of the perils of an over-reliance on myth and legend.

Leda and the Swan

Yeats sees Zeus's rape of Leda as another (anterior) version of the visitation of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit—an interpretation which seemingly excuses the violence of the scene depicted here. Two rhetorical features of the poem, at least, will engage the students' interest (or fury). First, his insistent use of rhetorical questions will strike some readers as a dishonest way of disguising his own sympathies in the poem; crudely put, at least one strain of the poem asks whether Leda was asking for it, and whether she enjoyed it. The connection to contemporary debates about rape and other intimate violence should be clear; more and more of my students every year object to the poem's seeming sanctioning of the rape. Second feature: the poem is surely one of the century's most unromantic sonnets (it's a somewhat disguised sonnet, but a sonnet nonetheless). Does Yeats intend an ironic comment by couching the poem as a sonnet—the quintessential love poem? Or, again, does he use the sonnet form to make a covert argument about right and wrong in this rape case?

Among School Children

Another of Yeats's meditations on aging—on the costs exacted, and on the benefits of mature wisdom. In the last stanza, especially, we can see Yeats feeling toward the great synthesis of mind and body that characterizes his feisty, energetic last poems.

Byzantium

Yeats worked hard to make this later poem parallel very closely, in its structure, the earlier "Sailing to Byzantium"; the main difference, as John Unterecker has shown, is that the scene in the earlier poem is described from the position of an outsider, while in "Byzantium" the point of view is that of an initiate. For Yeats, Byzantium represents the full flowering of the culture of the first millennium A. D., one of the end-points in his interlocking gyres of history.

Crazy Jane Talks to the Bishop

Crazy Jane is one of the strongest and most vivid of Yeats's female characters; unlike the various incarnations of Maud Gonne in the poetry, however, she is not criticized but admired. Unimpressed by the pieties of traditional religion, she quests for a bodily wisdom, and eschews all purely intellectual abstractions—a position that Yeats himself, at this point in his life, is trying to emulate.

Lapis Lazuli

Perhaps the greatest of Yeats's poems—a perfectly cut gem, like the stone it describes. This poem clearly marks itself out as a product of Yeats's mature years; the almost stoic acceptance of the whole range of what life has to offer strikes a new note in Yeats's *oeuvre*. The thinking in this poem is much indebted to the Nietzschean doctrine of tragic wisdom—that one must learn to love, rather than to resist, one's fate (the opposite of the disease Nietzsche called *ressentiment*). Unfortunately, students will perhaps have to be reminded that “gay” does not (in 1936) connote “homosexual,” but again is probably taken from Nietzsche, whose influential volume *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* is normally translated *The Gay Science* (i.e., philosophy).

The Circus Animals' Desertion

Probably one of the best poems about writer's block in the language. The poem is useful for the truncated tour of Yeats's poetry that it provides, as well as running commentary; in this very late poem, Yeats makes the courageous decision to strip away the fantastic and Romantic trappings that have brought him so much success in the past, and to return to basics: the foul rag and bone shop of the heart. It was a decision he had announced as far back as *A Coat* (1914), in which he declared that it was time to put off his “coat / Covered with embroideries / Out of old mythologies / From heel to throat,” resolving instead to “walk naked”; this poetic nakedness, however, proved to be the work of a lifetime.

Under Ben Bulbin

Traditionally the last of Yeats's poems, and the one containing his epitaph, which was indeed carved on his headstone in Drumcliff churchyard. The poem reaffirms Yeats's belief in the ongoing presence of the dead—in the memories of the living, if not in more tangible form; and in writing what amounts to an elegy for himself, Yeats helps to insure that he will continue to live in the Irish mind. He leaves, too, what amounts to a set of instructions to the writers who would succeed him, in section 5. Considering the poem an elegy for argument's sake, it makes an interesting contrast to Auden's rather grudging elegy, *In Memory of W. B. Yeats*.

James Joyce

Araby

A few general strategies will help students come to terms with these difficult stories. To begin with, Joyce said in correspondence that his goal was to betray

the paralysis of the Irish people; all of the stories touch on some form of paralysis, whether emotional, psychological, physical, or moral, and none more explicitly than “Araby,” especially its closing tableau. Second, Joyce sometimes used the concept of “epiphany”—roughly, “revelation”—to talk about one of the major strategies of the stories. In the second and third stories presented here, the only possible “epiphany” would seem to take place in the reader: the protagonists of these stories clearly remain blind to their own paralyses until the end. More controversy surrounds the conclusion of *The Dead*, which we will discuss in due course.

It makes sense with “Araby”—indeed, perhaps with all the *Dubliners* stories—after having read it through, to start at the end. The conclusions of these stories are uniformly vexing, and yet seem as well to bear a great deal of interpretive weight: with “Araby,” it’s fair to ask what the protagonist has learned, or what has happened to him, to wring from him the overwrought final sentence of the story. What, precisely, is vanity—and what about his experiences leading up to the bazaar, and at Araby itself, has forced this conclusion upon him? What about the protagonist’s relationship to women—his aunt, “Mangan’s sister” (whose name we, and perhaps even the protagonist, never learn), the shopgirl at the bazaar? Can students detect any passages in which the protagonist is being criticized, his foibles being treated ironically? Finally: Joyce said that the narrative goal of these stories was to give the Irish people a look at themselves in his nicely polished lookingglass. In looking at the mirror this story holds up to us, do we recognize ourselves? In what ways might we be like the story’s callow narrator?

Dubliners: Eveline

A few general strategies will help students come to terms with these difficult stories. To begin with, Joyce said in correspondence that his goal was to betray the paralysis of the Irish people; all of the stories touch on some form of paralysis, whether emotional, psychological, physical, or moral, and none more explicitly than *Eveline*, especially its closing tableau. Second, Joyce sometimes used the concept of “epiphany”—roughly, “revelation”—to talk about one of the major strategies of the stories. In the first three stories presented here, the only possible “epiphany” would seem to take place in the reader: the protagonists of these stories clearly remain blind to their own paralyses until the end. More controversy surrounds the conclusion of *The Dead*, which we will discuss in due course.

One simple strategy for engaging students in the moral and ethical problems that the story poses is to have them answer one question: Should Eveline have gone with Frank, or was she right to stay behind? Why? Careful exploration of the story should show that in fact Eveline has probably done the right thing—we readers don’t really know much about this guy Frank, and Eveline doesn’t seem to either—but she makes her decision for all the wrong reasons (primarily fear of the new). No explicit moral judgments are pronounced in the story; instead, throughout the collection, Joyce uses the characters’ language, or the language used to describe the characters, to suggest to readers where our sympathies should lie. In this story, for instance, when Eveline at the quay asks God to show her what her duty

is, the jig's up: she's already made her decision. No one elopes with an exciting young man out of "duty."

Dubliners: Clay

The stylistic device called "free indirect discourse" is important to a full appreciation of this story. In free indirect discourse, the (ostensibly) third-person, objective narration takes over the thought patterns and speech idioms of the character being described; in this fashion, the writer is able to convey the qualities and contours of a character's mind, without having to resort to first-person narration, and to having the character give voice to all kinds of observations that she would never make to herself in real life. The first four paragraphs of *Clay* are written in free indirect discourse; part of what's fascinating about the story is that after this "biased" introduction, it's very difficult to tell what, of the rest of the story, may have been influenced by Maria's own desires—such as, for instance, the story's close, which attempts to let Maria out of an embarrassing situation with the minimum of fuss.

Dubliners: The Dead

This closing piece from *Dubliners* is Joyce's best-known story; it's also the collection's longest by a good bit, and dividing the story into three main parts helps to focus class discussion. The first section is made up of the conversation and events leading up to the dinner (the night of the story is the Feast of Epiphany, or Twelfth Night); the story's middle section comprises the dinner, and Gabriel's after-dinner speech; and the closing section includes the breaking-up of the party, Gabriel and Gretta's journey to the Gresham Hotel, and the climactic scene that plays out there.

In the opening section, the main points of interest are the three blows that Gabriel's quite substantial ego suffers at the hands of women at the party. First, his indelicate questioning of Lily, the caretaker's daughter, is coolly rebuffed; next, Gretta playfully makes fun of Gabriel's love of all things European to his two aunts—and the playfulness is lost on Gabriel; and finally, Gabriel endures some teasing at the hands of an old schoolmate, Molly Ivors, on the subject of the Celtic Revival, and Gabriel's somewhat less patriotic political convictions.

Still hurting from these slights, Gabriel launches into the speech he has prepared, ostensibly to honor his aunts. Perhaps because his ego has been bruised, however, we see that the speech serves primarily to shore up his own sense of self-importance; the aunts, and their hospitality and generosity, are really of no particular interest to Gabriel—as we see when he praises them in classical imagery that they cannot understand. Part of Gabriel's irritation during the speech seems to be due to the fact that Molly Ivors, against whom Gabriel wishes to score points during his speech, has fled; indeed, he has changed the text precisely to put her down—but she has escaped into the night.

In the final section, Gabriel hopes to repair the damage of the day through a romantic tryst with Gretta at the fashionable Gresham hotel, away from the distractions of home and children, and away from the criticism of friends and family and the party. When Gretta confesses that Mr. D'Arcy's song has called to mind a boy she once loved, Gabriel's romantic scenario is shattered, and the story comes to an emotionally powerful, but rather ambiguous, climax.

The controversy over the story's conclusion centers on whether or not Gabriel has had an "epiphany"—whether the day's events, and his wife's revelation, will show him that a change of heart is needed; or whether, instead, he is hardening his heart against his wife and against anyone who would challenge his image of himself. Recent critics are more inclined toward this cynical reading; for many years, however, the trend was to see in this closing story an optimistic ending to an otherwise bleak and despairing collection.

Ulysses: [Chapter 13. "Nausicaa"]

Chapter 13, the "Nausicaa" chapter of *Ulysses*, is unique for its split personality: halfway through the chapter, the narrative point of view switches abruptly, and without warning, from the young Gerty MacDowell to the novel's protagonist whose wanderings the final fifteen chapters trace, Leopold Bloom. As a result, the chapter offers a perfect opportunity to talk about voice, style, and point of view, as well as (Joyce's take on) the differences between female and male perspectives on fashion, sexuality, love and desire.

Joyce is famous for adopting a different literary style for each chapter of *Ulysses*; for this chapter, which takes as its mythical prototype Odysseus's encounter with the Phaeacian princess Nausicaa in Book 6 of *The Odyssey*, Joyce adopted for Gerty what he dubbed a "namby-pamby jammy marmalady drawersy (alto là!) style with effects of incense, mariolatry, masturbation, stewed cockles, painter's palette, chitchat, circumlocutions, etc. etc." Gerty's section is narrated in that first-person/third-person hybrid that Joyce learned from Flaubert, called "free indirect discourse"; we do not get Gerty's narrative with Gerty as the narrator, quite, but instead seem to have an intimate access to Gerty's thought process mediated by the commodified languages of fashion and advertising, as well as the turgid prose characteristic of late-nineteenth century women's fiction. Critics seem almost evenly divided regarding the tone of Gerty's section: some feel the "shopworn" prose belittles and diminishes Gerty as a character, and even suggests that women's consciousness in general is a pastiche of second-hand opinions and sentiments. Other critics—among whom the editors of this section would count themselves—believe instead that a careful reading of the chapter shows Gerty's consciousness to be no more, no less commodified than anyone else's, and this is one of Joyce's great achievements in *Ulysses*: to suggest that we're all beholden to the narratives we consciously or subconsciously invest ourselves in, be they the narratives of fashion and romance (Gerty MacDowell), or those of cuckoldry and Jewishness (Bloom), or those of Irish nationalism (the unnamed "Citizen" of the "Cyclops" chapter), or those of anti-Semitism (Mr. Deasy in the "Nestor" chapter), and so on. In fact, we would argue, Joyce's depiction of Gerty

MacDowell is not at all *derriere-guard*, but instead evidences a postmodern understanding of the constructedness of all identity, and the complicated role that commodity culture plays in such a process.

The prose of the second half of the chapter is recognizably the “stream of consciousness” style of Leopold Bloom—but recognizably such only to those who have encountered it earlier in *Ulysses*, and hence not to students reading chapter 13 in isolation in this anthology. So while students encountering Gerty’s narration in the first half of the chapter will be at no greater disadvantage than other readers of the novel, they will perhaps need some background on Bloom, background that would have been assembled in reading chapters 4–12 (chapters 1–3 focus on Stephen Dedalus). Bloom is a salesman, selling advertising space in two Dublin newspapers to various merchants and commercial concerns. More important, perhaps, he is a Jew in turn-of-the-century Dublin, where less than 1% of the population was Jewish, and quite virulent anti-Semitism was not uncommon. But even without a detailed knowledge of Bloom’s character, students can infer a great deal by juxtaposing the two very different perspectives on the beach scene presented by Gerty and Bloom. And if Bloom’s background in merchandising tends somewhat to turn Gerty into a “piece of (damaged) goods,” the larger logic of the chapter suggests that this isn’t a personal foible alone, but part of the reification of the human that inevitably takes place under capitalism.

Finnegans Wake

Our audio CD includes a recording that Joyce himself made of the conclusion to the most beautiful chapter in the *Wake*, “Anna Livia Plurabelle.” Joyce’s high tenor voice conveys the quarrelsome speech of the two old Irish washerwomen in a tour de force of verbal music.

T. S. Eliot

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

Eliot’s first “famous” poem, like the rest of Eliot’s work, has attracted a great deal of critical commentary; by all accounts (excepting, perhaps, that of Arthur Waugh, below), the poem is a remarkable achievement for a young man recently graduated from Harvard (the poem was written in 1910–11). Too often, though, the “undergraduate” nature of the poem is overlooked, as it is read through later work like *The Waste Land*; and surely it’s worth pointing out that Prufrock is a figure not just of pity but of comedy. “I should have been a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas”—indeed!

The Canadian band Crash Test Dummies have a playful but finally respectful version of the song—reading its themes of ennui and alienation into a contemporary context, with echoes of the poem thrown in as grace notes—called “Afternoons and Coffee Spoons,” on the album *God Shuffled His Feet*.

COMPANION READINGS

*Arthur Waugh: Cleverness and the New Poetry;
Ezra Pound: Drunken Helots and Mr. Eliot*

These readings are salutary primarily as a reminder of how very much this new poetry threatened the literary establishment when it was first published—and the venom with which Pound and others were willing to strike back when attacked. Irreverent literary texts were seen as a potent threat in the 'teens and twenties, in a way that perhaps only rock-and-roll and film are perceived in our time (the religious controversy over Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* notwithstanding).

Gerontion

Like Prufrock, *Gerontion* is an old man, created and inhabited by a young poet; this contrast explains in part the power and fascination that both poems hold. In the draft materials for *The Waste Land* that Eliot sent to Ezra Pound for his consideration, Eliot had considered using *Gerontion* as a preface to *The Waste Land*; though the decision was ultimately made to separate the two poems, they do share some obvious stylistic and thematic connections, and a discussion of *Gerontion* might be used to prepare students for the greater difficulty of *The Waste Land*. Looking back to Prufrock, students might be encouraged to think about the differences, as well as similarities, in the situations and outlooks of these two aging gentlemen.

The Waste Land

The Waste Land is of course vast and complex, and a tremendous challenge to teach in the course of a British Literature survey. There are many different possible, and fruitful, approaches; themes to be emphasized will depend to some extent on what texts and themes the course has emphasized to this point, and what will be important in the second half of the course.

The poem's textual history is not only important but quite interesting; Valerie Eliot's edition of the manuscript, complete with Ezra Pound's marginal comments, will help students to appreciate that Eliot's masterpiece didn't come to the marketplace immaculate and fully formed, but instead went through a difficult birth, with Ezra Pound as midwife. This insight can be especially valuable to student writers, who sometimes suspect that "real" writers work in complete isolation.

As with Joyce's *Anna Livia Plurabelle*, hearing the text in the author's own voice(s) is a wonderful aid to comprehension. In an earlier draft Eliot had called the poem "He Do the Police in Different Voices"; and his recording helps to distinguish some of the many voices that wander in and out of the poem. One interesting approach to Eliot's orchestration of various and varied voices is to have the students "dissect" an especially dense passage: take a pen or pencil and draw angle brackets around the various voices or textual threads that make up a given paragraph. This exposure of the polyphonic nature of the text should lead quite naturally into a discussion of both the various sources that Eliot employs, as well as the

goals of such a strategy. If you have made such an analysis of Jones's *In Parenthesis*, you may want to have your students turn back to that poem to consider the similar strategies the two poems employ.

Students may want to talk about the status of Eliot's notes: with the exception of the strange marginalia that Coleridge added to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, no well-known precursor of Eliot's notational strategy comes to mind, and students may well want to debate the "validity," as well as the efficacy, of all of Eliot's extra-poetic apparatuses: the notes, but also the epigraph, dedication, and section titles. What are we to think of a poem that embeds so much of its interpretive apparatus within the poem itself?

For teachers interested in the influence of modernist texts on artists in other media, the early '70s rock band Genesis (headed up by Peter Gabriel) did a song on their album *Selling England by the Pound* called "Cinema Show"—a loose adaptation of the scene in *The Waste Land* between the typist and the young man carbuncular, as well as Tiresias's commentary upon that scene. The song succeeds quite well in capturing the feeling of the passage, in the form of a miniature rock opera.

Journey of the Magi

In Eliot's version, we are privy to all the contradictory feelings as the wise men of the New Testament nativity story realize that the epiphany they have had, of the newborn Christ, makes them somewhat discontent to return to life as usual. The story of the wise men is the source for the term "epiphany" that Joyce liked to use: the wise men (or magi) arriving at the stable at Bethlehem is the original epiphany. As the speaker of *Gerontion* asks, "After such knowledge, what forgiveness?" The scene described here can be productively compared to the scene of epiphany at the close of Yeats's *The Second Coming*, as well as his own poem on this same story, *The Magi* (which may have influenced Eliot).

Four Quartets. "Burnt Norton"

Eliot's *Four Quartets* are supremely the work of a mature poet. When he comes to write the quartets Eliot is solidly middle-aged, and has become solidly Christian in his beliefs, after an earlier syncretism made popular by the comparative anthropological work of scholars like Sir James Frazier and Jessie Weston, both acknowledged influences behind the religious amalgam of *The Waste Land*. Whereas Eliot used the writing of Christian mystics in his earlier poetry, here he approaches, experientially, a kind of mystical stance; whereas the earlier poetry excelled at hard-edged, almost clinical description and diagnosis of his times ("like a patient etherised upon a table"), in *Burnt Norton* Eliot dreams of transcending language through language. The result is some of the most beautiful poetry Eliot ever wrote—not a poet often associated with the celebration of beauty; the poem's recurrent image of the rose-garden, for instance, helps to make solid what otherwise threatens to disappear in clouds of vaporous generalizations.

One way to measure how far Eliot's poetry (and philosophy) had come since *The Waste Land* is to compare the conclusion of the earlier poem—which counsels a stoic detachment from the fallen world of the Waste Land, with the similar counsel at the end of section 3 of *Burnt Norton*. The opening of section 5, and the image of the Chinese jar, owes an obvious debt to Keats's Grecian urn and Yeats's lapis lazuli, and can be fruitfully set alongside those poems for the sake of comparison.

Tradition and the Individual Talent

It has been suggested by some that this essay is the most influential text in twentieth-century Anglo-American literary criticism, and the most influential text Eliot ever wrote; if one or both of those claims overstate the case, it's not by much. Very early in the modernist period, Eliot's essay served not just to reiterate the modernist battle cry of "make it new," but to remind his readers, as well as his fellow writers, that the only way to make it new was to keep always in one's sight the monuments of the tradition. The essay is a masterpiece of persuasive critical writing, produced by a poet who (not yet thirty) has at this point written almost no important poetry, and is newly arrived in England as well.

The essay's two most important and suggestive points are, first, the argument that the new work proves its importance by reconfiguring our understanding of its forebears, and second, that the artist, when doing his work properly, maintains a perfectly "impersonal" stance toward his material. This latter notion owes something to Keats's concept of negative capability.

Virginia Woolf

The editors of the *Longman Anthology* hope that Virginia Woolf will be a pivotal part of any course that includes the twentieth-century material. She is one of its major female authors, if not *the* major woman writer across the two volumes, and her work is central to modern British literature by any measure. As has been mentioned in the introduction to this section of the instructor's manual, if one additional novel can be assigned for this period, it is hoped that it will be one by Woolf. The section is set up so that *Mrs Dalloway* would fit with virtually all the literary and critical agendas animating the *Anthology*, thematically encompassing for the century which saw Britain's empire wane and the cultural margins of empire return to constitute its center. *Mrs Dalloway* prophesies this change, and in a sense enacts it, making its major character a British woman in the thick of the social turbulence of war, empire, immigration, urbanization, and class warfare. The book has a further element to recommend it, in that a film adaptation of it starring Vanessa Redgrave as the eponymous heroine, written and directed by the actress and Woolf scholar Eileen Atkins, has been released. While the film does not in any way substitute for a reading of the novel, it can nonetheless supplement the Woolf section by the visual excitement of its London and country settings, allowing students to grasp the modernity of Woolf's themes.

Virginia Woolf is a triple or quadruple threat as a writer, since she is a prose master in fiction and nonfiction, a lyrical poet in her style, and was an arbiter of English literary history and style as an essayist and as an autobiographer in her superb *Diaries*. As a diarist she has ties to Defoe, to Pepys, and to the great nineteenth-century autobiographers, such as Cardinal Newman. As an essayist and reviewer she stands with Dr. Johnson, with John Stuart Mill and Mary Wollstonecraft, with Thomas Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, John Ruskin and several of her Bloomsbury cohort. As a novelist and short story writer her peers are Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, George Eliot, D. H. Lawrence and few others in English. As a specifically modernist writer, only Joyce and perhaps Beckett can compare in the English language modernist tradition for formal innovations. Virginia Woolf is an astounding writer, and the *Anthology* attempts to showcase most of these facets of her work.

Woolf's gender is critical to studying her work, if only because as her literary writing accumulated in her lifetime she also had to argue for the right to be taken seriously as a writer. Nineteenth-century writers like Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters, George Eliot, and others had decisively entered the canon of English literature during Woolf's lifetime, so she was not arguing in a vacuum or a wilderness. Instead, she saw and pointed out the cultural lag which allowed those female authors entry into the pantheon of serious writers, yet perpetuated a hierarchy of female inferiority in education, employment, and personal freedom. It is an irony that many of Woolf's phrases for this gap or lag continue to be household words long after her death: to have a "room of one's own" is still a political and cultural goal of women in Britain and the United States, and the words crop up in newspaper headlines, in journalism, and on the Web, despite all the social changes and accomplishments in equality since Woolf wrote her essay. In other words, genuine equality for women is an ongoing issue, and Woolf's two long essays on the subject remain pertinent in political terms, no less than in the history of social thought to which they belong as sterling examples. Students should read Mrs. Pankhurst's speech to get a sense of Woolf's own context, and they will want to read Mary Wollstonecraft, J.S. Mill and the introductions to the Romantics section and the nineteenth-century volume for much more edification.

Partly because Woolf was a woman, her writing has sometimes been seen as less universal, less political, or less strong for often centering on what look like domestic settings: the room of one's own, the family house of *To the Lighthouse*, the party Mrs Dalloway spends the day preparing, and so on. Jane Austen's books experienced the same criticism; swirling around plots of marriage and located in country houses or resort towns, Austen's work was thought to ignore the important historical issues of its time—the Napoleonic wars, and so on. Later critics have caught up with readers in discovering the acute immediacy of Austen's plots, and the ways her prose style and narratives alike investigate the economic and social arrangements of the rising British middle class. Virginia Woolf's fiction is every bit as imbricated in the major issues of its period: imperialism, class conflict, women's independence, and sexual autonomy are only some of its concerns. Woolf argued that the British literature of the later nineteenth and the early twentieth century was retrograde in holding to the certainties of realism. Influenced by and fasci-

nated with new discoveries in science, with socialist politics, with psychological models of the personality that accepted the importance of fantasies, dreams, and memories, Woolf developed a style that was anti-realist. She avoided neat and tidy endings, abhorred moral or sentimental judgments, and argued that a fluid sense of self, open to dreams, to sexual feelings, and to the darker sides of human character, should find its way into open-ended literary works. Woolf believed that an aesthetic style was also a politics: the breaking down of authorial authority was as powerful to her as questioning the unquestioned domination of a family by the father—in fact, these were one and the same action to her. Literary “rules” had no basis other than custom, and in the main literary rules upheld a straight and narrow, masculine notion of the world and women’s place in it. By defying literary rules, and by creating literary spaces within language where the rules were of her own making, Woolf was convinced that both the individual readers of that writing, and the society surrounding those individuals, could be changed. She also wanted to challenge the unspoken rules, the rules of silence and taboo. Woolf’s prose is lush and sensual; her characters inhabit a fluid sexuality, where desires are freely voiced, and often break the rules of social and sexual convention.

Woolf’s story *The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection* shows her style at its most poetic and most sophisticated literary height. Remind students that one of the oldest, if not the oldest, metaphors for art is the mirror—art “holds up the mirror to nature,” and so art is a reflection, or a representation, of reality. This story is a meditation on art and its powers, and a commentary on the mimetic or mirroring view of art. It should be read in tandem with the great Romantic theories of art as mimesis, including Coleridge, and the influential theories of art produced by Ruskin and Pater, among others. In a deceptively “ordinary,” domestic scene Woolf stages a complex rumination on art’s power to create, and to destroy. She focuses on a scene without any characters in it—the “lady of the house” is not in sight at the beginning, and she never receives a name. It is Woolf’s language which, in its rich metaphors, brings personification and animation to the garden, the hall glimpsed from the doorway, and the mirror hanging in the hall, the fatal lens of art-making. Nothing in this very short story is actually “seen” in straightforward description. Woolf tricks and seduces us by her language into accepting a “reflection” of language as if it were reality—the reality of the setting and the woman in it. The imagery and metaphors of the convoluted sentences she uses begin to contain indirect, oblique hints of violation, of violence, and even of rape. Woolf’s story implicates its readers in the spellbinding power of reflection, since a reader is aching to know what is in the letters on the little table in the hall, dying to know who the woman is, what her story may be—even how she looks. All of this is accomplished solely through words, as if by magic. Woolf implicates herself as a writer too—this eerie fable about art and representation is not a simple gender parable, where the “male gaze” of writing has harmful aspects which female writing would not share. It seems crucial to point out to students that Virginia Woolf never makes such simplistic dichotomies; *The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection* illustrates that Woolf does not contrast male with female writers *per se*. She sees all art, and all writing, as potentially insidious or dangerous, as much as it is creative

and productive: what, after all, gives us the beautiful garden, its flowers and vines, the absent lady and the gleaming mirror, if not literary art? One explanation for this paradox at the heart of her ghostly story (with links in theme to Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*) is Woolf's appreciation for the flip side, or back side, of language: she wants to give silence its due. Virginia Woolf's literary style embraces the silence behind language. Silence was equally important for Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*; Woolf mentions his novel innumerable times in her own writing. Conrad's understanding of silence was more one-sided than Woolf's; since women have been silenced so literally in the cultural record, Woolf saw great potential in silence, along with death and darkness. Fruitful things can dwell in silence, just as the earth gives rise to a riot of flowers and fruits from its silent, invisible depths. Woolf's story provides a metaphor for silence as the handmaiden of literary art. The only twentieth-century writer to create as much from silence as Woolf was Samuel Beckett. Woolf recognized that many things of immense cultural value had been lost to silence—virtually anything or anyone which fell outside the “rules,” including not only women, although women most of all, but also the lower classes, colonial subjects, homosexuals, Jews, people of color. Woolf did not rush to “represent” all of these in her writing, since, as her story shows, she is suspicious of the urge to represent others in art. She does, however, leave open spaces in her writing, so that the silences which mark such people as outside the norm, outside the “rules,” can gather.

Her novel *Mrs Dalloway* indicates how sensitive Woolf was to London as the center of a commercial and a political empire, and to the complexity of everyday life as a whirl of impressions, fantasies, memories, and even resistances. While Mrs Dalloway is merely “shopping”—an activity scorned by many as a feminine frivolity—Woolf's writing style compares itself to a shopping expedition: creative, fragmentary, open to suggestion. The tiny details are what makes shopping, and the tiny details of Woolf's prose gather momentum and strength. Ultimately, Woolf proposes that literature, like life, is not a solid, fixed reflection, but a quicksilver mirror, dappled and darkened, a mirror in motion. T. S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* had contemplated just such a fragmentary view of modern life and modern art; the poet laments that his poem is a collection of scraps, “these shards I shore up against my ruin.” Virginia Woolf sees ruin in war, in social inequality, in violence and in enforced silence. Yet her diagnosis of modernity, despite these terrible evils, and her literary response to it, is entirely different. Woolf and women like her had very little stake in a system that had placed them outside politics, education, cultural achievement, and the public sphere. Whereas Eliot saw the collapse of tradition and religion, the downfall of the father (in church, state, and family) as sole authority, as responsible for the ruinous conditions of fragmentation, Woolf exulted in the fragmentary, the momentary, the new. Her writing begins on the scrap heap of modern culture—she couldn't have written what she did in Victorian times. Her gender had long been thrown onto the cultural scrap heap, in any event, so for all her love of the English literary tradition and its great masters, Woolf seizes on fragmentation as an opportunity. Virginia Woolf's modernist writing puts aside literary dreams of control, mastery, or totality—which is not to say that it isn't ambitious, po-

litical, and intense. Instead, in exquisitely lyrical and yet rigorous prose, she explores the silences, the neglected spaces—park benches, shops, parties, hospital rooms—and the momentary, fragile links between human consciousnesses.

Mrs Dalloway

Modernism is envisioned as an international, primarily European, urbanism, in other words the idea of modernity is the idea of the city, a city rooted in national identities, myths, and power, but breaking free of that horizon precisely at the level of modernist cultural practice. The place of women in the city, and the city seen as a space by and for women, however, considerably complicates modernism's urban focus. Concentrating on Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, but also with reference to "A Room of One's Own" and *Orlando*, this entry for the Instructor's Manual is meant to illuminate Woolf's great novel, but also to show how the modern(ist) city is figured there in ways at odds with the now customary notions of metropolitan experience under modernity—shock, fragmentation, dissolution, nostalgia. With an emphasis on consumption, viewed as an active, even productive or creative process, Woolf's texts are a prism of the multiple presences of women in the metropole, or capital city of London, and consequently this major emblem of modernist Europe, the city, is viewed quite differently in her novel. Within this difference there is by no means a singular "woman's" city or a single "female" modernism—instead, the richness of urbanity, of the presence of the city in Woolf's writing, establishes new directions for modernism, and multiple vectors for the women within the modern metropole implies liminality of identity, and its multiplicity: the ultimate result of the fluidity of identity, sexuality, and consciousness in *Mrs Dalloway* is the destabilizing of our conceptions of the metropole/periphery split. Woolf's novel recasts our ideas of what is central, what on the margins, whether that be in terms of gender and its masculine/feminine division, or of empire, where "center" and "periphery" are technical terms referring to the power at the heart of the imperial city; of nation or region, as in London appearing to be the very center of England, but shot through with the marginal—Scottish servant girls, Irish landladies, working-class intellectuals, Italian war brides; in regard to sexuality, where "proper" heterosexuality would seem to inhabit the center, yet in the novel is knocked off-center by the same-sex desires that infiltrate so many relationships. Finally, *Mrs Dalloway* questions the impregnable center of the English literary tradition, the British novel, and the English language, by Woolf's writing from the margins—female, unorthodox, uncompromisingly lyric prose.

If, as Raymond Williams persuasively demonstrates, modernism is characterized by an international, cosmopolitan metropole, with a floating bohemia or avant-gardist cafe society, a migratory modernist work force, then Virginia Woolf's greatest work decisively fails to register this, since her book is set squarely in one place, London, on one June day, occupied largely with the doings of a middle-to-upper class matron preparing for a party that evening. Some critics have been deceived by this appearance, and relegate Woolf's novel to the domestic settings or the embroidery hoop of narrative circumference within which her texts work their

inscriptions. We may choose, however, to envision her writing as a material modernism engaged throughout with the dilemmas of the urban and of modernity, concerned actively with politics, the city, the empire, the world. *Mrs Dalloway* spins around the core of consuming, often very literally in the form of shopping, a female-coded activity that is thought to be the opposite of manly production. In *Mrs Dalloway* “production” in the sense of masculine order, heritage, and power has led to World War I, to the inequities of the British empire, and to the dominating theories of its villainous doctors, theories personified by Woolf as the social forces of Conversion and Proportion. To this “center” of coercion and control—London’s economic power, its government, its male arbiters of social and psychic health—*Mrs Dalloway* escapes to the margins, to seemingly trivial acts of consuming, fraught with all its mysteries, its possibilities, its sacred rites.

We are led to expect “shock” as the objective correlative for the modernist urban experience; certainly a work like T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* creates an atmosphere of shock and dislocation for its vision of modern London, and “shock” was the term that both Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin, two of the most important theorists of modernity, gave to the new experience of urban modernity. The poet Charles Baudelaire, for example, used the metaphor of an electric shock to describe the confusing, painful, and yet often pleasurable intensity of the modern city and human reaction’s to the modern world. In *The Transparent Society* Gianni Vattimo links shock with Heidegger’s term for the modernist art work’s effect, *Stoss*, or the blow, and arrives at a definition for modernist aesthetic experience: “the focal point for art corresponding to this excitability and hypersensitivity is no longer the work, but experience. . . the phenomenon Benjamin describes as shock, then, does not concern only the conditions of perception, nor is it to be entrusted to the sociology of art. Rather, it is the manner of the work of art’s actualization.” In other words, Vattimo claims that modernist works of art are themselves experiences, and that their “shock value” lies in showing the positive sides of modernity. Woolf’s novel embraces this experience and enters the fray, taking sides in one of the primary disputes of modernism by repudiating the notion that modernity and its shocks are *only* alienating, dehumanizing, or degrading, and that the nature of mass culture, modern spectacle, and consuming behaviors is always negative or “fallen.”

The character of Septimus Smith is indeed a victim of modernity, suffering from a mental illness brought on by the war, whose very name “shell-shock” would seem to undercut the idea that shock or the modern metropole can be anything other than destructive. The book’s sympathy with Septimus, and its covert praise of his suicide as an act against the forces of “normality” in the form of Dr. Bradshaw, however, depends on seeing the city and modernity in new ways and from new perspectives: Septimus’s “insane” point of view, his working-class background and his apparently unimportant life are all celebrated in the book, as he becomes a stand-in for Eliot’s Fisher-King, a force of renewal. This transpires because of the obliquity, or off-centeredness, of Woolf’s approach to the urban and to modernity in general: *her* metropole, unlike, say, Walter Benjamin’s, has women and other marginal people at the heart of it, and thus reconfigures the

stage of the commodity, consumption, and gender. The society of the spectacle is not simply a society of appearance manipulated by power, where the refraction of goods in myriad shop windows makes for a dazzling, illusionary surface over the stark reality of hegemony. "This is also the society in which reality presents itself as more fluid, as weaker, as soft, where experience can acquire the characteristics of oscillation, disorientation, and play," Vattimo notes, and since he is speaking of modern social form, or "reality," and not of Woolf or her writing, the adjectives fluid, weak and soft are not any summing up or privileging of the "feminine," but descriptive of an alternative understanding of the effects of the advent of mass culture and the media. Essentially, Woolf's writing already contains or enacts just such an exploration.

The dual possibility—both negative and "alienating" and positive or creative—of this cultural terrain is brought out in the famous episode of collective transfixing as a scattered group of people in a London park look up to watch as a sky-writing plane emits its puffy, magic script across the sky, "Glaxo. . . Creemo. . . Toffee," writ large in the air for the wonderment and puzzlement of the onlookers in the park. "The clouds to which the letters E, G, or L had attached themselves moved freely, as if destined to cross from West to East on a mission of the greatest importance which would never be revealed, and yet certainly so it was—a mission of greatest importance." The words West and East are capitalized, a portentous reminder of the pan-European nature of the first World War and the importance of airplane technology to its devastation. But this airplane is not the mere replica of that other engine of destruction, the war-plane. Here the airplane, for good or ill, is an ineluctable feature of modernity, capable of hieroglyphic play, of hierophantic writing, and able to draw people together. "It was toffee; they were advertising toffee, a nursemaid told Rezia. Together they began to spell t . . . o . . . f . . ." This fluid sky-writing, emblematic of all writing under the sign of mass culture, and a figure for the modernist writing of Woolf's own book, prompts an unfurling of the personal history of various women in this city, especially Mrs Dempster, a figure left out of most accounts of modernity, urbanism, and shock, but decisively included here: "Ah, but that aeroplane! Hadn't Mrs Dempster always longed to see foreign parts? She had a nephew, a missionary. It soared and shot. She always went to sea at Margate, not out o' sight of land, but she had no patience with women who were afraid of water. It swept and fell. Her stomach was in her mouth. Up again. There's a fine young feller aboard of it, Mrs Dempster wagered, and away and away it went, fast and fading, away and away the aeroplane shot; soaring over Greenwich and all the masts; over the little island of grey churches, St. Paul's and the rest till, on either side of London, fields spread out and dark brown woods where adventurous thrushes hopping boldly, glancing quickly, snatched the snail and tapped him on a stone, once, twice, thrice." Mrs Dempster's experience is not comfortably to be written off in the vocabulary of reification or alienation, nor is she just a victim of the modern mass cultural spectacle. On the contrary: via the unexpected medium of the evanescent toffee advertisement Mrs Dempster has entered a geopolitical reverie. Her metropole is sexed by way of the skeins of consumption,

which are not riveted, mechanical, or restricting, but offer a cast-out line to another way of envisioning her circumstances.

Woolf reverses the expected trajectory of international metropolitan modernism in fascinating ways. A pivotal refrain in the book is the rather garbled crooning song, “the voice of an ancient spring spouting from the earth,” emitted by the chthonic old woman who sits at the park entrance, one of Woolf’s old woman figures, half working-class crone, half mythologized primal earth mother. The song she sings has thankfully been identified for us by numerous commentators as “Allerlei Seelen” or “All Souls,” a European high art fragment that recirculates through the old woman, a sexing (in the sense of grafting onto) of the metropole. The old woman’s “ee um fah um so, foo swee too eem oo” refrain is the transformation through consumption of the otherwise abstract modern artifact, and its re-entry in the culture of London on that day, in the form of an old woman’s song, as another form of currency.

Clarissa Dalloway has a special relationship to the metropole or “center,” in part because she lives in the heart of London, is married to a diplomat, and grew up on a classic 18th-century estate in the countryside. Her name, too, is borrowed, perhaps, from Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa*, one of the first novels. Clarissa Dalloway also has a special role in the book as a hostess—she is a shopper and a consumer, exactly the modern gender roles assigned to women of her class. However, while consumers and especially female consumers are the subject of much cultural disapproval, one thing that is so exciting and fresh about *Mrs Dalloway* is its refusal to do so. What is often labeled a marginal, trivial act—shopping, consuming, preparing for a party, taking care of a family’s needs, and so on—becomes the heart of this novel. Clarissa’s parties, it goes without saying, are bound up in extensive acts of literal consumption, the purchase of flowers and candles and food and clothes. But of greater significance is the placement of Clarissa at the core of the book, a meditation on urban modernity. Clarissa tentatively and tenuously reverses the “disenchantment of the world” characteristic of modernity, according to the great sociologist Max Weber, who argued that the nature of modernity was an ever-encroaching rationality, bureaucracy, and calculation. The world becomes “disenchanted,” in his lovely phrase, in that everything that doesn’t concern money or statistics or power politics slips away, whether it be personal touches or rural customs or belief in fairies and folklore. Clarissa re-enchants her world, or at least tries to defy its disenchantment, by the generosity of her gendered acts of consumption, where consumption is reformulated as the nature of the gift.

This appears paradoxical, in that gift-giving looks like the reversal of consumption, the taking in or appropriation of something through an act of exchange. Nonetheless, Clarissa’s consumption has this perverse or unexpected valence, and it is linked by the text to the nature of modernist writing and Woolf’s writing in particular. “I threw a coin once into the Serpentine,” Clarissa famously says, comparing this to the suicide of Septimus Smith as a form of sacrifice, giving the gift of his death to the city of London not as a soldier in the European war, but as an ex-centric denizen of the city itself. And on the verge of his suicide, Septimus is gendered female, when he decorates the

party hat as his penultimate creative offering. The sexing of the metropole in this fashion is not meant at all to suggest that, for example, men are unable to take up this relation to the city or to consumption. Rather, this is a way of figuring the dynamics of the modernist city, where, to put it very baldly, shopping is not the root of all evil—nor, one hastens to say, is it utopian. The processes and procedures of modernity, however, are accorded weight and positive possibilities, in contradistinction to the dehumanization often attributed to the modern city. The city of women—Clarissa’s London, for instance—is the site not only of all the hierarchies and divisions of the gendered social world, but also their liquefaction in gifts of consumption.

In *Mrs Dalloway* the English subjects depicted throughout the book are eccentric to the metropole in multifarious ways, whether by dint of having spent twenty years in India like Peter Walsh, repatriating as a World War I veteran in the case of Septimus Smith, being Italian, coming down from Scotland in hopes of escaping poverty there, or in less tangible ways, as for Richard Dalloway, pillar of the metropolitan establishment, but secretly wishing to be a farmer, a man with rural longings. Even Sally Seton, Clarissa’s dearest friend and for one brief moment the object of her romantic love, is marginal, unusual; she is at the time of the story a married mother of five sons, living in the country, but she was an intellectual, a radical, a bold and brilliant young woman who even now has defied the class system by marrying a business man who worked his way up in life. People all over the world are linked to London because of the British Empire; *Mrs Dalloway* diagnoses the injustices and wrongs of the empire, but shows that even people and cultures pushed to the margins are central in their significance and experience to modernity. London is a shadowy city of great power and exclusion, yet also a city of joy, of transformation, of women. Clarissa’s daughter Elizabeth travels the city on the open-air upper deck of a bus in the memorable next-to-last scene; she, unlike her mother, seems headed toward a profession, is uncomfortable with the role of debutante her father wants her to play, loves the city and its freedom, has compassion for those who, like her mentor Miss Kilman, are unloved and on the outskirts.

The novel ends with the party Clarissa gives; in it, through her, her friends and even foes have come together, spark memories and find themselves anew in talking about her. She is almost magical in her “sea-green silver” dress, like a mermaid as well as a middle-aged woman. Clarissa’s party is also her life, a whirling shimmering scatter of conscious moments, possibilities, gifts of love and thought she showers. “It is Clarissa, he said. For there she was,” are the last two lines, the first spoken by Peter Walsh and the second perhaps by us, the readers. What Clarissa “is” is as uncertain as are all our individual selves. This book encompasses so much historical loss, dislocation, personal compromise, grief and yet exultation. Clarissa’s party is a gift whose recipients don’t even recognize it—the truest form of gift there is, tossed without expectation of thanks or of reciprocation, like the coin into the Serpentine. Not all truth and knowledge comes from production, ruling, coercing, defining. Clarissa’s consuming gift is her gift to the world she inhabits, priceless and beyond measurement.

 PERSPECTIVES

Regendering Modernism

Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*

The brief excerpt from the middle of Virginia Woolf's famous book, *Orlando*, serves as the introductory and exemplary text to this Perspectives section on gender and modernism. It does so not only because Woolf is quite clearly herself the exemplary modernist writer who "regendered" modernism by the sheer power of her texts, and the centrality of gender to her work; the section of her novel *Orlando* is in some ways an allegory of the process of re-gendering, in a sense, taking gender newly into account.

Modernism was by no means the first literary movement or school to carry implicit or explicit questions of gender, nor the first where female writers participated as creative and ground-breaking innovators. The rest of the anthology amply demonstrates how important women writers have been to canonical and non-canonical literature, and even in their absence, the degree to which gender is a formative structure within language and literature as a whole. We include this special Perspectives section to highlight the special relationship modern writing has with, on the one hand, broad social and cultural changes in the understanding of men and women, and on the other, the paralleling of modernist literature with revelations and revolutions in gender roles and the knowledge of sexuality and desire. In a general way modernist writing is characterized by its movement into interior, psychic space, its rendering of the quicksilver patterns of consciousness and the equally powerful force of unconscious drives and wishes. Freud made it evident that, as he described it, conscious awareness of the self was but the visible part of a far more extensive iceberg, whose underwater dimensions are an apt analogy to the superior role of unconscious elements in the mind. Human beings, Freud showed, are "split" subjects, split into unequal parts and forever blocked from complete self-awareness or self-knowledge. Selfhood became for modernity a fluid affair, an almost literary, ever-fluctuating script that drew no distinctions between conscious and unconscious, present and past, self and other. Freud's theory mapped the movements of desire, as desire went undercover and returned in the form of memories, wishes, thoughts, repressions, dreams, sublimated creativity, and the ability, as Freud put it, "to work and to love," a more realistic hope than simply expecting to be "happy." Desire can be viewed as simply the most available source of human energy, and far from being used up in sexual activity, its primary reason for being is to keep human beings directed toward life and away from death. The interior fiction of identity each person constructs, then, circles importantly around gender, since the bottom line of self-definition, in social and cultural scripts that control even one's entry into language, is to be able to say "I am a girl" or "I am a boy." Freud's psychoanalytic work illustrated that such declarations are not only comprised of constant performances of what such gendered

identities mean, but also that they take place along a spectrum, where the “normal” shades into the so-called “perverse,” and where both sexes share gender elements and fantasies.

This fluid model of the self and necessarily of gender becomes pivotal to modernist writing, writing that tries to capture the evanescence of self-awareness just as it turns away from fixity and absolutes. This section contains separate works that address the innovations in language, style and subject that marked a renewal of interest in gender, as contrasted to biological sex. Much of the rest of the anthology, however, is as deeply invested in experiments with gender: Shaw’s *Pygmalion* has rich affinities with Woolf’s *Orlando* and with Caryl Churchill’s *Cloud Nine*; D.H. Lawrence is as alert to the flow of desire and the gendering of power as is E. M. Forster or Thom Gunn; Eavann Boland experiments with the gender of language with the same intensity as does Angela Carter. This Perspectives section teaches as a distinct and discrete grouping, though, in that each of the pieces emanates from the investigation of gender and self-hood so well-represented by Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*, whose main character is both man and woman, heterosexual and homosexual, self and other.

Virginia Woolf’s father, Leslie Stephen, was most famous for his writing and direction of a vast Victorian project, the *Dictionary of National Biography*, a reference work in numerous volumes that provided a capsule biography of the great and important figures who were seen as making up British social life: its major writers, its political figures, its educators, explorers, reformers and journalists, its diplomats and its scientists. The *Dictionary* turned lives into neat formulations of achievement and into standard evaluations of greatness, both linked to the desire to compile a national list that could also be said to define a national identity. Lives were seen as part of a larger cultural project or destiny, and the idea of placing these biographical sketches in alphabetical, dictionary form is, if you think about it, also something quite strange. Listing people in place of words, the dictionary then gives the impression that, for example, there are no other famous lives between f and g, that there is a kind of fictitious totality which the alphabet format provides. In some ways, it helps to form the very idea of a nation, where it even makes sense to compile a collection of these life stories under one heading. This major life’s work gave enormous cultural power to Leslie Stephen, in the sense that he could be an arbiter of someone’s importance to the national life; the connection to an imperial consciousness is also very direct, because it only became necessary to have such a reference work at the point that Britain was through its empire spreading itself out over the globe. People have often read *Orlando* as a *jeu d’esprit*, concentrating on its playfulness, its dedication to Vita Sackville West, its glossy surface and constantly ironic tone. If we consider, though, as we must, that Woolf is taking on a form brought to its national, imperial, Victorian height by her own father, then the textual politics of *Orlando* becomes something else again. Its status as a spoof is a serious one, for it takes on, seemingly in jest, all the principles of such biographies and really looks at what they do to constitute a sense of a person’s life. Along the way, Woolf’s novel presents an intertwined investigation of sexual, international and textual politics.

Orlando is subtitled “A Biography,” and clings to that premise throughout its improbable unfolding, improbable because it becomes apparent that a biography of a person who won’t neatly die within one historical “age,” won’t even conform to the ultimate sanctity of biography, that is, identifiable sexual identity. This throws a huge monkey wrench into the works, since Orlando the character begins as a man and is described in those terms, but then becomes a woman and opens up all the established categories of representation. Moreover, the “biography” is wrapped around the literary tradition of England, since Orlando is a writer, whose writings we never really get to read, and is involved in the lives, if only in passing, of the writers who are said to “sum up” their respective periods, to stand in for them, almost. Finally, the biography also is from its opening words interlaced with Britain’s imperial identity, with its gradual building up of a mercantilist empire to its ultimate political installation of an imperial state—Orlando doesn’t just witness this, but takes part in it in many ways. This construction of the mock biography helps to show us how indissolubly linked these elements are in cultural discourse. *Orlando* is not a text in which we identify with the hero/heroine, or are moved by the characters’ losses and courage, as happens in *Mrs Dalloway*; we are kept on the surface of this life because the process of biography itself is in question, the ways that selves and genders are put together in culture. And running throughout this is the interrogation of patriarchy—simply put, why it is that the “norm” has been taken to be male, and that all the positive cultural terms—rationality, art, power, action, strength, purpose, and even fame are taken to be masculine traits.

Orlando begins with the character Orlando as a boy, slicing off the head of a Moor, a desiccated severed head, we soon learn, part of the family bounty from the grandfather’s trips to foreign places. This head grins at Orlando with its shriveled lips, and in that gaze begins to confound the placement of self and other the text will set thoroughly at odds. The questioning continues, for example, in the section where Orlando goes to Constantinople as the Ambassador. This part is reflected to us in bits and pieces only—as the very vocal narrator says, only “charred fragments” of history remained. The opulence and merriment of the Arabian court where the male Orlando enjoys his time as Ambassador, the extravagance of the royal party leading even to his marriage with the gypsy Rosita Pepina, are all obliterated in a very significant stroke, wherein this male Orlando is looked back at, as it were. Following a strange courtly allegory, a Masque that one could show students is an ironic take-off on courtly masques in Shakespeare and other early writers, three graces come before Orlando and then withdraw, upon which Orlando stands revealed as a woman. It seems not to be a coincidence that this transformation should have taken place on foreign, exotic soil, in the land of the Other, since after all, Woman is seen as the ultimate Other in patriarchal culture. Orlando suddenly becomes a beautiful object, drawn out almost magically (or through literary magic) of the immensely beautiful surroundings and their lavish strangeness. It is as if this splitting off of Orlando into femininity has come about because of a kind of surplus of exoticism, of which femininity can readily become a part. It also signals that the biography of this supposed person, Orlando, is not going to rest content with the exploits of a swashbuckling Duke; suddenly we are

on the other side of the looking glass, an unfamiliar place, except perhaps in fiction. It is clear how hard it is to tell the story of the British empire and its noble deeds if the protagonist is a woman, how hard it is to connect the elusive self with a national identity when in a foreign place. Orlando goes out to the gypsies in her new incarnation, as a woman, although what she seeks is solitude and contemplation. But her desire for England drives her back home, and she leaves on the ship *The Enamoured Lady*, anything but in love.

While the newly female Orlando will survey, from the deck of the ship, an England suddenly made orderly by the arrival of the 18th century, there is more disorder now in the text than it can cope with, because the issue of sexual identity cannot easily be resolved. Initially, Orlando is simply no different, except anatomically, but then an internal doubling occurs, and Orlando knows life from two sides—prompted, in fact, by being back in England, where there is a need to see how much a woman is created by the social order and how much stems from some innate “womanliness.” The argument of this text, or what it enacts, at any rate, is the costumed nature of sexuality, its performative aspects. Gender is like a form of theater; obviously there are unique biological experiences, such as giving birth for women, or experiencing sex with different physical organs, but beyond those, the display of sexuality is a matter of clothing, in a sense. A woman’s experience is not created by any innateness, nor by an “essence” that is womanly, but by the social construction of women. Orlando even feels a rush of anger against her own former category, the male side of things, while at the same time the text suggests a double state for all human beings. More sex changes occur further along in the novel, when Orlando has been wearing women’s garb for a considerable period of time, and the book ends in the modern period, with Orlando in love with modernity and the city, waiting for a husband who likes to wear pearls.

These flips back and forth across the central divide of gender are also played out in the main “plots” of the biography, in order to suggest the difficulty of making even a simple statement about someone’s love affairs or their desires. The Archduchess Harriet is a case in point. She comes on the scene early on in the Elizabethan period, an ungainly 6’2” of love for Orlando (then a man), laughing rather maniacally, and evaded by Orlando in his then repulsion from her. Later in the 18th century the Archduchess is back, except this time it is revealed that she had been playing a part, and was really the Archduke, madly in love with Orlando as a man and adopting this ruse to be able to woo him. Now that Orlando is a woman, the Archduke is willing to propose marriage, although this little performance is not accepted by the female Orlando. There is a confetti of sexual positions and desires going on here, on both sides of the Archduke’s masquerade. *Orlando* almost prophesies transgendered and transsexual identities that had not become surgically or socially possible until very recently.

The entire biography of Orlando, male and female, is wrapped up with writing; ironically, Orlando carries the manuscript of her poem “The Oak Tree” around in one form or another for several hundred years. The work is begun in the Elizabethan age in Orlando’s flush of enthusiasm for the immortality of literature, until he is rudely disabused of this notion by the poet Nick Greene. Greene

is scathing about the literary value of the present age and criticizes Shakespeare, Donne, Jonson, Marlowe, and so on for their inability to hold up next to the great classical past. Literary value is shown to be as subjective and fluid as gender. The text oscillates wildly back and forth between the act of writing and the act of being written, the act of writing and the act of reading. There is a hilarious scene when Orlando goes with Sasha, his early love, to a street fair, there to see a puppet show of Shakespeare's *Othello*; in the very next passage, without knowing it, Orlando acts out *Hamlet* in his obsession with death and the futility of all action. But Orlando won't die, can never die or reach closure, and thus allow the act of biography to really begin. Obviously, one of the most important features of biography is that the life it traces has ended, making a narrative complete. In *Orlando*, no final judgment is able to be made, and this stymies the whole operation of fixing and embalming an identity. Modernism, too, refuses closure, refuses simple endings, whether they be "happy" or sad. Modernist works like *Mrs Dalloway* end on an open note; Joyce's *Ulysses* famously ends without punctuation and in a passionate rush with Molly Bloom's "yes I will Yes" and then is over.

The fetishizing of men leads to the denigration of women's lives and the repetition or the reproduction of a social system that uses the worship of art for conservative rather than liberating ends.

The Victorian age is horrific to Orlando, and points to a kind of constricting, narrowing, dominative aspect that in *Mrs Dalloway* was presented as Proportion and Conversion, an age where his/her liminal status as man-woman is even less tolerable than before. The empire is ushered in, and this has everything to do with the conditions of sexuality under Victorianism. Soon, imperceptibly, Orlando the woman finds herself subject to the blushing fits which characterize the age and, much worse, to the desire to marry, the ultimate paradigm of conformity. The book takes up most savagely its critique of the ways that an ideology of marriage and the family came to be so dominant, with such appalling results, and how this was related to the spectacle of Britain as an imperial society.

Orlando does succumb to the pressure to marry, but is able to do this in such a unique way that it obviates all the control mechanisms of the century, since Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine (obviously a playfully ironic name) is more like a woman than a man, is never in England, and is not part of Orlando's real life, her writing. The book ends with an open future, an open page, before her, an allegory for the regendering that perhaps only literature can accomplish in the modern age.

Vita Sackville-West *Seducers in Ecuador*

In some ways, *Seducers in Ecuador* is the perfect cautionary tale for Western tourists and even students and faculty off to acquire spring-break tans in tropical places like Key West and Aruba, wearing RayBans to ward off the fierce glare, and, in that sense, becoming like Arthur Lomax in Vita Sackville-West's tale, a prisoner of spectacles. Lomax's trip to foreign ports of call leads inexorably to his death by hanging back in a grimmer and greyer England; most tourists have nothing like this to worry about as they contemplate much-needed voyages to tropical climes. Still, the

relation of this text to travel, empire, and gender is one of the compelling reasons for including it in the anthology and in the Regendering Modernism Perspectives section. Vita Sackville-West's tale is an ironic parable of an empire, England, in the process of regendering itself.

There are other key contexts that help to situate this work an instructor needs to embroider upon first. It may seem that after *Ulysses* or *Mrs Dalloway* that writing itself had undergone an apocalypse and nothing remained to do with words on a page. The revolutionary reverberations of Joyce's and Woolf's texts are still ringing in students' ears, but an important thing to point out is that their modernist textual experimentation was a highly specific cultural act, that it had meaning not just as an experiment in modernist art but as very committed political texts originating out of the colonial context and its collision with language. One of the main lines of change we have been tracing in the anthology has been what makes British literature British, in other words, why is this tradition composed so strikingly of people from non-British or at least non-English backgrounds, or by those with a highly marginal relation to the nation itself, whether by politics or sexual orientation or by gender or race or class. Joyce's *Ulysses* went as far as it is perhaps possible to go with a challenge to the English language as an instrument of oppression and an instrument of change and renewal—his very mode of writing has been called a version of *écriture féminine*, women's writing, by French feminist theorists including Julia Kristeva, who is under no misapprehension about James Joyce's biological masculinity, but whose claim is that the fluidity of the language in his texts approaches a feminine, rather than masculine, sensibility. Vita Sackville-West is not mounting a challenge to the supremacy of English nor tunneling inside writing itself to carve out a new consciousness of modernity. Next to that project this story is somewhat slight. It is, however, revelatory of a kind of displacement that enters all British modernist writing and that is especially valuable to investigate as the product of a female writer, perhaps only possible emanating from a female sensibility.

Far from being an outsider figure like Conrad, or Lawrence, or Joyce, Sackville-West was brought up in, literally, the largest house in England, an Elizabethan estate called Knole that is approximately *Brideshead Revisited* times two. Set squarely in the ruling elite of Britain, poised within its aristocracy with all the feudal trappings of merry old England on a vast acreage, she grew up as a confident possessor of what may be the ineffable quality of Britishness, which was her birthright. She later lost the house when, on her father's death, it went to her male cousin by the immutable laws of gender and property. That sense of usurpation—of having something taken away solely because, in this case, one was female, became paramount to Vita Sackville-West. Her entitlements remained almost unimaginable to most of us; she had a perfectly fine, enormous house called Sissinghurst instead, was wealthy in the extreme, and, through her marriage to Harold Nicholson, was part of ruling circles socially and diplomatically until she died in 1962. But her intersection as a writer with the world of modern British literature, her occupation of a strange niche within the Bloomsbury group, and her accomplishments as a female writer who helped to change the texture and aims of British literature are key to the section: her work shows how much this modernist literature was predi-

cated on a relationship, suppressed or acknowledged, with the rest of the world, with Britain's status as an imperial power and as such, as the ruler of an empire of English, too—since under the British flag English was disseminated to the colonies and was taught rigorously there. The first advanced college courses in English literature were, in fact, developed in India for Indian students, meant to teach them to absorb Englishness and thus loyalty to the British culture that ruled them. Vita Sackville-West spent a large part of her adult life in Persia, now Iran, and wrote some of the first and best books and essays about that culture in English, a part of the vast imperial administration of English, but a marginal, insidious voice within its world of writing. Even at the veritable center of power and empire, there is margin, at the metropole, there is periphery, to use two terms from the theory of colonialism that help to describe the uncanny as well as exploitative ties between the ruling country and its colonies. The center comes to depend on the margin, in linguistic and psychological ways, and one could argue that if the modernist center was also masculine, it depended on its female or queer margins for much of its energies. *Seducers in Ecuador* is a neat presentation, unconsciously perhaps, but delivered with great zest, of this predicament.

Show students that the story is dedicated to Virginia Woolf, one of West's closest friends, so close indeed that, according to her, they went to bed together twice. The physical extent of their relationship is unimportant; certainly its emotional intensity was powerful, and even more so, Sackville-West's debts to her friend Virginia's writing. *Orlando* is dedicated to and "about" Vita; it is, as is everything Woolf wrote, lyrical, rich, and extraordinary. Sackville-West realized her strengths did not lie in style or writerly genius. Instead, she could offer something to the modernist table, too, a small gift, but crucial, the gift of her elite sensibilities put to subversive use by her ironic stance as woman, a bi-sexual, a feminist, and a critic of Britain's empire. Sackville-West had a propensity for donning men's clothes and, with her ample checkbook in hand, leaving her husband and two sons for a month or two of deliciously decadent rampaging in Europe and the Middle East; she lived out an aristocratic version of the sexual and intellectual freedoms commanded by Bloomsbury circles.

Bloomsbury is an important phenomenon within the study of 20th century British literature, and other than West both E.M. Forster and Virginia Woolf on our anthology syllabus have to be rooted within it too—not to wholly explain their literary being nor as the only way of reading their texts, but to help to explain in the larger historical sense what a language community can provide, what work it can do in generating literary responses. It's hard to pin down the elusive Bloomsbury Group or to give any definitive explanation for what they were about, because of course one is dealing with a group of people with loose alliances over time, not an institution or a group that can be pinned down. This group of friends, rivals and colleagues was centered in London as an outgrowth of friendships made at Oxford and Cambridge that then also expanded to include the non Oxbridge-educated, especially the Stephens sisters, Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell. Other prominent members besides Forster were Lytton Strachey, the biographer, Maynard Keynes, the economist, Leonard Woolf, Roger Fry and Clive Bell,

who worked in art and art criticism, Duncan Grant, Bertrand Russell, Lady Ottoline Morell, and students of the philosopher G.E. Moore. These people don't cluster to form one school or one program, but nonetheless, with their iconoclasm and their anti-imperialism within limits, their prolongation of a kind of university life well past its ending, with their sexual nonconformity—Bloomsbury as such is reported to have begun when Vanessa Bell said to someone else entering the room where a group was gathered to talk—"Is that sperm on your skirt?"—homosexuality and round-robin affairs, their devotion to free thought and to an anti-national, anti-Victorian stance, they do constitute a strong cultural force within British life, one that has been thoroughly mythologized.

Arthur Lomax's life is transformed by the wearing of sunglasses, first the blue pair he buys in London to prepare for going to Egypt on Bellamy's yacht, and then the amber, green and black pairs he acquires at Cairo. Ultimately, he is unable to look at the world without them, and they do provide him with an entirely new insight into things, into truth, however much the colors of the lens change what seem to be the real hues of life. It is in fact the saddest thing that happens to him, even worse than being tried and hanged, when the police take his spectacles away when he is arrested in Paris. Twice in the tale the adjective "quixotic" is applied to Lomax's extraordinary behavior under the sway of the glasses, and this is a giveaway of sorts. Lomax is a new incarnation of Don Quixote. "Quixotic" is now used to mean an attempt to do something idealistic, despite the obvious impossibilities. Lomax is a Don Quixote because just as the Don picked up the romances of chivalry, was overwhelmed by them, and then read the world through the lens of the romantic page, treating the world as text, and in the blunt encounters that resulted, saw the power of the text to utterly transform and even refigure the "real," so the colored glasses produce a new sense of the world. This world is one where chivalrous behavior or loyalty and honor go without saying—Lomax will marry Miss Whitaker in a flash because she merely sets him up to believe that she is pregnant with the child of a bounder who has gone off to Ecuador to hide amongst his exploits, and he will agree to poison Bellamy because Bellamy has begged him to put him out of his supposedly terminal misery. So far, there are indeed echoes of the behavior Don Quixote engaged in that made him thought to be so mad, but other aspects also enter in. The world becomes skewed by an altered sense of vision, by a covering or veil that makes everything different—Lomax even says that he thinks he would go mad without the spectacles, and cannot bear to take them off, even when he has returned to England. Don Quixote imbibed his world view from literature, and then was himself turned into a piece of writing, as he and Sancho Panza became characters in a text whose author they meet on the road. Nothing quite so metaphysical happens to Lomax, but his story encapsulates a kind of encounter that is earth-shaking. This is not just an accident of sunglasses, but that it is precisely because he has to shield his eyes from the hot colonial sun, as it were, that he is given this vision, a vision that, on the one hand, turns him into a person others think is mad, bad, and dangerous to know (famously said about Oscar Wilde) and that, on the other, gives him the "half-dozen pictures" he wants to remember out of the seventy or eighty pages or years of life most people

have. His changed vision is the product of the colonial eyestrain, or the sun that only mad dogs and Englishmen go out to confront. Once you think of it that way, everything in the story is hooked to that inexorable logic, because there are intimations everywhere of what it is like to go elsewhere, to see other things, under the auspices or the regime of the imperial flag—even when the people are not in the slightest degree aware of it. For example, Arthur Lomax is as distant from Frantz Fanon, the theorist of colonial revolution, as it is possible to be—he hasn't broken through to any glimpses about empire or its problems at all. He accepts the status quo unquestioningly. What has happened, though, is that under the urgency of taking in these other sights and places he has been thrown out of the life course, the almost zombie life course, of his previous existence, and is set in a shattered world where anything can happen. Under the spectacles, Lomax is utterly without ego—it is egoism that, Mr. Bellamy tells him, he himself suffers from, and one can also see that Miss Whitaker partakes of this as well.

All these British people are in need of the tropics or of exotic locations in some way: Miss Whitaker must use them to invent a lover who has romantically taken advantage of her, to escape from the desolation of her bed-sitting room and her lack of friends and prospects. Bellamy is a Nietzschean figure who is so colossally bored he steers the yacht into a deadly storm off the Mediterranean coast, and sets up Lomax to kill him when, in fact, there is nothing the matter with him at all. This egotism is important to the Bloomsbury connection, because one of the key touchstones for the Bloomsberries, as they were called, was G. E. Moore's ethical philosophy, which posited a detached, secular ethics that involved an understanding of the self's position in relation to the social. This story works out some of that—in a completely non-philosophical way, to consider how it is that Lomax could stand on the other side of egotism altogether—he almost has no personality at all.

When Lomax gets his glasses he sees Miss Whitaker, for example, as having tears like Ethiopian jewels, whereas we know she is quite ordinary and plain; when he stands on the deck in the storm off the Illyrian coast he wears his amber ones, and the world is bathed in the mists of Elizabethan conquests and the glamour of gold—like the opening evocation of *Heart of Darkness*. One of the most salient scenes in the novella, and a scene to discuss with students, is set in Artivale the scientist's Parisian workshop; he studies butterflies, and has turned his basement into a simulacrum of the tropics, with butterflies and their larvae disporting about. He talks to Lomax about Bellamy and the fortune, and then Artivale—whose name seems to refer to “art” and “truth” or its “veil” at once—demonstrates his most crucial link to the unquestioned assumptions of empire, class, race and gender. This basement tropical zone contains black female workers, “imported,” so the text says, and the echo of slavery and empire is there, several black women to serve him, since only they can stand the heat of this work in the warmth needed to preserve the butterflies. As blue butterflies circle about their heads Lomax tells Artivale that he will give his fortune to him to use for “the good of humanity,” another abstraction that Artivale and we the reader must question, especially given the ways that the two men think nothing of exploiting black women, who are as invisible to them as they can be. Of course the text contains another irony, in that the money

supposedly left to further scientific progress will be taken away by some old maiden aunts who will use it to advance the civilizing missionary work of British empire. Lomax's attempt to divert the money to another cause—the science of blue butterflies—has fallen back to perpetuating empire. What is so ironic is that Artivale's laboratory in Paris is empire writ small—science masquerading as impartial, but depending on the labors of “others”—black, female, subservient—to accomplish. Note for students how the word “civilized” constantly appears in the early sections of the text, and show them how it accumulates irony. The company of British strangers keeps together only because they see each other as examples of the “civilized” world. In their inevitable brush with what lies outside themselves everything is, through Lomax, unveiled.

Miss Whitaker speaks of Lord Carnavon, the real-life discoverer of Tutankamen's tomb: “He would be alive today if he had not interfered with the tomb.” This tossed-off reference to one of the great archaeologists and companions of empire has fateful echoes, since Lomax will be hanged, and it is in his trial that Bellamy's tomb is interfered with. But how is Lomax like Lord Carnavon? He doesn't even find the antiquities of Egypt exciting—he hates the Sphinx, for example, but the installation of the sphinx in the text is deliberate and important. The Sphinx is traditionally given female gender, and women's wisdom is referred to culturally as mysterious, or “sphinx-like.” Vita Sackville-West quietly disputes this, and shows how for English people so culturally blinkered, that oracular icon can no longer give off knowledge in a world that has been eviscerated by tourism, by the empire, by these differences and displacements. These colonial places are now entirely like tombs. Lomax and the others stay with their own kind, go with the tourists to the hotels and so on, but they don't have a life that isn't made up out of these encounters with sameness. Miss Whitaker is a debased version of the sphinx herself, with her silence and her riddles about pregnancies and brothers and friends that don't exist.

It is a high point of the text when, as a result of the trial, she is submitted to an examination and is found to be *virgo intacta*. Her body and also Bellamy's corpse and then Lomax's body are subjected to the Law, to the surveillance of the rules that don't take into account the tropical world that glimmers behind the glasses. Her virginity is the final disproof of marriage, used by the court to demonstrate, ironically, the final proof of Lomax's guilt. The fortune that Bellamy wills to him had been made through colonial speculations; it is thus in a manner of speaking like the tomb that Carnavon entered. The fortune was tainted with empire, and Miss Whitaker's virgin body was “unconquered” by a male seducer, hiding in Ecuador or anywhere else. She told a lie that paradoxically revealed the truth underneath British law and propriety—better to be a seduced and “fallen” woman than a person who dares to put on “queer spectacles” and see the world in new ways. When Artivale tries on Lomax's spectacles, he doesn't like them, but says “By Jove, what a queer world! Every value altered!” He means that things look strange or queer with the spectacles on, and that their color alters the color “values” one ordinarily sees. Vita Sackville-West's wonderful story, however, contains a hidden meaning for this line. The “queer world” opened up is just the world as other eyes

see it, a world whose values and meanings are diametrically opposed to the confident propriety of those who refuse to at least try to see things from another perspective. Nietzsche made a famous claim about philosophy and its search for truth—"truth is a woman!" he declared, meaning that philosophy was largely an attempt in words to see beyond the "veil" of female mystery, to conquer and control, to dictate values and propose absolute knowledge. There is none of that masculine truth, that singular white Civilization available in *Seducers in Ecuador*. Things break down, go queer, turn blue or amber or misty mauve. The female writer Vita Sackville-West casts a cold eye on British "truth" and offers up a new world through the lenses of her powerful and mordantly funny tale.

E. M. Forster
The Life to Come

E. M. Forster's literary writing has the same fidelity to subjective experience and the dawning of awareness. While Forster did not make the same experimental leaps in style that Woolf did, in order to convey the momentariness of consciousness and the elasticity of time, he nonetheless took "standard" Victorian plot lines and stretched them beyond recognition. In his novels the British social classes do not stay in their places, but converge and conflict, breaking ranks for love or sex or politics' sake. His many female protagonists are not content with marriage proposals or childbirth; he daringly makes one female main character an intellectual and—gasp—a German; he traces the erotic bonds of men across class lines; he takes his characters to places like Italy or India where their British propriety and timidity about life is subjected to rude shocks, which produce painful growth and even glimpses of happiness. Forster was like his fellow Bloomsburyites in being strongly critical of British empire and imperialism in general, and Forster didn't just speak this, he lived it. Venturing to Alexandria, Egypt as a Red Cross worker during World War I, and later on his many extended professional trips to India, he saw firsthand the execrable toll of imperialism, on those it dominated and on the dominating culture itself. The hypocrisy of the British Empire maintained that its mission in the colonies was a beneficent one—noble, just, kind, and imbued with the British sense of "fair play." Forster's writing, whether literary or critical, sniffed out these hypocrisies at home and abroad and challenged them. Like Virginia Woolf in *Three Guineas*, he judged that the hierarchy that elevated the British above their supposedly inferior subjects in the empire was the same one that denied rights to women, proscribed homosexuality, and kept the underclass in its place at home in Britain. His writing on India, then, with its sparkling, deft prose, joins his magical literary work in mounting a subtle but general critique of the social forces that have erected a false god: the white, male, upper-class, heterosexual, rugby-playing, cigar-smoking Briton as the supreme peak of humankind. Sir William Churchill brought the stereotype to life, yet transcended it in his command of the victorious World War II forces. Afterward, Britain repudiated Churchill despite the victory, voting in a Labour government. E. M. Forster's lifework predicted the transition in values, as Britain as a whole became just that much closer to Bloomsbury's ideal.

“The Life to Come” should make it clear to students that gender relations and their transformation also includes gender and sexuality, and the rupture of negative views of homosexuality. Forster died just as the Gay Liberation movement began, but his literary work throughout the century was an enormous intellectual and artistic contribution to a revisionary understanding of men, women, heterosexuality and homosexuality. Forster’s story was among many of his explicit works that could not receive publication earlier in his life, when despite the sexual revolutions apparent in Joyce, Lawrence, and many other writers, overt homosexuality remained coded and secret, in part no doubt because the laws that sent Oscar Wilde to prison simply for “being” gay were still on the books.

The story explores its subject with quiet irony—that is, it argues indirectly that hatred of homosexual desire stems from the same hatred of Otherness that lies behind colonial racism, because it too operates out of a fear of finding the loathed quality of Otherness in oneself. Students may not get the tone at first reading, since the story is filtered through the self-deluding perspective of the missionary preacher who comes to this colonial outpost to convert the natives to Christianity, but finds himself struggling to control his own truest desires. The Reverend Paul is a naïve young man who does not at first see how much the Christian missionary project he pursues is linked to imperial control of the native population and their valuable land. In reality, the religious conversions he is directed to get for the British church are paving the way for British political control and economic penetration. The story exposes the ugly underside of what many supporters of empire liked to call its “civilizing mission.” The mission to “civilize” is bogus both because the native culture and religion are perfectly civilized already, without white, British interference, and also because the church missionaries are just the thin edge of the wedge of colonial takeover. Read this story with Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s account of his boyhood missionary education, for example. To imagine that one is civilizing people requires a racist notion that they are inferior savages; the story shows that this is the basis of the missionary intervention, but it backfires on the Reverend.

The Reverend never has enough enlightenment or self-awareness to admit to his own racism. Confident that the native chief Vithabi is inferior to him in every way, he is nonetheless instantly sexually drawn to him, and they become lovers without the Reverend ever naming their actions to himself. It is important to stress that what is morally flawed in the story is NOT the homosexual activity and indeed love between the missionary and the native chief, but instead the inability of the Reverend to acknowledge this love and the equality of his lover. Instead, he retreats from him in fear and self-loathing, and casts all his self-hatred into redoubled energy to convert these heathen inferiors. To admit that he is a gay man with desires for the chief would be to have the whole precarious construct of male superiority, colonial conquest, racism and sexism collapse.

The amazing ending or climax of the story is also an allegory of self-deception. The Reverend has settled for his closeted, self-hating life of missionary activity that largely serves to make the native community pliant and childlike. When Vithabi is dying, his fears recede a bit and he goes to try to get this man, his own former lover,

to deny their past. This Vithabi will not do—in fact, in his religious universe, he wishes to free the Reverend from his bonds and to allow the two of them to unite after death in a return to the love they once shared. The Reverend finds himself in a last moment of shock and, one hopes, self-realization, the object of a “sacrifice”—but not a sacrifice on the altar of savage violence. The blade that comes down to kill him where he lies is a repetition of the sexual act that once promised to free the Reverend to see things differently—native peoples, his nation and church colluding in empire, and above all, himself. He didn’t then, and lived a life of repressed conformity and actual destruction of the native culture. There is, then, an ironic kind of poetic justice in his death at Vithabi’s hands, a poetic justice for what he has done to them but also to himself. “The Life to Come” plays on both senses of this phrase: in Christian terms, the “life to come” is heaven, and it is thought to be more important than life on earth, which is just its prelude. The life to come is equally important in Vithabi’s theology, but it is a life that honors the genuine love expressed on earth. Finally, Forster’s title, with its echoes of both sexual climax and religious resurrection, makes a political point, too. In the life to come on earth, perhaps there will not be such waste of love, solidarity, and community as has happened in the homophobic, racist and imperial society constructed so unwittingly by the poor Reverend Paul.

Rebecca West
Indissoluble Matrimony

Since the plot of *Indissoluble Matrimony* is set in motion by marital tensions caused by the women’s suffrage movement, West’s story can be taught fruitfully in conjunction with Virginia Woolf’s famous text on women’s rights, *A Room of One’s Own*, as well as Emily Pankhurst’s *Address*, included as a Companion Reading. West’s story also raises many of the same issues as does Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*; on the other hand, while many of the interpersonal tensions are similar to those raised in D. H. Lawrence’s stories like *The Horse-Dealer’s Daughter*, students will quickly see that these two authors have very different sympathies and loyalties in the battle of the sexes. The revulsion that George Silvertown betrays for his wife’s self-confident sexuality, for instance, is held up by West for ridicule; Lawrence’s men feel this same revulsion, but we’re invited to share, rather than criticize, it.

Katherine Mansfield
Daughters of the Late Colonel

One productive way of reading Mansfield’s story is to contextualize it with Nietzsche’s 1882 declaration, “God is dead.” *Daughter of the Late Colonel* functions at least in part as an allegory: the daughters, like all twentieth-century citizens, find their “father,” the “colonel”—the one from whom they had been used to taking orders, the one who imposed rules and a structure that made life meaningful and rewarding—suddenly dead. The story can thus be read as a parable of the loss of certainty, the loss of a “center” that Yeats laments in *The Second Coming*, that has seemed to many of the century’s most prescient writers to characterize our age. The story is also reminiscent in its atmosphere of Henry James’s haunting *The Beast in*

the *Jungle*, as well as looking forward to Samuel Beckett's landmark drama of inactivity, *Waiting for Godot* (1953).

Jean Rhys *Mannequin*

Jean Rhys is a fascinating writer in twentieth century British literature, in part because well before the "wave" of commonwealth reintegration she emigrated to England from her Caribbean birthplace. While Rhys was nominally "white," her life in the Caribbean marked her forever as a Creole in British eyes, an outsider who was suspicious as an Anglo-Caribbean with perhaps black blood in her family's past, as a woman who had an outspoken cultural affinity (explored wonderfully in her novels) with all things Caribbean, from the people to the landscape, and certainly as a woman making her own way in the world. Like the characters in her story, Rhys came to England with no money and no education, and worked as a model, a dancer, an "escort," a typist and so on, all while she avidly wrote the stories and novels that only in her old age were seen as the vital contributions to literature and women's writing they are.

Jean Rhys is most famous for her novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a book that rewrites *Jane Eyre* from the point of view not of Jane Eyre, shy governess, but of Bertha Mason, the Creole first wife of Rochester, the one who goes mad when taken back to England and who haunts the estate and finally burns down Rochester's English country house. For Charlotte Bronte this madwoman in the attic was simply that, a threat from outside, from the wild Sargasso Sea, a possibly black "savage" woman who keeps Rochester from all that is white, English, and good (namely, Jane herself). Rhys shifted the lens, an act that is characteristic of every writer in this Perspectives section. She demanded that new angles of vision, new sorts of narratives, and points of view once despised as Other for their gender, class or race come into literary voice.

"Mannequin" has the sour, understated quality of all Jean Rhys's prose. Students should be made aware that even its subject matter was considered outrageously risqué at its time—these are girls and women who are working, making money, and under their own control. That they are constantly subjected to male exploitation and violence is made evident, but that they have to live and do what it takes, despite so-called "morality," is paramount.

Mannequin is of course the French word for model, and Jean Rhys's story has a wonderful continental flavor. She shows that women on their own financially could hardly get adequate jobs in sexist England; there is consequently much circulating back and forth from France to England to the rest of Europe on the part of these restless girls. Happy endings—the typical fictions of marrying a rich man or finding true love—are shown up in Rhys's daring prose for what they are—fictions. She speaks through the voice of her heroine, Anna, who is as lost and desperate and strong as the other girls. The kind of social morality that would label her a "loose woman," a "slut" or prostitute, because she is a woman on her own, is exactly the logic *Pygmalion* puts on display and explodes. It is also clear that having sex for money is something these models have to do—and it differs only in de-

gree from traditional marriage. “Mannequin” is a much quieter piece of work, but it too probes the gender inequality that makes the female point of view almost invisible culturally and literarily, too. Anna is struggling for a “room of her own,” barely managing, and yet her desires, ideas, and inadequacies are never idealized or sentimentalized. That is perhaps the break-through of Jean Rhys’s fiction: it refuses to sentimentalize women or men. The emphasis on clothes, costume, and self-fashioning we have seen from Shaw to Woolf to Churchill suffuses this story about fashion models, clothes, style, and gender. Models are “objectified” by the fashion industry and by male approval, yet modeling also permits Anna and the others to change their identities, and to have whatever freedom and creativity they can grab onto. A mannequin is in some senses a silent, effaced statue, something like the statue Galatea, who nonetheless came to life. There’s no magical Pygmalion or Henry Higgins figure for most women, the story adds. Anna’s life is both frozen and objectified by her mannequin status, a wax doll, and yet her non-idealized woman’s voice is also on display in Jean Rhys’s subtle and bitter story.

Angela Carter

Angela Carter was a contemporary of the playwright Caryl Churchill, although Carter died in her early fifties and thus had her writing life cut short. She ends the Perspectives section because her fiction so wonderfully pursues the regendering theme; while Carter wrote in a postmodernist period, from the late 1960s until the 1990s, she was a self-declared feminist writer, exploring the gender divide and directing her work to its erasure. She self-consciously followed in Virginia Woolf’s literary footsteps, not by writing like Woolf, but by placing gender questions at the heart of her work. Her story “The Heart of the Forest” is just such an excursion.

Angela Carter’s mode of writing descended through Gothic foremothers—there is a large strain of Gothic plots and non-realist characters flowing in her stories especially. The Gothic has been known to be related to women from its inception, not only because many of the first Gothic novelists were women, but because the Gothic is pervaded with questions of the family and women’s place in it, with reproduction, incest, and death. Carter’s other main literary source came from fairy tales. She saw these tales as incredibly powerful in creating social scripts that people clung to subconsciously—Little Red Riding Hood, for example, may be dismissed as “merely” a fairy tale, but it is repeated so widely throughout the culture that rare is the woman who doesn’t hear the refrain “beware the big bad wolf” when she sets out on independent adventures. Carter wanted to deconstruct fairy tales and generate new ones with a gender twist. Her fairy tales were so vivid that many were adapted for the screen; “The Company of Wolves” is the film made from her re-telling of “Little Red Riding Hood.”

“The Heart of the Forest,” then, is not a realist or naturalistic story, but an allegory and a fairy tale, another way, as morbid and sexy as Carter’s work often was, to tell the story of origins. The forest is in some ways the Garden of Eden, for whose loss Eve’s supposed curiosity and “weakness” has been made culturally responsible. Carter is having none of that. She makes her characters, the sister and brother pair, both versions of a fairy-tale like Hansel and Gretel, going into a men-

acing forest, and Adam and Eve. In the blender of her mordant, audacious wit, she seeks new patterns that are not gendered in old ways, to account for knowledge and power. Another influence on the story is Mozart's opera *The Magic Flute*; transformation and enchantment are also possibilities in this gender fable.

The story is a fable, a parable, and an allegory all at once. It compresses many of the narratives of knowledge or truth that have been told in literature and folklore for thousands of years. Carter brings in philosophers of the Enlightenment, for example, not by name but by allusion, as in calling her male character Emile. Emile was the title of a work by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, an exploration of education. In it, Rousseau claims that only men need education, and that the best education starts in early childhood with exposure to nature. Carter pokes holes in this paradigm—"nature" is rarely pure or even untouched by culture, and in fact Emile is learning what men have been taught for aeons. Carter's twist on the tale is to give the "fruit of the tree of knowledge" an incest motif. The story is not meant to be a shocking "real" description of brother/sister incest—it's an allegory of arriving at knowledge shared between men and women, where women are not the culprits. Take all the details of the story and consider them not as realist details, but as part of a fable that seeks to retell the education into truth. For Angela Carter, in the past "truth" has come at too high a price—whether by eliminating women altogether, blaming them, or ruining their adventures. Her incestuous pair go to the heart of the family and propose an androgynous solution to the mystery of what lies at the heart of the forest. Along the way, the power over nature and supposedly inferior beings, whether these are women or animals or native Others, is questioned. The mysterious ending leaves the allegory open—does there exist a way to tell the story anew? Can truth and knowledge be recognized in an egalitarian way? Carter's tale becomes an almost religious parable by its close—beckoning us into a forest we would rather avoid.

D. H. Lawrence

D. H. Lawrence's writing can still shock. The flavor of scandalous modernity surrounding his work makes him both an easy sell and a hard sell to students. Some may batten on the "bad boy" image his writing conveys, with its whiffs of class rage and its glamorous foreign settings; others may be incensed by his sexual and cultural politics, or at least by what may appear to be their flagrant political incorrectness. In either event it should be possible to prompt lively discussions on Lawrence's artistic methods, on his pivotal role in modernism, and on the lasting shock waves of his uncompromising art. There isn't a tame version of D. H. Lawrence to be had; his new readers need to be prepared for its invigorating outrage as much as its aesthetic power.

The *Anthology* includes all four facets of Lawrentian modernism: his poetry, his "travel writing," his fiction, the latter in the form of two short stories, "The Horse Dealer's Daughter" and "Odour of Chrysanthemums," and a snippet (in *Surgery for the Novel—Or a Bomb*) of his considerable and important critical writing. Even in

his criticism Lawrence's voice is wild and untamed: works like his *Studies in Classic American Literature* or *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays* might sound dry and scholarly, but are in fact as outrageous and idiosyncratic as Lawrence's fiction. Of the latter Lawrence wrote in a letter in 1914, just as he was starting the book: "Out of sheer rage I've begun my book on Thomas Hardy. It will be about anything but Thomas Hardy I am afraid—queer stuff—but not bad." "Sheer rage" was the motive for much of Lawrence's writing on every subject, as was his propensity to make his subjects "anything but" what they nominally appeared to be.

"I *don't* like little islands," Lawrence once wrote with typical spleen. He wasn't referring to England in that comment, but might as well have been, since the relatively small island of Great Britain was incapable of holding him. Among the modernists collected in the *Anthology* Lawrence is the sole world traveler: Joyce and Beckett lived in self-imposed exile in Europe, Auden took American citizenship, T. S. Eliot took British citizenship, but no one else traveled the globe as if they had been shot cannonball-fashion right out of their native land. Lawrence didn't live in England, but he didn't live anywhere else either, or not for long. His restlessness and peripatetic writing practice is important to stress to your students, if only so that they can identify with his search for places to become himself. Surely they will have sympathy with what Lawrence stated was his desire "only to *be*." The pilgrimages so many Westerners now make to Nepal or the Ganges, for example, the treks to Macchu Picchu or Tibet, the interest in Eastern religions and in spiritual guides like Carlos Castaneda, have a serious counterpart in Lawrence's searching art. Lawrence was modernism's rolling stone: his special places were Italy, specifically Sicily and Sardinia (he was called by the Italian name *Lorenzo*), Greece, Australia, Mexico, New Mexico, and a host of other ports of call. He wrote: "One can no longer say: I'm a stranger everywhere, only 'everywhere I'm at home.'" To emphasize the rootlessness of much of Lawrence's life underscores something special about his literary art—it moves rapidly and even dangerously across the landscape of English literature. The first sentence of Lawrence's *Sea and Sardinia* is "Comes over one an absolute desire to move." The subject of Lawrence's writing is to trace the movements of desire wherever they may lead.

The center of his circle of wanderings was Eastwood, his birthplace, a grim mining town in Nottingham, England. The pervasive ugliness of life there—ugliness in a spiritual sense as well as in the physical surroundings of poverty and grim, grueling labor— injected Lawrence with his life-long rage, as it did with his understanding of beauty. People condemned to such lives as his parents and relatives hungered for beauty, even when they couldn't afford it or didn't understand it. The unplayed piano sitting in many working-class parlors was a mute symbol of this longing, a longing which had brought Lawrence's own art into being. "What was the piano but a blind reaching out for beauty?" he asked. The point of this reference makes clear that beauty and art were not, for Lawrence, simply the luxurious icing on the cake of life: they were part of a life and death struggle in which art and beauty *were* life; a struggle most people, through no fault of their own, were going to lose. Lawrence's anger makes more sense when it is seen as the flash point of creation.

The first poem included in the *Anthology* is *The Piano*, and when read in light of Lawrence's comments on his home life, the picture of a small boy positioned beneath the piano is far more than an endearing childhood memory. The poem speaks of "the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside," and of "the hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide." If students imagine a pampered middle or upper class parlor where a family is gathering, they need to think again. Only on Sunday is there time for the piano, since every other day is a working day; on Sundays the only music permitted is hymns. The power of those hymns played on the parlor piano by "the mother who smiles as she sings" is not merely religious. The intensity of the poem rests on how special and rare the music was in the life of its narrator and his family; the instrument of the music, that is, the piano itself, provides a refuge from the everyday that is also highly charged with desire: the small boy hidden underneath it is in intimate contact with his mother as he presses her "small, poised feet" on the pedals. The rich delight of their intimacy melds with the infusion of music and song: mother and son share a moment out of time—out of the daily grind of time, that is—transfigured by the homely art of her music-making. The poem refers to "the glamour of childish days is upon me" not because, as students may think, those childhood surroundings were glamorous or wealthy. "Glamour" means the power of fairies to cast a spell; in other words, the potent memory of those days casts its spell of reverie over the narrator, who is locked in the enchantment of memory, impervious to the singer who has now "burst into clamour with the great black piano appassionato." The rhyming of "clamour" and "glamour" is inspired—literally. Clamorous, loud music is transmuted into the spirit of past days as if by fairy magic. The "flood of remembrance" he experiences is as passionate, if not infinitely more so, than the musical marking of the unheard, if clamorous, score being sung in the present. The sensual and even ejaculatory "flood" of memories casts down the narrator's "manhood" in several senses—he no longer is conscious of his present age and maturity, since the past of his boyhood has him in its spell; his adult sexuality is overmastered by the pull of the past, so that he is not aroused by the passionate singer but wholly present in a memory of his mother's warmth and closeness. The closing line continues the ambiguity: "I weep like a child for the past" suggests that, like a child unashamed of its tears, he weeps for what is now gone, but also that he weeps as a child does for what is past in its short life. The confusion is intentional—the poem suggests that we can't sort out the present from the past, nor resist the past's "glamour."

Thomas Hardy's poetry is the best comparison to Lawrence's in general, not only because Lawrence considered Hardy his master in both poetry and prose, but also because the differences between these two past-worshipping, memory-obsessed poets is so striking. Hardy's poetry doesn't dissolve the thin membrane between present and past. For Lawrence, it is porous, because the man of the poem is really no more than the exalted child under the piano, forever banished now from his mother's skirts and the pure sway of her music, weeping for the comfort and wholeness he has lost. Hardy like Lawrence was a self-educated artist; Hardy like Lawrence was "rescued" by his mother when she recognized his intelligence and got him placed in school, instead of sent out at an early age to labor. Both owed their liter-

ary art to the prescience of their mothers and to the maternal bond; only Lawrence is willing to so explicitly sexualize that all-important tie to the mother. His poem moves into a past where a socially deprived mother and son create a self-sufficient world unto themselves in and through a piano, a symbol of both art and desire. The piano (as an extension of the mother's music) both "mans" and "unmans" the narrator simultaneously. Formal similarities are just as important between these two poets. Show students how much Lawrence accomplishes within the four-line stanza format; spend time looking at the rhymes he makes out of the homely vocabulary of simple language. This poem and Lawrence's others have the same fidelity to form and to rhyme that Hardy's perhaps grander poems do; Lawrence is willing to emphasize the singing voice in his poetry, as was Hardy, but less willing than Hardy to bring abstractions and complex references into the poems. What he does include in the "insidious mastery of song" that "betrays him back" is direct reference to desire, to sexuality, and to rage. For example, the title of the poem *Tortoise Shout* refers mind-bogglingly to the male tortoise's cry of orgasm. The "tortoise in extremis" is a symbol of the power of sex to "crucify" us: the round wholeness of a tortoise shell deceptively hides its reliance on another being—a female tortoise—for completion and wholeness. Yet the moment of completion and union is far from serene or fulfilling—the tortoise's cry at their moment of consummation is reminiscent of Christ's agony on the cross, because it manifests the terror of separateness at the heart of our being. Lawrence boldly juxtaposes the natural world (turtles) with transcendent myth (Christ on the cross) to hint at the human state. No more than tortoises are humans able to be complete and whole in and of themselves. Sexuality is necessary, but it is a form of "crucifixion," in that humans are left hanging (the horrible pun is inevitable) in their desire for one another. "Sex" is at the heart of the mystery of human existence, in this poem as in Lawrence's work as a whole, not because of any focus on the sexual act or on sexual pleasure for its own sake. Lawrence deplored sexual hedonism—he wrote about his relationship to his wife Frieda that "Fidelity to oneself means fidelity single and unchanging, to one other one." No, sex is metaphysical, going beyond the physical to the spirit: it "breaks us into voice." In other words, sexuality is at the core of our being, and giving voice to ourselves, like the tortoise's shout, is a painful yet triumphant shout. Sex is the empowering ground of our being, but it is also always godforsaken—we can never be complete within ourselves, and will always long and yearn for a completion by another that never arrives. The darkness of this view returns in *Snake*, whose narrator confronts an ominous snake come to drink at his water-trough. Debating internally whether to kill the snake, yet drawn by its majesty—"he seemed like a king to me"—the narrator clumsily throws a log at it, and the snake retreats, leaving the poem's speaker guilty of "a pettiness" he longs "to expiate." The pettiness lies in his fear of the snake and his need to get rid of it; the snake itself, like a "dark king of the underworld," is that part or principle of life we fail to honor and confront at the peril of our own petty natures.

"Cypresses" is a good example of Lawrence's "primitivism"—his romantic fascination with premodern peoples and cultures. In his essay "Indians and an Englishman," for instance, Lawrence writes: "I don't want to live again the tribal

mysteries my blood has lived long since. I don't want to know as I have known, in the tribal exclusiveness. But every drop of me trembles still alive to the old sound, every thread in my body quivers to the frenzy of the old mystery. I know my derivation. I was born of no virgin, of no Holy Ghost. Ah, no, these old men telling the tribal tale were my fathers. I have a dark-faced, bronze-voiced father far back in the resinous ages. My mother was no virgin. She lay in her hour with this dusky-lipped tribe-father. And I have not forgotten him." Cypresses are, among other things, famous for their longevity; healthy trees can live as long as a thousand years. Lawrence imaginatively stretches this life-span even further, and imagines that the trees he views were looking on during various classical scenes, including the suppression of the "primitive" Etruscans by the civilizing Romans. Lawrence's fascination with the primitive can be fruitfully compared to Conrad's, as can his belief that we "civilized" people have to some degree lost the ability to comprehend the primitive, to decipher its secret language: "Is there a great secret? / Are our words no good?"

Bavarian Gentians is perhaps a poem about following the snake, dangerous as it might be, into that underground, the realm where art gets made. Lawrence rewrites the myth of Persephone in this short poem. Persephone's mandatory stay underground with the lord of Death is usually thought to be the tragic part of her narrative; the happy and fruitful part of the cycle occurs when she emerges each spring into the light and into her mother's arms. Lawrence suggests that creation, like sex, partakes inevitably of the dark side. He proposes that the flowering blooms of poetry—of literary art—owe as much to the workings of death and to what is unseen or unconscious in our natures, as creative art does to the illumination of conscious awareness.

Lawrence's "The Horse Dealer's Daughter" makes an interesting companion piece to Katherine Mansfield's "Daughters of the Late Colonel"; Lawrence and Mansfield were friends, and both stories deal with the coping strategies of young women who suddenly find themselves in radically altered family circumstances. If Mabel's strategy in this story is a desperate one, it is at least a strategy—something the sisters in Mansfield's story can't seem to muster for the life of them. Then too, the dramatic climax of the story, when Mabel is rescued from a rather banal drowning by the young doctor Fergusson is just one of many memorable scenes in Lawrence's writing in which women, water, and sexuality are woven together in provocative ways. For another, less happy incident, you may want to screen the "Water-Party" scene from Ken Russell's film adaptation of *Women in Love*—in which a newly wed bride helplessly pulls her groom down while he's trying to save her from drowning. In both instances, a woman's love—or is it lust?—is the undoing, the "drowning," of an innocent man.

"Odour of Chrysanthemums" is perhaps Lawrence's best-known short story, and is as well one of his most unsettling. One of Lawrence's famous laws for readers of fiction is "Trust the tale; don't trust the teller." But "Odour," strangely enough, is precisely the kind of story in which the "teller" (the story's narrator) and the "tale" (the plot-level events) are at loggerheads. For while the history of Walter and Elizabeth suggests she's more sinned against than sinning, by the end of the

story Lawrence has turned Walt into a sinless lamb of God without blemish—a very obvious Christ figure. It will be useful to have students explore their shifting responses to Elizabeth as the storyline unfolds, and to think through the fictive methods by which Lawrence attempts to win us to Walt’s side in this battle of the sexes.

P. G. Wodehouse

Strychnine in the Soup

The exuberant dialogue and witty narration of this story recall the work of Oscar Wilde; like Wilde’s plays, *Strychnine in the Soup* functions primarily as a light-hearted social satire, and comically makes the point that in the modern world, it is the thinkers (and artists) rather than the women and men of action, who have ascendancy. Indeed, there is a kind of reverse Darwinism at work in the story’s plot: for it is not the strong who survive and triumph, but instead our pipsqueak protagonist, who exploits Lady Bassett’s weakness for popular fiction to his own ends.

Graham Greene

A Chance for Mr Lever

The theme of Greene’s *A Chance for Mr Lever*—or one of its themes—is again the British imperial exploitation of remote areas of the globe; the story resembles Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* in important ways. The story presents no unusual difficulties for students until its strange closing paragraph, which probably merits some discussion; the irony of the story’s closing rivals the bitter cosmic irony of some of Hardy’s best poems.

PERSPECTIVES

World War II and the End of Empire

Sir Winston Churchill

Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat (May 13, 1940)

This first major speech of Churchill’s teaches us a great deal about what made him such a powerful and charismatic leader during the darkest days of World War II. The speech contains a number of features you may wish to discuss with your students. Most prominent, perhaps, is the way he urges the serious nature of the engagement to come: it is a “crisis,” promises to be “one of the greatest battles in history,” perhaps “an ordeal of the most grievous kind.” In the face of this great challenge, Churchill both counsels and exemplifies “buoyancy and hope.” The final paragraph emphasizes especially the threat not just to the nation, but to the British Empire—an entity which of course will survive the war only in part, and much weakened.

Reading a speech is rather like reading a play: while the most powerful oratory remains powerful in transcription, it was created as a performance, and is most fully appreciated in performance. We have included excerpts from this and another great speech by Churchill on our audio CD.

Wars Are Not Won By Evacuations (June 4, 1940)

This speech provides an opportunity, if one be desired, to connect back to the materials in the perspectives section “The Great War: Confronting the Modern”; for what Churchill is engaging in here is, in the very best sense of the word, *propaganda*, discussed by T. E. Lawrence in *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (and which will be one of the objects of Orwell’s scrutiny in *Politics and the English Language*, below). Students might be asked to compile a list of the terms and phrases used to describe the German people, the German army, and Hitler; they are, not surprisingly, highly-charged, emotionally evocative descriptions playing on longstanding stereotypes of the Germans. The suggested power of language and of names is implied even in the name of the newest British fighter plane, which Churchill proudly announces will be called the Defiant.

When it comes to recounting episodes of British valor in combat, Churchill proves himself a masterful storyteller. The various engagements of the British Expeditionary Force are told with an air of great suspense; and the fact that, in Churchill’s telling, these stories all have a more or less happy ending helps to reinforce the idea that Great Britain is God’s favored combatant (a notion that language like “a miracle of deliverance” makes quite explicit). The quotation from Tennyson calls our attention to the ways that Churchill employs British literature and mythology in order to assert the nation’s preeminence in the current conflict; in the manner of Tennyson in *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, perhaps, or in some of Kipling’s nationalistic writing, Churchill combines reportage with legend, history with mythmaking. A keen student of history, Churchill realized that history is made, not simply recorded, and must have recognized as well that his simple chronicles of the British military experience in World War II will set the model for subsequent writing about the war. Furthermore, while his immediate audience is the members of the House of Commons, more importantly (through the press) Churchill is talking to, reassuring and calming the fears of, the British people; and the down-home storytelling style that he adopts (“I will tell you about it”), reminiscent of FDR’s fireside chats, is clearly better-suited to the populace than members of Parliament. More importantly, perhaps, it is, because of Churchill’s unabashed narrative bent and his gift for the memorable phrase, language that history has remembered.

Part of what that powerful language was able to accomplish, of course, was the kind of internal exile of “enemy aliens and suspicious characters of other nationalities” that Churchill advises toward the end of the address. American students may better understand what is being proposed here (in a rather understated way) by reference to the internment of Japanese-Americans in this country after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, as well as (in his comments about “Fifth Column activ-

ities” and a “malignancy in our midst”) an obvious similarity to the Communist “witch hunts” of the 1950s led by Senator Joe McCarthy.

Stephen Spender Icarus

The poem in some ways plays a trick on readers’ expectations; only when we arrive at the final couplet do we realize that Icarus has been the vehicle, and not the tenor, of the poem’s controlling metaphor, and the subject of the poem, who is compared to Icarus, remains unnamed. It was a subject which also proved attractive to Auden, whose later *Musée des Beaux Arts* (1938) approaches the myth rather differently, and makes an interesting comparison. The American poet William Carlos Williams also has an Icarus poem, which can be pulled in to make a triptych, and provoke a discussion on the role of the Icarus myth in modern poetry. One might argue, for instance, that Icarus plays the part in the modern imagination that Prometheus played for the Romantics; in this way, a link could be forged to both Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound* and Byron’s *Prometheus*, as well as more generally to the figure of the Byronic hero. Indeed, if one is willing to make a stretch, Icarus in these poems becomes a type of Lucifer, whose pride goeth before his fall; Stephen Dedalus makes this linkage explicit in Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and a number of pertinent texts are included in the “*Frankenstein* and Its Time” cluster. The Spender and Auden poems, then, can be used as a kind of case study in the modernist mythical method.

What I Expected

The poem expresses quite effectively the disillusionment felt so poignantly by so many during the years leading up to World War II. The poem can be opened up for students by posing one simple question: what led the speaker to expect “thunder, lightning,” and all the rest? What is the paradigm, or ideology, that seems to be coming apart in the face of the ’30s?

The Express, The Pylons

These two poems, together, suggest Spender’s complex and somewhat contradictory attitude toward what might broadly be called “modernization.” In *The Express*, the powerful train is an object of worship; she is mysterious, powerful—almost a “great black god” in a world without god. The poem’s closing verse sentence goes so far as to invert the Romantic valuation of nature over culture, arguing instead that nature can never equal her beauty. In *The Pylons*, however, the ugly concrete pillars used to suspend electrical or telephone lines throughout rural England are “giant girls that have no secret”; they clearly represent the wave of the future, “so tall with prophecy,” and yet they retain no mystery, and are anything but beautiful: more like a scar on the natural beauty of the land.

Elizabeth Bowen Mysterious Kôr

Mysterious Kôr is a mysterious story—mysterious in the sense that it acknowledges that there is something ineffable, not accessible to logical analysis, at the core of all human relationships. The foci of the story are two, and both are of historical,

cultural, and literary interest: the position of two single, working women in London during the war; and, more generally, the strange inversions and privations of life during wartime. Pepita and Arthur—Pepita most especially—walk through the moonlit, war-ravaged landscape of London like automatons, seemingly bereft of their life scripts, and separated from their instinctual reactions and behaviors by the new rules imposed by the war.

The story's opening paragraphs quite graphically demonstrate the ways in which wartime realities have usurped the natural rhythms of life: the moonlight of the story's opening sentence "drenche[s] the city and searche[s] it," like an enormous, infinitely bright searchlight; in the second paragraph, the clouds metamorphose into "opaque balloons"—seemingly the zeppelins introduced by the Germans during World War I. And the military atmosphere takes over not just the natural, but the human, environment; Pepita and Arthur, attempting to complete a romantic stroll through the city as though nothing had changed since their courtship began (before the war), suddenly "faced round to look back the way they had come . . . as though a command from the street behind them had been received by their synchronized bodies."

The story does make use of the mythical method, after a fashion; the difference is that the "myth" that Pepita, and Bowen, exploit is not an ancient one, but instead part of the plot of H. Rider Haggard's extremely popular adventure story *She* (1887). Teachers may want to reproduce the short passages describing Kôr from the novel, or perhaps show a short scene or two from the 1965 film *She*, starring Ursula Andress. A couple of suggestions: the "shell shock" that Bowen witnessed first-hand during World War I seems to become in this story a moral condition; even the women who remain at home during World War II seem to be suffering from a kind of shell shock (or Pepita, at least; Connie, by contrast, is an old-fashioned sort of woman, who seemingly doesn't let any of the spiritual malaise touch her). In what ways might "going to Kôr" be like the psychological retreat that shell-shock victims make? The story also demonstrates to some degree the ways in which the power relations between the sexes have been changed by the wartime economy.

Evelyn Waugh

Cruise

Two of the stories in this cluster of short fiction of the '30s—those by Waugh and Wodehouse, as well as the Monty Python sketch—are intended to remind students of an aspect of British writing that is too often lost in scholarly anthologies: there's a lot of tremendously funny British writing. Indeed, many of the students in lower-division literature courses, especially students with majors outside the humanities, will have had as their first exposure to British literature the likes of Monty Python, Benny Hill, Fawlty Towers, and other British comedies (not to mention the music of the British Invasion and beyond).

Waugh's *Cruise* is a wonderfully lighthearted satire on the self-satisfied stupidity of some members of the privileged classes. Our postcard writer is a culture vul-

ture of the worst kind; she wanders from port to port taking in whatever Daddy's money is sufficient to buy, without letting anything that she sees change her: indeed, she seems primarily interested in a shipboard romance (as, in fairness, do the rest of the members of her party). The story helps to suggest that the ugly Brit is every bit as potent a stereotype as the ugly American.

It is also possible to do a darker reading of the story, however. The boorishness of our correspondent and her family parallels, in important ways, the brutal insensitivity of British imperialism as it lingers into the 1930s, '40s, and '50s; the cruise ship sails through the Suez Canal, a largely British project completed in 1854 and paid for by 120,000 Egyptians who died in forced labor while digging the canal. In Waugh's story, the British penchant for travel and travel writing merges almost imperceptibly into the imperial quest for land; our postcard writer seems to be master of all she surveys—and a wholly incompetent, and disengaged, master. In her postcards, all the lands she visits are reduced to the stereotypes convenient to hand: "This is a photograph of the Holyland and the famous sea of Gallilee." Indeed, all the foreign lands, and their peoples, are reduced precisely to postcards: the leisure class's equivalent of colonial possession.

COMPANION READING

Monty Python: "Travel Agent"

The connection between the Waugh story and the Monty Python sketch should be readily apparent; the tourist in the sketch wants to go on holiday not to learn about places and people different from himself, but to have his prejudices confirmed, and to taste the comforts of home however far from home he might be; Great Britain seems to have devolved from the empire on which the sun never sets to a seemingly endless string of Watney's Red Barrel franchises. Comic actor Eric Idle puts in a virtuoso performance as the tourist, Mr. Smoke-Too-Much; it can be heard on a few different Monty Python compilation recordings, and (even better) seen on volume 3 of the *Monty Python's Flying Circus* videotape collection (Paramount Home Video 12545).

The Man Who Liked Dickens

The first connection to make with this story is its pretty explicit parallel to *Heart of Darkness*. For while its setting is South America rather than Africa, "The Man Who Liked Dickens" explores life in one of the unexplored areas of the world map, a "white space," in which the invading white man is king. In place of Kurtz we find Mr. McMaster, whose name means, fittingly, "son of the master"; and the story's opening pages, when McMaster nurses Henty back to health, turn the narrative of *Heart of Darkness* on its head. McMaster's rather improbable Dickens library, in the heart of the primeval Brazilian forest, is an oasis of "civilization" in the midst of "barbarism"—not unlike the hut of the accountant Marlow meets at the middle station in *Heart of Darkness*. In this story McMaster, who believes in no god, believes instead in Dickens: the narratives of Dickens's novels become a vi-

carious form of (quintessentially British) life in this alien environment. That McMaster can treat Henty with such complete barbarity—as, apparently, he has treated his previous “reader,” Barnabas Washington—ironically gives the lie to the notion that reading the Great Books improves one’s moral character. In *Apocalypse Now*, Francis Ford Coppola’s re-telling of *Heart of Darkness*, his Kurtz (Marlon Brando) reads T. S. Eliot’s poetry while carrying out genocide; McMaster, in “The Man Who Liked Dickens,” is likewise representative of the British imperial mindset, disguising his selfish designs behind a façade of British “culture.”

Evelyn Waugh’s first wife was named Evelyn; she also happened to be the daughter of Lord Carnarvon, the man who discovered King Tut’s tomb. Through this close association and many others, such as his own journalistic jobs around the world, Waugh was connected to the map of otherness I have contended is such an integral part of modernism. Although Waugh upheld the traditional virtues, as he saw them, of Western culture, he was always “ready to be startled” by the spectacle of barbarism wherever he found it, and he spent much of his time going places in order to glimpse that spectacle, looking for examples of man’s disregard of civilized society. Believing barbarism was “a dog to be stalked with a pinch of salt,” he “went to the wild lands where man had deserted his post and the jungle was creeping back to its old strongholds.” It was in “distant and barbarous” places that his literary sense came alive, “at the borderlands of conflicting cultures and states of development, where ideas, uprooted from their traditions, became oddly changed in transplantation.” He stalked this division of savagery and civilization in Abyssinia, in Kenya and in Brazil, as well as in England; he later felt he had found its epitome in California, in Forest Lawn cemetery and the celluloid castle of Hollywood. “The Man Who Liked Dickens” is set at that razor’s edge between savagery and civilization, its modernism in dialogue with both Joyce and Woolf, and with its recreation of Conrad, its own quite obvious undertaking of a journey to the heart of darkness. Especially, I want to read the impulses that set this text on the track of the wilderness, and to explore the satiric modernism which is at its heart.

In quite different ways, and at the risk of simplifying, Conrad, Joyce, Lawrence and Woolf are preoccupied with the excess of rationality or the deadness of intellectuality which had left Western European culture without spontaneity, the will drained. In each there is an attempt to suggest a route to immediate experience, to a realm of sensation and depth that is figured as sexuality, or the unconscious of writing, or the loosening of the bonds of rational thought and convention. In Waugh’s work, the analysis is different—it is the inability to sustain a dialect between reason and will which has led to the stalemate of modern culture, the division between mindless action and an enfeebled reflection tied to a nostalgia for what is past. The gusto with which the “savage” comes to infiltrate Waugh’s work is on the one hand a diagnosis of a problem in modern society and on the other a leaning toward that which isn’t accommodated in his system.

Waugh referred to himself once as a “pure aesthete,” and despite his later denunciations of modernist art his own quicksilver narratives are purely in the modernist vein, with their poised artificiality, their utterly withdrawn narrator, their dizzying changes of scene, and, as in Lawrence, the absence of any “stable ego of

character.” Waugh’s text makes a flat canvas across which these figures are drawn, taking up the glossy linguistic artificiality of Ronald Firbank, camp novelist extraordinaire. While Waugh wants to avoid what he felt to be modernism’s perilous Scylla and Charybdis of the overly abstract and the ludicrously mimetic, there is never any return to traditional narrative style, to “realistic” characters, to narratorial commentary. And the major influence on the technique of his story is without doubt the cinema. His primary charge against modernist aesthetics, and in particular the work of Woolf and Joyce, was that it was overly subjective, and one can see how ruthlessly the subjective is scooped out in favor of the energy of satire, which can propose another underlying assessment of the matter at hand. Woolf and Waugh begin writing from exactly the same premise: the nineteenth century novel has died. Woolf’s response to this knowledge is to move inward, to what she calls for in this passage: “Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad of impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms . . .”

“For moderns, “ she also says, “ the point of interest lies very likely in the dark places of psychology.” Their subject, one could say, was the self at the very moments where, by accident or by design, it eludes the conventions of society. The mind has no access to objective truth, and what can be charted are the moments of subjective longing, of desire transfigured in language. Waugh just as scrupulously avoids the fiction of the “complete” or rounded personality of 19th century fiction, and despises the 19th century novel for its sentimentality and the worn-out furniture of realism. Waugh’s modernist technique is stripped away from an ideology of modernism, and deployed for other purposes; it uses scattershot scenes, a lack of realist detail and an absence of transitions, implausible characters who are linguistic costumes more than anything else, to mount a diagnosis of the conditions of modern life. An algebra of fiction, in Waugh’s words. One of the chief concerns or problems for modernist writers was the lack of a belief that their world was intelligible or coherent, that it could be written about. Woolf’s response to this, for example, was to privilege the subjective moment of consciousness, not for its coherence or for its ultimate truth, but as the evanescent register of consciousness. Waugh avoids any register of consciousness; with a surreal narration, a counterpointing of innumerable tiny scenes, paper-thin characters and the dissolving of any claims of verisimilitude, Waugh pitilessly looks on at the world. Woolf had urged, in a classic passage on the character Mrs Brown in the fiction of the Victorian novelist Arnold Bennett that this fictional character should be released from realist fiction by a smashing and crashing of the furniture of the novel; in Waugh’s fiction the houses are falling left and right, among them Hetton in *A Handful of Dust*. The fictional Mrs Brown also dissolves and fades into “the kaleidoscope of dimly discerned faces” which made up, for Waugh, the truth of the modernist age.

Tony is, in a sense, deserting his post, refusing to confront the savagery at the heart of British life and instead vanishing into the outposts of another world, eager to put the present behind him. “The seemingly-solid, patiently built, gorgeously or-

namented structure of Western life was to melt overnight like an ice castle, leaving only a puddle of mud." The aimlessness and restless movement of the modern world that made a concerted, heroic effort seem impossible was also, clearly, favored by an economic system that is run for the circulation and accumulation of ever more commodities, goods and sensations, and the world of Waugh's characters is an unceasing round of the dictates of such an economic system, with parties and movies and redecorating and airplane rides and frenzied travel for the sake of it. For those who want to resist this, it is imperative that they not pursue an idealized and outmoded notion of Western culture, as Tony does; such an idealization causes petrification, it removes the possibility of actually resisting conditions and tends to turn these figures into completely disaffected and thus ineffectual wanderers. Without conviction, such characters can only be doomed, as is Tony, to the assaults of modernity.

The story's very construction is cinematic. Take in particular the use of montage—the sudden juxtaposition of utterly different scenes which is a primary technique of film, so that we can “go” from viewing one scene unfolding to seeing something else that is happening elsewhere at an adjacent or the same time. In Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* the voyage is ironized by the words Marlow uses to recount it; the irony is provided by these sudden cross-cuttings which undermine the stability of place or time and rocket the reader back and forth between these spaces with the greatest alacrity. Scenes are spliced together with associational rather than linear logic, and with radical editing as a trope of modern life. The discontinuity and unreality of such life was virtually cinematic, for Waugh.

Film is ideally suited to the relativist, satirical sensibility, capable of suggesting the shifting, fluid perspectives of a world without any fixed center and periphery, actually or in ethical terms.

The relation of film to primitivism was also a direct one for Waugh; the text shows that modern technocracy unwittingly promotes the reversion to a barbarous sensibility, which for Waugh is characterized, quite unanthropologically, as an immersion in the here and now incapable of perspective, distance and civilized thought through time. Film fascinates at least in part because it seems to subvert those very structures, and thus is also linked with a primitivism of sorts. Europe can't keep its pretense at civilization.

Waugh's primitivism was unsound and ethnocentric, to be sure, but it is also mythical, not a real assessment of other cultures, since what preoccupied Waugh was the condition of the west, which he can't, however, depict without invoking all these other places, and putting them into counterpoint.

Waugh's take on the question of subject and object can be compared to Woolf's—in Woolf's work, the two come ever closer and closer, so that the object is penetrated by subjectivity and becomes an expression of it. Waugh holds these resolutely separate, and in fact uses his figurative language, the use of similes, to do so—his similes, in contrast to Woolf's, are classical ones, intended to keep compartments between subject and object, rather than figuratively blurring them.

The riveting closing of “The Man who Liked Dickens” puts that juxtaposition of the savage and shows that Tony's fate is to be evicted from time. When last seen,

he has just awoken from two days of drugged sleep, having missed the search party of Englishmen who have come looking for him by Mr. Todd's clever ruse; his watch is also gone, given to those same men as proof, along with the wooden cross, that he has actually died. The search party returns to England where Tony is declared officially dead, and Tony becomes the permanent captive of Mr. Todd, who will keep him to read and reread the works of Dickens to him endlessly. Tony is trapped in one of the barbarous borderlands of the 20th century, between the menace of an illiterate madman who has a sentimental attachment to Dickens. Mechanized speed and the manipulation of goods for profit—this text is absorbed in these forces as thoroughly as Woolf or Lawrence's are. Last's final fate is that of Western society—the eye held hostage to the ear, a civilized man trapped because he can read, not by primitive so-called savages, but by a barbarous man who is backed up by the technology of a gun. History is annulled, time and tradition swept away.

Tony has vanished into the far away, living the life of a Dickens novel.

George Orwell Politics and the English Language

Like *Inside the Whale*, Orwell's *Politics* essay is at its most effective as a critique of what Orwell called "group think" in *1984*: the ways that party-line thinking results in foolish writing—which, in turn, reinforces foolish thinking. The argument Orwell makes here—especially the stylistic foibles that he catalogs in the middle of the essay—make up the backbone of Richard Lanham's famous composition textbook, *Revising Prose*; and it's not difficult to see how Orwell's prescriptions here could be used as a sort of abbreviated *Strunk and White*.

An interesting exercise is to turn back a few pages and see how well Orwell's diagnosis of political language serves to describe the speeches of Winston Churchill—or going back further, those of Perse, Parnell, and Collins. Students are likely to conclude that the speeches anthologized here are memorable because they largely avoid the solecisms Orwell outlines.

If the teacher is interested in suggesting the points where Orwell's argument is vulnerable, this can be done inductively by having students think for a minute about the word "extramarital," which Orwell singles out as one of his examples of "pretentious diction." What he has in mind, apparently, is that the good old-fashioned English word "adulterous" will do just as well; if it was good enough for Chaucer, it ought to be good enough for us. One might argue, though, that there are good reasons for a new formation like "extramarital": "adulterous" cannot help but carry connotations of Biblical morality along with it, whereas a new formation like "extramarital" is, at least for a time, free from such associations. In other words: "adultery" is, literally, a sin; but an "extramarital" affair is simply one which takes place outside the bounds of marriage—and its morality would be left up to others to decide; it is surely a more objective, less evaluative term. Similarly, students of literature who have spent a good portion of the term reading British poetry and prose of the early nineteenth century may well want to argue that words like "romantic," "sentimental," and "natural" have important philosophical meanings, though Orwell writes them off as "meaningless words."

Shooting an Elephant

Orwell's brief essay is a classic exploration of the perverse logics of imperialism and colonial domination—and, Orwell's particular interest in this piece, the ways that neither colonizer nor colonized is entirely free in this most unnatural of civil arrangements. What is perhaps most remarkable is the complete honesty of the writing: Orwell is willing to reveal his own racism ("sneering yellow faces") and the vanity which values saving face over the preservation of animal, and even human, life ("I was very glad that the coolie had been killed; it put me legally in the right"). Orwell is able to write with such disarming honesty about his role as an enforcer of empire because he understands the situation structurally: he recognizes that he is part of an evil system, and that his possible responses are tightly proscribed by his circumstances. Orwell's awareness—"I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing and the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better"—might be fruitfully compared with the attitude of Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*, who also got a look at "the dirty work of Empire at close quarters."

Salman Rushdie

Christopher Columbus. . . .

In "Christopher Columbus," Salman Rushdie employs a fictional technique much in evidence in postmodern writing: he reanimates the historical record with a farcical fictional imagination, and succeeds at the same time in exploring the power struggles evident in the *un*-colonial enterprise of the Western imagination, Columbus's "discovery" of America. The story is comprised in part of the question-and-answer pattern characteristic of the religious catechism; James Joyce, perhaps the most important influence on Rushdie's writing, was the first to bend the catechism to fictional ends, in the penultimate chapter of *Ulysses*, the "Ithaca" chapter. (One might also hear a faint echo of the famous ending of Joyce's famous novel—"yes I said yes I will Yes"—in the close of Rushdie's story, in words spoken by Columbus: "Yes,' he tells the heralds. *Yes. I'll come.*" Thus, in Rushdie's twisted version of imperial history, Columbus must "come" (as Molly Bloom may indeed "come" at the end of *Ulysses*) before he can go; sexual consummation prefigures imperial consummation. Among other things, Rushdie's story makes the point that even the great knight of empire Columbus was a foreigner, an outsider, in Isabella's court.

Dylan Thomas

Dylan Thomas's poetry usually appeals immediately to its first-time readers; its lyric intensity and its musical rhythms galvanize even neophyte readers of poetry, while the personal and yet universal issues Thomas's poems raise are immediately recognizable. His incantatory reading of *Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night*, included on our audio CD, provides a compelling introduction to his voice and verse. The poetry meshes beautifully with other poets' offerings in the twentieth-century sec-

tion—Hardy, Yeats, and Boland in particular—while it is a superb complement to readings in the Romantics, especially Keats and Wordsworth, and to Hopkins later in the nineteenth century. The medieval and early modern Welsh poetry is extremely apposite, since Dylan Thomas was furthering a long tradition of Welsh poetry, as well as fostering the English lyric poem, where John Donne and Andrew Marvell are the best comparisons and companions for his work.

The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower is one Thomas poem that can center a discussion radiating out into all the poetic forebears and styles sketched above. The passionate “I” of its lyric speaks repeatedly of (his) “dumbness” before the natural world’s force, a force which itself speaks through many “mouths” of stream and wind and blood. Nature is personified, and yet impersonal. The poem seems to refer directly to Wordsworth’s *The Leech Gatherer* in its line “The lips of time leech to the fountain head,” where time too is a human agent, a speaking subject or mouth with lips, lips that greedily try to adhere themselves to the fountain head at life’s source, just as the “I” of the poem does. At the same time the line echoes the concerns with temporality found in Keats’s *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and in Marvell’s *To His Coy Mistress*. While it rewrites the pastoral genre in an almost violent vein—a post-Darwinian view of nature’s harshness infuses the poem—there is an ecstatic element very akin to Hopkins’s divine landscapes, imbued with God’s animating power. Thomas Hardy’s verse forms seem to cling to the lines “And I am dumb to tell the hanging man, How of my clay is made the hangman’s lime,” and their aura of fatalism resembles Hardy’s poetic sensibility too. Yeats’ poetic presence can be glimpsed throughout the poem—which is not to say that it is derivative of Yeats, or any of the other poets cited, but that it is, like all poetry, a complicated hybrid of things that came before—in the majestic way a whole world can be summoned up in the image of “the crooked rose,” in the bow to the destructive side of an empowering nature, and in the cosmic implications of humanity’s position: when the “I” looks up to the heavens at the end of the poem, it is a speechless “I” in the face of time’s relentless pace, “how time has ticked a heaven round the stars.”

If at all possible, the best way to teach the extraordinary radio play *Return Journey* is to get a recording of it. Without hearing it in that form, one might forget that it uses modern technology to create a crucial part of its meaning. A radio broadcast transmits disembodied voices, voices floating through time and space without definite location. This piece is about a definite location—Swansea, Wales, where the narrator is returning to find out if anyone remembers him in the town he has left for good. He finds many who remember him, but none who recognize him as the young man he inquires about, and in fact his last interlocutor tells him with great authority that the boy is “dead.” Of course, the boy *is* dead, or at least that version of his identity seems dead. The peculiarities of radio can convey the sense of disappearance or death as no other medium could. Thomas’s formal brilliance in this work is reminiscent of the *sui generis* art form created by David Jones in *In Parenthesis*, and the latter work would be terrific to read in conjunction with it. Jones fuses poetry, narration, and drama in his memoir of World War I, and many of the artistic issues of style, and the political issues of Welsh history, emerge

in Thomas as in Jones. Both writers need to find a style which can include elements from the great English literary tradition, while inflecting these with the different and in many ways oppositional artistic legacy of Wales. Welsh art was often literally suppressed and censored over the centuries by the English, as were attempts at Welsh independence, and by the twentieth century the Welsh language was primarily relegated to cultural uses—songs, church music, poetry, and ballads. Welsh identity was constructed, in English eyes, as fanciful, overly emotional, and even magical—shading into the demonic. Welsh writers in English of the stature of Jones and Thomas had to take into account the threatening power of Welsh language for English speakers, who saw it as alien and transgressive, and had to reckon with the still disturbing force of Welsh accents in English. Southern accents in the United States, or what is called “Black English” dialect, are analogous in conveying negative connotations or stereotypes to some American English speakers’ ears. So the sound of the voices in Dylan Thomas’s *Return Journey* is all-important, and cannot be fully captured on the page. National radio broadcasts, like national television, demands that a standard English be spoken—we know this phenomenon in the United States media as regional or ethnic dialects are suppressed in favor of standard, “accentless” speech for news anchors or television hosts. Dylan Thomas’s radio play is formally ingenious in linking its ghostly themes of self-forgetting and death to the specificities of radio; Samuel Beckett, among others, would follow and imitate his ingenuity. There is also a political aspect to the use of the radio medium, however. The narrator in *Return Journey* cannot go back to Swansea and inquire about the ghost of himself without encountering the Welsh “accents” that BBC English forbids. The narrator has adopted a less regional form of speech, as his life has taken him away from his community—he has lost his “accent,” and his dialect as well. No wonder no one recognizes him—his voice patterns are as much of a disguise as his age and his social status. *Return Journey* summons up the dialect and accent of the narrator’s youth, as all the folks he speaks to respond to him unself-consciously in their regional speech forms; the melange of Welsh voices make up the play being broadcast on the BBC, which tended whenever it could to eliminate accents. The British Broadcasting Network has only very recently begun accommodating regional accents and dialects on its programs, and even now rarely allows these to be heard on its news broadcasts. Its announcers speak a standard upper-class British, whether they be from Scotland, Wales, or Yorkshire. *Return Journey* is a sly and yet immensely poignant radio play, making a political point in disguise by capturing the lost voices of Dylan Thomas’s youth and broadcasting them in all their regional glory to an English nation never comfortable with the audible marks of difference. Speech is a force that through the fuse of radio waves drives the nation toward sameness, and death. Dylan Thomas’s writing certainly insisted upon raging against the dying of that linguistic light.

The second edition of the anthology adds among other things Thomas’s astonishing poem “Fern Hill.” Among the approaches to this poem that would surely captivate students is reading it aloud with an emphasis on the way the description of a very local place—Fern Hill itself—with very specific memories for the poet is enlarged as a space or zone for the intersection of consciousness with place.

Compare Thomas's technique of what could be called "poetic geography" to the more sweeping, abstract landscapes in poetry by Hughes, Auden, Hardy or Larkin. A crux of Dylan Thomas's poetics lies in making a small spot on the Welsh countryside, a gentle, fern-covered hill, surge with lyric intensity and general application. Students should pay special attention to the words for landscape features Thomas draws upon, and how the poem almost burrows into the ferny hill of its title to invest the local with sublimely immediate passion. Cultural geography and the intense relation humans have to place is becoming ever more engaging in current thinking; Thomas's gorgeously detailed topographic poetry inscribes an absent place with surging fervor, and by doing so invests his poem with the forces of place and time. Dylan Thomas in "Fern Hill" writes like a green fuse driving the flowers of mind and memory back to a location its readers now forever share.

Samuel Beckett

Krapp's Last Tape

Like most of Beckett's work, *Krapp's Last Tape* works by bringing an unusual amount of pressure to bear on a minimal amount of verbal material. The text of *Krapp's Last Tape* is short and quite repetitive; indeed, the plot is primarily about repetition—about our inability to avoid repeating the past, even our compulsion to play again and again the "tapes" (as contemporary psychologists would say) of our past, thus effectively erecting barriers to any more satisfactory future.

In a strange way, *Krapp's Last Tape*, despite all the differences in *mise en scène*, could easily be a James Joyce, *Dubliners*-style story. In playing over and over the birthday recording from his 39th birthday, Krapp is presented with the opportunity to look himself in the eye—to see himself for the vain and selfish person that he is, and to attempt to grow in consequence of that awful knowledge. But like Joyce's characters, he refuses that "one good look" in the looking-glass; continued self-delusion—even if it requires a lifetime of alienation and loneliness—is easier than admitting one's faults and honestly facing them. Thus the play's close, with the 69-year-old Krapp insisting that he wouldn't want the past back, finally suggests the awful price he has paid for the macho "no regrets" philosophy he has lived by.

A brilliant performance is available on videocassette, from Smithsonian Institution Press, in the *Beckett Directs Beckett* series: a production by the San Quentin Drama Workshop starring Rick Cluchey. Watching the play, more than anything else, will drive home its pathos, as well as underscoring the genuine humor that underlies the play, including Beckett's debts to Charlie Chaplin and vaudeville.

Texts for Nothing

All of Beckett's narrators are obsessed with the fact of their narrating; this is nowhere more evident than in the *Texts for Nothing*. Text 4 performs an inquiry into the nature of the self, and suggests that the "self," the "I," is simply a story

that we tell ourselves in order to create the illusion of unity of being—the sense of a whole, integrated self. “Who says this, saying it’s me?,” our narrator wonders in the first sentence. The suggestion is that some portion of one’s experience is always sacrificed in the forging (in both senses of that word) of the self; some part that doesn’t seem to fit in with the overall story one wishes to tell ends up on the cutting-room floor, edited out of the final text. But those censored passages that the “self” tries to keep out have a nasty way of reasserting their rights, as Freud taught us. Thus the monologue we overhear in Text 4 might almost be narrated in the voice of Krapp—that part of Krapp that the self-confident, vain man who works the tape recorder can’t allow, that thing of darkness he is unable, or simply unwilling, to acknowledge his. This human tendency—the way that the host ego that keeps our narrator down “tells his story every five minutes, saying it is not his”—is the focus of Beckett’s late play *Not I*, in which the psychological mechanism of repression is able to create a seemingly healthy self with which to meet the world, but only at the cost of saying “not I” to a number of things that the whole person had experienced. Text 4 is then, on one level, a parable about the unavoidable but costly process of creating a self—about the violence and violent forgetting that a life narrative visits upon lived experience. The “self,” Beckett reminds us, is a fiction—a character whom we create but, that creation accomplished, can no longer see.

Text 8, while continuing the focus of Text 4 on the creation of the self, broadens its horizons somewhat to talk about the more general human drive to tell stories. Throughout Beckett’s writing there is the strong message that humans are condemned to tell stories, condemned to speech: to go silent is all that many of Beckett’s characters dream of, but it is a dream that is approached but never quite realized. To cease telling stories is to die; but as long as we have the breath of life in us, that breath will be used to tell stories—and far too often, Beckett suggests, used to tell stories about ourselves that prevent us from honestly facing who we are and what we have done.

The Expelled

The Expelled, we learn in this story, includes all of us: we all suffer the originary act of being expelled from the mother’s body at birth—an ouster which Beckett here compares to the Christian notion of the Fall, through the narrator’s comic series of falls—and spend the remainder of our time here on earth trying to get back on our feet, and to write the story that will make sense for us of our being tossed out of our ancestral home.

Making reference to *Paradise Lost*, and the doctrine of the fortunate fall, may help students to see the paradigm that Beckett is playing with here; in this story, of course, the Fall is made quite literal, our protagonist lying in a gutter as he begins to tell his story, and he proceeds to fall and fall again throughout the brief story (one of Beckett’s plays for radio is called *All That Fall*).

Like the characters in the *Texts for Nothing*, our protagonist here seems to be forced to tell his story, punished by being forced to describe (“How describe this

hat? And why?"; "I have always greatly admired the door of this house. . . . How to describe it?"); like Charlie Marlow in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, life seems to our protagonist a stiff sentence indeed, and he hopes to shorten his stay—to earn time off for good behavior—by dutifully telling the stories that he thinks are demanded of him.

W. H. Auden

W. H. Auden provided the skeleton key for reading his poetry in the many essays and books of literary criticism he also wrote. The *Anthology* includes just such a critical essay, *Writing*, in order to facilitate the interpretation of Auden's poetic mission, and to compare his ideas of the goals of art to the critical writings other poets produced in past eras. William Wordsworth's "Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*," Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, Percy Shelley's *Defense of Poetry*, and even William Blake's poetic rationales make productive companion readings. Auden was a literary scholar along with being a practicing poet; his erudite understanding of the English literary tradition extended even to his passionate explications of its precursor forms in the medieval sagas. Within the twentieth-century section itself, Auden's essay, like his poetry, ought to be compared to T. S. Eliot's critical essay on poetic form and modern writing. The two critics, like the two poets, have an intriguingly different diagnosis of modern poetry, and a similarly divergent prescription for writing.

Eliot is famous for having insisted on the necessary impersonality of art. He called for an impersonal style which sought an "objective correlative" to the subjective emotion of the artist. In other words, a poetic object was sought to correlate with, and to replace, the explicit mention of subjective inner states. Out of this prescription Eliot also created a canon of his favorite poets, those who had adopted the "objective correlative" he championed—for example, the "metaphysical" poets, like John Donne, who had been relatively ignored. The knotty conceits and cerebral metaphors of poets like Donne exemplified the refined, impersonal poetry Eliot mandated. While many critics have lately insisted that Eliot's poetry, far from impersonal, fairly seethes with references to his own experiences and emotional states, there is nonetheless a huge contrast between Eliot's criteria for poetry and Auden's. W. H. Auden kept the lyric or personal voice alive in his poetry. This is not to say that it was openly confessional or autobiographical: Auden's poems are not at all like Anne Sexton's or Sylvia Plath's, for example. Still, poems like *In Memory of W. B. Yeats* or *September 1, 1939* hinge on personal experience and the voice of a person narrating the history of his own time. Eliot's poetry contains myriad splintered allusions to all sorts of historical and personal experiences, of course, yet these are filtered through a mesh of "objective correlatives"—quotes from other poems, images that refract the experience. W. H. Auden by contrast seems to stand or hover in back of his poetry, not just a witness but an actor in its events.

The famous *Musée des Beaux Arts* does not revolve around a strikingly *personal* personal experience, yet it exhibits Auden's poetic signature. The poem transcribes

a visit to an art museum, where the viewer—the poetic voice—is looking at a well-known painting by Brueghel, yet is not fully aware of an ominous detail of it. Hidden in a corner of the painting, the boy Icarus falls into the sea, the wings his father Daedalus molded from wax having melted when Icarus brought them too close to the sun. The Greek myth of Daedalus and Icarus is a cautionary tale about art: the father's artifice was so skillful that the son, borne aloft on artificial wings, overreached himself, and was drowned. So much else seems to be happening in the painting, so much else draws the eye, that the poignant tragedy of Icarus unfolds unseen. Auden's poem draws a word-picture of the painting—this is a favorite technique of the Renaissance, when the Latin phrase *ut pictura poesis* referred to the ability of verbal art to mimic or imitate visual art. The classical and early modern rivalry between poets and painters was intense, and long-standing, with painters claiming to be able to imitate the real, and poets claiming supremacy because their art, the art of language, could introduce the element of time. Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn* brings this old quarrel of *ut pictura poesis* into Romanticism, when the frieze on the Grecian urn he depicts in his poem freezes time—the figures on its surface are forever dancing to the music of “slow time,” and the maiden who is on the verge of her marriage yet who never gets there in the frieze is a “still unravished bride of quietness.” Neither Keats nor Auden is interested in whether painters or poets are better—they have entirely given up on that ancient and somewhat silly debate. What interests them both is the question of time: how poetry relates to time, and staves off death by filling the void of time with language. Auden's words are able to draw our attention to a new part of the picture; there, unlike anything that can actually happen on a picture's surface, Icarus is in the process of falling, as if the picture had become a motion picture. Does knowing that Icarus is falling allow him to be rescued? Unfortunately, no. Words have the power to “give life” to Icarus for an instant, just as his father's ingenuity gave him the wings to soar. Both modes of artifice or art, however, have no power to change things in the face of time. Icarus will fall, the painting will remain, and Auden's poem asks, what will the poem have changed?

Musée de Beaux Arts shows how adept Auden is at borrowing things—in the case of that poem, borrowing a *topos* from Renaissance defenses of poetry, and from Romantic defenses of those defenses, and making it new. The highlight of Auden's poetic method is his love of, and talent for, pouring new wine into old bottles; that is, using older metrical forms, like the sonnet and the aubade, and infusing them with new poetic life. A serious inquiry into Auden's poetry would require a rigorous grasp of the techniques and the technicalities of English verse forms. Auden may have violated T.S. Eliot's idea of poetic protocol by inserting himself into his poetry in a lyrical Romantic fashion, but he has no argument with Eliot's love of classical form, and no modern peer in his facility for remaking the patterns of English poetry to fit the age of anxiety, atomic bombs, and free love. For example, *Lullaby* follows its model poem Herrick's *To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time*, echoing its line “Gather ye rosebuds while ye may” with the same scrupulous meter and tight prosody. Auden is strict, never sloppy, and exacting in his verse and vocabulary. By borrowing the older poem's form, yet not its words and images, he imbues

that paean to love—and sex—with a heady modern sexiness, and an equal poignance at the fleeting wings of time.

Love is perhaps Auden's best poetic subject. This has been proven in popular terms, anyway, in the pop culture of the 1990s, when Auden had a huge posthumous success with his love poetry. After a scene in the British film *Four Weddings and a Funeral* featured a character reciting an Auden poem aloud at a friend's funeral service, audiences found the poem overwhelmingly moving, and tried to find out who had written it. Auden's publishers heard about the demand for the poem and reprinted it, along with others, as a new volume, *Four Love Poems by W. H. Auden*, sold at bookstores and discount stores, with "includes the poem from *Four Weddings and a Funeral*" emblazoned on its cover. It may seem ironic or even a little seedy that it took a film to revive interest in Auden's work for a wider public. However, Auden would have appreciated the happy accident of coming to public notice, whatever the circumstances. The poet who wrote *Musée des Beaux Arts* worried about how, and if, people would notice what art tried to show them. It is no more strange that Auden's poem proved to be so moving and powerful when read by an actor in a movie, than that Icarus might fall to earth in a stationary painting. Life is always going on, and time hastening along; Auden believed that if the words of a poem were strong enough, they could "stop time." So precise and strong were Auden's words that they overpowered the film around them, and took on a new life of their own.

Stevie Smith

Stevie Smith's poetry almost teaches itself, especially when read where it is embedded, within the largely male poetry of post-war poets such as Auden, Larkin, and Hughes. Sylvia Plath's individual poems, like those of the poets just mentioned, demand individual glosses, whereas Smith's poems are best taught as a group. This is not meant to imply that she is an unserious poet, but rather that her greatest worth lies in the poetic voice she brought to the fore, a voice that insists on an "I" without enlarging its own importance.

Smith boldly violated one of the unspoken taboos of modern poetry when she added her sprightly, tensile line drawings to her poetry. For a thousand years or more an artistic "war" has been waged between poets and visual artists, the latter claiming that only they could render "reality," the former insisting that the advantage literature has over poetry, in addition to the almost infinite permutations of words, is its incorporation of time. Paintings can only freeze or stop time, the critical argument went, whereas words need no secondary clues or illustrations of what they can so elastically show to the mind's eye. Into this long debate waltzes Stevie Smith, who matches her poems up not only with visual art, but with representational or figural drawings that dare to be personal, almost decorative, additions. Help students see how their immediacy, their almost improvisatory nature is meant to collaborate with her poems—Stevie Smith is not intent, as was Auden, for example, on establishing herself as a witness to the major historical events of her time, nor was she interested in maintaining a lofty seriousness nor a "purity"

of poetic word. My headnote in the anthology compares her instead to the recent singer-songwriters Alanis Morissette and Chrissie Hynde, among others—Smith’s poetic lyrics are about herself, her loneliness, her pain, her observations, her grasp of everyone’s ordinariness. They dramatize and, with her sketches, bring to life a persona that while desperate, is never bitter, while suffering is never just a victim. “Not Waving But Drowning” attributes its own main line to someone else, and then flips the poetic line to have the poet’s persona voice this scary but still comical plaint. Waving, after all, is such a sweet interpretation to make of a flailing hand stretched above the waves—and of course Smith uses the play on hand-waving and ocean waves, too. Like her sketches, the poems are stripped down to the tightest, thinnest line, the most economical stanzas, and despite this self-effacing economics her poetry bursts with casual flair and immediate rapport with a reader. Stevie Smith’s work does not articulate a “theory” of feminism, as perhaps could be said of Sylvia Plath’s incisive poetry, with its controlled rage against Fathers everywhere. Smith doesn’t rail or dramatize, she just insists on putting her heart on the page, certain that others—women, yes, but men too, who are as lonely in this life as anybody else—will have been struck by the absurdity, the sadness, and yet the “pretty” aspects of the world. The poem “Pretty” is as bold as her others in the same fashion—here is a female poet who dares to deploy the word “pretty,” when the only proper poetic subject, according to the tradition of poetics, is beauty. Prettiness is not ugliness, but not beauty either—it stands there unrecorded, seemingly not a part of art, never reaching the heights of Beauty, where Truth also resides. Pretty is in the eye of the beholder, much more so than beauty is, because “prettiness” isn’t valued in the same way, and has to be given value by those who find it and name it.

Stevie Smith’s poetry was highly popular, and that too was a strike against her. Without in the slightest taking away from the admittedly great poets—Yeats, Eliot, Thomas, Hardy and so forth—who occupy center stage in the tradition of modern poetry, Stevie Smith makes room for herself and room for other readers, sophisticated and not so, to read poetry differently. Well before it was fashionable, Stevie Smith developed a kind of “confessional” poetry that honored her own emotions, her own observations, her solidarity with others. She never, however, used poetry to highlight herself or for narcissistic purposes. Just as the vibrant female singer-songwriters of today yoke words and music, so too did Stevie Smith yoke words and image. Her poetry and her line drawings are both as light as air and inscribed like a diamond, in recognition of what is both “pretty” and “drowning.”

Philip Larkin

Church Going

Much of Larkin’s poetry is concerned with the creation of a meaningful life after the death of God; in *Church Going*, the speaker wonders why he is attracted to houses of worship, largely empty, when he does not believe in the God they were built to honor. The interior is described in terms that emphasize its emptiness and

silence; clearly, these empty churches are meant to symbolize the death of an older order, one which, for all its shortcomings, did help to explain to people their place in the creation, and a purpose for their lives. For the speaker, not just belief, but even “unbelief,” has disappeared; both can create a kind of energy, a kind of passion, that he in his agnostic torpor cannot capture. In the poem’s conclusion the speaker reaffirms the church’s importance—which lies not in its fulfilling the purposes for which it was originally constructed, but rather serving as discrete, physical links in British history and tradition, another system of belief within which one can find one’s place and purpose.

High Windows

The curse word in the second line of *High Windows* may present problems for teachers of some students, in some parts of the country; though texts from Beckett and Kelman are by turns vulgar and profane, there is something especially troubling and unexpected about the “f-word” cropping up in a poem, especially in verse as classically disciplined as Larkin’s. And that, of course, is precisely the point: there’s nothing adventitious or cheaply sensationalistic about Larkin’s “fucking,” but instead the harsh language suggests the violence of the speaker’s reaction to what he thinks he sees. It’s important to point out that the speaker’s indictment of this “couple of kids” is purely conjectural, borne of his own prejudices and envy; a perfectly parallel passage, and one which may give students a better understanding of the way that Larkin is here criticizing his speaker, occurs in the opening paragraphs of Don DeLillo’s novel *White Noise*, where a middle-aged college professor, envious of his students’ monied families and healthy, tanned bodies, imagines luggage full of all kinds of prohibited substances. Both DeLillo’s Jack Gladney and Larkin’s speaker owe something to Eliot’s Prufrock, indulging themselves in “pity parties” and imagining that while the mermaids sing each to each, they will not sing to them.

Thus the speaker’s palpable self-pity is meant to undercut, at least to some degree, the critique of modern sexual mores that the poem presents. In the same way the speaker, with a disarming honesty, recalls as the poem closes that this is a timeless strategy employed by the older generation against the younger; every generation of parents have thought their kids’ music was too loud, etc. The poem achieves a fine balance between criticism of contemporary morality and a critique of the nostalgia that helps the older generation sustain the illusion of its ascendancy. Larkin has little time for either of these comforting illusions.

Talking in Bed

This brief and poignant poem is in part an indictment of sex without love—an indictment which, unlike that delivered in *High Windows*, focuses primarily on the speaker’s own life. The slippage of values is suggested economically in the last two lines, where the quest to find and speak words “at once true and kind” devolves to the depressing attempt only to speak words “not untrue and not unkind.”

MCMXIV

Looking back over the distance of half a century, the speaker considers images of the Edwardian and Georgian life that MCMXIV–1914, and World War I—brought suddenly to an end. The closing stanza suggests what many other poets of the War, including W. B. Yeats, had proposed—that the Great War marked the end of innocence for the British Empire, and made post-War life a pale shadow of Great Britain’s heyday. In another sense, the poem can almost be read as an epitaph for Larkin himself; born in 1922—traditionally considered the banner year for British Literary modernism—Larkin here (and much more explicitly in his preface to *All What Jazz*) suggests that he was born into a world with which he had no sympathy, and longs instead for a pastoral and traditional British culture which had disappeared permanently by the time of his birth.

Sylvia Plath

As the anthology’s headnote to Plath’s work suggests, it is for all practical purposes impossible to read Plath’s poetry apart from her tragic life story; her “confessional poetry” makes lasting art of that tragedy. The first three poems collected here, “The Colossus,” “Daddy,” and “Lady Lazarus,” are fruitfully read and discussed as a coherent cluster, picking up and enriching through repetition a group of images related to suicide, death, and patriarchal authority. The poems suggest, for instance, that an accidental near-death experience at age ten was followed by a more deliberate suicide attempt at twenty—and that the every-ten-years pattern would play out again. “Dying / Is an art, like everything else,” Plath writes in “Lady Lazarus”; “I do it exceptionally well.” The fact that Plath connected much of her despair to the death of her father suggests connections to Mansfield’s “Daughters of the Late Colonel” and even, perhaps, Lawrence’s “The Horse Dealer’s Daughter”; in those texts, as in these three poems of Plath’s, the death of the father is both literal and hugely metaphorical—the death of the father signifying the death of God, the death of law and order and reason and purpose. The deliberately shocking use of Holocaust imagery in “Lady Lazarus” (chillingly read by Plath on our audio CD) can be seen within the wartime context provided by Churchill’s speeches.

The final Plath poem, “Child,” is every bit as dark as the first three—but melancholy where the others are angry or bitter. The poem manages three perfectly beautiful and poignant stanzas, buoyed by the hope of innocent new life, before grinding to a dark halt in the despairing final stanza.

Ted Hughes

In the poetry of Ted Hughes, human beings learn what it means to be human only through encounters—often painful, or disturbing, or violent encounters—with the inhuman. In “Wind,” the speaker is reduced to cataloguing the evidence of the violent energy of nature; the poem’s final line echoes Christ’s famous claim that the very

stones call out God's identity, though for Hughes they testify more to an impersonal natural force than a personal God. "Relic" gives Hughes's version of Tennyson's nature, "red in tooth and claw"; Hughes's vision of nature is not that of the Romantics—or better, perhaps, it's Shelley's nature, or Blake's, not Wordsworth's. These themes are further developed in his powerful reading of his *Second Glance at a Jaguar*, included on our audio CD. "Theology" takes its place in a long and venerable tradition of retelling the story of the Fall from Genesis; in Hughes's version, pride and effrontery (that of the serpent) is rewarded rather than punished. "Dust As We Are" bears comparison to some of the poetry emerging from WWI, including some of the poetry in this anthology, detailing the after-effects of war on those fortunate enough to survive. The poem also depends on a stark contrast between the masculine and feminine principles, the nurturing of the mother and the hard-won wisdom of the father, as does "Leaf Mould," which figures both the knowledge of nature and the feel for poetic language as emanating from the mother. "Telegraph Wires" conveys an apt image of the collision of the natural and the human worlds, telegraph wires hung across "a lonely moor." And though communication is thus enabled, it's a complex mix: for while "towns whisper to towns over the heather," so too natural forces use the telegraph wires to communicate their inhuman messages, the lines "picked up and played" by the winds like the aeolian harp celebrated by the Romantic poets. Unlike the Romantics, though, there's no suggestion that this is spirit music: these are "the tones / That empty human bones."

Thom Gunn

If Hughes's poetry is largely about the agency of the inhuman, and human beings' powerlessness in the face of it, Gunn's poetry is intimately human in scale and scope. In "Lines for a Book," he celebrates the active life of the body over the contemplative life of the mind, admiring those in history who have backed up thought with action—"those exclusive by their action." This admiration immediately distinguished Gunn from most of his contemporaries in the British poetry scene. "Elvis Presley" celebrates a popular culture figure who succeeds in marrying thought and deed, art and action, turning "revolt into a style," and paving the way for a generation at war with the proprieties of their elders. In "A Map of the City" Gunn revisits the topos of a poem like Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," but privileges the city and its dangers and possibilities over the hill upon which he stands; what others would call "urban decay" Gunn sees as "ground of my delight"—"I would not have the risk diminished." This romantic, indeed implicitly erotic, love of danger boils below the surface of "Black Jackets" as well. The fact that this biker bar is virtually indistinguishable from one of the Bay Area's gay leather bars is not an accident, for while Gunn had not yet publicly come out as a gay man, his poems dealt increasingly with homoerotic material. But even in his openly gay poems like "The Hug," love and desire and sex are universalized, so that every reader can read him- or herself into positions which finally aren't "gay" or "straight," but instead profoundly human.

“From the Wave” represents Gunn’s growing infatuation with his adopted Californian home, celebrating as it does the hedonist, active lifestyle he champions starting with “Lines for a Book.” For teachers interested in spending time on prosody, it’s worth making the point that Gunn here combines a “slack,” pop-culture topic with carefully controlled prosody: a poem of classical proportion, singing the praises of surfing. Indeed, the overall effect of Gunn’s worship of the surfers is to turn them into classical gods, marbled bodies “half wave, half men,” underscoring the discipline involved in this seemingly spontaneous activity. “The Hug” comes from Gunn’s first book focusing on the AIDS epidemic, *The Man With Night Sweats*; and while the context, both historical and biographical, make clear that the lovers are men, the poem exploits gender ambiguity (as does Auden’s beautiful “Lullaby”) to emphasize what’s universal about this emotional experience. “Patch Work” works as an allegory of the poetic process, suggesting that poets are mocking birds, patching together bits and pieces of others’s songs; as if to prove the point, Gunn gestures broadly to Shelley’s “To a Sky-Lark” and Keats’s “Ode to a Nightingale,” both echoing and redirecting those poets’ work. “The Missing” again makes the point that we are defined by those with whom we are in relation and that, as Donne wrote centuries before, implicitly indicting the “straight” audience’s indifference to AIDS: “Any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.” We are all incalculably diminished by “the missing.”

V. S. Naipaul

All the selections from V. S. Naipaul’s work stem from his autobiographical writing. They will connect well with other selections that stress the memoir or the first-person story; what is especially important for students is to recognize what is so unusual about Naipaul’s narrative. He writes in majestic English prose about the arrival in England of a young man who is the product of a complex colonial history. This is a return journey of sorts—Conrad’s character Marlow, a British seaman, travels to Africa and then makes his way back to tell a harrowing story of what empire has wrought. Naipaul starts “out there,” and finds his way to the heart of darkness at the imperial center, where he makes his way as a writer.

It’s not only what he writes about, but how he writes, that makes Naipaul so distinctive and distinguished. Unlike his younger colleague in distinction, Salman Rushdie, who also came from “elsewhere” to make a lasting mark on modern British literature, Naipaul’s prose models derive from classically British models. Rushdie’s writing is self-evidently modernist; a cosmopolitan in style as well as in background, his influences are James Joyce, William Faulkner, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, whereas Naipaul’s writing displays no modernistic pyrotechnics. His prose is nourished by nineteenth-century realist writers—Eliot, Austen, Thackeray and Dickens among them—and by the scrupulous style of Matthew Arnold, Cardinal Newman, and Thomas Carlyle. Joseph Conrad is a major influence running through Naipaul’s writing, since it is symbolically charged and rich with poetic imagery. If Naipaul were

being placed in a modernist category, it would be in the Conradian section, where realist narrative is still discernible under the narrative innovations, rather than in the company of out-and-out experimentalists like Woolf, Joyce or Beckett. The chiseled gravity of his essays owes something to T.S. Eliot's crisp prose in *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, and his polemical tartness owes something to the moral urgency of George Orwell's voice in *Politics and the English Language*.

Naipaul has refused to be categorized as a postcolonial writer, although he is one in a sense, and has refused the mantle of multiculturalism. Nonetheless, the settings for many of his novels, and of his nonfiction, have been places still found "exotic" by many Westerners, British and Americans alike. Naipaul has not avoided or ignored these places—the Caribbean, Africa, India, Latin America—in his writing, but he has not made a simple division between the evils of imperialism—the British—and the virtues of resistance—Britain's colonial subjects. Contrast Graham Greene's story with V. S. Naipaul's writing: both writers are animated by ethical questions, above all, and see writing as a calling of moral seriousness. Greene's stories and novels, like a latter-day Conrad's, are mostly set in exotic places, where the Greene anti-hero, a flawed but good man, is finally able to express his religious and political solidarity with the oppressed local population. Naipaul's exotic locales just do not include this opportunity for romanticized self-redemption; his colonial characters usually throw the request for solidarity with them right back into the startled British face, often at gunpoint. Well-meaning British travel writers, and sometimes would-be heroes, from Richard Burton to T. E. Lawrence, make an excellent contrast to Naipaul's literary universe too. Naipaul's monumental writing emanates from an in-between place, neither here nor there. He has witnessed the end of British empire as one of its subjects, yet he neither idealizes nor glamorizes the aftermath of the national independence movements.

One fascinating pairing would contrast V. S. Naipaul and Derek Walcott as Caribbean writers who have enlarged the territory of English literature in differing ways. Walcott's Caribbean heritage melds white British and African diaspora ancestors, and his writing parlays those roots; Naipaul's Caribbean inheritance is by way of a further or double dislocation, since his Indian ancestors had been brought from one British colony to serve in another, far away. As a Trinidadian, his ethnic background put him at some distance from the Afro-Caribbean majority, yet was no less colonial in its origins. Putting them together will demonstrate conclusively that no singular identity as a British Caribbean or Anglophone (English-speaking) Caribbean writer exists. Their styles, their subjects, their genres, their influences, and their politics could not be more diverse.

Another great Caribbean writer, the political theorist and physician Frantz Fanon, wrote a hugely influential book on colonialism called *Black Skins, White Masks*. His thesis was that colonialism was so dehumanizing and dominating a system that it affected the personal identity of everyone it touched: it caused some colonial subjects to denigrate themselves as the colonizers had, and thus to idealize them and even imitate them, while hating themselves. Fanon, a psychiatrist from Martinique, described the psychological condition of putting on a "white mask" inside the self, identifying with whiteness, with colonial values, and even with colo-

nial superiority, in a distorted form of self-hatred of what the colonizers had rejected as “bad.” V.S. Naipaul has written (in *Mimic Men* especially) of this distorted mimicry, and of how destructive it has been individually and socially in a postcolonial world. However, his entire body of work stands as a refutation of those who would claim that his artistic gifts are in themselves an “imitation” of Britishness, and not “authentically” Caribbean or third world. Naipaul’s work never feels the need to disguise its own power, nor to pretend not to be “British”—in the sense of being part of the central tradition of the finest British literature. The pressures on him to do and think otherwise, which come from both sides of the colonial division, and both sides of the political fence, are evident in his work, and in his memoir. It is a testament to his lasting place in British letters that V.S. Naipaul has made a literature out of resisting those pressures either to conform or to mimic.

Caryl Churchill

Churchill’s *Cloud Nine* is a comic maelstrom of racial, sexual, gender, religious, and imperialist energies and antagonisms; it touches on some of the most troubling aspects of post-Cold War, post-Imperial British life and culture, while deploying a theatrical style sometimes bordering on farce (reminiscent of Joe Orton). The highly stylized result is one of the period’s most incisive texts, juxtaposing the restrictive Victorian-era colonial project with the 1970’s “permissive society” within which Churchill wrote the play. One of the points of comparison Churchill is able to bring out is that for all its vaunted “permissiveness,” the 1970s was indeed a good deal like the 1870s in one important respect: the British Empire, under the symbolic leadership of a strong, humorless, and seemingly asexual female political leader determined to set a high moral tone, was in fact seething with barely repressed and anarchic sexual energy.

A teacher using *Cloud Nine* as one of her concluding texts in a British literature survey would do well to take a cue from Churchill’s own prefatory note to the play, in which she expresses her interest in “the parallel between colonial and sexual oppression.” For convenience sake, we will break down the remainder of discussion here to those topics indicated in our opening sentence:

Race. Set in “a British colony in Africa in Victorian times,” Act I contains the bulk of the play’s meditation on the politics of race under empire. Joshua, the family’s black servant, is played by a white actor—because, as Churchill explains, white is what Joshua wants to be. He is both treated as an inferior by members of the ruling British family, and is full of self-loathing: his divided consciousness finds no point of similarity or kinship with the other African household servants, as Joshua instead identifies wholly with his oppressor (even to the point of refusing to grieve the death of his own parents). Joshua’s sexuality is somewhat ambiguous; by some characters, he is treated as a “savage,” and since less than human, not a sexual being; so that the extramarital affairs of the whites are barely hidden from him. At the same time, when the polymorphously pleasure-seeking Harry Bagley suggests a tryst, Joshua seems neither very interested nor repelled: “That’s all right, yes.” Joshua is a prime example of the deeply contradictory images ascribed to black

men in western culture: both outside the ken of appropriate sexual desire and, at the very same time, a deeply fetishized “primitive” sexual object (with obvious parallels to the situation in E. M. Forster’s “The Life to Come”).

Sexuality and Gender. Most remarkable for its time, when homophobia was perhaps the most acceptable form of discrimination in Thatcherite Great Britain, *Cloud Nine* dwells with real intensity and insight on questions of sexual identity, the social construction of sexual roles, and sexual politics. In Act I, the famous (if stereotypical) outlines of “Victorian morality” are ostensibly in place—everywhere respected in appearance, everywhere violated in private. Clive, steadfast and stalwart husband, carries on a sexual relationship with the widow Mrs. Saunders; meanwhile his wife, Betty, attempts in vain to inflame the ardor of the bisexual Harry Saunders, and at the same time keeps at arm’s length the advances of her maid Ellen—only to leave Clive in the second act, and explore a lesbian relationship with Lin. For each of the play’s women—with the possible exception of Betty’s mother Maud—must discover, in the course of their maturing, that desire is an active force that can be claimed by a woman for herself; this in contradiction to the widespread Victorian belief that sexual pleasure is exclusively a man’s prerogative. (Betty’s extended description of her post-divorce discovery of the pleasure of masturbation would have to be read in this context.) Both Betty and her daughter’s friend Lin—and seemingly, by the play’s end, Victoria as well—have thrown off marriage partners who dominated and subordinated them, much as (by 1972) most of the former possessions of the British Empire had thrown off their protective “spouse.” Like the Dark Continent, men secretly realize that women, with their own appetites, are “voracious,” as Clive says of Mrs. Saunders—voracious, and threatening: “You are dark like this continent,” he tells her, “Mysterious. Treacherous.” The uncertain boundary between child and adult sexuality—so troublingly evidenced in a figure like Lewis Carroll, author of the *Alice* books, but also photographer with a penchant for slightly risqué (by contemporary standards) portraits of little girls—also crops up in *Cloud Nine*; the sexual relationship between Harry Bagley and young Edward is a clear example, but even the matronly Maud’s nursery rhymes carry a pederastic (and incestuous) edge: “Clap hands, daddy comes, with his pockets full of plums. All for Vicky.”

In one of the play’s keener insights into the sexual mores of the swinging sixties and seventies Churchill shows, through the adult relationship of Edward and Gerry, that gay relationships, though ostensibly outside the strict boundaries of traditional morality, can quickly fall into the very same clichéd gender dynamics as heterosexual relationships. This failure—though at the play’s end Gerry, who had walked out on Edward in disgust over his traditional domesticity—is but one aspect of the larger problem the play points toward: how to build satisfying modes of personal relationships after having torn down the unsatisfactory models of our forebears. As Betty, of all people!, says in her last extended speech: “If there isn’t a right way to do things you have to invent one.”

Religion. Though the references are brief, Churchill succeeds in suggesting that the western Judeo-Christian tradition is complicit in the patriarchal oppression seen throughout the play; Joshua’s alternative cosmogony, sketched out in the first act, points the way to a different understanding of man’s and woman’s place

in the larger scheme of things than that suggested in the creation stories of Genesis, while the Biblical story of the Fall is invoked in Act II as proof positive of women's moral and intellectual inferiority.

Imperialism and Empire. The play opens, in Act I, with a somewhat ironic paean to the British Empire, "Come gather, sons of England"; the speeches then given by the principal characters give undisguised voice to the patriarchal politics which play out both within the microcosm of the British family and the macrocosm of the British Empire ("The empire is one big family," Clive blithely declares). The disguised motives behind imperial conquest are rendered in the same double register in which Conrad speaks of the Europeans bringing to Africa both a lamp and a sword; here, all sing of how "the forge of war shall weld the chains of brotherhood secure"—a dramatic irony that prepares an audience for the riot of contradictory and hypocritical statements and actions to follow. Then too, Harry's description of British settlements "up the river" which are distinguished by "a lot of skulls around the place but not white men's I think" must call to mind Marlow's horrified description of Colonel Kurtz's compound at the Inner Station in *Heart of Darkness*. In one of the plays most scathing suggestions, the entire imperial project is likened to a confidence game, a con: "Come along everyone," Clive exclaims, "you mustn't miss Harry's conjuring trick"; whence from his sleeve Harry produces the union jack, to "general acclaim."

There are quiet suggestions that the Empire is in decline—that, as Betty innocently suggests, "sometimes sunset is so terrifying I can't bear to look." Clearly, Clive's reign over the Africans is somewhat precarious, even if he stiffly insists that he "look[s] after Her Majesty's domains." At the same time, though—and following hard on the heels of this speech of Clive's—we learn that Edward is "minding" a baby doll for "Vicky" (his sister Victoria, not Queen Victoria—and yet the ironic parallel is clearly suggested). On some level, Clive's imperial rule is another version of Edward's caring for his sister's doll.

PERSPECTIVES

Whose Language?

Seamus Heaney

Though it's a truism about poetry in general, it's probably especially important to say about Heaney: that poetry is meant to be *heard*, and that his poems need to be read aloud. Audio tapes of Heaney reading some of these poems are available; but even more simply, students should be encouraged to read these poems to one another, for much of what fascinates Heaney, especially in the early poems, is the sound of words, the feeling of words shaped and held in the mouth.

"The Toome Road" juxtaposes the human scale of small-town life in rural Ulster with the military transport used to enforce the peace and sustain the Union. The "omphalos" in the poem's final line is both "navel," as the footnote

suggests, but perhaps more specifically a reference to the tower occupied by Stephen Dedalus and Buck Mulligan in the opening chapter of Joyce's *Ulysses*: like Yeats's tower at Thoor Ballylee, a symbol of Irish art. "A Postcard from North Antrim" also deals with the Northern Irish "Troubles," and the inextricable way that the personal and the political are entangled one in the other.

"The Singer's House" indulges one of Heaney's recurrent interests, that in place names: specifically, the possibility that the sound of a place name might evoke some essential reality about the place, through repetition and meditation. In "The Skunk," Heaney manages the very tricky proposition of analogizing his wife to a skunk, and succeeds in having the comparison come off as affectionate, even apt. The poem is probably richer for those who know Robert Lowell's "Skunk Hour," as Heaney clearly does.

"Punishment" is one of Heaney's most powerful and disturbing poems, one of a loosely affiliated series of poems growing out of his encounter with P.V. Glob's work on the "bog people"—immaculately preserved human bodies brought out of peat bogs in England, Germany, and Denmark, some of them dating back nearly two centuries. Some of the bodies seem to have been ritually prepared human sacrifices, as for example that evoked in Heaney's poem; more information about these archaeological finds, and some haunting photographs, are to be found in Don Brothwell's *The Bog Man and the Archaeology of People*. In "Punishment," the similarities between the (inferred) circumstances surrounding the death of this bog woman and the sectarian terrorism carried out by the IRA in Northern Ireland. Like Boland's poem "The Journey," *Station Island* reprises Dante's journey to the underworld with his guide Virgil—though in this instance Heaney's guide is the shade of the nearly blind James Joyce. The attitude toward the Irish language, and the appropriateness of English for the Irish writer, might be compared to that of Boland in "Mise Eire"—and contrasted to that of Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill in her essay, "Why I Write in Irish."

"In Memoriam Francis Ledwidge" explores the logic of an Irish soldier fighting in support of British interests in WWI; the wisdom of this decision is not as easy to decide as the narrowly nationalist rhetoric Heaney is surrounded by would suggest. The poem makes an interesting companion piece to Rupert Brooke's "The Soldier," who is made proud at the prospect of dying in foreign parts as a forfeit for his country's freedom. Finally "Postscript" returns to the Hughes-like nature poetry of Heaney's earliest work, suggesting the capacity of the natural landscape to astonish and to revivify—to "catch the heart off guard and blow it open." The terrorist echo of the poem's closing line serves to make the advice both more powerful and more menacing.

Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill Feeding a Child

Ní Dhomhnaill here plays on a couple of meanings of the phrase "feeding a child": her child is literally fed at her breast, but is also, or will soon be, literarily fed on the stories of her people and her culture: no less important food, the poem suggests. In the poem's repeated questions "Do you know . . .?", "Of all these things

are you / ignorant?”, the mother/poet/speaker paradoxically is able to give voice to the stories she fears her child needs to hear. The importance of these stories is suggested especially in the closing lines, where the speaker insists that the myths and legends of the Irish people are not about other people and other times, but about themselves.

Parthenogenesis

The concept of parthenogenesis—the development of an egg without fertilization—is here the concept that links immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary to the Irish legend, in its many variants, of the childless woman got with child by the sea-shadow. Standing between these two versions of the same archetypal story, at least for an Irish poet, is Yeats’s retelling in *Leda and the Swan*; it’s worthwhile to direct students back to Yeats’s poem at this point, as well as to the account in the Gospel of Luke (1:26–38) of Mary’s visitation by the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. The Irish poet Yeats demonstrates the universal quality of Mary’s conception, by comparing it to the Greek myth of Leda and Zeus; Ní Dhomhnaill here allies the myth to a uniquely Irish version. The “sea people” that the poem speaks of—the half-human, half-seal selkies of Celtic myth—were the subject of the John Sayles film *The Secret of Roan Inish*—hardly required viewing in this context, but a delightful film, and one which evokes quite vividly the rugged beauty of the West of Ireland, and the Gaeltacht.

Labasheedy (The Silken Bed)

The genre of this poem might be made clear by comparing it to Christopher Marlowe’s *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*; at the same time, the poem depends in part for the vividness of its imagery on the Old Testament *Song of Solomon*, with its rich sensual images translated into an Irish landscape and an Irish idiom.

As for the Quince

This puzzling poem partakes of an air of mystery which, as Ní Dhomhnaill explains in her essay *Why I Write in Irish*, may be a unique feature of writing in Irish; it is a mode that has been employed quite successfully by Paul Muldoon, for instance in the poem *Why Brownelee Left*. Such poetry insists, finally, that there is something ineffable, a-rational—mysterious—about experience (and in this case, human behavior and motivation), and that it is not the job of the poet to make mystery comprehensible, but rather to bear articulate witness to it.

The poem also has a humorous pop culture motif running through it; the brand-name reference (Black & Decker), the slangy feel of the language (“left me so zonked”), and the Raymond-Chandleresque tough talk that the “bright young thing” spouts all give the poem a refreshing colloquial energy.

Why I Choose to Write in Irish, the Corpse That Sits up and Talks Back

Ní Dhomhnaill’s essay is at once so confident and so self-deprecating that it’s hard to see where students might need any real explication. Instead, you may wish to locate the essay’s central claim—that “minority languages like Irish” have a “unique and unrepeatable way of looking at the world”—and ask your students whether or not they find it compelling. Does Ní Dhomhnaill’s analogy to biological diversity seem reasonable?

Ngugi wa Thiong'o

To approach Ngugi's polemical argument about the need for African literature to be written in African languages, an excerpt from his passionate book on postcolonialism, *Decolonizing the Mind*, it might help to turn to an earlier section of the Longman Anthology and find one of the poems that Ngugi refers to in his essay. Wordsworth's "Ode on a Daffodil," a poem that describes a quintessentially English landscape, is among the choices, although a Shakespearean sonnet, a selection from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, or a Tennyson poem will do as well. Have students imaginatively enter the subjective position of a young student from a village in colonial Kenya, surrounded by the African landscape, its unique animals and plants, its huts and unpaved roads and herds of cattle, sitting in a dusty missionary school under scorching sunlight, memorizing such a poem. If they perform this "thought experiment" they will be closer to seeing what Ngugi means about the sheer distance between African realities and the assumptions and expectations of English poetry. In general, such poetry assumes a middle-class, white audience, or takes on the lyric voice of such a person, unlike the everyday life of a young African boy like Ngugi, for whom the issues of survival, hunger, poverty, and encounters with a hostile if stunning natural world are commonplace. Ngugi's intention is not to critique British literature as out of touch, inferior to indigenous oral traditions, or a thin veil over an ideology of conquest. Nonetheless, his essay describes how alienating and humiliating the imposition of even the greatest literary heritage can be, when it is accompanied by the certainty that everything African is inferior, degraded, or even sub-human. The violent ways that his school—and the entire British colonial government in Kenya—prohibited speaking in his native Gikuyu, and rewarded only the study of English, has parallels in the anthology in the experience of Irish, Scottish, and Welsh writers also, whose languages were either forbidden by law or extirpated by years of privileging English. The Irish, the Scottish, and the Welsh peoples, however, shared a landscape, a climate, certain ways of life, customs, and folklore with the English, which doesn't of course mitigate the pain and the violence of their cultural conflicts with the latter, nor the loss of their languages. It does mean that there were always fewer echoes of home present in English literature to the Africans who learned English and became intellectuals, writers, and artists in a tongue not their first. By contrast to Ireland or Wales or Scotland, Africa as a whole had symbolized darkness and savagery to Europe, and in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* students will have read how Conrad reverses the stereotypes of light versus dark, white versus black that remained unreversed stereotypes that were fully in place in Ngugi's boyhood homeland.

The title of Ngugi's work of political theory provides another glimpse of what is at stake—for if most African nations had succeeded by the second half of the twentieth century in becoming independent nations, and throwing off the colonial yokes of Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Portugal, to name a few, to truly "de-colonize," Ngugi argues, requires an inner independence, a freedom of the mind and soul. Ngugi seeks this in language itself. Until the once-suppressed languages of African colonies become the vehicles

for literature and thought at the highest level of excellence, he says, there will still be a colonial flag planted in the minds of Africans. The great modern works of literature and theory from Africans in the later twentieth century have been written in English, French, Portuguese and sometimes in Arabic, rather than in Swahili or Yoruba or Gikuyu. It is not a problem of having too few outstanding writers, but of having the majority of African literature be written in European languages. Ngugi himself came to prominence as an African writer in English, as did Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and many others. He suggests that for Africa to genuinely step beyond the old colonial legacy, writers like himself will need to put theory into practice and adopt their native African languages as their literary tongues.

Nuala ni Dhomhnaill argues something quite similar in her essay in this volume, and follows her desire to keep Irish alive by writing poetry in Irish and having others translate it. There are political reverberations to her argument as well, but students may find some stark differences. Irish is now a mandatory subject in Irish schools, and while few speak it as a mother tongue, the Irish-English facing pages of a poetry collection like ni Dhomhnaill's can be read by many and appreciated by a wide circle of English-only readers. Ngugi's stance has been applauded by many in Africa and outside it, yet there are also many who question the realism behind his position. For one thing, Africa is a vast continent with so many languages and dialects that even within the body of African languages none is dominant; in Kenya, not everyone can read or speak Gikuyu, for example, so Ngugi's work in that language will have to be translated multiple times for African audiences. A lively discussion could be prompted among students by having a debate with members of the class assigned each side of the argument. Critics of the Ngugi side have commented that what is lost in the attempt to emphasize African languages, however laudable the goal, is a sense of cosmopolitanism, a mission to exchange culture, literature, thought and so on around the globe by acknowledging the impossibility of nativist or provincial enclaves. On the one hand, the attitude that English is global may lead to complacency and smugness in countries like the U.S., famous for its xenophobia, its lack of interest in the outside world, and its confidence that American English should be the world's lingua franca by fiat. That non-cosmopolitan world-view is obviously narrow, blinded, and arrogant—and calls for Ngugi's decolonization process.

The result of European colonialism is that modern African literature is written in European languages like English. This is a different predicament from that of British writers such as Naipaul and Rushdie; Naipaul's first language was English, and although it was disconcerting to have English literature taught as the standard of beauty, truth, and realism in his diverse Caribbean birthplace, there is no other language Sir Vidia can or would turn to—and he has given British English his own sounds. The same is true for Salman Rushdie, whose audience in English is global, even in Pakistan and India. What Ngugi wa Thiong'o points out is another lesson, another struggle altogether, a battle for independence that may entail abandoning English. There may be more people who read Ngugi's newest literary work in English than read it in Gikuyu, but for him, it makes a world of political differ-

ence which language his writing is translated into: English has become that secondary language, with Gikuyu the proudly original source of his creativity.

Nadine Gordimer

What Were You Dreaming?

Part of what's so engaging about this story is that at several points along the way, we're sure we know what kind of story this is. And we're constantly being proved wrong. The first section, narrated by the "Coloured" hitchhiker, creates the impression of a somewhat cunning young African, and the two well-meaning, if somewhat naive, Britons who stop for him out of some condescending sense of "white liberal guilt." The hitchhiker, having summed up his hosts quite quickly, plays up to their expectations, telling probable stories rather than the sometimes improbable truth about his life and situation.

But if the passenger suspects that the whites' heads are full of stereotypes about black (and coloured) South Africans, we quickly learn that he operates out of just as narrow a set of assumptions about these whites—assumptions which, in the case of the white woman, turn out to be quite unfounded. She knows who he is, and what he's doing; while the passenger sleeps in the back seat, after the story breaks midway and the narrative point-of-view shifts to third person, we hear both the simplified version of the truth that she tells her tourist companion, as well as the more complex truth that she figures out for herself. She realizes that their passenger isn't what he appears to be; but she also knows that if he's lying, he's doing so in an attempt to "translate" the hardship of his life into an idiom that will be comprehensible to English men and women unfamiliar with the realities of life in South Africa. The only solution, seemingly, is for both the Africans and the English to take the time to live in one another's cultures, to gather knowledge about one another first-hand; while she is thinking about the half-truths that she must concoct for her companion that he might understand better, if not perfectly well, she thinks, looking at his tourist's sunburned arm: "there is the place through which the worm he needs to be infected with can find a way into him. . . . Complicity is the only understanding."

James Kelman

Home for a Couple of Days

One thing that the common comparison of Kelman to both Beckett and Kafka overlooks is that both Beckett and Kafka present a vision of human despair undergirded with a fundamental humor; "Don't presume," Beckett would say, "one of the thieves was damned; don't despair—one of the thieves was saved." Kelman's is an altogether darker vision; even if his characters don't face the extreme, even allegorical, misery that Beckett's characters come up against (buried up to one's neck in a pile of sand, exposed to the hot sun, watching one's husband crawl up the pile with a pistol), their options, and their resources, seem if anything more strained. A more apt comparison on this score would be James Joyce, to whose story *A Little Cloud* Kelman's *Home for a Couple of Days* bears more than a surface resemblance.

The dialect, and Kelman's representation of it, may prove something of an obstacle at first; you may want to have students try their hand (or tongue) at reading some dialogue aloud, to get a feel for Kelman's Glaswegian speech rhythms. With a little practice, one develops an inner ear for the writing.

There is of course an air of mystery hanging over much of the story—Why did Eddie leave for London? Why has he come back? Has he in fact been in prison? Kelman is careful not to dispel these mysteries, and students should be encouraged not to spend too much time on fanciful solutions to problems the story itself refuses to answer.

Instead, Kelman seems to want us to stay on the literal level of the story: a world in which men of all ages sit in pubs drinking, waiting for the next dole check to come through; where new curtains in a pub, and a friend drinking in a different establishment, signify that a city like Glasgow has changed tremendously in three years. By the story's conclusion, we're apt to believe not that Eddie Brown has just been released from prison, but that he's just landed back in it.

Eavan Boland

In "Anorexic," Boland adopts the persona of a young woman suffering from *anorexia nervosa*, disciplining the unruly and unholy female body by starving it into submission, and in the process effacing the secondary characteristics of female sexuality. The poem is an acerbic exploration of the strange logic of anorexia, in which a woman carries out the sexualized torture which the culture at large both sanctions and absolutely denies. Instructors may wish to introduce Muldoon's poem "Aisling," as well, which moves the act of self-starvation into both the male and the Irish political realms.

Boland's "The Journey" allies itself with the great journey poems of the Western tradition: Virgil's *Aeneid* (explicitly through the epigraph), Dante's *Divine Comedy*. As Dante is guided in his journey through hell, purgatory, and heaven by the poet Virgil, so Boland imagines herself in the capable hands of Sappho, the classical forebear of women's poetry. The poem might be discussed in light of Woolf's suggestion in *A Room of One's Own* that women writers must learn to think back through their poetic mothers, and construct a useable women's literary history.

"The Pomegranate"—beautifully read by Boland on our CD—also imaginatively reinhabits mythic terrain, in this case the story of Persephone and Hades (hence another myth of the underworld), which Boland implicitly likens to the story of the Fall in Genesis by her focus on the pomegranate—a version of Eve's apple. Imaginatively identifying herself both with the lost daughter and the bereaved mother (and with Hades as well?), Boland writes again about the power of thinking through literary history and through myth. So too with "A Woman Painted on a Leaf," which adopts and adapts the story of the Sibyl of Cumae. The sibyl foretold the future and inscribed her verse prophecies on leaves; they were set at the mouth of her cave and, if not collected and read, were scattered by the winds. The poem closes with Sibyl's words, "Let me die": she was granted by the god Apollo eternal life, but not eternal youth. In wishing for a poem "I can die in," the speaker echoes the Sibyl's words—and we come to recognize that the poet is herself "a woman painted on a leaf," in this case the leaves of her books of poetry.

In teaching “Mise Eire”—a poem as resolutely set against the kind of sentimental, nationalist nostalgia as is Yeats’s “Easter 1916,” or the writing of Joyce—teachers may want to present an English translation of Padraic Pearse’s “Mise Eire,” to which Boland’s poem responds:

I am Ireland:
I am older than the Old Woman of Beare.

Great my glory:
I that bore Cuchulainn the valiant.

Great my shame:
My own children that sold their mother.

I am Ireland:
I am lonelier than the Old Woman of Beare.

Great my pain:
Enemies ever torturing me.

Great my sorrow:
Dead the people in whom I put hope.

Joyce said of this kind of sentimentalized nostalgia, that the Irish too much loved to hug their chains; in her poem Boland rejects the notion that a return to the Irish language itself will somehow undo the historical suffering of the Irish people: “I won’t go back to it.”

Paul Muldoon

Paul Muldoon’s poems will pose pretty significant difficulties for many students—especially, perhaps, those who are good readers of poetry, adept at “translating” a poet’s elusive or seemingly ambiguous language into a more-or-less coherent “reading.” Muldoon’s work largely resists this kind of paraphrasing; his poetry is most often structured around scenes of real mystery, and insists that the mystery be experienced, and accepted, rather than mastered. When we agree to wrestle with Muldoon’s poems, we must do so knowing that we will lose (and therein, we will win).

“Cuba” takes as its occasion the famous Cuban Missile Crisis—the “missiles of October,” 1962. The first two stanzas of the poem unfold rather smoothly: a narrative in which the small daily events that make up a life (a dance, breakfast-table quarreling) are juxtaposed against a crisis of world-historical dimension; Muldoon derives some mild humor from the fact that the Irish seem to have less confidence in one of their own (JFK) than even the Americans do. The poem takes an unexpected turn in the last stanza, where those same everyday acts—in this case, a caress—turn the tables on the prurient inquest conducted by the priest.

“Aisling” takes a traditional Irish poetic form and deploys it to explore a very contemporary problem—the hunger strikes carried out in Northern Ireland in support of the IRA’s demands for independence from the United Kingdom. The poem manages successfully to combine the graphic, clinical details of slow death

by starvation (“a lemon stain on my flannel sheet”) with the mythological air of the traditional *aisling*; the fact that advanced states of starvation cause the sufferer to hallucinate serves in the poem as a kind of physiological bridge between the body and the spirit. Instructors will probably want to connect discussion of this poem to another poem about anorexia, Boland’s “Anorexic.”

In “Meeting the British” Muldoon reflects contemporary concerns about the British role in Northern Ireland through the colonial experience of the Americas. Similar in some ways to Rushdie’s “Christopher Columbus,” the poem imagines its way back to a still-innocent moment in the British imperial project, before the full force of its domination had been experienced. Marlow, in heart of darkness, talks about the Roman ships that had sailed up the Thames, bearing with them “The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires”; Muldoon’s poem closes with a very literal rendering of this last phrase, with the British introducing to the French-speaking native Americans smallpox, against which they had no resistance.

“Sleeve Notes” is a loosely organized and loosely associational group of lyrics provoked by twenty-one rock albums. Muldoon himself was born right around the birth of rock & roll, and the history of rock largely parallel to his personal and poetic history; in this cycle of short poems, then, he explores the cultural, political, historical and aesthetic influence of rock on his poetry. The albums referred to are listed chronologically, from 1967 through 1994, and by registering his reactions to each of them, Muldoon creates an imaginative personal, national (note the presence of the Irish band U2, Ulsterman Van Morrison, and Irish “wild goose” Elvis Costello, born Declan MacManus), and international history of the period. Since much of this music was made before our students were born, it will be helpful to audition some of this music, and display some of the cover art, to fuel classroom discussion. As you move toward the end of the sequence, some of the albums—beginning, perhaps, with Nirvana’s *Bleach*—will evoke a more personal response from at least some of your students, which can be put in dialogue with Muldoon’s poems.

Derek Walcott

A Far Cry from Africa

Walcott’s punning title suggests both that the speaker hears, from afar, the anguished cry of Africa, but also that the Africa of the western imagination is often “a far cry” from the reality of Africa. The poem dwells and does its work in the space between these two meanings, investigating the ways in which propagandistic language allows us to commit violence against others, and how Walcott’s own dual allegiances force upon him an awareness of this hypocrisy.

Wales

Describing the Welsh landscape in grammatical and poetic terms, Walcott asserts a similarity between the way that language is used in Wales—with its native Welsh falling into disuse, the linguistic situation of Wales is similar to what Ní Dhomhnaill describes in Ireland—while asserting that “a language is shared / like bread to the mouth,” ultimately holding the people together. This faith is based

on the fact that the English-speaking Caribbean, like Wales, will continue to forge an identity simultaneously through its two linguistic traditions.

The Fortunate Traveller

The word “fortunate” of the title comes to have a number of ironic resonances by the poem’s end, and not just because it plays on Thomas Nashe’s *The Unfortunate Traveller*: the speaker of the poem is “fortunate” in that his creature comforts are well attended to both by the government agencies that support him and by the foreign bodies that attempt to bribe him, but the sharp contrast between the luxuries he enjoys and the misery he sees all around him makes it difficult for him to feel especially fortunate. (“‘You are so fortunate, you get to see the world—’ / Indeed, indeed sirs, I have seen the world. / Spray splashes the portholes and the vision blurs.”) His simple charge is to show mercy, or charity, as the New Testament teaching requires; the protagonist realizes, however, that it is quite possible to dispense charity (aid, relief) without a spirit of charity undergirding the operation—and in fact, the more suffering one sees, the more one is deadened to the pain of others, and the more difficult true Christian charity becomes.

The poem brings up the false charity that has propped up various colonial projects throughout history, including the Belgian ivory trade in the Congo that is the subject of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*; various of Conrad’s pilgrims, too, spoke of charity, but instead robbed the continent blind. “The heart of darkness is not Africa. / The heart of darkness is the core of fire / in the white center of the holocaust.”

Midsummer: 50 (“I Once Gave My Daughters, Separately, Two Conch Shells”)

The writing of youth is compared to separate stones dropped into the sea, which lie separate on the sandy bottom; but as one’s career and life progress, those separate stones start to form lineaments between themselves—form constellations that surprisingly resemble those of the tradition one has (unconsciously) inherited, or, as in Walcott’s case, those of parents that we have imbibed at a pre-logical level.

Midsummer: 52 (“I Heard Them Marching the Leaf-wet Roads of My Head”)

The invasion of the English language is imagined as a military invasion, trampling the native language into the mud; Walcott, the poet, declares that his occupation “and the Army of Occupation / are born enemies.” Thus the poet with dual linguistic citizenship, like Walcott, is in a difficult position, as he had explored in *A Far Cry from Africa*. The solution, in this poem, is to appropriate the materials of English into his own language—to pin the poppies of English to his blazer, to let them bleed and stand by, articulating their death.

Midsummer: 54

(“The Midsummer Sea, the Hot Pitch, this Grass, These Shacks That Meet Me”)

Another poem on the same theme: Walcott’s vexed relationship to the English language and to the British literary tradition. The reference to “the sacred wood” in the third line is, among other things, a veiled allusion to T. S. Eliot’s criticism, and the way that his critical pronouncements for decades set the fashion, and made and broke reputations, among British poets; his first critical volume was called *The Sacred Wood* (and contained the essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent*).