Encounters With the Arts: Readings for ARTC150

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DR. MARK THORSON

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Blake, William. (1794). *The Ancient of Days*. Relief etching with watercolor.

Introduction: You and the Arts

I don't know much about art. But I know what I like.

Cool. But … let's explore that. For example, do you like poetry? No? What about song lyrics? Do you ever sing favorite lyrics because they move you? Well, that's poetry, **Lyric Poetry**:

Lyric Poetry

A term usually applied to short poems expressive of a poet's thoughts or feelings; as a broad genre, it includes such forms as the **Sonnet**, ode, and elegy along with many other varieties deriving from popular song. The term originally referred to a Greek song to be accompanied on the lyre, but later became associated with song-like poems uttered by a single speaker (Lyric Poetry).

This definition applies to the "words" of popular songs today. We inherit the term from Greek playwrights (e.g., Aeschylus, Sophocles, Aristophanes) who, five centuries before Christ, dramatized stories from their mythology. The *lyric* portions of these plays were accompanied by the lyre (a stringed instrument similar to a harp). In the Euro-American literary tradition, *lyric* is applied to "the sonnet,

ode, and elegy, along with many other varieties deriving from popular song."

Martin Luther: *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*

One lyrical **Genre** is the hymn. Let's explore a Protestant standard.

Martin Luther. A Mighty Fortress is Our God (Lyrics and Audio file)

1. A mighty Fortress is our God,
a Bulwark never failing;
Our Helper He amid the flood
of mortal ills prevailing:
For still our ancient foe
doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great,
and armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.
2. Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side,
The Man of God's own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth His Name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.
3. And though this world, with devils filled,

Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo! his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.

4. That word above all earthly powers,
No thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours
Through Him who with us sideth:
Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also;
The body they may kill:
God's truth abideth still,
His Kingdom is forever.

Translated by F. H. Hedges.

This hymn is a favorite for Protestant worshipers. But the more we know of the **Context** of its composition, the more we appreciate the lyrics. The hymn was one of many written by the 16th Century monk and scholar Martin Luther who braved the wrath of the Roman Church to challenge Papal authority. In 1521, Luther confronted the Holy Roman Emperor and papal representatives to defend his ideas. He was condemned to excommunication and death. Yet, God led him to sanctuary in a "might fortress," Wartburg Castle, owned by Frederick III of Saxony. Think of that place of sanctuary when you hear or sing this hymn.

Woody Guthrie: *This Land is Your Land*

As do residents of every country, Americans are inspired by songs celebrating their nation. Listening to Woody Guthrie's *This Land is Your Land* (1940), many Americans celebrate the magnificence of their national landscape.

Woody Guthrie. (1940) *This Land is Your Land*

1. This land is your land, this land is my land
From California to the New York island,
From the redwood forest to the Gulf Stream waters;
This land was made for you and me.
2. As I was walking that ribbon of highway
I saw above me that endless skyway;
I saw below me that golden valley;
This land was made for you and me.
3. I've roamed and rambled and I followed my footsteps
To the sparkling sands of her diamond deserts;
And all around me a voice was sounding;
This land was made for you and me.
4. When the sun came shining, and I was strolling,
And the wheat fields waving and the dust clouds rolling,
As the fog was lifting a voice was chanting:
This land was made for you and me.

Listen to Woody Guthrie's performance of his song: link.

Do you dislike "poetry" but enjoy song lyrics? Many negative attitudes overlook unsuspected roles played by the arts in their lives. Enjoy lyrics and you are enjoying poetry!

What is Art?

OK, so what counts as art? What doesn't? Obviously, painting and sculpture are widely seen as art. However, we will also consider poetry and prose fiction as arts. We will now and then nod to the artistic dimensions of photography, architecture, and other artistic endeavors.

But wait: paintings, sculpture, poems, stories—do they ***always*** *count as art?*

- Does art require a certain level of excellence to count?
- Must art be original, ground-breaking, innovative?
- Can art serve commercial purposes?
- Can beautiful scenery created by God count as art?

These are great questions and they have been disputed for many years by artists and philosophers. We can't resolve the thorny issue of defining art in our class. What we can do is notice that various traditions of artistic endeavor tend to share certain *shared hallmarks*.

Hallmarks of Art, class definition

- Compositions of the human imagination
- Craft and artifice drawing on tradition, technique, and technology
- Themes and patterns of meaning
- Stimulation of aesthetic experiences: beauty, ugliness, the sublime
- Ideological and spiritual inspiration

Aesthetic Reactions to Art

Did you notice that word, *aesthetic*? **Aesthetic Attitude** refers to a specific way of looking:

Aesthetic Attitude

A term usually applied to short poems expressive of a

poet's thoughts or feelings; as a broad genre, it includes such forms as the sonnet, ode, and elegy, along with many other varieties deriving from popular song. The term originally referred to a Greek song to be accompanied on the lyre, but later became associated with song-like poems uttered by a single speaker. ("Lyric Poetry," 2012)

The aesthetic attitude is supposedly a particular way of experiencing or attending to objects. It is said to be an attitude independent of any motivations to do with utility, economic value, moral judgement, or peculiarly personal emotion, and concerned with experiencing the object "for its own sake."

At the limit, the observer's state would be one of pure detachment, marked by an absence of all desires directed to the object. It could be ... an episode of exceptional elevation wholly beyond our ordinary understanding of empirical reality, ... or simply as a state of heightened receptiveness in which our perception of the object is more disengaged than usual from other desires and motivations which we have. The term "disinterested" is often applied. (Janaway, 2005)

You watch a beautiful sunset over the water. You are pleased, perhaps moved by the beauty. But you receive no tangible benefit. The spectacle pays you no money. Gains you no power. Confers no health. The sunset's beauty has no moral dimension. You respond to sheer beauty.

The *aesthetic* dimension of art refers to the feelings evoked by its pure form: color, light/shadow, sound, pattern, rhythm—the features that confer an experience of beauty or ugliness. Of course, *aesthetic* responses are subjective. People differ in their reactions.

What Do You Like?

Sargent, John Singer. (ca. 1892–1893). *Lady Agnew*. Oil on canvas.

Matisse, Henri. (1947). *Two Girls, Red and Green Background*. Oil on canvas.

Lucas Cranach the Elder. (1502) *Portrait of Dr. Johannes Cuspinian*. Tempera on red beech.

Picasso, Pablo. (1907). *Les Memoiselles d'Avignon*. Oil on canvas.

Monet, Claude. (1899). *Water Lilies and Japanese Bridge*. Oil on canvas.

Pollock, Jackson. (1950). *Number 18*. Oil and enamel on Masonite.

Well? What do you think? (Be sure to click on or hover over the thumbnails to see richer reproductions.) And what seems to determine your response? Familiarity? Your understanding? Surprise? A visual puzzle? Our responses to art reflect familiarity and understanding. Consciously or not, we are conditioned to respond comfortably to a **Genre**, certain kind of art:

Genre

The French term for a type, species, or class of composition. A literary genre is a recognizable and established category of written work employing such common conventions as will prevent readers or audiences from mistaking it for another kind (Baldick, 2015b).

At the movies, do you like *rom-coms* (romantic comedies)? Urban fantasies? Super hero flicks? **Film noir**? All are cinematic *genres* with which you are familiar. In the visual arts, the term **Genre Painting** refers to "paintings or other works depicting scenes from daily life" which have retained their appeal ever since the *genre* was pioneered by 17th-century Dutch artists. Those Dutch interiors and **Still Life** compositions are perennially popular because they are familiar in subject matter and in technique. A *Genre*, is defined by **Convention**.

Convention

An *established practice*—whether in *technique*, *style*, *structure*, or *subject-matter*—commonly adopted in [artistic] works by customary and implicit agreement or precedent rather than by natural necessity (Convention).

Conventions guide artists in producing their works. They also contribute to an audience's understanding. Our reading of the arts deepens as we become aware of the impact of *conventions* on our reactions. In a *rom com*, the primary characters initially clash, setting up the final resolution: true love. Watching the opening conflict play out, we smile, reassured that we know where the story is going. To see the guiding hand of the convention is to understand the film and our response.

Of course, unrelieved clichés, excessive conformity to convention can be boring. A *rom com* that merely lurches from one stock scene to the next will put us to sleep. Artists who leave the biggest impression often challenge conventions in interesting ways. In great works, an interplay between comforting convention and surprising innovation lights the piece up for fascinated viewing. Baldick notes that "while some [artistic] works may be 'unconventional,' none can be convention less" (Convention).

On a larger scale, art is produced and experienced in a **Context**: the social, cultural, and historical milieu in which a work of art is composed and received by an audience. Or, perhaps, two contexts: that of the work's production and that of the audience. We read Shakespeare today in a far different context from that of Elizabethan England. And contexts vary in their degree of tolerance for convention and for innovation. In the so-called "art world" of artists and **aficionado**, artists have since the era of Impressionism to be valued for originality, innovation, challenges to conventional social values, and individual vision.

As the divergence between conventional expectations and insurgent innovation has widened, the gap between the sensibilities of the **Fine Arts** world and those of the mainstream public have tended to widen. While some folks are drawn to **avant garde** work, many are put off by wholly unfamiliar, bewildering conventions which can lead to confusion, impatience, dislike, even fear. In which direction do you move when you encounter really challenging ideas or art?

Reading the Arts

So how shall we approach the arts? What will be expected of you? No, you are not expected to decide that you love all of the poems, stories, and paintings chosen for the class. Nor are you expected to discover hidden codes of meaning that only the instructor can see. You might be concerned about your limited knowledge base. Well, that's OK. Ultimately, the work must speak for itself. Your work will be judged for the richness of your observations of and reflections on the work's features.

Features of an artistic text or image to reflect on:

- Features of the ***text*** itself
- The sociocultural ***context*** in which the work was produced
- The ***maker's*** life and background
- Genre, conventions and techniques that form the ***craft*** of the work
- Structures of ***meaning***

Of course, readings grows richer as we become more knowledgeable. This text will provide an array of information on the Context and techniques that comprise the painting or poem or story. Furthermore, we will approach these works as a reading community, enriching each other's senses of the works.

In your class readings and writings, draw on the materials we provide and on class collaboration. But when you select a work to focus on in your writing, bear down on your own, close reading. See.

Hear. Observe. Pay attention to details. And share the richness of your reading with your reading community.

The Challenge of Encountering the Arts

Folks who avoid off putting art may feel some anxiety about a course like this. They may feel they have a poor general sense of the arts. They may worry about kinds of art that seem strange or incomprehensible. They may want to resist an expected pressure to like what the instructor likes.

Will we expect you to learn to like everything we explore? Not at all. Your ultimate reaction is yours to choose. Our text samples a wide range of arts, too many to engage in detail. The hope is that, each week, you will be intrigued enough by a few pieces to look more closely.

Sometimes, that means bravely engaging work that initially puts one off. We will ask you to make a good faith effort to give our selected works a chance to speak to you. We'll be working on the challenge of engaging art that confuses or put us off. Here are some tips:

Responding to Unfamiliar or Challenging Art

Hold your initial responses loosely

Our initial responses to art—likes and dislikes, understanding and bewilderment—are often conditioned by our sense of the familiar. If we judge too quickly and

harshly, we are likely to overlook work we could value and to misread its techniques and themes.

Look for indicators of context

Art's features and conventions grow from cultural contexts. Obviously, we more easily and comfortably respond to art reflecting our own contexts. We are prone to recoil from work from times and cultures not our own. We can, however, increase our sensitivity to features suggesting another perspective. Always be cautious decoding work from a context foreign to you: *might it mean something else in a different context?*

Select and consult available information

To illuminate our readings, we will provide limited background information for our works of art. Each week, select a few works that "light up" for you and consult information provided, especially information on unfamiliar works that interest you.

Let the text or image speak for itself

Background information helps. But always *let the text of image speak for itself.* Be open to its expression of its own values and goals, which may differ from yours or from the conventional genre formulas. Rich readings are based on close, personal observation.

Respond honestly and openly

In our course, we'll be asking you to give our poems, stories, and images a fair chance to speak to you, especially when illuminated by background information. However, you are not expected to ultimately decide to embrace anything. You might decide that, even after beginning to understand, you are not interested in a certain art form. You don't gain

extra points by liking our materials. We do expect you to read richly and thoughtfully.

The Special Challenge of Poetry

William Butler Yeats (May, 1914) A Coat

I made my song a coat
Covered with embroideries
Out of old mythologies
From heel to throat;
But the fools caught it,
Wore it in the world's eyes
As though they'd wrought it.
Song, let them take it
For there's more enterprise
In walking naked.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=30#audio-30-1

Of all the arts, poetry is perhaps the one that causes the most anxiety in the most people. Many readers struggle to read verse, feeling that it often wrenches language out of normative patterns. OK, let's try to ease the challenge a bit. Again, you won't be asked to fall in love with poetry. However, you will be asked to bravely tackle some poems and explore their functions and patterns of meaning.

First, please try to believe that ***poems do nothing you don't do with language***. Poetic effects–e.g. **Meter** and **Figures of Speech**–are familiar to you if you learn to recognize them. You encounter them in daily speech, songs, and effective oratory. If poetry seems elusive, it is because poets push these effects further and with more cleverness than we are used to.

Second, although the full depth of poetry may seem elusive, that is not because it harbors secret messages only English teachers can see. Too many readers are so busy looking for secret messages that they can't experience the overt sense and texture of the poem in itself. To enhance your experience of poetry, begin with the immediately available:

Tips on Reading Poetry

- Read aloud, listening for rhythms, patterns. (Click the button above to hear a reading of "Coat.")
- Recognize the plain sense of the words before looking for hidden meanings.
- Who talks to whom about what? Clearly seeing this dynamic can open many poems.
- Track themes and patterns of meaning that flow from the above.

So … try to relax and let these great artists speak to you. You just might find yourself enjoying them!

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PART I

CHAPTER 1: THE ART AROUND US

Where do we find "art"? In art museums and galleries, right? But here's the thing. In Paris, the Louvre, the first real art museum, opened in 1682.The British Museum (London, 1753), the Hermitage (St. Petersburg, 1764) and the Uffizi (Florence, 1765) followed in the next century.

If that sounds like the distant past, consider the fact that art objects have been found dating back over 45,000 years. Clearly, a lot of art was created before the museum age. And even if you don't read poetry magazines or explore art galleries, art is all around you.

Domestic Art

One could argue that art has always begun in the home. Skilled artists have long been patronized by wealthy families to sumptuously decorate their homes. Indeed, the idea of the Louvre was to provide a venue for wealthy patrons display their personal art collections for the public. Even after institutionalized art museums developed, art has overflowed their walls, disproving the fallacy that art is what museums decide it is. Today, museums account for a small percentage of the vast amount of design that is created and put to use. Art is still overwhelmingly found in the home. Including yours.

Pottery

Developed at least 30,000 years ago, pottery—fired clay—was wonderfully useful for collecting grain, fruits, and water. Archaeologists treasure durable pottery for distinctive conventional patterns and techniques that identify prehistoric cultures. Pottery may be useful, but it is invariably enhanced by artistic design. The images below sample characteristic pottery from an array of ancient cultures. You'll notice some shared conventions, especially animals and geometric design.

Horned Animals and Dancers. (Chaleolithic period, c. 5,000 BCE). Ubaid culture, Samarran ceramics.

Jar with Four Ibexes. (Neolithic Pakistan c. 2800-2500 BCE). Jar from "the earliest era of Indian civilization, ...the Indus Valley Period,"

Background information provided by the Artstor site for the Samarran bowl explains key conventions, The most distinctive shapes of Samarran ceramics are deep or shallow bowls, plates, pedestalled bowls and high neck jars. Samarran ceramics are the first in human culture where animal designs were extensively used, and the first to be decorated with human figures. ... Swastikas, a common religious symbol in ancient South Asian cultures, appear on the outsides ... and whirling, spinning, swirling swastika-like designs are found on the insides. These include gazelles with their horns extended out behind them, females (with three fingers on their hands), with their long hair flying out at right angles to their heads as they spin around, surrounded by designs of scorpions. Similar arrangements of fish, snakes and other life forms are found. The figures are often grouped in fours, with horns or hair at right angles to the main figure in strictly geometrical but swirling pattern.

The venerable Chinese pottery tradition has flourished in China for over 6,000 years. This Hu culture pot exhibits whorls and geometrical patterns that parallel many ancient aesthetics.

Pot with swirl pattern. (Hu culture, 4000-2000 BCE)

Porcelain Tang dynasty jar. (618–907 CE):

Comparing the Hu and Tang culture pieces, can you see the remarkable difference created by a new technology? About 14 centuries ago, Chinese potters made a remarkable technological breakthrough: **Porcelain**, illustrated in the Tang Dynasty jar above.

Porcelain

A hard, white, translucent ceramic body, which is fired to a high temperature in a kiln to vitrify it. It is normally covered with a glaze and decorated, under the glaze (usually in cobalt), or, after the first firing, over the glaze with enamel colors. ... True porcelain was first made by the Chinese in the 7th or 8th century ad, using *kaolin* (china clay) and *petuntse* (china stone) (Porcelain).

That sophisticated, high gloss finish characteristic of porcelain lies in the **Glaze**:

Glazes

A glassy coating on a ceramic body which provides a waterproof covering and a surface for decoration. The ingredients used are similar to those in glass, with a flux added and then ground to produce an insoluble powder. This can then be sprayed or dusted on to a ceramic body. Alternatively, the powder can be mixed with water and the body dipped into this solution. The water is absorbed by the porous body, leaving a coating of glaze, ready to be fired. The glaze is fused to the body after a *glost* firing, which follows an initial *biscuit* firing. Earthenware was commonly covered with lead glaze or tin glaze, stoneware with salt glaze, and hard-paste porcelain with feldspathic glaze. Decoration can also be glaze. Decoration can also be applied under the glaze, usually using cobalt, or over the glaze using a wide range of enamel colors. ("Glaze" article)

During the Ming Dynasty (16th Century) Chinese porcelain reached a high degree of sophistication using *underglazing*, "decoration painted on to a ceramic body before the glaze is applied and which is permanently fixed under the glaze when the piece is fired" ("Underglaze").

In the 17th Century, European mercantile and colonizing efforts dominated trade around the world. A particularly prized import for affluent Europeans was Chinese porcelain, and manufacturers in China tooled up for the export trade (*Cinese export porcelain*):

Ming Dynasty Vase. (1522-66 CE). Porcelain with blue underglaze

Porcelain dish Worcester Porcelain Co. England (1765-1780)

Of course, import costs raised prices and "there were many attempts to reproduce [porcelain] in Europe" ("Porcelain" article). Chinese techniques proved elusive to European artisans until, in the 18th Century, manufacturers broke through and emulated Chinese designs in bulk production. "China" became a staple of European domestic design and people's dining rooms.

Carpets, Frescoes, Mosaics

Many cultures express their identity in textiles which, unfortunately, do not survive the passing of centuries as well as pottery does. Often, the designs are abstract with geometrical forms and patterns. For nomadic Islamic cultures of the Middle East, woven carpets provided portable luxury.

The Art of Carpet Weaving

Carpet weaving constitutes one of the most well-known Islamic art forms, whether manifested in the more familiar knotted-pile carpets or the larger variety of flat-woven

examples. The heavy textiles we know as Islamic rugs or carpets are found in a geographic “rug belt” usually characterized by a dry and temperate climate, an abundance of marginal grazing land, and nomadic or seminomadic pastoral traditions. The rugs are usually destined to be used in the form in which they left the loom; they are woven from Morocco in the west to northern India and western China in the east. Carpets were traditionally woven and used in all levels of Islamic society: court carpets were unique creations made singly or in pairs for the palace; commercial carpets were woven in workshops and sold in urban bazaars; village and nomadic carpets served the domestic needs of their makers, and were also made and sold as a source of cash (Denny, “Carpets”).

After the conversion to Islam, Arab peoples found themselves influenced by the Hebrew revulsion against idolatry: images of animals and people that could be worshiped as Gods. Thus, although representation of people and beasts is not unknown in Islamic art, it was frowned upon. The glorious tradition of oriental rugs which can be found today in many households worldwide tends toward images of vegetation and abstract designs.

Esfahan Herat Rug. (16th century). Persian. Silk warp, cotton weft, wool pile.

Kashan carpet. (16th century). Iranian. Pile weave, silk pile on silk foundation

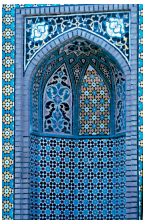
Not surprisingly, Middle Eastern carpets were exported to Europe. The distinctive style of the Islamic carpet came to be known in Europe as an **Arabesque**:

The Arabesque

A distinctive kind of vegetal ornament that flourished in Islamic art from the 10th to the 15th century. The term "arabesque" … is a European, not an Arabic, word dating perhaps from the 15th or 16th century, when Renaissance artists used Islamic designs for book ornament and decorative book bindings. Over the centuries the word has been applied to a wide variety of winding and twining vegetal decoration in art and meandering themes in music, but it properly applies only to Islamic art.

Alois Riegl (1858–1905) was the first to characterize the principal features of the arabesque by noting the geometrization of the stems of the vegetation, the particular vegetal elements used and the fact that these elements can grow unnaturally from one another, rather than branching off from a single continuous stem (Arabesque).

While we must remember that Europeans coined the term, the patterns can be found in many aspects of Arab design, from rugs to decorative ceramics. Arabesques form a key feature of Middle Eastern architecture in palaces and mosques. Often, the effects are achieved with mosaics, as in this detail from an Arab palace.



Arabesques, Fatima's Haram. (N.D.) Niche: Decorative panels. Qom, Iran.

In other cultures, domestic design was applied to structures more permanent than a nomad's tent. Roman villas, for example, were often decorated with **Fresco**, the ancient version of wallpaper:

Fresco

a method of wall painting in which powdered pigments dissolved in water are applied to a wet, freshly applied plaster ground. The color is absorbed into the drying plaster, which acts as the binding medium. ... Fresco, which was sometimes called *buon fresco* or *fresco buono*, was distinguished by the wetness of the plaster from paintings executed on dry walls. ... The plaster dried quickly, and details were sometimes added in *secco* after the plaster was dry, a practice ... used to great effect in frescoes such as Fra Angelico's series in the Convent of San Marco in Florence. ... Frescoes were primarily an Italian form; the deleterious effect of dampness on plaster meant that frescoes never became an important medium in Venice or in northern Europe ("Fresco").

Main salon with garden & birds. (c. 10 BCE-10 AD) Fresco. Prima Porta, Italy: Villa of Livia.

Floor mosaic. (2nd half 4th C. A.D). Taunton: Low Ham Villa.

As we see in the fresco above, a key function of a villa fresco is to connect the home's interior and exterior in a time before glass windows were practical. For the floor, house proud aristocrats used **Mosaics** assembling images from thousands of colored bits of stone. The sample above is from a Romano-British villa home in today's Taunton, UK. One way the Roman Empire sustained itself was to co-opt local authority figures and reward them with the luxuries of Roman living, including sumptuously designed and decorated villas often equipped with baths.

Asian Silk and Paper Screens

In China and Japan, painted screens of silk or paper divided spaces within the home. Reflecting the close link between calligraphy and art, the screens often combine images with poetic or epigrammatic text. In the work of Yon T'ang (Tang Dynasty, 15th Century CE) we find a fusion of aesthetic dimensions: clothing, architecture, and portals into carefully ordered gardens. Japanese domestic design was influenced by Chinese culture and also by the contingencies of the island. Houses were walled with paper for flexibility and recovery after earthquake.

		
Yin T'ang. (1516). *Imitation of Tang people.* Ink & wash painting.	Yin T'ang *Lady with Peony.* (16th Century) Paper Scroll	Kunisada. (19th Century) *Playing games in an interior overlooking a snow garden.* Color Woodcut, ink on paper

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Chinese Landscape Painting

What is your favorite **Genre** of painting? Do you like the sweeping vistas that open out in **Landscape Painting**? Variations on the landscape *genre* can be found around the world. However, this *genre* was rare until the form was pioneered by Li Ch'eng during the Song Dynasty. What do you think?

Li, Ch'eng. (10th century). *Solitary Temple Amid Clearing Peaks*. Ink and color on silk.

Guo, Xi. (1072). *Early Spring*. Ink on silk scroll.

Tang, Yin. (ca. 1505-1510). *Seeing Off a Guest on a Mountain Path*. Ink and light colors on silk.

These three works are clearly examples of a distinctive **Genre**. A glance at the range of dates suggests that this *genre* has persisted for many centuries, a sure sign that it is deeply rooted in Chinese culture. As individuals, we may or may not have much connection with Chinese culture. However, we can observe and reflect on what we see. We can recognize **conventions** that seemed to be share over the centuries:

- *Elongated rectangular shape determined by the*

medium: silk or paper scrolls that can be unrolled or displayed vertically or horizontally

- *Monochromatic colors*: a narrow range of hues, again reflecting the primarily ink medium
- *Conventional subjects*: mountain, water, small scale human habitation, absent or minimized human figures
- *Spatial zones*: minimized foreground, looming middle distance, vanishing background
- *Contrast*: highly detailed sections opening into cloudy, vague mystery

Reflecting on our observations, we can begin to recognize **Themes** or patterns of meaning. Banal human life, minimized in mere traces of human presence, fades against spectacular natural vistas. Mountaintop elevation suggests, as it does in many cultures, spiritual enlightenment. Vertical composition lifts our eyes to the heavens, while void spaces seem to open out into the mysteries of infinity.

The Vista of the Immaterial–Mountain and Water

Now let's see how an expert's perspective can enhance our experience. In a 2017 reflection, Diep contrasts Chinese and Western approaches to landscape:

> The closest term that I find suggesting landscape as the perceptual image in Chinese is *fēng jıng* 風景(wind + scene). Similar to the English word, the Chinese term implies a perceptual framework (i.e. the scene). Thus, in both languages, landscape is visual and anthropocentric. However, the Chinese landscape is the scenery of the wind and not of the land – it is the vista of the immaterial. Hence, the Chinese landscape is a paradox: It is a vision of the invisible. … A Chinese landscape painting, *shān shuı huà* 山水畫(mountain + water + picture), is literally a painting of the mountains and the water, both material and tangible features of nature (Diep, 2017 p. 79).

"The Chinese character for valley, gǔ 谷," explains Diep (2017, p. 81), "is derived pictorially from a flowing River and not as the space between mountains." Diep's observations inform us that Chinese script consists of characters derived from pictograms. In Chinese culture, calligraphy forms the core skill leading to literacy, education, and art. Traditionally, Chinese painters began with calligraphy and developed their techniques using ink and paper. Paintings featuring ink on paper are, not surprisingly, often monochromatic (displaying a limited range of colors).

So, mountain and water. What is it about these conventional elements that inspire not only landscape paintings, but the essence that defines the whole idea of a valley? Here is Diep (2017):

> Chinese landscape paintings are placed between the margins of heaven and earth. … The Chinese landscape is placed between the sky and the ground, tiān de jiān 天地間,

> a place that is simultaneously unknown and familiar. Thus, each element in nature is sacred. … Chinese philosophy accepts the uncertainty of nature and the uncertainty of human life. This uncertainty is what is divine and is the meaning of existence (Diep, 2017 p. 79).

Chinese paintings depict landscapes not merely to celebrate natural beauty, but also to evoke spiritual exaltation. These artists invite us to *see* portals into the infinite. Furthermore, they insert a reflective, enlightened human perspective directly into the scene:

> Similar to Western landscape paintings, the human figure is infrequently found in Chinese landscape paintings. When people are depicted, they are often inconspicuous or diminutive compared to the landscape features. While European landscapes often depict peasants working or in leisure, the Chinese figure is usually of the pensive scholar (Diep, 2017 p. 79).

Chinese artists have worked in many media and *genres*. Some Chinese traditions of painting focused on depicting the aesthetic splendors of aristocratic life. But the landscape genre turns resolutely away from both the elegant luxuries of the elite and the squalor of poverty. Human perspective is reduced to temples of meditation compressed into a minimized foreground and, occasionally, tiny figures with scholarly or monkish aspirations.

Landscape paintings, then, affirm the highest ideals of Chinese culture. Buddhism offers enlightenment as the fruit of a pilgrimage out of the self and into the mystery of the transcendent.

Confucianism and Taoism both call for the individual to rise above selfish indulgence and surrender to the principles of heaven.

OK. So how much of this did you "see"? Well, it depends on what we mean by "seeing." Our discussion includes information that many students in an American class do not bring to their experience. And you may not be in the habit of analyzing your experience like this. Yet all of us can look closely. And the Themes we have discovered are all too human.

And, perhaps without having terms to explain things, you actually felt something when looking at the images. Beauty. Harmony. Even a suggestion of inspiration in the elevation of mountain and open space. Powerful images like these can bridge wide cultural gaps. The power of art lies in our dynamic experience itself. Analysis and background information can then open up new dimensions of the experience so we can return and discover new riches.

European Landscape painting: John Constable

Centuries later, European painters began to popularize the landscape painting. In the work of the English painter John Constable, we see the genre in a mature form:

John Constable. (1820). *Dedham Lock & Mill*. Oil on Canvas

Notice how different is Constable's orientation from that of the Chinese masters. While we may or may not find this view of bucolic England inspiring, the vision is settled in a time and place. There

is little or no effort to inspire transcendent reflections beyond the boundaries of human experience. Constable places us securely in the English Suffolk. Even if we haven't read Austen, the Brontë sisters, Hardy, and Eliot[1] we can probably "read" in the painting a good deal of Constable's world. What ways of life are suggested by the elements of the scene, for example, the buildings? How does Constable compose (arrange) materials to imbue the painting with an air of serenity?

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[1] Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters, Thomas Hardy, and George Eliot were 19th Century novelists whose social portraits have familiarized the world with English country life.

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Portraiture

All families face the core human challenge: time, decay, and loss. How can art help preserve the image and identity of loved ones? Human figures in ancient art are often funerary. This sarcophagus—i.e. coffin—represents the loving union of a husband and wife.

Sarcophagus of the married couple. (circa 520 BCE). Etruscan culture. Terracotta

As does funerary art in many cultures, the coffin is topped with an *effigy* preserving the memory of the deceased. But is it a portrait? *The Columbia Encyclopedia*'s definition of portraiture emphasizes its role in preserving identity against the corrosive impact of time:

Portraiture

The art of representing the physical or psychological likeness of a real or imaginary individual. The principal portrait media are painting, drawing, sculpture, and photography. From earliest times the portrait has been considered a means to immortality. Many cultures have attributed magical properties to the portrait: symbolization of the majesty or authority of the subject, substitution for a deceased individual's living presence or theft of the soul of

the living subject (Portraiture).

Portraiture is clearly a branch of **Representational Art** (also known as *Figurative Art*) which depicts images that can be recognized from the real world. Of course, we approach the image from our own perspective. Centuries of post-Renaissance portraiture and nearly two centuries of photography lead many in the Euro-American West to expect **Mimetic**, imitative realism. A "good" portrait, many feel, would capture the idiosyncrasies of an individual's appearance and character. So, what do you think of the representational technique in the Etruscan effigy? How vividly do you see the husband and wife as individuals?

Well, perhaps not so well. **Representational Art** presents visual subjects that we can recognize. But how perfectly must an image emulate the precise appearance of a figure (the visual subject) for us to recognize it? And are we looking at a specific object or person or an image representing a class of subjects? The image of our Etruscan couple makes little attempt to capture the individuals in the way that a modern photographic portrait would. Instead, it effectively represents a conventional *idea* of an affluent couple in Etruscan society. We might imagine that the couple preferred to be remembered for their social class rather than for their specific appearance. The image is composed with abstract **conventions**: the braided hair, the pointed facial features, the fixed, dreamy smiles, these would have been virtually identical in similar funereal pieces.

Art can represent its subject, then, can very well as **Stylized art**: "Figurative visual representation seeking to typify its referent through simplification, exaggeration, or idealization rather than to represent unique characteristics through naturalism" (Stylization). Stylized Art is actually very common. In our day, cartoonists and advertisers *suggest* characters, emotions, and actions with a few deft strokes of a pen. We find these techniques comfortable and convincing because they have become

conventional. We "see" in images of Charlie Brown, Lucy, and Linus convincing depictions of child characters whom we know from repeated experience and from narratives that make them live for us. Yet few would argue that Charles' Schultz's spare sketch lines meticulously capture the faces of children.[1]

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[1] While images from Charles M. Schultz's *Peanuts* comic strip are well known around the world, open source images are hard to come by. To sample some of Schultz's stylized representations of children, try this website: https://www.peanuts.com/.

The fact is that most ancient art relied on stylized features, making little attempt to perfectly render a **Mimetic** image. What conventional, stylized features do you see in these figures from Xochipala Culture figures (Mexico) formed from red-brown micaceous ceramic? What can we plausibly infer about the artistic values motivating these artists from a distant culture?

Seated shaman and youth. (400 B.C. – A.D. 500).

Female Figure. (circa 15th-10th century BCE).

Tomb of Ch'in Shih-Huang-Ti. (c 246-210 B.C). Standing soldiers and horses. [Terracotta statues].

If we define portraiture in terms of the *distinctive appearance of the individual*, portraiture was rare in ancient cultures. Yet, Ch'in

Shih-Huang-Ti's famous terracotta army offers an interesting case. In 1974, excavations uncovered the tomb of China's first emperor. The emperor is guarded by more than 7,500 life size figures, an army of soldiers and horses projecting imperial power into the afterlife. The army was intentionally buried, unknown for 2,300 years.

A close look at the figures seems to suggest that these are portraits of individuals. Each figure has different features: shape of head, beard, expression, facial features. An even closer look, however, shows that the appearance of individuation is misleading. The artists worked with half a dozen distinct templates for each component of a figure's appearance: head, beard, expression, etc. By mixing and matching these stylized components, the artists achieve hundreds of "individual" figures.

Ancient Chinese and Roman artistic traditions composed individualized portraits of particularly famous heroes. The portrait of Confucius, "one of the great cultural heroes of Chinese history was most likely used in a temple or at an altar dedicated to his system of thought" (explanatory note for the MIA image). Composed long after the sage's life ended, it displays an artist's imagined rendering drawing on conventional ideas of the master.

Portrait of Confucius. (14th C). Ming dynasty. Ink and colors on silk scroll

Bust of Julius Caesar. (1st century BCE). Green granite and white glass

The bust of Caesar below reflects a more direct knowledge of the emperor's actual person. Next week, we will explore the emergence of Roman realism out of **Classical** Greek art. The art which flourished in Rome during the time of the Caesars virtually copied

Greek techniques. Does this **Mimetic** approach seem more "evolved" to us today? Does that response reflect our own cultural orientations?

During the reign of Julius Caesar, Ptolemaic Egypt was absorbed into the Roman Empire. For about 3 centuries, northern Africa, centered in Alexandria, provided the grain which fed the Empire. Roman citizens owned plantations which grew the grain using slave labor. Over this time, the cultures fused, as they tend to do in colonial contexts.

Of course, Egyptian culture is famous for embalming deceased bodies. A mummy was traditionally housed in a sarcophagus with an effigy placed over the face within. These traditional effigies were highly stylized, with little attempt to depict the individual faces of the deceased.

Coffin of Horankh. (c. 700 BCE). Wood, paint, bronze

Mummies with Child Portraits. (c. 50 CE).

Funerary Portrait. (2nd C.). Encaustic on wood

During the Roman era in Egypt, the process of mummification was maintained, but the style of the effigies on the coffin changed radically. The deceased began to be remembered in individualized portraits influenced by Roman art traditions. The faces of these two mummified children look at us with a startlingly life-like intensity. (Are they a bit creepy?) The funerary portrait of the young lad would seem to fit into a family's photo album today.

As we will see next week, the Classical traditions of Greece and Rome that pioneered Mimetic art were cut off by the Byzantine

era's commitment to stylized Christian art. A thousand years later, the concept of the portrait was revived in the Renaissance period. During the Baroque and neo-Classical eras that followed, family portraiture evolved as it became a virtual requirement in elite society. Painters refined their techniques for flattering their patrons' self-images. In this group composition by Franz Hals, notice the individuated faces and motivations. As the adults sit formally, the youngsters twitch with suppressed energy. Notice, too, the lighting! We'll have more to say about that next week.

Franz Hals. (c 1650). *Family Group in a Landscape*. Oil on canvas.

Joshua Reynolds. (1777). *Lady Elizabeth Delmé and her children.* Oil on canvas.

John Singer Sargent. (ca. 1892-1893). *Lady Agnew*. Oil on Canvas.

Joshua Reynolds was one of the predominant English portrait painters of the 18th Century. Below, he composes Lady Delmé and her children in an intimate grouping. Don't miss the landscape which is the family's pride and joy: a great country estate, sign of enormous wealth. But beware of appearances! Lady Delmé might or might not have loved her children, but she would have had little contact with them as they were raised by wet nurses' nannies, and governesses, with little "young gentlemen" sent off to public (boarding) school.

The American painter John Singer Sargent made his name and fortune portraying America's elite and British nobility. His portrait of the Scottish Lady Agnew illustrates the great skills of portraiture that had evolved over 400 years.

Until the 19th Century, the idea of preserving one's image in a portrait was a privilege reserved only for the extremely wealthy and powerful. Indeed, the whole concept of faithfully recording the appearance of an ordinary person was repugnant to the preference for nobility in art. Yet values began to change in the 19th Century, and we find here Jean-François Millet's honoring a moment of piety for two humble peasants in France.

Jean-FrançoisMillet. (1857-1859). *The Angelus*. Oil on canvas

Hill & Adamson. (ca. 1845). Jeanie Wilson & Annie Linton, Newhaven Fisherwomen. Salted paper print.

How many images do you have of your children and grandchildren? Of the children of friends who text you 15 times a day? Well, before the age of the photograph, portraits were almost never available to working people. Only the wealthy and exalted could patronize artists. And then, in the mid-19th Century, the camera came along and brought portraiture to common people. In 1845, Jeanie and Annie Linton could not even imagine having the funds to sit for painted portraits. Yet here they are, captured in a photographic print. Painters now faced competition from a medium affordable to common people and reflective of a growing social awareness of the significance of lives not cushioned by wealth. Artists and writers of the Romantic Era (Week 4) embraced more humble walks of life.

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Art that Teaches

The impulse toward art extends outside the home and into the larger society. Cultures weave their people together and express their vision in a wide variety of artistic forms. Now, a key requirement for any culture is to instruct its members in how to think, communicate, work, and behave. Thus, much art is designed to teach:

Didactic Art

Instructive; designed to impart information, advice, or some doctrine of morality or philosophy. Much of the most ancient surviving literature is *didactic*, containing genealogies, proverbial wisdom, and religious instruction. Most European literary works of the Middle Ages have a strong didactic element, usually expounding doctrines of the Church (Didactic).

We see this didactic purpose in the Confucian and Buddhist themes of Chinese landscape art. The beauty and wonder of these paintings lift viewers out of the querulous mundane and into edifying reflections on transcendent spiritual dimensions of life. Beholding them, one learns much about the good life as understood in Chinese culture.

We see this didactic purpose in the Confucian and Buddhist themes of Chinese landscape art. The beauty and wonder of these paintings lift viewers out of the querulous mundane and into edifying

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The Gods with Us

You will not be surprised if I remark that a great deal of the world's art teaches religious lessons and cultivates piety. Until very recently, great public buildings were either temples or palaces, and often both at once. A major role of the art in a temple is to communicate the themes and ideas of the faith. Consider this example.

Vishnu Reclining on Serpent-Bed of Shesha. (6th Century CE). Frieze: sandstone and masonry. Deogarh, India: Dashavatara Temple.

About 2,500 years ago, the Hindu blend of philosophy and religion arose in South Asia and expressed itself in art. The temple frieze on the left depicts the god Vishnu reclining in a dream. Hindus see the universe as an infinitely repeating cycle of creation and recreation flowing through Vishnu, who continuously dreams the universe into orderly existence. Vishnu slumbers on the coils of the serpent Shesha who embodies the cycles of creation and destruction. This frieze affirms nothing less than all reality: time, space, and the cycle of infinity.

Many world cultures link well-being—health, prosperity, success in conflict, power—with the presence and approval of their gods. Some cultures cultivate intimate relationships with the spirit world

through ritual. Many African peoples combine the arts of dance and mask making to seek the aid of the gods. Performers wear masks that represent spirits mediated through ritual dance.

Mbuya (sickness) mask. Pende people

Power figure, *nkondi tatu*. (19th–20th century). Luba people

Power figure, (20th century). Kongo people. Wood, natural fibers, glass, metal.

But wait. What's going on with these *power figures*, apparently tortured by nails? Something quite different from what might be imagined by those from a different cultural background. These figures do not represent violence. Rather, as explained by the Minneapolis Institute of Art web site, the nails represent specific petitions and blessings:

Poer Figures

It looks like a man being punished or tortured. But to its Kongo makers and users, this figure was a container, empowered by a ritual specialist to house a specific spirit. The figure was consulted like a traditional chief to settle disputes and arrive at binding decisions. Each nail and blade, driven in to energize its powers, represents an issue resolved by its ritual authority.

For a long time, African cultures were dismissed by Europeans and Americans as primitive, inferior. In the late 19th Century, Western artists led a gradual discovery of the great sophistication of various African cultures. We will meet that Pende mask again in Module 4.

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Teaching Fidelity to the State

About 6,000 years ago, the practice of agriculture transformed societies in various parts of the world. Agriculture required extensive social organization and produced surpluses which had to be protected. The result was what we loosely recognize as *civilization*, stratified societies with unequal distributions of wealth and power. Some wealthy societies developed ruling elites and armies of conquest. Such societies have always used art to affirm the legitimacy and glory of the state. Let's glance at three examples.

Below, we see the figure of the *Dying Gaul*, a representative of the native peoples to the north and west of Italy who resisted Roman rule for generations before being subdued by Julius Caesar. Representations of defeated enemies in other ancient cultures often demean the vanquished by depicting them in small scale and in positions of servitude. This sculpture depicts a noble, dignified warrior who has fallen in battle. The image flatters the Empire by humanizing and respecting the enemy it has conquered.

Dying Gaul. (ca. 230-220 BCE). Sculpture.

Jaques-Louis David. (1802). *Napoleon Crossing the Saint Bernhard Pass*. Oil on canvas.

Leutze, Emanuel. (1851). *Washington Crossing the Delaware*. Painting.

Over 17 Centuries later, a Corsican gunnery officer in the French Army sought to rebuild the glories of Ancient Rome by conquering Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Russia. Napoleon Buonaparte, the scourge of other European nations, fired in the French breast an immense

sense of *gloire* (*glory*) that has not fully died out even today. Jaques-Louis David's invests his vision of Napoleon astride a horse with *gloire*, the French term for glory all but monopolized by the Emperor's cult. Note: later, we'll look at Goya's much less flattering portrait of Napoleon from the perspective of his ambition's victims.

The revolution in France that led to Napoleon's ascendancy was inspired by one among 13 British colonies in North America. Emmanuel Leutze's painting of a heroic moment in the American Revolution celebrates one of the iconic moments of a national history imbued with the legend and virtues of democracy. **Didactic Art** has through the ages celebrated the state and enhanced popular support.

Shamash and Hammurabi

In the ancient world, power always claimed the blessing of divine favor. Kings, often seen as divine, served as priests, mediating between the people and the gods. Often, gods were thought to live in temples attended by royal high priests. If a city or nation succumbed to famine, plague, or an enemy's armies, clearly the king/priest had lost the favor of the gods who were believed to have literally abandoned the building.

Hammurabi reined in the 1st dynasty of Babylon. Babylonian kings are prominently featured in Hebrew scripture (for Christians, the Old Testament). Yet Hammurabi's era was much older than the neo-Babylonian empire that conquered the Israelite kingdom of Judah in 605 BCE (relevant Hebrew scriptures: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Lamentations, and more).

Royal Head [Hammurabi?]. (2nd millennium BCE).

The Code of Hammurabi. (ca. 1792-1950 BCE). Engraved black basalt.

Detail: Hammurabi before Shamash

Hammurabi's glory is commemorated in a basalt *stele* (or stela), a monument that affirms the king's authority by portraying him in supplication before Shamash, a Babylonian god (see the detail). *Steles* were often set up by powerful rulers to affirm their authority, to delineate a realm's boundaries of a realm, or to commemorate military triumph. But this one has a remarkable feature.

Didactic Art teaches not only subservience to the state but also how to behave. The key to Mesopotamian prosperity was an elaborate system of irrigation channels that had to be maintained. Hammurabi's *stele* inscribes a complete legal code, one of the world's first, and a major concern of its provisions is with the proper maintenance of those irrigation systems.

The Code of Hammurabi

The Laws of Hammurabi are the most famous and complete of the ancient Mesopotamian law collections. There are 275–300 laws in Hammurabi's collection, … carved on a cone-shaped black diorite stela that stands over two metres tall. … The Babylonian god of justice,

> Shamash, is seated at the top of the stela, dictating the laws to Hammurabi. ...In addition to the laws themselves, there is a poetic prologue, recounting Hammurabi's accomplishments and articulating his desire to establish justice, and ... cursing those who might deign to disobey his laws. (Versteeg, 2008, para. 4)

Ancient Egypt

A noteworthy example of **Didactic Art** supporting a society is that of ancient Egypt. As is the norm, similarly affirms a society, its leaders, and its claims to divine patronage. The Narmer Palette below commemorates the military and political unification of Upper and Lower Egypt under one rule (3,000 BCE).

Narmer Palette (Obverse face). (ca. 3000 BCE). Slate relief.

Narmer Palette (Reverse). (ca. 3000 BCE). Slate relief.

The faces of the palette are divided into "registers," or zones which affirm Narmer's authority through his close relationship with the gods. At the top, we see the invocation of a deity, the cow goddess Hathor. In the middle register (obverse face), we see King Narmer smiting an enemy under the gaze of the falcon god Horus.

Your sharp eye will notice the difference in size between the king and other figures in the image. In many ancient traditions, difference in scale conventionally indicates social status. The image of the Pharaoh Menkaure is dominated by the goddess Hathor, seated and a bit larger than the Pharaoh, Hathor's attributes of the cow and the heavens are represented by her headdress: a solar disk between horns. Smaller still is Hare, a deified personification of a region of Egypt.

Menkaure, Hathor, and Hare. (26th Century BCE). Sculpture.

King Mendaure & Queen. (25th Century BCE). Sculpture.

Hunting Scene. (ca. 1415 B.C.). Tomb of Menna (no. 69). Painting.

What do you think of the depiction of Menkaure with his wife? Does it seem familiar? These royal figures strike a pose strictly conventional in Egyptian sculpture: erect stance, feet flat with one advanced, the king's arms straight with fists clenched. The faces are impassive and impersonal, capturing no emotion or individuality. Remarkably, this style remained largely unchanged through scores of royal dynasties over 2,500 years. This level of stylistic continuity clashes with contemporary artistic values. Great art, we think today, throws over the stale patterns of the past and boldly explores personal visions. What sort of artists do the same thing for 2,500 years?

The answer is simple: these artists expressed a very different cultural perspective. The function of art in ancient Egypt was to affirm the myth of an enduring people. Egyptian wealth and power were based on the predictability of the Nile River's gift of fertility

to a strip of land in a hostile desert. Every year, the Nile flooded and receded. Every generation of Pharaoh continued the authority of those before. Egyptian art reflected a conservative, consistent, stable culture.

The *Hunting Scene* captures the prosperity conferred by the Nile through multiple levels of society. The Nile teems with fowl and fish, signifying the fecundity of its river valley. The nobleman hunts with his wife, servants, and slaves, each figured sized according to social status. The figures are depicted in a distinctive, timeless, two-dimensional style. As is true of nearly all ancient Egyptian painting, the figures are presented in profile, but some combine two perspectives: feet and heads in profile, torsos turned toward the viewer.

Egyptian art, then, attempts to stave off the destructive effects of time: generations may come and go, but our civilization, our personal lives, endure. Ancient Egyptian art was mostly funerary, focused on the transition from life on earth to the underworld. Not only did the "art" of mummification seek to preserve the body, but carved and wrought figures and vehicles in an Egyptian tomb provided the deceased with food, conveniences, and servants into eternity.

Colossi of Memnon. (1372 B.C.). Sculpture.

Colossi of Ramses II. (ca. 1270 B.C.). Temple. Abu Sunbul. Sculpture.

From ancient kings to corporations in our age, the powerful erect massive, *monumental* buildings and art works to intimidate and assert power. Ancient Egyptian architecture and statuary—the pyramids, the Sphinx, the temple compound at Luxor—were erected to project power and affirm the blessing of the gods in opposition

to every rival … now and in the future. Colossal statues of pharaohs like Ramses II sought to intimidate generations yet unborn.

Shelley and Ozymandias

Curran, Amelia. (1819). *Portrait of Percy B. Shelley*. Oil on canvas.

Of course, no one beats time. Pharaohs died. The empire was repeatedly defeated, finally by Greeks and Romans. Over the centuries, even the monuments eroded, crumbled, and collapsed. In 1818, the English poet Percy Byssche Shelley was intrigued by press drawings of archeological discoveries in Egypt. Eroding monuments, such as the Colossi of Memnon, invoked the irony of human aspiration.[1]

[1] As quoted in Mikics, Shelly's poem channels the irony of an ancient Roman historian named Diodorus who quoted an inscription on an Egyptian monument: "King of Kings Ozymandias am I. If any want to know how great I am and where I lie, let him outdo me in my work."

Percy Bysshe Shelley. Ozymandias (January 11, 1818)

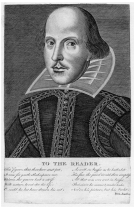
I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,

And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;

And on the pedestal, these words appear:
My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=89#audio-89-1

Elizabethan England



Shakespeare, W. (17th Century). Frontispiece, *First Folio*.

All societies celebrate the heroes that embody the ideals they imagine at the core of their national characters. Between 1590 and 1610, William Shakespeare wrote and directed plays in the flourishing theater scenes in London and the provinces. Now, Shakespeare's dramas were composed under especially constraining circumstances. Playwrights of Shakespeare's day had to be sponsored—i.e. officially authorized—by English aristocracy: lords, ladies, and Queen Elizabeth, who eagerly sponsored the arts. Clearly, their plays were required to teach the lesson of fidelity to their patrons' authority.

Furthermore, Queen Elizabeth was vulnerable to bad publicity. Her Tudor grandfather, Henry VII, was thought by many to have usurped (stolen) the crown. Her father, Henry VIII, had broken with Rome and was condemned throughout Catholic Europe. Elizabeth's navy had to fight off the massive Spanish Armada, sent to invade and re-impose Roman Catholic authority. Oh, and Elizabeth was a ruling queen in a world of kings and patriarchs. Tudor England needed support from all of its poets.

Henry V, Act 4, Scene 3 by William Shakespeare

He which hath no stomach to this fight,
Let him depart; his passport shall be made
And crowns for convoy put into his purse:
We would not die in that man's company
That fears his fellowship to die with us.

This day is called the feast of Crispian[2]:
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
Will stand a tip-toe when the day is named,
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
He that shall live this day, and see old age,
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbors,
And say 'To-morrow is Saint Crispian:'
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars.
And say "These wounds I had on Crispin's day."

But he'll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day. ...
This story shall the good man teach his son;
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,

From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remember'd;

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,[3]

This day shall gentle his condition:[4]
And gentlemen in England now a-bed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

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[2] *Crispin's day*: the calendar of the medieval church listed many holy days (holidays) that honored various saints. Crispin and Crispian were Christians martyred during the 3rd Century persecutions of Diocletian.
[3] *Vile*: this word refers to social caste—the sense is *no matter how low of birth.*
[4] *Gentle his condition:* think of *gentleman*—the word *gentle* refers to a rank within the aristocratic upper classes. Henry is saying that veterans of this battle will rise to a higher social caste.

Astonishingly, Henry's small army routed the French, in large part because of non-aristocratic long bowmen who had the audacity to slay hundreds highborn French knights from afar. To this day, the British revere Agincourt as one of England's greatest victories. Shakespeare's speech has rung through the ages and continues to inspire soldiers and athletes even today. Every time you see the phrase "band of brothers," Shakespeare's words live on.

The play has twice been notably filmed. Lawrence Olivier directed and starred in a 1943 production to rally English spirits during World War II. In 1989, Kenneth Branagh also directed and played the lead role in a revival (Video of the "Band of Brothers" scene , technicalmark, 2009). Today, it is quoted and cited all over the world to motivate peoples in crisis and sports teams facing adversity.

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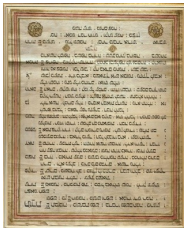
Israel's Literary Artistic Tradition

For Jews, Christians, and Muslims, one tradition of **Didactic** literature with special importance is that of the ancient Jews.[1]



Mizrah (*East plate*). (17th Century). Manuscript

Molnar, Jozsef. (1850). *Abraham's Journey from Ur to Canaan*. Oil on canvas.

The people of ancient Israel were among the Semitic tribes who migrated into and out of Mesopotamia. Israelites recognize the birth of their ethnic identity in the patriarch Abraham's faithful obedience to God's command to go out from his Mesopotamian home in Ur of the Chaldeans and journey to Canaan, later known as Palestine. We read the tale of Abraham's founding journey in the first book of *Torah*,**[2]** Genesis 11.27-12.9.

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[1] You may be surprised to hear that the Jewish tradition of scriptures is important to Muslims. However, as all Muslims know, the Prophet Muhammad was inspired in his faith by the Judeo-Christian heritage and saw himself as a prophet in the line of Abraham, Isaiah, and Jesus. The *Koran* draws

frequently on Jewish scriptures and honors Jesus as a great prophet.

[2] *Torah:* Hebrew scriptures are divided into three sections, *Torah*, (books of the law), *Nevi'im*, (books of the prophets) and *Ketuvim* (books of wisdom). *Torah*, later known to Greek and Latin scholars as the *Pentateuch*, consists of the first 5 books of both Hebrew scripture and the Christian Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Genesis 11:27-12:9

Terah took Abram his son and Lot ... and Sar′ai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chalde′ans to go into the land of Canaan. ...

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves."

So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sar′ai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions which they had gathered, and the persons that they had gotten in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan.

When they had come to the land of Canaan, Abram

> passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. Thence he removed to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord. And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.

The Israelites rejected the multiple gods of the peoples around them and the habit of worshiping idols depicting the gods as animals and persons. In Exodus 20:4-6, Moses warns the people of Yahweh against forming idolatrous images:

> You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath. ... You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.

This abhorrence of idolatry conditioned Jews and the spiritual traditions that descended from them—Christianity[3] and Islam—to turn away from religious imagery in their art forms. Though they have vastly influenced the world, the People of Israel have left few paintings or sculpture. Jewish art took a very different form: the composition and loving preservation of texts. Through millennia of exile, persecution and even genocide, Jews have miraculously preserved their culture through devotion to their literary tradition of scripture.

[3] Christians have always shared the Hebrew abhorrence of idolatrous worship of other gods. However, since Christians see Jesus as an *incarnate* god who adopted a human body, a long tradition of religious iconography developed in the early Centuries of the faith. We will sample this tradition. It should be noted, however, that *iconoclasm*, a religiously inspired revulsion against Christian images of Christ, Mary, and the saints popped up in a few periods of Christian history to attack icons as idolatry. With some exceptions, Protestant traditions minimize the use of religious images.

Hebrew scripture (for Christians, the Old Testament) centers on God's call to the Israelites to be His people, follow his laws, and trust in His protection. *Torah* celebrates the providence of the God who called them to a special and lasting communion. The way has not been easy: Abraham's journey leads to slavery in Egypt and a migration personally blessed by God:

Exodus 3.7-8

The Lord said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

Journeying from Egypt to the Land of Canaan, the Israelites follow divinely inspired prophets and judges. In time, the people begin to grumble: they lack the national glory of a royal house: "So all the

elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have" (1 Samuel 8.4-5). Grudgingly, Samuel anoints Saul as King of the Israelites. When Saul's reign turns sour, Samuel is called by God to journey to Bethlehem to anoint a successor.

1 Samuel 16.1-13

When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord."

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." ...

Jesse had seven sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, "The Lord has not chosen these." So he asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" "There is still the youngest," Jesse answered. "He is tending the sheep." Samuel said, "Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives."

So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; this is the one." So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David."

You may be thinking, *I've seen these story elements before*. You have,

in hundreds of stories—Aladdin, Hamlet, Elizabeth I of England, Ko-Kwal-alwoot,[4] Jane Eyre, Frodo Baggins, Sgt. York, Luke Skywalker, Harry Potter. Each of these heroes is a youthful innocent reluctantly caught up in a conflict with threatening forces. These story elements are found in tales throughout the world. Particular features of the hero's journey are found to run parallel to each other in many cultural traditions:

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[4] *Ko-Kwal-alwoot*: in a traditional tale told by the Samish people of the Northwest Coast of the Pacific, *Ko-Kwal-alwoot*, the Maiden of Deception Pass, is called to sacrifice herself in a magical marriage that provides for her people. The young woman is courted by a suitor who carries the cold of the sea and bargains with the maiden and her father: if *Ko-Kwal-alwoot* will marry him and join him in the sea, her people will be blessed by an abundance of fish (link).

Archetype

A primary symbol, action, setting, or character-type found repeatedly in myth, folklore, and literature. Religious mystics have ...proposed ... a universal symbolic language of dreams and visions. In the 20th century this notion was encouraged by the speculative anthropology of J. G. Frazer and the psychology of Jung, who claimed that human beings shared a "collective unconscious" for which archetypal images, whether in dreams or in imaginative literature, provided evidence (*Archetypes*).

In archetypal fashion, David is an unlikely hero, reluctant to take

up the challenge of his calling. Like many other narrative heroes, David has to hide in a cave from the jealous King Saul who leads the Israelites into battle with the Philistines.

1 Samuel 17-24

A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. His height was six cubits and a span. ... Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us." ... On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified. ...

With battle lines dominated by the massive warrior Goliath and Israelite courage flagging, our hero arrives at the front, "glowing with health and handsome." The sun glints on the armor that the youth disdains, relying on innocent faith. The tension culminates in flash of combat and a grisly finale repeatedly envisioned in Christian paintings of later centuries.

David ran to the battle lines and asked his brothers how they were. As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it. ... David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him." Saul replied,

"You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth."

But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine." ...

[Rejecting the heavy armor offered by King Saul, David] chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. He looked David over and saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him. He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" The Philistine cursed David by his gods. "Come here ...and I'll give your flesh to the birds and the animals!"

David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. ...The whole world will know that there is a God in

Israel. All … will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's."

As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David … reached into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground. So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone. … After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword

Caravaggio, Michelangelo Merisi da. (ca. 1601-1602). *David and Goliath*. Oil on canvas.

So the hero prevails over the villain. 2,500 years ago, the Greek philosopher Aristotle analyzed core narrative elements:

Central conflict driving narratives

Agon: the central conflict driving a narrative

Protagonist: the *hero* character with whom the narrative

perspective identifies and whose interests the reader shares

Antagonist: the hero's opponent in opposition to the narrative and reader perspective

Of course, villain and hero are matters of perspective. Even while making his promise to Moses, God had acknowledged that the "land of milk and honey" was inhabited by "Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites" (Exodus 3.8). To these peoples, the Israelite migration was an invasion, and generations of warfare have followed. Yet for Jews, Christians, and Muslims, David's faithful heroics provide the inspiration and the lessons that support the faith.

Hebrew Verse and Its Descendants

With their artistic energies focused on literature and scripture, the Jewish People have long been known as "the people of the book."[5] Jewish and Christian worship is drenched in its spirituality and wisdom. And in the poetic textures of Hebrew verse.

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[5] When Islamic armies conquered Asia Minor, Palestine, northern Africa, and Spain in the 7th and 8th Centuries CE, Jews and Christians were afforded limited privileges as the "people of the book," the Hebrew and Christian scriptures which inspired Muhammad and are honored by Muslims to this day.

Wait, what? Old Testament texts are poems? Well, not all of them,.

But the Psalms, the Prophets, and the books of wisdom are written primarily in verse. Consider the famous Wisdom in the Streets passage from the Book of Proverbs.

Call of Wisdom (Proverbs 1:20-33)

Wisdom cries out in the street;
in the squares she raises her voice.

At the busiest corner she cries out;
at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:

"How long, O simple ones, will you love
being simple?

How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing
and fools hate knowledge?

Give heed to my reproof;
I will pour out my thoughts to you;
I will make my words known to you.

Because I have called and you refused, have
stretched out my hand and no one heeded,
and because you have ignored all my counsel
and would have none of my reproof,

I also will laugh at your calamity;
I will mock when panic strikes you,
when panic strikes you like a storm,
and your calamity comes like a whirlwind,
when distress and anguish come upon you.

Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer;
they will seek me diligently, but will not find me.

Because they hated knowledge
and did not choose the fear of the Lord,
would have none of my counsel,
and despised all my reproof,
therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way
and be sated with their own devices.

For waywardness kills the simple,
and the complacency of fools destroys them;

but those who listen to me will be secure
and will live at ease, without dread of disaster."

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=97#audio-97-1

Oratorical Rhythm: Figures of Speech

The rhythms of Hebrew verse operate through figures of speech: "any form of expression in which language is manipulated for rhetorical effect" ("Figure of Speech," 2011). Shared by many languages, they are recognizable even in translation. For now, let's briefly look at two:

Figures of Speech

- ***Parallelism*** : "balanced arrangement achieved through repetition of the same syntactic forms" (Baldick, 2008)
- ***Anaphora*** : "repetition of the same word or phrase in several" lines" ("Anaphora," 2012)

Use these concepts to back through the Wisdom in the Streets passage. Notice the repetitions of phrases, expressions, and syntactic structures. These subtle patterns achieve a poetic rhythm just as effective as rhyme or meter. Perhaps you didn't recognize the subtle rhythms of Hebrew verse. But do they sound familiar? They should: orators (politicians, preachers) use these same verbal patterns to enthrall audiences and enhance listeners' memory.

Adelman, Bob. (1963). *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" Speech.*

Many of us are familiar with Dr. Martin Luther King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech from the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 28, 1963). The most often quoted passages from the speech reverberate with **Parallelism** and **Anaphora**.

***"I Have a Dream" Speech* by Martin Luther King, Jr.**

I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.
I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out ... its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."
I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and ... of former slave owners will ... sit down together at the table of brotherhood.
I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, ... of oppression, will be ... an oasis of freedom and justice.
I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.
I have a dream today!

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, ... one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.
I have a dream today!

... This is our hope, and *this is the faith*. ...

With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. *With this faith*, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. *With this faith*, we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle

together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

And this will be the day — this will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning.*My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the Pilgrim's pride, From every mountainside, let freedom ring!* ...

And so *let freedom ring* from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire.
Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York.
Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania.
Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado.
Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California.

But not only that:

Let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia.
Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee.
Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi.
From every mountainside, *let freedom ring.*

And *when this happens*, and *when we allow* freedom ring, *when we let* it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when *all* of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual:

Free at last! Free at last!
Thank God Almighty, we are free at last.

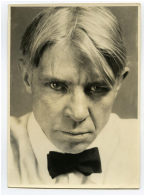
The best way to experience this speech is to listen to it. One can

distinctly hear the rhythms of oratory rhetoric in King's masterful delivery. Of course, the passage above is only an excerpt from the speech. You can read and listen to the entire speech in a clip from NPR's *Talk of the Nation.* The famous passage begins at the 11:26 mark of the recording.

Poetry? I've got no use for poetry. It's a common viewpoint in our day. But the rhythms of verse pervade our lives from songs to the Hebrew prophets to poetic oratory. What do you think of poetry? You will do well to listen for poetic rhythms all around you.

Carl Sandberg: Poetry of Working life

Shakespeare affirmed his culture by dramatizing the glory and tragedy of its kings and nobles. America's myths are democratic, steeped in the lives of ordinary citizens. Among the most committed of the nation's democratic voices was that of the Illinois poet Carl Sandberg. Like many poets of the early 20th Century, Sandberg composed **Free Verse**. We hear his rhythms much better if we apply what we have just learned from Hebrew verse and oratory.



Portrait of Carl Sandberg, c. 1925

Carl Sandberg (1924). "*Chicago*"

Hog Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler;
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders:

They tell me you are wicked and I believe them, for I have seen your painted women under the gas lamps luring the farm boys.
And they tell me you are crooked and I answer: Yes, it is true I have seen the gunman kill and go free to kill again.

And they tell me you are brutal and my reply is: On the faces of women and children I have seen the marks of wanton hunger.

And having answered so I turn once more to those who sneer at this my city, and I give them back the sneer and say to them:

Come and show me another city with lifted head singing so proud to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning.
Flinging magnetic curses amid the toil of piling job on job, here is a tall bold slugger set vivid against the little soft cities;
Fierce as a dog with tongue lapping for action, cunning as a savage pitted against the wilderness,
Bareheaded,
Shoveling,
Wrecking,
Planning,
Building, breaking, rebuilding,

Under the smoke, dust all over his mouth, laughing with white teeth,

Under the terrible burden of destiny laughing as a young man laughs,
Laughing even as an ignorant fighter laughs who has never lost a battle,
Bragging and laughing that under his wrist is the pulse, and under his ribs the heart of the people,

Laughing!

Laughing the stormy, husky, brawling laughter of Youth, half-naked, sweating, proud to be Hog Butcher, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with Railroads and Freight Handler to the Nation.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=97#audio-97-2

Traditionally, art that celebrates culture weaves a vision of social virtue to justify the authority and ascendancy of the elite. Sandberg celebrates the virtues of work and working people. But he also insists on a realistic vision that embraces both vices and virtues. Chicago is a great town, Sanders argues, not because it is pure and righteous, but in spite of its corruption, prostitution, unpunished gun violence, and the poverty suffered by so many citizens.

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The Art of Love

So art has historically flourished in the home and in the teaching of social, religious, and cultural messages. But I'll bet that, if you think of poetry, you think first of love.

Domestic Love in Proverbs

As Tolstoy observed in the opening lines of *Anna Karenina*, some families are happy and some aren't. Family structures differ enormously in cultures around the world. Poets and artists in these cultures all seem to find a way to celebrate domestic love.

One cultural tradition which has influenced the familial models of many others is that of the ancient Hebrews. Jewish, Christian, and Muslim cultures all look back to the family structure modeled by Abraham, Sarah, and Leah. Abraham's example was clearly patriarchal, but Hebrew tradition did honor the role of the woman. Centuries after Abraham, the Proverbs writer employs rich poetic rhythms to celebrate the wisdom and strength of an ideal wife.

Proverbs 31.10-13

A wife of noble character who can find?
She is worth far more than rubies.

Her husband has full confidence in her
and lacks nothing of value.

She brings him good, not harm,
all the days of her life.

She selects wool and flax
and works with eager hands. ...

She rises while it is still night
and provides food for her household
and tasks for her servant-girls.

She considers a field and buys it;
with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.

She girds herself with strength,
and makes her arms strong.

She perceives that her merchandise is profitable.
Her lamp does not go out at night. ...

She opens her hand to the poor,
and reaches out her hands to the needy. ...

She makes herself coverings;
her clothing is fine linen and purple. ...

She makes linen garments and sells them;
she supplies the merchant with sashes.

Strength and dignity are her clothing,
and she laughs at the time to come.

She opens her mouth with wisdom,
and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

She looks well to the ways of her household,
and does not eat the bread of idleness.

Her children rise up and call her happy;
her husband too, and he praises her:

> "Many women have done excellently,
> but you surpass them all."
>
> Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,
> but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.
>
> Give her a share in the fruit of her hands,
> and let her works praise her in the city gates.

Patriarchal notions of gender relations and of women are deeply rooted in societies that draw on Jewish tradition. However, if we look closely at this **Catalogue** of wifely virtues, we may be surprised at the characteristics attributed to fine and faithful women: strength, courage, business sense, authority, wisdom, and a resounding voice. Blessed be such women.

Anne Bradstreet's Great Love

Anne Bradstreet found her way into print by a most improbable route. A child of non-conformist parents, Bradstreet married a man who shared her Puritan convictions and emigrated with him to the new Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630. She wrote numerous poems which were published in England in 1650 as a literary marvel. First, it was written in the wilds of the American colonies. And second it was written by a woman, something almost unthinkable in that culture. (For more information on Anne Bradstreet, explore this note: link.) Bradstreet's most well-known poem is "To My Dear and Loving Husband," a passionate and loving tribute to the love she and her husband shared.

Anne Bradstreet (1650) *"To My Dear and Loving Husband"*

If ever two were one, then surely we.
If ever man were loved by wife, then thee.
If ever wife was happy in a man,
Compare with me, ye women, if you can.

I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold,
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.
My love is such that rivers cannot quench,
Nor ought but love from thee give recompense.

Thy love is such I can no way repay;
The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.
Then while we live, in love let's so persevere,
That when we live no more, we may live ever.

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Elizabeth Barrett Browning: Reflections on Love

Michele Gordigiani. (1858). Portrait of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Daguerreotype.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning was hailed as one of the finest poets of the Victorian age, although at the time the praise was generally qualified: one of the finest *female* poets. In 1846, she was contacted by Robert Browning, a young poet impressed by her work. The two poets were married and enjoyed many years of loving relationship. (For more information on Elizabeth Barrett Browning, explore this note: link.). You may well be familiar with at least the first few lines of this selection from *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1844).

Elizabeth Barret Browning. (1844) Sonnet #43

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace.

I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use

In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.

I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=108#audio-108-2

Browning's famous sonnet testifies to the great love she shared with her husband. As does Anne Bradstreet, she composes a **Catalogue** of celebrations, in this case, dimensions of love: soul, freedom, purity, passion, time, faith, and spirit.

Langston Hughes: Maternal Love

Allen, James L. (1930). Portrait of Langston Hughes. Photograph.

When we think of domestic love, we often think first of love between spouses. Yet few themes carry more weight than that of a

mother for her child. A mother's steadfast love gains even more power when it stands strong in the face of challenges. In 1902, Langston Hughes was born in Joplin Missouri to a mixed heritage steeped in a tradition of education and ethnic pride. We will meet Hughes again during the course in his role as one of the prominent members of the so-called **Harlem Renaissance**. (For more information on Langston Hughes, explore this note: link.)

Langston Hughes. (1926). *"Mother to Son"*

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare.
But all the time
I'se been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now—
For I'se still goin', honey,
I'se still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=108#audio-108-3

Hughes' powerful poem celebrates the steadfastness by which an enduring mother tries to instill courage and perseverance in the mind of a son tempted by waywardness walking the hard road of racist America. This advice takes on extra force when we understand that Hughes' father, frustrated by America's hostile environment, emigrated to Mexico, leaving his wife and son behind to make their way. Thinking of our own day, the poem helps people of other ethnicities understand the challenges facing Black parents in raising children in a society that continues to crush their dreams.

Passionate Love

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—
for your love is more delightful than wine.

Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes;
your name is like perfume poured out.
No wonder the young women love you!

Take me away with you—let us hurry!
Let the king bring me into his chambers.

Recognize these lines? You may or may not be surprised to find that they are excerpted from the opening chapter of *The Song of Songs*, one of the books of Hebrew wisdom literature (Christian Old Testament).

Song of Songs has often been interpreted as an extended metaphor of God's love for His church. However, the text clearly celebrates that part part of God's creation that leads to renewed life. You will not be surprised to note that one of the driving energies of the arts throughout human experience is that of sexual passion. The myth of love as a consuming passion has fueled numerous poetic traditions.

Love in the Elizabethan court

When he wasn't writing patriotic plays, Shakespeare was engaged in one of the most hotly contested games of the Elizabethan court: composing Courtly Love verses to impress lords and ladies alike. Courtiers competed with each other for top honors in composing love poems of surpassing wit and flattery. Shakespeare was, of course, the master. Reading his sonnet below, ask yourself how he gets the best of his competitors. (For more information on Shakespeare's poetry, explore this note: link.)

William Shakespeare, Sonnet 130

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;[1]
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

I have seen roses damasked,[2] red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.

I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.

And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

---

[1] In Shakespeare's day, pure whiteness of skin was considered the highest form of beauty since it was associated with the sheltered lifestyle of a wealthy woman never required to expose herself to the sun. *Dun:* a sort of mousy-gray brown considered inferior.
[2] *Damasked:* a patterned blend of colors as in sumptuously woven cloth

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Now let's see. The poem makes ten comparisons. In each, the lover comes off the worse. What sort of flattery is this? Well, for each comparison think of a trite bit of flattery common to lesser wits. *My lovers eyes are like the sun! Her lips are red as coral. Her breasts are white as snow.* Etc. Shakespeare keeps denying that these fanciful clichés have anything to do with his mistress, whose beauty is of

the real world. Of course, the real target of the poem is those lesser courtly wits capable only of "false compare."

Traditional Ballads

Courtly Love verse was composed for and read by elite levels of society. But ideals of love's passion are shared at all levels of society. Folk verse, too, was lit by love's splendor and haunted by its failure. The most common folk genre was the **Ballad**: "strictly speaking, a story in song" (McNeill). For centuries, ballads were composed, sung, and revised by bards singing in taverns and inns. No one wrote them down, and bards felt free to express their poetic talents in their own versions of popular standards. Thus, no version could be "authoritative."

In the 16th Century, printers began to sell texts to as many people as possible. McNeill explains the development of *broadside ballad*: "a ballad printed on a broadside—a single sheet of paper on the early modern printing press—usually eight by twelve inches." Such broadsides preserved and fixed particular versions of ballad lyrics, some read and sung yet today.

Thomas Rowlandson. (19th Century). *The Ballad Singers*. Drawing & Watercolor.

In the 16th Century, printers began to sell texts to as many people as possible. McNeill explains the development of *broadside ballad*: "a ballad printed on a broadside—a single sheet of paper on the

early modern printing press—usually eight by twelve inches." Such broadsides preserved and fixed particular versions of ballad lyrics, some read and sung yet today.

"The Unquiet Grave" (*15th Century?*)

"The wind doth blow today, my love,
And a few small drops of rain;
I never had but one true-love,
In cold grave she was lain.

"I'll do as much for my true-love
As any young man may;
I'll sit and mourn all at her grave
For a twelvemonth and a day."

The twelvemonth and a day being up,
The dead began to speak:
"Oh who sits weeping on my grave,
And will not let me sleep?"

"'T is I, my love, sits on your grave,
And will not let you sleep;
For I crave one kiss of your clay-cold lips,
And that is all I seek."

"You crave one kiss of my clay-cold lips,
But my breath smells earthy strong;
If you have one kiss of my clay-cold lips,
Your time will not be long.

"'T is down in yonder garden green,
Love, where we used to walk,

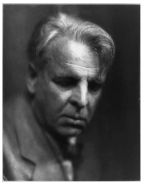
The finest flower that e're was seen
Is withered to a stalk.

"The stalk is withered dry, my love,
So will our hearts decay;
So make yourself content, my love,
Till God calls you away."

Listen to the audio file of *Luke Kelly's performance of the ballad*

"The Unquiet Grave" illustrates themes common to traditional ballads. Such songs celebrate heroic ideals of true love, but the challenge in them is very often the perpetual human enemy, death. In folk ballads, lovers are separated by death, but the living lover remains perennially faithful, often loitering about by a gravesite haunted by the spectral voice of the beloved.

William Butler Yeats, Celtic Troubadour



Portrait of William Butler Yeats. (Feb. 7, 1933) Photographic print

The Anglo-Irish poet William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) steeped his

work in Celtic traditions, contemporary Irish experience and his own reflections on mortality and the heart. At 24, Yeats met Maud Gonne, a powerful woman passionately committed to Irish independence. Yeats fell deeply in love with Gonne and was haunted by her rejection of him. Her aura pervades his verse, often embodied in the apple blossoms he recalled from their first meeting.

William Butler Yeats (1899) "The Song of the Wandering Aengus"

I went out to the hazel wood,
Because a fire was in my head,
And cut and peeled a hazel wand,
And hooked a berry to a thread;

And when white moths were on the wing,
And moth-like stars were flickering out,
I dropped the berry in a stream
And caught a little silver trout.

When I had laid it on the floor
I went to blow the fire a-flame,
But something rustled on the floor,
And someone called me by my name:

It had become a glimmering girl
With apple blossom in her hair
Who called me by my name and ran
And faded through the brightening air.

Though I am old with wandering
Through hollow lands and hilly lands,
I will find out where she has gone,
And kiss her lips and take her hands;

And walk among long dappled grass,
And pluck till time and times are done,
The silver apples of the moon,
The golden apples of the sun.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=108#audio-108-5

Yeats' early verse drew heavily on Celtic myths. This poem remembers a Celtic god: "Angus Óg is the god of youth and beauty among the Tuatha Dé Danann; he may also be the god of love, if any such god can be said to exist" (Angus Óg). Yeats finds inspiration in the association of Aengus with poetry and with "a widely known story" of Angus Óg "wasted by longing for a beautiful young woman he has seen only in a dream."

"Somewhere Beyond the Sea": Love's Ideal

Bobby Darin. (11 March 1959). Publicity photo.

In post-World War II America, cabaret singers like Bobby Darrin gained enormous popularity. One of his most famous songs casts an idealized vision of love's impossible promise.

Charles Tenet and Jack Lawrence, (1945) *"Beyond the Sea"*

Somewhere beyond the sea
somewhere waiting for me
my lover stands on golden sands
and watches the ships that go sailin'

Somewhere beyond the sea
she's there watching for me
If I could fly like birds on high
then straight to her arms
I'd go sailin'

It's far beyond the stars
it's near beyond the moon
I know beyond a doubt
my heart will lead me there soon

We'll meet beyond the shore
we'll kiss just as before
Happy we'll be beyond the sea
and never again I'll go sailin'

I know beyond a doubt
my heart will lead me there soon
We'll meet (I know we'll meet) beyond the shore

We'll kiss just as before
Happy we'll be beyond the sea
and never again I'll go sailin'

No more sailin'
so long sailin'
bye bye sailin'...

Listen to Bobby Darin's performance of the song.

To an ironically post-modern taste, the song might sound a bit naïve. Still, how naïve is the song, really? Remember that Bobby Darin's generation had endured a Depression and a World War. Those folks knew plenty about reality. And the fantasy lover is imagined in some unrealizable realm beyond moon and stars, not in the streets of post-war America.

Actually, the core themes of the song drive countless lyrics and dramas as popular as ever today and in many cultures. Romantic comedies. Romance novels. Bollywood musicals. Telenovelas. Valentine's Day greeting cards. All affirming the dream of passionate true love for "the one" selected by "the universe" to fulfill an otherwise incomplete life. Our tales tell us that passionate completion with one's fated beloved irradiates life in an explosion of grace.

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A Story of Young Love

So, OK, let's be honest. What do you look for in a story? Well, judging by our novels, films, and television shows, what people always seem to want is a love story. So let's explore a story written by one of the finest novelists ever to write in English: James Joyce. In 1904, Joyce, frustrated with Irish culture, abandoned his homeland. Yet every scene, every detail of his novels and stories is lodged stories in the gritty streets of Dublin (See James Joyce).

Berenice Abbott. (1928). Portrait of James Joyce

Most of us can remember the magic of teenage love as it struck us with possibilities and heartbreak. Each generation discovers that passionate love is a young person's ideal. Joyce's short story "Araby" resonates with timeless themes of youth: youngsters playing on a Dublin street and the thrills and miseries of teenage passion.

James Joyce. (1904). "*Araby*"

North Richmond Street, being blind, was a quiet street except at the hour when the Christian Brothers' School set the boys free. An uninhabited house of two stories stood at

the blind end, detached from its neighbors in a square ground. The other houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces.

The former tenant of our house, a priest, had died in the back drawing-room. Air, musty from having been long enclosed, hung in all the rooms, and the waste room behind the kitchen was littered with old useless papers. Among these I found a few paper-covered books,[1] the pages of which were curled and damp: *The Abbot*, by Walter Scott, *The Devout Communicant* and *The Memoirs of Vidocq*. I liked the last best because its leaves were yellow. The wild garden behind the house contained a central apple-tree and a few straggling bushes under one of which I found the late tenant's rusty bicycle-pump. He had been a very charitable priest; in his will he had left all his money to institutions and the furniture of his house to his sister.

When the short days of winter came dusk fell before we had well eaten our dinners. When we met in the street the houses had grown somber. The space of sky above us was the color of ever-changing violet and towards it the lamps of the street lifted their feeble lanterns. The cold air stung us and we played till our bodies glowed. Our shouts echoed in the silent street. The career of our play brought us through the dark muddy lanes behind the houses where we ran the gauntlet of the rough tribes from the cottages, to the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odors arose from the ashpits, to the dark odorous stables where a coachman smoothed and combed the horse or shook music from the buckled harness. When we returned to the street light from the kitchen windows had filled the areas. If my

uncle was seen turning the corner we hid in the shadow until we had seen him safely housed. Or if Mangan's sister came out on the doorstep to call her brother in to his tea we watched her from our shadow peer up and down the street. We waited to see whether she would remain or go in and, if she remained, we left our shadow and walked up to Mangan's steps resignedly. She was waiting for us, her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door. Her brother always teased her before he obeyed and I stood by the railings looking at her. Her dress swung as she moved her body and the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side.

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[1] The listed books are those of a former resident, but would lodge in a literary lad's mind: romance (Walter Scott, author of fictional romances), a devotional text reflecting a strict Catholic education, and adventure (memoirs of Eugène François Vidocq, a pioneering French criminologist).

In a moment, we'll return to the story. As we do so, notice how the story presents its events. **Narrative** can be defined as "a telling of some true or fictitious event or connected sequence of events, recounted by a narrator to a narratee." Story-telling comprises three dimensions:

- The **Story**: a set of events unfolding in some imagined world
- The **Narration** (or discourse): voice(s) depicting characters, events and world
- The **Narrator**: a voice or medium (e.g. a cinematic camera) conveying the narration

To better understand the difference between *story* and *narration*, think of the difference between a novel and a film version of the story. Story characters and events are at least roughly the same. But they are narrated by a movie camera filming actions in a scene.

Now, narrators can take up either of two positions relative to the **Story**. They can speak from personal experience within the story: "I saw Bill walk in." This is called **First Person Narrative** (*1st Person narrative*). Or they can detach their voice from any involvement in the story. That option is called **Third Person Narrative**. This is, of course, a distinction between two forms of **Narrative Point of View**:

Point of View

"in literary studies, the position from which a narrative is told; it is the vantage point from which its events, situations, and characters are presented to the reader" (Point of view/Focalization).

In our tale, the lad in love with Mangan's sister is never named but all our knowledge and experience is channeled through his eyes and sensibilities. In the following paragraphs, notice the sight lines, the literal **Point of View** through which the lad and we see the young woman: the curtained window, the striding figure seen from behind as the lad speeds up and then passes her.

Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlor watching her door. The blind was pulled down to within an inch of the sash so that I could not be seen. When she came

out on the doorstep my heart leaped. I ran to the hall, seized my books and followed her. I kept her brown figure always in my eye and, when we came near the point at which our ways diverged, I quickened my pace and passed her. This happened morning after morning. I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood.

Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance. On Saturday evenings when my aunt went marketing I had to go to carry some of the parcels. We walked through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of laborers, the shrill litanies of shop-boys who stood on guard by the barrels of pigs' cheeks, the nasal chanting of street-singers,

who sang a *come-all-you***[2]** about O'Donovan Rossa[3], or a ballad about the troubles in our native land. These noises converged in a single sensation of life for me: I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes. Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand. My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom. I thought little of the future. I did not know whether I would ever speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her, how I could tell her of my confused adoration. But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires.

One evening I went into the back drawing-room in which the priest had died. It was a dark rainy evening and there was no sound in the house. Through one of the broken panes I heard the rain impinge upon the earth, the fine

incessant needles of water playing in the sodden beds. Some distant lamp or lighted window gleamed below me. I was thankful that I could see so little. All my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves and, feeling that I was about to slip from them, I pressed the palms of my hands together until they trembled, murmuring: "O *love*! O *love*!" many times.

At last she spoke to me. When she addressed the first words to me I was so confused that I did not know what to answer. She asked me was I going to *Araby*.[4] I forgot whether I answered yes or no. It would be a splendid bazaar, she said; she would love to go.

"And why can't you?" I asked.

While she spoke she turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist. She could not go, she said, because there would be a retreat that week in her convent. Her brother and two other boys were fighting for their caps and I was alone at the railings. She held one of the spikes, bowing her head towards me. The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease.

"It's well for you," she said.

"If I go," I said, "I will bring you something."

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[2] *Come-all-you:* a traditional folk song from Ireland or Britain

[3] *O'Donovan Rossa:* O'Donovan Rossa (1831-1915)

was an inspiring leader of the Fenians who sought Irish independence.
[4] *Araby*: everything in a Joyce fiction is firmly rooted in reality. Araby was a bazaar, a sort of indoor fair held in Dublin in May of 1894. The word *bazaar* is used in the Middle East to designate an extensive indoor marketplace.

Again, let's pause. **Point of View** can be complicated. Think of the narrating voice as a **Persona**: the "assumed identity or fictional 'I' (literally a 'mask') assumed by a writer in a literary work" (Persona). A narrating voice confers a **Point of View** on the narrative: "in literary studies, describes the position from which a narrative is told; it is the vantage point from which its events, situations, and characters are presented to the reader" (Point of view/Focalization). One aspect of Point of View is literal: the perspective from which we visualize the events of the story. This refers of course to those sight lines through which we see Mangan's sister. But Point of View also involves ways of understanding and valuing the events of the story.

And we need to notice a gap between the **Narration** and the character of the lad. The **Persona**, the actual voice of the tale is that of the older, more skeptical man into whom the lad later grew. That voice shares remembered images and passions—"O, love! O love!"—but processes it all through distant reflection. Do you not see a big difference between your perspective now and the 16 year old viewpoint you remember? As we continue, try to be aware of the difference between the young lad and the older skeptic. For example, who judges the lad's passions as "Innumerable follies"?

What innumerable follies laid waste my waking and sleeping thoughts after that evening! I wished to annihilate the tedious intervening days. I chafed against the work of school. At night in my bedroom and by day in the classroom her image came between me and the page I strove to read. The syllables of the word Araby were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast an Eastern enchantment over me. I asked for leave to go to the bazaar on Saturday night. My aunt was surprised and hoped it was not a Freemason affair. I answered few questions in class. I watched my master's face pass from amiability to sternness; he hoped I was not beginning to idle. I could not call my wandering thoughts together. I had hardly any patience with the serious work of life which, now that it stood between me and my desire, seemed to me child's play, ugly monotonous child's play.

On Saturday morning I reminded my uncle that I wished to go to the bazaar in the evening. He was fussing at the hallstand, looking for the hat-brush, and answered me curtly:

"Yes, boy, I know."

As he was in the hall I could not go into the front parlor and lie at the window. I left the house in bad humor and walked slowly towards the school. The air was pitilessly raw and already my heart misgave me.

When I came home to dinner my uncle had not yet been home. Still it was early. I sat staring at the clock for some time and, when its ticking began to irritate me, I left the room. I mounted the staircase and gained the upper part of the house. The high cold empty gloomy rooms liberated me and I went from room to room singing. From the front

window I saw my companions playing below in the street. Their cries reached me weakened and indistinct and, leaning my forehead against the cool glass, I looked over at the dark house where she lived. I may have stood there for an hour, seeing nothing but the brown-clad figure cast by my imagination, touched discreetly by the lamplight at the curved neck, at the hand upon the railings and at the border below the dress.

When I came downstairs again I found Mrs. Mercer sitting at the fire. She was an old garrulous woman, a pawnbroker's widow, who collected used stamps for some pious purpose. I had to endure the gossip of the tea-table. The meal was prolonged beyond an hour and still my uncle did not come. Mrs. Mercer stood up to go: she was sorry she couldn't wait any longer, but it was after eight o'clock and she did not like to be out late as the night air was bad for her. When she had gone I began to walk up and down the room, clenching my fists. My aunt said:

"I'm afraid you may put off your bazaar for this night of Our Lord."

At nine o'clock I heard my uncle's latchkey in the hall door. I heard him talking to himself and heard the hallstand rocking when it had received the weight of his overcoat. I could interpret these signs. When he was midway through his dinner I asked him to give me the money to go to the bazaar. He had forgotten.

"The people are in bed and after their first sleep now," he said.

I did not smile. My aunt said to him energetically: "Can't you give him the money and let him go? You've kept him late enough as it is."

My uncle said he was very sorry he had forgotten. He said he believed in the old saying: "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." He asked me where I was going and, when I had told him a second time he asked me did I know *The Arab's Farewell to his Steed*. When I left the kitchen he was about to recite the opening lines of the piece to my aunt.

We approach the story's end. As we do so, let's mention a term that Joyce borrowed from the Catholic calendar and attributed to all of the stories in *Dubliners*. "**Epiphany**" celebrates the recognition of Jesus Christ's authority by the Magi, or Wise Men (Matthew 1.1-12). More generally, the word refers to a moment of profound, transformative discovery. Joyce used the term to describe the climactic moment in his stories—not so much a resolution of conflict in the plot, but a moment of discovery shared by a character and the audience (epiphany): "a 'sudden spiritual manifestation' in which the 'whatness' of a common object or gesture appears radiant to the observer. … Joyce's fiction is built around such special moments of sudden insight." Let's see how Joyce builds to the final epiphany.

I held a florin[5] tightly in my hand as I strode down Buckingham Street towards the station. The sight of the streets thronged with buyers and glaring with gas recalled to me the purpose of my journey. I took my seat in a third-class carriage of a deserted train. After an intolerable delay the train moved out of the station slowly. It crept onward among ruinous houses and over the twinkling river. At Westland Row Station a crowd of people pressed to the carriage doors; but the porters moved them back, saying

that it was a special train for the bazaar. I remained alone in the bare carriage. In a few minutes the train drew up beside an improvised wooden platform. I passed out on to the road and saw by the lighted dial of a clock that it was ten minutes to ten. In front of me was a large building which displayed the magical name.

I could not find any sixpenny entrance and, fearing that the bazaar would be closed, I passed in quickly through a turnstile, handing a shilling [6] to a weary-looking man. I found myself in a big hall girdled at half its height by a gallery. Nearly all the stalls were closed and the greater part of the hall was in darkness. I recognized a silence like that which pervades a church after a service. I walked into the center of the bazaar timidly. A few people were gathered about the stalls which were still open. Before a curtain, over which the words Café Chantant[7] were written in colored lamps, two men were counting money on a salver. I listened to the fall of the coins.

Remembering with difficulty why I had come I went over to one of the stalls and examined porcelain vases and flowered tea-sets. At the door of the stall a young lady was talking and laughing with two young gentlemen. I remarked their English accents and listened vaguely to their conversation.

"O, I never said such a thing!"

"O, but you did!"

"O, but I didn't!"

"Didn't she say that?"

"Yes. I heard her."

"O, there's a … fib!"

Observing me the young lady came over and asked me did I wish to buy anything. The tone of her voice was not encouraging; she seemed to have spoken to me out of a sense of duty. I looked humbly at the great jars that stood like eastern guards at either side of the dark entrance to the stall and murmured:

"No, thank you."

The young lady changed the position of one of the vases and went back to the two young men. They began to talk of the same subject. Once or twice the young lady glanced at me over her shoulder.

I lingered before her stall, though I knew my stay was useless, to make my interest in her wares seem the more real. Then I turned away slowly and walked down the middle of the bazaar. I allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket. I heard a voice call from one end of the gallery that the light was out. The upper part of the hall was now completely dark.

Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger.

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[5] Florin: a British coin valued at "two bob," or 2 shillings.
[6] A *shilling*: in 1894, a shilling was a lot of money to a Dublin lad from lower middle class background.
[7] *Café Chantant*: i.e. *Enchanted Café*, an actual café

at the Araby bazaar, the name evoking the theme of exotic enchantment.

So "Araby" ends with an **Epiphany**: the young man—or the older narrator?—sees himself "as a creature driven and derided by vanity." He had treasured love's ideal only to see illusion's folly evaporate into a darkening, cavernous hall. He is growing up. Many of us might relate.

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Woody Guthrie: The American Myth under Duress

So Joyce's tender remembrance of love ends in grief. Even when they set out to affirm our expectations and ideals, great artists have a way of reminding us of the sobering truths that shadow life. We began the week's readings with Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land." But if we look into the song's context and closely observe its lyrics, we find social tragedy.

In 1929 a global economic bubble burst and America entered a devastating Depression, dragging the industrialized world with it. Even during the times of prosperity, millions of Americans had toiled in miserable, unhealthy working conditions for starvation wages. Bitter, often lethal class warfare had been roiling between capitalist land and business owners on the one hand and socialist and union activists on the other. When the Depression broke, millions were impoverished and left homeless. Guthrie joined thousands bumming rides in railroad boxcars.

Shepard Fairey. (2010). Woody Guthrie. Stencil, mixed media.

Can you make out the words on Guthrie's guitar in the painting above? They howl with resistance to the economic injustices of the time: "This machine kills fascists." And, yes, Guthrie's guitar really did proclaim that message. Tramping dusty roads and riding the rails with other hoboes, he brought self-awareness and hope to

thousands with that beat-up guitar and songs that knew what life was like for society's outcasts. So let's look at the last four, forgotten stanzas of Guthrie's famous song.

Woody Guthrie (1940). *"This Land is Your Land"*

As I went walking I saw a sign there,
And on the sign it said "No Trespassing."
But on the other side it didn't say nothing.
That side was made for you and me.

In the shadow of the steeple I saw my people,
By the relief office I seen my people;
As they stood there hungry, I stood there asking
Is this land made for you and me?

Nobody living can ever stop me,
As I go walking that freedom highway;
Nobody living can ever make me turn back
This land was made for you and me.

Listen to Guthrie singing his great song: link.

In 1985, during another time of socio-economic upheaval as the manufacturing base of the American economy was dismantled and discarded, Bruce Springsteen returned to Guthrie's song. In this linked concert video, Springsteen illuminates our reading of Guthrie's lyrics and our understanding of the American dream. Maybe Woody and "The Boss" sing for you?

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PART II

CHAPTER 2: CLASSICISM AND HEARTBREAK

What is a *classic*? Classic novel? Classic movie? Classic car? Classic rock 'n Roll? Classic art? ESPN classic? ... Classic Coke?

Coca Cola Co. (ca. 1940). Refreshing Surprise.

Generally, the word *classic* refers to time and excellence. A classic era. A classic example of a genre. *Classic* can also designate art linked to a sophisticated, privileged social group. Some folks resist "classical" forms, feeling patronized by elitist traditions. This week, we look at some classical traditions, classical Greek art, and its revival in the Renaissance. We'll also look at literary forms with long-lasting influence that could be called *classical*.

Classic: a term used to describe both an aesthetic attitude and an artistic tradition. The artistic tradition refers to the classical antiquity of Greece and Rome, its art,

> literature and criticism. … Its aesthetic use suggests … clarity, order, balance, unity, symmetry, and dignity (Classicism).

To make sense of all of this, we need to distinguish between closely linked, but distinct terms (classicism, classic, and classical):

- **Classic**: a work … first-rate or excellent of its kind, fit to be used as a model or imitated
- **Classical**: works of Greek and Roman antiquity—"the classics"
- **Classicism**: a critical position [preferring] harmony, proportion, balance, decorum, and restraint; deploring less regulated products of the **Vernacular** modern literatures

As an attitude, **Classicism** honors an idea of a golden past, disparaging later, contemporary traditions (classicism, classic, and classical). Holberton describes *classicism* as a "commitment to a canonical art of the past or its values, in particular the art of Antiquity." He identifies "order, proportion, balance, harmony, decorum, and avoidance of excess" as values common to classicist attitudes. *Classicism* is often held to contrast with "romantic values, … individualism, spontaneity, and inspiration" (classicism, classic, and classical).

Classicism: General Preferences

- A style valued persistently over time

- Emulation of a venerated past, a golden era
- Association with a social elite that imposes it values in an ideal of refined elegance
- A standard of excellence associated with order and harmony

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Classical Traditions

Classical Egyptian Art

In Week 1, we looked at **conventions** of ancient Egyptian art that remained static for centuries. In Egyptian painting, "the eye is shown frontally in a profile face and the shoulders are turned round so as to be presented parallel to the picture plane" (Egyptian art). To view the image, we must embrace a double perspective: figures in profile; shoulders and eyes straight on.

King Menkaura & queen. (25th C. BCE).

Meryt offers cup to Sennufer (c 1410 BCE). Tomb of Sennufer

In Egyptian sculpture, feet stand flat on the ground, one advanced forward. Heads display standard, stylized features of a generic human face fused with totemic animals.[1] No movement or emotion disturbs a sense of static order, uninterrupted by time's cycles. Unchanging rules and styles affirm a vision of perpetual Egyptian authority and prosperity.

This reliance on static rules and conventions is typical of "*classical*" art. Canonical styles affirm the ruling regime, its class, and its cultural values, assumed to be *civilized* and superior: *We dominate because our sophisticated ways make us worthy to do so.* Often tragically, classicism burdens oppressed social groups whose own cultural styles are cited as evidence of inferiority. Classical

styles dominate a society's image, breeding emulation and resentment.

[1] *Totemic* animals: animals associated with the gods

Samurai Classicism in Japan

An example of a **Classical** tradition can be found in medieval Japan. Yet this brand of classicism came into being by displacing an older model of classical aristocracy. In the 12th Century, the Japanese warrior class gained dominance in society by becoming a hereditary caste which alone retained the right to bear arms.

We think today of Samurai as warriors, and "their conduct was regulated by *Bushido* (Warrior's Way), a strict code … of loyalty, bravery, and endurance" (Samurai). Yet *Samurai* culture was far more comprehensive than that, seeking cultural refinement in every area of life.

Samurai. (1801 – 1806). Color woodcut

Kunichika, Toyohara. (1883). Tea Ceremony. Woodcut.

Yasuimoku Komuten Company (2001) Facsimile of a Japanese Teahouse

In an article on *Japanese aesthetics*, Ryōsu Ōhashi explains that 3 influences—Chinese Confucianism, Zen Buddhism, and the Shinto religion—coalesced in a commitment to a refined style of life. "Aesthetic egalitarianism," claims Ōhashi, applied to all areas of life, martial arts, fine arts, and everyday arts: cooking, eating, bathing and entertaining visitors. Even the basest areas of life were raised to elegance through art and ritual.

Japanese aesthetics are deftly expressed in the tea ceremony, a "highly ritualized gathering of people" that sought four Zen principles: "harmony, purity, tranquility, and reverence." Ritualized conventions govern not only the drinking of the tea, but the utensils that serve it, the architecture of the teahouse, and its connection with formal gardens.

Westerners observing art in the classical Japanese style will miss much of the significance of details in this cultural tradition. However, we can sense an ideal harmony of design and spirit in this silk screen variant on Chinese landscape painting.

Tawaraya Sōatsu. (circa 1600-1628). Waves at Matsushima. Right panel of folding screen.

Ryōsu Ōhashi explains that the Japanese sense of beauty is characterized by an **Aesthetic** of "Implication, Suggestion, Imperfection." Many classical cultures prefer indirect methods of communication.

Haiku: Poetics of Indirection

In Japanese culture, civilized refinement lies in one's ability to communicate with cool restraint, intimating rather than boorishly exclaiming emotions and messages. According to Saito, Japanese aesthetics seek indirection in every area of life and art, including *haiku*, a genre of poetry familiar to many American school children. Ueda explains that *haiku* challenged an earlier classicism, using humor "to liberate poetry from aristocratic court culture."

You may recall that **Haiku** have an apparently simple form and

rhythm: three lines and precisely 17 syllables. English translations of Japanese *haiku* strive to find correlative rhythms:[1]

> On a withered branch
> crow is sitting
> his autumn eve.

> *One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=130#audio-130-1*

So OK, what do we see here? The plain sense of the poem appears to be pretty straightforward. The words sketch a poignant scene: branch, crow, autumn evening. We visualize the image with a sense of grace. But let's recall the three themes that Ōhashi specifies: "Implication, Suggestion, Imperfection." How do these three themes play out in the poem?

The haiku above was composed by the master Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694) who, according to Ueda. "elevated *haiku* to a mature poetic form by setting up high aesthetic ideals." Ueda identifies two ideals that suggest typically classical refinement:

- *sabi* (loneliness) reinvented by Bashō, as "the pleasure of loneliness" as in "two old men" watching cherry blossoms who have "learned to accept the mutability of life."
- *karumi* (lightness) which contrasts with the "'heavy' beauty" of "a poem dealing with a weighty philosophical theme

"Yet, it is not the opposite of 'heaviness'" warns Ueda, "rather, it

is a dialectic[2] transcendence[3] of it." *Haiku* center on images of nature caught in seasonal moments which deftly suggest themes of mortality and the passing nature of time:

A successful haiku does not attempt to describe things in detail. … The writer (or observer) is only half of the process: the reader is the other half. Every haiku is almost asking the reader to be a poet too, by hopefully triggering an emotion or reaction. Haiku do not include the poet's reaction to what is being observed. They hope to evoke a response in the reader from recorded observations (haiku).

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[1] Translations of poetry are always extremely difficult. In addition to construing the sense of the lines, a translator of verse is faced with the daunting task of devising rhythms and figures of speech that emulate the idioms of the original language.
[2] *Dialectic*: an opposition between contrasting ideas—*thesis* v *antithesis*—that leads to a resolution in a 3rd term, the *synthesis*.
[3] *Transcendence*: rising above a current realm or state of affairs

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Kinkoku, Y. (after 1799). Portrait of Basho. Hanging scroll, ink and light color on paper.

Matsuo Bashō. (17th Century) Poetry Painting

Try your hand at sensitively reading these samples of **Haiku** by

Bashō. Before doing so, look at the "poetry painting" above. In contrast to Western art which mostly separates visual art from literary texts, the boundary between the two is much more fluid in Asian art. Remember that in Asian languages, words in a text are represented not by abstract phonetic letters, but by characters that are really word pictures. In Asian art, text often blends into the composition of the painting or sculpture.

Haiku composed by the 17th Century master Matsuo Bashō

An ancient pond!
With a sound from the water
Of the frog as it plunges in.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=130#audio-130-2

The cry of the cicada
Gives no sign
that presently it will die.

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excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=130#audio-130-3

O ye fallen leaves!
There are far more of you
Than ever I saw growing on the trees!

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Tis the first snow—
Just enough to bend
The gladiolus leaves!

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Twas the new moon!

Since then I waited—
And lo! to-night!
[I have my reward!].[4]

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[4] This last line in brackets is added by the translator to capture the implication of enigmatic, suggestive line three. Does it help or hinder?

How did your reading go? Perhaps you had a nice experience of *ennui*, of somber beauty. Yet this deceptively complex form has complex rhythms, as Ōhashi explains:

> In Japanese aesthetics *kire* ("cut" or "cutting") is a basic element not only in artistic creation but also in a stance toward life. … The so-called *kire-ji*, or "cut-syllable" … cuts off the flow of expression in order to create space for a new phase. … The reader stops at a cut-syllable and awaits the opening of a new perspective. This kind of cut is not … a severing, but rather a connection to a new flow. The word *kire* thus constitutes together with another term, *tsuzuki* ("continuance"), the expression "cut-continuance," which is

a key term in Japanese poetics (Ōhashi).

The "cutting word" in **Haiku** is often found at the end of the 1st or 2nd line. This rhythmic break encourages us to compare the 1st and 2nd images or themes. Below, the weary traveler's yearning for rest is crosscut by a sudden vision transcending weariness. Structure and rhythm open up thematic contrasts. Can you see them?

I come weary,
In search of an ***inn—***
Ah! these wisteria flowers!

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=130#audio-130-7

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Classical Culture in Greece

Catalogues of colleges and universities have traditionally listed **Classics** as a course of study. In the European educational tradition, *Classics* referred to ancient Greece and Rome: their languages, histories, literatures, and arts which permeate "Western" culture. Euro-American cultures were exported from Europe, which developed from vestigial Roman culture preserved in the Roman Catholic Church. Roman culture itself was shaped by the influence of Greek mercantile colonies. All Western cultural roads lead back to Greece.[1]

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[1] Of course, the cultural situations are much more complicated than this sketch suggests. Whether we speak of Germanic tribes fusing with vestiges of Empire in Western Europe or Spanish, French, or English colonists being re-invented through contact with the indigenous peoples of the Americas, intercultural influences move in both directions.

Greek Art: Archaic Period

Surrounded by the Mediterranean, Greeks took to the sea, cultivating trading relationships with nearby peoples. From the Phoenicians, Greeks learned maritime trade techniques and how to write with a phonetic alphabet. Greek culture was especially influenced by the sophisticated culture of the Nile, Egyptian myths, thought, technology, and art.

Kouros figure. (6th C. BCE). Attributed to Myron

Kore figure, Lady of Auxerre. (c. 630 BCE). Incised limestone, originally painted.

We can see the impact of Egypt in the artistic styles of what scholars call Greek's *Archaic* era. Votive[2] figures from this time are clearly influenced by Egyptian models. Notice how the *Kouros and Kore* figures emulate Egyptian statuary: the timeless stance, the abstract, stylized features, and the vacant smiles.[3]

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[2] *Votive*: a gift offered to honor a god and used within a worship ritual.

[3] In the hair and fixed smile of these figures, we also see the influence of Mesopotamian cultures. No time here for that tale!

Then Greek artists began to innovate. Red and Black figure vases and amphorae of the 6th and 5th Centuries depicted scenes from daily life and heroic athletes and warriors. Remarkably, the figures are depicted in motion. Greek art was coming alive.

	
Diosphos Painter (c. 500 B.C.), Black-figure amphora (jar)	Peleus Painter. (c.430BCE) Red-figure pottery: Bell-Krater with Torch-racers and Priest at Altar

- **Black Figure Vases**: originating in Corinth in the 7th century BCE, in which figures were painted in black silhouette on the light red clay background. Details were added by incising through the black pigment or sometimes by overpainting in red or white (Black-figure vase painting)
- **Red figure vases**: background painted black, leaving figures in the unpainted red color of the pottery. Details added with a brush rather than incised through the black paint, allowing much greater flexibility and subtlety of treatment. Because of this advantage the red-figure technique, which developed in Athens from about 530 BCE, gradually superseded the black-figure technique (Red-figure vase painting).

It may not seem remarkable today, but the fact that those black and red figure potters depicted *action* marked a profound change in artistic possibilities. These figures began to challenge viewers in a new way, forcing them to consider visual experience itself.

The Classical Period

In the 5th and 4th Centuries, Greek dominance over the Mediterranean reached its peak. Trade colonies were established

across the Mediterranean: Asia Minor, North Africa, Italy, southern France, and Spain. Beyond economic and political dominance, Greek culture achieved an almost unprecedented level of influence. Rome, for example, emulated Greek culture as it began to develop its power base. The entire Mediterranean world was dazzled by astonishing achievements in philosophy, medicine, geography, history, mathematics, democracy and the arts that shaped the Western world.

Map of Greek and Phoenician trading settlements in the Mediterranean

Now, "Greece" at the time was far from one fused entity. Ancient Greek culture was defined by a shared mythic tradition and language. *Barbarians* were those who spoke no Greek, despised by Greek speakers for growling *bar*, *bar*, *bar*, *bar*. Greek-speaking peoples clustered in city states, each *polis* competing with and sometimes warring with one another. Among these city states the *polis* of Athens reached a so-called "Golden Age" under the leadership of Pericles. Athens boasted magnificent architecture, especially on the Acropolis. The Parthenon, temple to Athena, Goddess of wisdom and patroness of the city, was a triumph of order and harmony. It also achieved a technological breakthrough for the day: roof trusses spanned much wider spaces between pillars than did those of Egyptian temples.

	
Acropolis, general view. Athens, Greece	Parthenon. (447-436 B.C). Exterior, west end. Athens, Greece (Acropolis)

What do you see in the Parthenon? The columns? The pediment, that gable spanning the tops of the columns? Where have you seen these before? In the White House. The Securities and Exchange building on Wall Street. Neo-classical homes in your neighborhood. Inspiring architects into our own day, the look of the Parthenon well earns the term **Classical**.

On a smaller scale, Greek artists innovated exciting new forms in painting and sculpture. Sadly, apart from a few remarkable sculptures, few of these pieces have survived the erosion of time. Their reputations and theories, however, have endured.

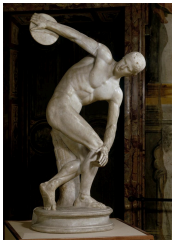
> Sculptural works of this period have been regarded since antiquity as precise, beautiful, monumental, balanced, and perfect in their rendering of the human form. The fame of sculptors like Myron, Polyclitus, Phidias, Alcamenes, Praxiteles, Scopas, and Lysippus is amply attested in ancient literature. These artists … defined a *naturalistic* and *idealized* style that continued to resonate in later Roman and Renaissance art. …Classical Greek sculpture is distinguished from the arts of other [ancient] cultures … by its … *mimetic* or naturalistic *mimetic* or naturalistic quality (Rhodes).

Mimesis refers to the *imitation* of nature. In the sculptures below, we see unprecedented levels of anatomical precision in presenting the structures of the human body. Greek philosophers and historians were fascinated by empirical observation. Greek

sculpture reflects that orientation in its meticulous attention to the form and movement of muscles, skin, and bones. Consider the mimetic naturalism of the musculature depicted in the Spear Carrier (*Doryphoros*). But consider as well the figure's stance and its suggestion of movement:

> The sculpted figure approximates the appearance and movements of the real human figure, rather than relying upon a series of more abstract conventions. ... Statues, rather than standing squarely on both feet as in the Archaic Period, place the weight on one leg (**Contraposto**), leaving the other leg free and introducing asymmetries into the figure (Rhodes).

Doryphoros [Spear Bearer]. (ca. 450-440 B.C.E.). Roman marble copy of original bronze



Diskobolos [Discus Thrower]. (Bronze original c. 450 BCE; marble copy c. 2nd century CE)

In classical sculpture, figures come vitally alive. Precisely modeled human forms suggest movement in time and express moods and attitudes.

> In the Early Classical Period (ca. 480–450 BC), figures display a more naturalistic sense of movement, … exploring the patterns of movement and adjustment in the body in the performance of an action, encapsulated in the Greek term **Rhythmos**. … Sculptors also focused upon facial expression, gesture, and attitude to convey emotion, or **Pathos**, giving the figure a psychological movement in addition to a physical movement. These developments allowed the artist to explore the character (*ethos*) of the figure (Silberman, Stansbury-O'Donnell, Rhodes).

Let's see. Mimetic precision. Does that mean portraiture? Well, no. Classical art sought to depict, not ***a*** human being but ***the*** human being. Theirs was an art not of the *real* but of the **Ideal**: "Classical sculpture is idealized, utilizing systems of proportions, balance, and expression that bring order, serenity, and completeness to the figure" (Silberman, Stansbury-O'Donnell, Rhodes). We use the word *ideal* pretty casually. In ancient Greece, the term derived directly from the work of Plato, a philosopher of incalculable influence. The *ideal* is …

> A conception of something that is perfect, referring in the visual arts to works that attempt to reproduce the best of nature, but also to improve on it, eliminating the inevitable flaws of particular examples. The notion derives ultimately from Plato, according to whom all perceptible objects are imperfect copies approximating to unchanging and imperceptible Ideas or Forms. … Throughout much of subsequent European art the model of ideal beauty was supplied by classical statuary (Ideal).

Classical sculptural figures were formulated to reflect the *ideal* articulated by the philosopher Socrates in the dialogues of his student, Plato. "Platonic idealism" holds that real objects—a basket, a wagon, a horse, a man—are imperfect reflections of an *ideal form* beyond our experience: the perfect basket, wagon, horse, man. Classical Greek artists meticulously represented human anatomy, but they sought an ideal beauty beyond ordinary mortals: purity of line, balance, harmony, proportion.

The figure of the *Spear Carrier* above is perfectly proportioned according to precisely calculated formulas of beauty: facial features, skeletal structure, musculature, etc. This ideal appearance continues to influence our idea of personal beauty even today, sometimes to the detriment of people's self-image and mental health. The *Spear Carrier* is also, as I am sure you have noticed, nude. Attitudes of the Greeks toward the body differed from those of neighboring cultures. A key building in every *polis* was a *palaestra*, that is, a gym. Athletic workouts and competitions (e.g. the Olympics) were always performed in the nude. When a *palaestra* was established in a conquered city, the nudity often offended the conquered people. This was one of the reasons for the Jewish revolt against Seleucid (Greek) rule.[4] Idealizing the male body, arts naturally presented them in the nude.

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[4] This was the Maccabean Revolt in the 2nd Century before Christ.

Hellenistic Art

In the 4th Century BCE, the Macedonian/Greek king Alexander the Great avenged Greek peoples for earlier, failed invasions by the Persians and went on to conquer Asia Minor, Palestine, Egypt,

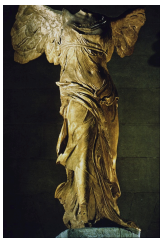
Mesopotamia, Persia, and parts of India. After his death, Alexander's authority descended into regional dynasties: Ptolemaic Egypt and Seleucid Asia Minor, including the Palestine of the New Testament. *Hellenistic* Greek culture spread from India to North Africa.

Map of Alexander's Macedonian (Greek) Empire at its greatest extent, bout 336 BCE.

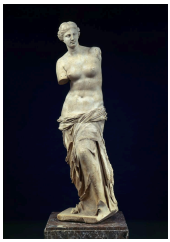
The traditional distinction between Classical and Hellenistic art is controversial. (Scholars always argue over eras and movements.) Still, enhanced techniques in Hellenistic art master folds of fabric, emotions, and individuality. Shall we see in this movement beyond the *ideal* a culture losing touch with its classical, golden age or shall we see it as evolution?

Nike: the Personification of Victory

The figure of Victory (*Nike*) on the balustrade from the Temple of Athena Nike on the Acropolis portray a new kind of sensuality and refinement through transparent draperies that reveal the figure underneath and with intimate poses and situations, found more broadly in grave reliefs and vase paintings of the time (Silberman, Stansbury-O'Donnell, Rhodes).



Nike of Samothrace. (3rd-2nd Century BCE). Marble.



Venus de Milo. (c. 100 BCE). Frontal view.

Laocoön. (50-25 BCE). Marble

The figure of a half nude Venus discovered in 1820 on the Greek island of Melios (Milos) is one of the most famous images of art on earth. One of very few Greek originals to survive, it is dated today to the 1st Century B.C.E. (Venus de Milo).

The Venus de Milo

On its discovery, The *Venus de Milo* was thought to be the work of the late Classical master Praxiteles. Male nudes had long been common in Greek art, but Praxiteles' Aphrodite of Knidos "inspired a whole series of naked or half-naked Aphrodites in Hellenistic art" (Osborne 231). The sculptural *genre* of a nude goddess of love inspired both fame and infamy in the ancient world as people were drawn to their sensuality but disturbed by their impropriety. An *aesthetic***[5]** look at the figure perceives classical ideals of form and figure still powerfully influential in our contemporary notions of beauty.

Hellenistic art draws on classical conventions, but adds a taste for naturalism, i.e. depiction of the specific features of individuals, as well as a deeper embrace of drama and emotion. We see this in the powerful *Laocoön*: "A spectacular antique marble group (Vatican Mus.) representing the Trojan priest Laocoön and his two sons being crushed to death by sea serpents as a divine punishment for warning the Trojans against the wooden horse of the Greeks" (*Laocoön*).[6] The *Laocoön*'s intense emotionalism [was] influential on Baroque sculpture, and in the Neoclassical age ... [was seen] by Winckelmann,[7] as a supreme symbol of the moral dignity of the tragic hero and the most complete exemplification of the "noble simplicity and calm grandeur" that he regarded as the essence of Greek art and the key to true beauty (*Laocoön*).

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[5] As you will recall, an *aesthetic* perspective responds to formal aspects of design and sets aside ulterior motives such as, in this case, erotic impulses. Of course, *aesthetic* perspectives can be hard to maintain and can conflict with some ethical values.

[6] The subject matter of *Laocoön* testifies to the complexity of Greco-Roman cultures. The story of Laocoön is told in the *Aeneid*, an epic narrative grafted by the Roman poet Virgil onto Homer's Greek epic the *Iliad*. Homer sings of the Greek heroes who conquered the city of Troy. Virgil tells of a Trojan warrior who survives the war and goes on an epic journey leading to the founding of Rome. The poem coopts Greek myth to infuse Rome's origin story in Greek tradition.

[7]*Winckelmann:* Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) was a "German art historian and archaeologist, a key figure in the Neoclassical movement and in the development of art history as an intellectual discipline" (Winckelmann).

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Byzantine and Medieval Art: Teaching Christianity

In the century before Christ, Rome displaced the dominance of Seleucid and Ptolemaic Greek empires. Yet Roman culture was largely shaped by Greek influence. For example, Roman art absorbed and emulated Hellenistic models. Indeed, we know many Greek pieces as Roman copies. Scholars still debate whether *Laocoön* is a Greek original or a Roman copy.[7]

And then came Christianity. Unlike Judaism, Christianity affirms a physical, incarnate God. It reinterpreted the Jewish abhorrence of idolatry to permit images of the Christ. Early Christian art reflected the ethos of small churches that met in private homes and tended to the needs of humble people, especially women and slaves. The Savior was inscribed as a humble shepherd into the walls and ceilings of burial catacombs outside Rome.

Christ as the Good Shepherd. (3rd C). Fresco. Catacomb of Priscilla

Christ as the Good Shepherd. (3rd Century). Catacomb of Domitilla. Fresco.

In the early 4th Century, however, an alliance between the Roman Emperor Constantine changed the world, the church, and Western art. Imperial bishops demanded that all aspects of life, including art, focus on Christian themes. Constantinople, the new imperial capital, honored emperors, Christ, and the Virgin mother in a

Byzantine style. In the 6th Century, the Emperor Justinian rebuilt the Cathedral of Constantinople, the seat of imperial church authority. *Hagia Sophia* (The church of *Holy Wisdom*) was one of the grandest buildings on earth with the largest dome. It testified to God's grandeur, but probably more to the power of the Empire that now equated its interests with Christ's.

Hagia Sophia. 6th C. Constantinople (Istanbul, Turkey)

Christ Pantocrator. Mosaic, Hagia Sophia.

Virgin and Child. Mary as Queen of Heaven. Mosaic, Hagia Sophia.

The interior of Hagia Sophia was ricly decorated with **Mosaics**:

> A wall or floor decoration made up of many cubes of clay, stone, or glass blocks (*tesserae*) of different colors. Mosaics may be either *geometric*, composed of linear patterns or motifs, or *figured*, with representations of deities, mythological characters, animals, and recognizable objects. Mosaics became extremely popular in the Greco-Roman world. ... Mosaics were also a feature of the Byzantine Empire, some of the finest mid-1st millennium, examples being those at Ravenna, Italy (Mosaic).

The mosaics of Hagia Sophia would set the standard for centuries of **Byzantine Art** throughout the Christianized Empire and Medieval Europe. In a sharp departure from the **Classical** Greek and Roman

Aesthetic, Byzantine artists were constrained by church and empire to focus solely on instructing the faithful in theology and worship. To use a concept from last week, the **Byzantine** enterprise was a strong example of **Didactic Art**. An **Icon**, an image of Christ, the Virgin Mary, or a saint, schooled often believers in the faith and focused their worship of the Lord and their veneration of saints. [8] But Christian faithfulness had also come to mean fidelity to the Empire that had fused with the Church. You can see this fusion in Byzantine images, in which Christ the humble shepherd becomes Christ the emperor, robed in purple, the emperor's color. Mary becomes Queen of Heaven, her divine child on her lap. As we saw last week, the "Madonna" image was repeated in monumental churches from Asia Minor to the Britain [9].

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[8] With little time to explicate the complex issue of veneration of saints, let's try to summarize it briefly. The Church always condemned worship directed toward anyone but God. However, it encouraged believers to *venerate* saints who had earned special favor through martyrdom of holy living. *Icons* (holy images) of the saints and *relics* from their lives—bones, clothing, possessions—were used for *intercessory prayer.* The supplicant brought a request to the saint who resided in favor with God in the hope that God would be more likely to grant requests presented by favored saints. Art was deeply involved in these rituals.

[9] The Virgin Mary began to be venerated as the Queen of Heaven as early as the 3rd Century. This designation became a major focus in Medieval Christianity.

Didactic Art generally loses interest in **Mimesis** and adopts a fixed style. The **Stylized art** of *Byzantine* images display little depth. The figures are abstractions with little individuality. They do not move, display little emotion and are not placed in any particular time or

place. The image transcends time, including figures from different eras of Christian history. As we saw in Egyptian art, this timeless constancy affirms eternal authority, in this case that of God and the Queen of Heaven.

Between the 5th and 7th centuries, Imperial rule in the West—basically, Europe—collapsed in waves of migration from Germanic peoples. Warrior tribal chieftains assumed control of local lands and adopted the titles of the old Empire. But they had little interest in the **Classical** tradition of learning and art. They converted to Christianity and delegated to monks and bishops the tasks of administration, law, and learning. As knowledge of Greek dissipated, all but a tiny portion of Greek learning was lost to the West for roughly 1,000 years. Church scholars monopolized Latin learning and the churches monopolized art. Anonymous artists designed and decorated churches, created altar pieces for worship, and illustrated Bibles and prayer books.

Ezra the scribe. (7th Century). Book illustration.

Saints Peter, Hermagoras, Fortunatus. (c. 1180). Fresco.

Cimabue. (c. 1290). *Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist and Saint Peter*. Tempera on panel.

For centuries, European artists worked for the church and channeled the standard conventions of Byzantine icons. The image of St. Peter and two later saints affirms the passing of divine authority from generation to generation. As in Byzantine art, it lacks depth of field, mimetic modeling, time, and place. In Medieval Europe, art was almost completely monopolized by the

church. Cimabue's depiction of the Holy Mother and Child was composed in the early the 13th century. Cimabue is working in tempera on wood, not mosaics, but we see that Byzantine style nearly unchanged after a thousand years: flat, expressionless, timeless, and wholly theological. By the 14th Century, European art had strayed very far from its roots in Classical Greece. That was about to change.

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"Classical" English Poetics--Rhyme and Meter

As we are seeing, the word **Classical** properly refers in the Western academic tradition to the traditions of ancient Greece and Rome. But, it is used in other contexts, including Classical music. Let's ask ourselves, what are the "classic" patterns of English poetry? More importantly, how can they help us make sense of verse? As we approach this perhaps daunting enterprise, let's recall our approach to facing the challenge of poetry:

Tips on Reading Poetry

- Read aloud, listening for rhythms, patterns.
- Recognize the plain sense of the words before looking for hidden meanings.
- Who talks to whom about what? Clearly seeing this dynamic can open many poems.
- Track themes and patterns of meaning that flow from the above.

OK, so what makes poetry poetic? Rhythm, always. And when people think of English verse, they most instinctively think of **Rhyme**, a pattern of repeated sounds, usually the final syllable in the ends of verse lines (Rhyme). Where do you hear rhyme in Yeats' poem?

William Butler Yeats (1889): "Down by the Salley Gardens"

William Butler Yeats (1889): "Down by the Salley Gardens"

Down by the salley[1] gardens
my love and I did meet;
She passed the salley gardens
with little snow-white feet.

She bid me take love easy,
as the leaves grow on the tree;
But I, being young and foolish,
with her would not agree.

In a field by the river
my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder
she laid her snow-white hand.

She bid me take life easy,
as the grass grows on the weirs[2];
But I was young and foolish,
and now am full of tears.

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[1] *Salley*: a form of the word *sallow*, suggesting here a garden of willow trees
[2] *Weirs*: low fences or dams to control the flow of water or capture fish

You'll notice that not all of these lines end in rhyme. (By the way, lines 1 and 3 end in a repeated word, generally not considered a

rhyme.) English speakers' ears are attuned to Rhyme, but we often don't really pay much attention to what words rhyme. Let's notice:

- *Meet … Feet:* the lovers meet in the gardens, but the elusive beloved's "snow-white feet" will soon carry her away.
- *Tree … Agree:* the leaves on a tree which annually come and go contrast with the lover's stubborn refusal to "take love easy"
- *Stand … Hand:* the lover stands stolidly in place, touched only by the beloved's hand which rests lightly on his shoulder—and nothing more
- *Weirs … Tears*: a weir is designed to control water and the lover's resolution to remain steadfast dissolves into tears, the body's fluids

When listening to poetic rhythms, always ask how they support the poem's thematic structure. In fine poetry, these effects are subtle, but fascinating and enlightening to notice.

Now notice something else. The **Rhyme** in the poem forms a pattern that divides the verse into **Stanzas**, something like the paragraphs in prose. We **Scan** or analyze a **Rhyme Scheme** using letters. When lines don't rhyme, we use X. I'll bet you can do this for our poem: X-A-X-A; X-B-X-B; X-C-X-C; X-D-X-D-X-D.

So what have we got. Yeats composes 4 **Stanzas**, each consisting of 4 lines with the second and fourth lines rhyming. Literary folk have names for the possibilities: **Couplet** (2 lines), **Tercet** (3 lines), **Quatrain** (4 lines), **Sestet** (6 lines), and **Octave** (8 lines). Thus, Yeats' poem consists of four *Quatrains.* OK, you may not be used to that sort of talk, but it isn't too hard to grasp, eh?

But not all English poetry rhymes. Elizabethan drama, including Shakespeare's plays, and major English epics such as Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1674) are written in **Blank Verse** which lacks Rhyme and is not divided by Rhyme Schemes into Stanzas. So what makes them poetry?

This is where it gets a bit tricky. Rhyme is fairly easy to recognize. But whether English verse rhymes or not, most of it is strictly

controlled with a subtle rhythm that can be tricky to hear: **Meter** a "pattern of measured sound-units recurring more or less regularly in lines of verse" (Meter). In English poetry, Meter usually consists of a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables. Believe it or not, native English speakers are almost all deeply familiar with meter in children's stories and traditional nursery rhymes. You know this one, right?

> **Jack Spratt** could **eat** no **fat**
> his **wife** could **eat** no **lean**.
> And **so** be**twixt** them **both**, you **see**,
> The **licked** the **plat**ter **clean**.

You may well know the nursery rhyme and you almost certainly recognize the metrical pattern: *ta*-**DA** *ta*-**DA** *ta*-**DA** *ta*-**DA**// *ta*-**DA** *ta*-**DA** *ta*-**DA**. I'll bet you can comfortably play that beat in your mind. Countless verses in songs, on greeting cards, and in poems you may have been asked to read use this metrical pattern.

The meter is called **Ballad Stanza** because it is common in popular songs. If you listen, you'll begin to recognize it in many songs you love. Ballad Stanza uses a strict metrical pattern: "a four-line stanza in Iambic meter in which the first and third unrhymed lines have four metrical feet and the second and fourth rhyming lines have three metrical feet" (ballad stanza).

I know. We just got really technical. Let's see if we can make sense out of this by defining some metrical terms:

- Metrical **Foot**: "a group of syllables taken as a unit of poetic Meter **Prosody**, regardless of word-boundaries" (foot)
- **Iambic foot**: "a metrical unit (foot) of verse, having one unstressed syllable followed by one stressed syllable, as in the word beYOND" (Iamb).
- **Trimeter**: 3 feet per line; Tetrameter: 4 feet per line;

Pentameter: 5 feet per line

Remember that **Ballad Stanza** pattern: *ta*-**DA** *ta*-**DA** *ta*-**DA** *ta*-**DA//** *ta*-**DA** *ta*-**DA** *ta*-**DA?** It can help us understand these terms. The unit that keeps repeating has two syllables: *ta*-**DA**. Each of these is a metrical **Foot**. And in each case, the second of two syllables is stressed. Thus, each is an **Iambic Foot**. There are other options, but the *Iamb* is by an enormous distance the most common metrical foot in English verse. It is actually hard to compose English in any other foot. Finally, if we count the feet in each line we get the pattern: four feet (**Tetrameter**)/three feet (**Trimeter**). At least in a simple case like Jack Spratt, it's not really that hard to grasp.

Let's return to Yeats' "Down by the Salley Gardens." And let's do so aurally. Poetry should always be read aloud. It won't take you long to read Yeats' poem with your voice. Try butchering the normal flow and rhythm of the verse by unrealistically exaggerating the stressed syllables: *Down* **BY** *the* **SAL***ley* **GARD***ens* … You'll soon hear the emerging meter.

But over-hyped meter is not poetry. Meter works best when it subtly interweaves itself with more natural readings. If you over-exaggerate the meter, you butcher the flow of the verse. If you pay no attention to it, you mute its expressive force. Listen some time to a recording of a great actor playing a Shakespearean part (e.g. our Week 1 You-Tube of Kenneth Brannagh delivering the *Henry* V speech?). You'll hear an amazing oral hybrid of natural language and metrical pattern.

This is why literary folk use the term *doggerel* to refer to hackneyed verse that so meticulously obeys the patterns of Rhyme and Meter that it becomes impossible to avoid a sing-song awkwardness. All strong metrical verse includes subtle variations or exceptions which prevent a tiresome, sing-song regularity. Don't let exceptions to the meter stop you: what matters is the dominant pattern in the lines and stanzas. Listen for them in Yeats' poem.

Down by the salley gardens
my love and I did meet;
She passed the salley gardens
with little snow-white feet.

She bid me take love easy,
as the leaves grow on the tree;
But I, being young and foolish,
with her would not agree.

In a field by the river
my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder
she laid her snow-white hand.

She bid me take life easy,
as the grass grows on the weirs;
But I was young and foolish,
and now am full of tears.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=155#audio-155-1

You may have noticed that the initial **Foot** in some lines begins with a stressed syllable (TA-da, a **Troche**). This is very common and generally the line naturally shifts to the standard Iambic pattern. And notice the repeated expression, "as the GRASS GROWS ..." There are technical terms for these variations: a **Pyrrhic Foot** (two unstressed syllables) and a **Spondee** (two Stressed syllables).

Obviously, the former has a weak impact and the latter slows the Meter and gives punch and emphasis. In this poem, the repeated reference to the evanescence of grass enhances the melancholy the poem's theme of lost love.

Expect and watch for metrical exceptions. Blend the metrical rhythm with the natural flow of the language. And watch for subtle enhancements of the poem's themes in its Meter, its Rhyme Scheme, and its structure of Stanzas. Poetic rhythms are always meaningful if we have a sharp ear.

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Broken Love

Last week, we explored samples of art focusing on domestic and passionate love. Even today, audiences clamor for portraits of passionate *amour* (French for *love*). Passion promises a great deal. All too often, it leaves destruction in its wake. The arts of many cultures probe the distress left behind by passion's betrayal. Consider this satirical portrait of a an apparently loving couple by Lucas Cranach the Elder. Notice the title. What is Cranach revealing to us? Notice the hands!

Lukas Cranach, the elder. (1531). The Uneven Couple. Tempera on Beech.

Bernini. (1622-1624) of Daphne's transformation. Marble.

As we will see next week, the 14th Century Renaissance was driven by wide distribution in Europe of a rich trove of classical—Greek and Latin—learning preserved by Arabs and Orthodox monks. Patronized by private wealth, Renaissance artists began to focus their work on Greco-Roman myths. The trend became especially strong in the ensuing Baroque period. In the early 17th Century, the sculptor Gianlorenzo Bernini dramatized the climactic moment in a characteristically heart-breaking tale of passion's destructiveness.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

To make sense out of a great deal of post-Renaissance European art, one must know one's classical myths, especially the *Metamorphoses*, in which the 1st Century Roman poet Ovid translated a range of tales from Greek myth. Although the Roman Empire had absorbed Greece, the Romans channeled Greek culture as their own. The word *Metamorphosis* means *transformation*, and the tales in the collection dramatize miraculous moments of human transformation. Their characters are beautiful mortals and quasi human, Greco-Roman gods and demi-gods driven by obsessive, destructive sexual passions. In our selected tale, Phoebus, the Sun God, known to the Greeks as Apollo, is stricken with love for Daphne, a semi-divine *naiad*, or wood nymph. Things do not go well.

Ovid. (c 8 CE). The Metamorphoses. from The Tale of Daphne and Phoebus

Daphne, daughter of a River God was first beloved by Phoebus great God of glorious light. 'Twas … out of Cupid's[1] vengeful spite that she was fated to torment the lord of light.

For Phoebus … beheld that impish god of Love upon a time when he was bending his diminished bow, and voicing his contempt in anger said; "What, wanton boy, are mighty arms to thee, great weapons suited to the needs of war? The bow is only for … those large deities of heaven whose strength may deal mortal wounds to savage beasts of prey; and who courageous overcome their foes. …. Content thee

with the flames thy torch enkindles … and leave to me the glory that is mine."

Undaunted, Venus's son replied, "O Phoebus, thou canst conquer all the world with thy strong bow and arrows, but with this small arrow I shall pierce thy vaunting breast!" … From his quiver he plucked arrows twain[2]: … one love exciting, one repelling love. The dart of love was glittering, gold and sharp; the other had a blunted tip of lead; and with that dull lead dart he shot the Nymph [Daphne], but with the keen point of the golden dart he pierced the bone … of the God.

Immediately the one with love was filled, the other … rejoiced in the deep shadow of the woods. … The virgin Phoebe … denied the love of man. Beloved and wooed she wandered silent paths, for never could her modesty endure the glance of man or listen to his love. Her grieving [River God] father spoke to her, "Alas, my daughter, I have wished a son in law, and now you owe a grandchild to the joy of my old age." But Daphne only hung her head to hide her shame. The nuptial torch seemed criminal to her. … "My dearest father let me live a virgin always." …

Phoebus when he saw her waxed distraught, and filled with wonder his sick fancy raised delusive hopes, and his own oracles deceived him.—As the stubble in the field flares up, … so was the bosom of the god consumed, and desire flamed in his stricken heart. …

Swift as the wind from his pursuing feet the virgin fled, and neither stopped nor heeded as he called; "O Nymph! O Daphne! I entreat thee stay, it is no enemy that follows thee. … I am not a churl—I am no mountain dweller of rude caves, nor clown compelled to watch the sheep and

goats. … My immortal sire is Jupiter.[3] The present, past and future are through me in sacred oracles revealed to man, and from my harp the harmonies of sound are borrowed by their bards to praise the Gods. … The art of medicine is my invention, and the power of herbs; but though the world declare my useful works there is no herb to medicate my wound." …

The Nymph with timid footsteps fled from his approach, and left him to his murmurs and his pain. Lovely the virgin seemed as the soft wind exposed her limbs, and as the zephyrs fond fluttered amid her garments, and the breeze fanned lightly in her flowing hair. She seemed most lovely … and mad with love he followed … and silent hastened his increasing speed. As when the greyhound sees the frightened hare flit over the plain:—With eager nose outstretched, impetuous, he rushes on his prey, and gains upon her till he treads her feet, and almost fastens in her side his fangs. … So was it with the god and virgin: one with hope pursued, the other fled in fear. …

Her strength spent, pale and faint, with pleading eyes she gazed upon her father's waves and prayed, "Help me my father, if thy flowing streams have virtue! Cover me, O mother Earth! Destroy the beauty that has injured me, or change the body that destroys my life." Before her prayer was ended, torpor seized on all her body, and a thin bark closed around her gentle bosom, and her hair became as moving leaves; her arms were changed to waving branches, and her active feet as clinging roots were fastened to the ground— her face was hidden with encircling leaves.—

Phoebus admired and loved the graceful tree. … He clung to trunk and branch as though to twine his form with hers, and fondly kissed the wood that shrank from every kiss. …

"Although thou canst not be my bride, thou shalt be called my chosen tree, and thy green leaves, O Laurel! shall forever crown my brows, be wreathed around my quiver and my lyre; Roman heroes shall be crowned with thee, ... and as my youthful head is never shorn, so, shalt thou ever bear thy leaves unchanging to thy glory."

Here the God, Phoebus Apollo, ended his lament, and unto him the Laurel bent her boughs, so lately fashioned; and it seemed to him her graceful nod gave answer to his love.

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[1] *Cupid:* Roman name for the Greek god Eros, son of Venus (goddess of love, named Aphrodite by the Greeks). Cupid's arrows compelled those struck by them to either love (gold for love; lead for hate). In the story, the powerful Phoebus derides the small bow of the diminutive Cupid, not understanding its power.
[2] *Arrows twain:* i.e. a pair of arrows
[3] *Jupiter*: Roman name for the Greek god Zeus, king of the gods on Mt. Olympus

So how shall we read the tale? On the one hand, it is a typical instance of an origin myth, in this case, the origin of laurel trees. On the other hand, it clearly dramatizes the all-too-human dynamics of passionate pursuit and evasion. Indeed, we could see it as an attempted rape, thwarted only by magic which essentially kills Daphne's humanity. Can you see these dynamics in the relationships around you, or even in your own experience? Narrative traditions in

many cultures explore themes of desire, loss, and the costs of failed love.

King David's Lethal Passion

Last week, we saw David's great glory in ascending to the throne of Israel. Under David's leadership, the ancient Kingdom of Israel reached an unprecedented political prominence in the region. In the biblical accounts of his career, he is celebrated as a virtuous hero, a "man after God's heart." Many of the Psalms which lead the faithful in worship are attributed to him.

But David was also a great sinner. In the passage below, see David being led into genuine evil—lust, adultery, and murder—by the passion of a voyeur looking upon a woman's body.

Gentileschi, Artemisia.(c.1640-5). *David and Bathsheba*. Oil on canvas.

David's Great Sin: 2nd Samuel, 11.2-12.24

Late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. When David inquired about the woman, it was

reported, “This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.” So David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. … The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, “I am pregnant.”

So David sent word to Joab, “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” And Joab sent Uriah to David. … David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house, and wash your feet.” Uriah went out of the king’s house …but slept at the entrance of the king’s house … and did not go to his house.

When they told David, “Uriah did not go down to his house,” David said to Uriah, “You have just come from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?” Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing.”

Then David said to Uriah, “Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back.” … The next day, David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch, … but he did not go down to his house.

In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab: … “Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die.” … The men of the city came out and fought and some of the servants of David … fell. Uriah the Hittite was killed as well. … When the wife of Uriah heard that her husband was dead, she made lamentation. When the mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son.

As we know today, the sins of the great and powerful often go unpunished. But Uriah and Bathsheba had a champion—the prophet Nathan.

> But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord, and the Lord sent [the prophet] Nathan to David. He came to him, and said to him,
>
> > *There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. He brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children; it used to eat of his meager fare, and drink from his cup, and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was loath to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb, and prepared that for the guest who had come to him.*
>
> Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man. He said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die; he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."
>
> Nathan said to David, "*You are the man!* Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul; I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added as much more. Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? ...Now therefore the sword shall never depart from

your house, for you have despised me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.

Thus says the Lord: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of the sun. For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan said to David, "Now the Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die. Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child that is born to you shall die." ...

The Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became very ill. David therefore pleaded with God for the child; David fasted, and went in and lay all night on the ground. The elders of his house stood beside him, urging him to rise from the ground; but he would not, nor did he eat food with them. On the seventh day the child died. The servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead; for they said, "While the child was still alive, we spoke to him, and he did not listen to us; how then can we tell him the child is dead? He may do himself some harm."

When David saw that his servants were whispering, he perceived that the child was dead; and David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" They said, "He is dead." Then David rose from the ground, washed, anointed himself, and changed clothes. He went into the house of the Lord, and worshiped.

David's sin is great, but the repentance modeled in his penitential

Psalm 51 has comforted and inspired sinners for centuries. The Psalm is also a masterful poetic expression. Can you trace those figures of speech we discussed last week: **Anaphora** and **Parallelism**?

King David. Psalm 51, a prayer of repentance

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.

Against you, you alone, have I sinned,
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence
and blameless when you pass judgment.

Indeed, I was born guilty,
a sinner when my mother conceived me.
You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my heart.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.

Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence,
and do not take your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.
Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
and sinners will return to you.

Deliver me from bloodshed, O God,
O God of my salvation,
and my tongue will sing of your deliverance.

O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare your praise.
For you have no delight in sacrifice;
if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.

The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=161#audio-161-1

Torch Songs

It is difficult to empathize with the frustration felt by Ovid's Phoebus

lusting after Daphne or King David's power play against a married woman. But the all too common outcome of passion, invoked over the centuries by many artists, is the heartbreak of unrequited love. In American popular music, the term **Torch Song** designates a tune in which a lover agonizes over betrayal and loss:

Torch Songs

> The term derives from the phrase to *carry a torch for someone*, ... to suffer the pain of unrequited love. ... Such lyrics characteristically dramatize the resigned hopelessness of a woman in thrall to a no-good man: the song is a lament expressing both devotional love and willing subjugation as she is treated by her lover with habitual disdain, neglect, and sometimes violence (Brookes).

Thematically, Yeats' "Down by the Salley Gardens" works as a torch song. In American popular music, scores of popular songs from the 20th Century qualify as torch songs, often sung by women: "Body and Soul," "Stormy Weather," "I Got it Bad (and that Ain't Good)," "Can't help Lovin' Dat Man," "Am I Blue" and many more. In "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," a song from the 1933 musical *Roberta*, passion burns to smoke and ash.

Jerome Kern and Otto Harbach. (1933) *"Smoke Gets in Your Eyes"*

They asked me how I knew,
My true love was true,
Oh-oh-oh-oh, I, of course, replied,
"Something here inside,
Cannot be denied."

They said, "Someday you'll find,
All who love are blind.
Oh-oh-oh-oh, when your heart's on fire,
You must realize,
Smoke gets in your eyes."

So I chaffed them,
And I gaily laughed,
To think they could doubt my love.
Yet today, my love has flown away.
I am without my love.

Now, laughing friends deride,
Tears I cannot hide.
Oh-oh-oh-oh, so I smile and say,
"When a lovely flame dies,
Smoke gets in your eyes."
Smoke gets in your eyes.

Listen to the great Sarah Vaughn's performance of the song.

Torch songs maintain their appeal into more recent times. In 2011, Adele recorded a monster hit that poignantly captures the heartbreak and weary resolution of a left-behind lover encountering the lost beloved.

Adele and Dan Wilson, D. (2011). "Someone like You."

I heard that you're settled down
That you found a girl and you're married now
I heard that your dreams came true
Guess she gave you things I didn't give to you.

Old friend, why are you so shy?
It ain't like you to hold back or hide from the lie

I hate to turn up out of the blue uninvited
But I couldn't stay away, I couldn't fight it
I hoped you'd see my face & that you'd be reminded
That for me, it isn't over.

Never mind, I'll find someone like you
I wish nothing but the best for you two
Don't forget me, I beg, I remember you said:
"Sometimes it lasts in love but sometimes it hurts instead"
Sometimes it lasts in love but sometimes it hurts instead,
yeah.

You'd know how the time flies
Only yesterday was the time of our lives
We were born and raised in a summery haze
Bound by the surprise of our glory days.

I hate to turn up out of the blue uninvited
But I couldn't stay away, I couldn't fight it
I hoped you'd see my face & that you'd be reminded
That for me, it isn't over yet.

Never mind, I'll find someone like you
I wish nothing but the best for you two

Don't forget me, I beg, I remember you said:
"Sometimes it lasts in love but sometimes it hurts instead",
yay.

Nothing compares, no worries or cares
Regrets and mistakes they're memories made
Who would have known how bittersweet this would taste?

Never mind, I'll find someone like you
I wish nothing but the best for you two
Don't forget me, I beg, I remembered you said:
"Sometimes it lasts in love but sometimes it hurts instead."

Never mind, I'll find someone like you
I wish nothing but the best for you two
Don't forget me, I beg, I remembered you said:
"Sometimes it lasts in love but sometimes it hurts instead"
Sometimes it lasts in love but sometimes it hurts instead,
yeah.

Note: the above link includes lyrics and the audio file.

It probably isn't difficult to process the themes and dynamics of these two lyrics. Using our approach to poetry, we can read the plain sense of the words and fairly quickly determine who is speaking to whom. The first song reflects, perhaps inwardly, perhaps to an unidentified listener, the musings of one whose confident trust has been shattered. The second dramatizes an encounter between two one-time lovers, unnamed, but deftly realized.

About now, however, you should be in a position to track the poetic

structures of the songs. Our old friends, *Parallelism*, *Anaphora*, and sheer poetic repetition are here. But notice also the **Rhyme Schemes** and **Trimeter** beats in "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes." The patterns are looser in "Someone like You," but don't miss the occasional rhymes that provide thematic emphasis.

African American Heartbreak

The American songbook has been deeply influenced by African American musical and literary traditions. Early American folklore and songs blended Euro-American idioms with the rhythms of Africans forcibly imported as slaves. By the early 20th Century, African American music was beginning to establish an astonishing level of influence over all of American pop music. Not surprisingly, the music of a people enslaved and then denied full citizenship is full of heartbreak.

Singin' Da Blues

African American musicians, as slaves and as "freedmen"[1] developed three traditions of startlingly innovative composition. "Negro spirituals" were sung in churches and on concert stages around the world. Jazz music was developed to entertain patrons of brothels and evolved into a transcendent form brilliantly wedding individual expression with mutually supportive partnership. And the **Blues** were sung to ease the breaking heart:

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[1] *Freedmen*: the term used after the Civil War for slaves liberated by the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Blues

a slow jazz song of lamentation, generally for an unhappy love affair. Usually in groups of 12 bars, each stanza being 3 lines covering 4 bars of music. … The earlier (almost entirely African-American) history of the blues is traced by oral tradition as far back as the 1860s, but the form was popularized about 1911–14 by the black composer W. C. Handy (Blues).

The most pervasive traditions of American music today—rock and roll, rhythm and blues, reggae, hip hop, and many dimensions of contemporary country—descend at least in part from the blues.

Rick Darnell and Roy Hawkins (1969) *"The Thrill is Gone"*

The thrill is gone
The thrill is gone away
The thrill is gone baby
The thrill is gone away
You know you done me wrong baby
And you'll be sorry someday

The thrill is gone
It's gone away from me
The thrill is gone baby
The thrill is gone away from me

Although, I'll still live on
But so lonely I'll be

The thrill is gone
It's gone away for good
The thrill is gone baby
It's gone away for good
Someday I know I'll be open armed baby
Just like I know a good man should

You know I'm free, free now baby
I'm free from your spell
Oh I'm free, free, free now
I'm free from your spell
And now that it's all over
All I can do is wish you well.

Listen to the performance by the great bluesman B. B. King

Thematically, notice that the lamentation in this blues arises from the death of passion, the other side of passion's coin. Initially, it seems so powerful in its promise of euphoria. But, it doesn't seem to last. And as lovers learn generation after generation, it doesn't offer much as a foundation for a lasting relationship. "The thrill is gone."

Like Hebrew verse, a blues stanza uses repetition for emphasis, memory, and developing elucidation. Line 2 more or less repeats line 1. Line 3 takes things further. And line 4 resolves the tension. In this case, the stanza carries the repetition over 4 rather than 2 lines. Repeated blues lines linger like the throbbing pulses of heartbreak.

Ballad of Lost Love

Last week, we sampled the traditional English ballad, a story-song of a heart often broken by grief over a deceased lover. Anonymous folk ballads were sung and modified by countless bards over centuries. African American musicians developed their own ballad tradition, one steeped in violence to reflect the violent world Black people have long inhabited.

In 1899, a woman named Frankie Baker shot and killed her unfaithful lover, Allen Britt, in St. Louis. Within a year, the ballad "Frankie Killed Allen" had been composed by Bill Dooley and published by Hughie Cannon. More popularly titled "Frankie and Johnny," the song has been sung by scores of artists and dramatized in several films (Frankie and Johnny). Thus, although there was an original publication, there is no authoritative version of the lyrics. All, however, share variants of the haunting refrain that speaks for millions of women in many ages and cultures: "He was my man, and he done me wrong." The 1929 version by Mississippi John Hurt shines as an engaging example of Delta-style Blues. Here is Hurt's version of the ballad.

Mississippi John Hurt (1928) *"Frankie and Johnny"*

Frankie and Johnny was sweethearts, O Lord how did they love.
Swore to be true to each other, true as the stars above.
He was her man, he wouldn't do her wrong

Frankie went down to the corner, just for a bucket of beer.

She said “Mr. Bartender, has my lovin’ Johnny been here?
He’s my man, he wouldn’t do me wrong.”

“I don’t want to cause you no trouble, I ain’t gonna tell you no lie.
I saw your lover an hour ago with a girl named Nellie Bly.
He was your man, but he’s doin’ you wrong.”

Frankie looked over the transom, she saw to her surprise:
There on a cot sat Johnny, makin’ love to Nellie Bly.
“He’s my man, and he’s doin’ me wrong.”

Frankie drew back her kimona, she took out a little .44.
Rooty-toot-toot three times she shot right through that hardwood door.
Shot her man; he was doin’ her wrong.

“Bring out the rubber-tired buggies, bring out the rubber-tire hack.
I’m takin’ my man to the graveyard, but I ain’t gonna bring him back.
Lord, he was my man, and he done me wrong.”

“Bring out a thousand policemen, bring ’em around today.
Then lock me down in the dungeon cell and throw that key away.
I shot my man, he was doin’ me wrong.”

Frankie said to the warden, “What are they going to do?”
The warden said to Frankie “It’s electric chair for you,
‘Cause you shot your man, he was doin’ you wrong.”

This story has no moral, this story has no end.
This story just goes to show that there ain’t no good in men.
He was her man, and he done her wrong.

Listen to Mississippi John Hurt's recording.

In 1955, Lena Horne recorded a highly produced and lushly orchestrated version of "Frankie and Johnny": link. In this dramatized version, the vocalist takes up the Persona of Frankie, transforming the ballad into a Torch Song: "He was my man, but he done me wrong!"

The Spent Passions of Crazy Jane

In his later years, William Butler Yeats' composed spare, hard-hitting verse that packed the punch of both disillusionment and wisdom, doubt and enduring hope. In 1932, Yeats published *Words for Music Perhaps*, exploring the link between literary verse and song lyrics. In that collection, he composed a series of poems expressing the jaded life view of Crazy Jane, a woman who has walked the path of life from passionate youth to sterile old age. "Crazy Jane and the Bishop" is no torch song. But it profoundly probes the bitter ashes of broken love.

William Butler Yeats. (1932). "Crazy Jane and the Bishop"

I met the Bishop on the road
And much said he and I.
`Those breasts are flat and fallen now
Those veins must soon be dry;

Live in a heavenly mansion,
Not in some foul sty.'

"Fair and foul are near of kin,
And fair needs foul," I cried.
"My friends are gone, but that's a truth
Nor grave nor bed denied,
Learned in bodily lowliness
And in the heart's pride.

"A woman can be proud and stiff
When on love intent;
But Love has pitched his mansion in
The place of excrement;
For nothing can be sole or whole
That has not been rent."

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=161#audio-161-2

In her dialogue with the Bishop, Jane deals with the smug superiority of a religious prude who glories in her physical decay, chiding her for having trusted (he imagines without knowing) the power of her physical beauty. But Jane knows that the world is more complex, more paradoxical than narrow, graceless piety will allow. Where does love "pitch his tent"?

Can you work out the **Meter** of Yeats' poem? Yes, it's **Ballad Stanza**,

a meter Yeats returned to again and again. Notice how each **Trimeter** line deftly restates or explicates the concept in the previous **Tetrameter** line. The Rhyme Scheme also supports the poem's themes. Stanzas are defined by an X-A-X-A-X-A pattern and the rhymes create suggestive contrasts:

- I … DRY … STY
- CRIED … deNIED … PRIDE
- inTENT … excreMENT … RENT (i.e. torn asunder)

What do you think of these rhymed patterns? Analyzing Meter and Rhyme Schemes may seem like a tedious pedantry. But when we begin to hear these rhythms, Thematic patterns come alive.

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Family and Narrative Dysfunction

For many, passion's ideal result is a sound marriage. Yet many marriages go sour. pens a harrowing journey through family dysfunction. In 1892, Charlotte Perkins Gilman composed a narrative detailing the breakdown not only of a marriage, but of a woman's mind as well. Her story is no torch song. The unnamed narrator is, or so she tells herself, happily married. But she can't understand why she feels tortured and imprisoned. Readers of the day, and perhaps some readers today, couldn't really understand it either. Let's see if we can figure it out.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper"

> It is very seldom that mere ordinary people like John and myself secure ancestral halls for the summer. A colonial mansion, a hereditary estate, I would say a haunted house, and reach the height of romantic felicity—but that would be asking too much of fate!
>
> Still I will proudly declare that there is something queer about it. Else, why should it be let so cheaply? And why have stood so long untenanted? John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage.

These opening paragraphs orient us to the story. The narrator has been taken by her physician husband to a summer's idyll in a grand

estate home. Of course, this is **First Person Narrative**, so we know we can trust the accuracy of the **Narrator**'s account. Or can we? The Narrative Voice emerges from the mind of a woman who can't be sure of her own sanity. *I will proudly declare that there is something queer* about the house. Well, many queer things go on in this house, but we wonder what to believe. Is it haunted? Is the narrator sick or not?

John is practical in the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures. John is a physician, and *perhaps*—(I would not say it to a living soul, of course, but this is dead paper and a great relief to my mind)—*perhaps* that is one reason I do not get well faster.

You see, he does not believe I am sick! And what can one do? If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression—a slight hysterical tendency—what is one to do?

My brother is also a physician, and also of high standing, and he says the same thing. So I take phosphates or phosphites—whichever it is, and tonics, and journeys, and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to "work" until I am well again.

Personally, I disagree with their ideas. Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good. But what is one to do?

I did write for a while in spite of them; but it *does* exhaust me a good deal—having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition.

I sometimes fancy that in my condition if I had less opposition and more society and stimulus—but John says the very worst thing I can do is to think about my condition, and I confess it always makes me feel bad. So I will let it alone and talk about the house.

The most beautiful place! It is quite alone, standing well back from the road, quite three miles from the village. It makes me think of English places that you read about, for there are hedges and walls and gates that lock, and lots of separate little houses for the gardeners and people.

There is a *delicious* garden! I never saw such a garden—large and shady, full of box-bordered paths, and lined with long grape-covered arbors with seats under them. There were greenhouses, too, but they are all broken now.

There was some legal trouble, I believe, something about the heirs and co-heirs; anyhow, the place has been empty for years. That spoils my ghostliness, I am afraid; but I don't care—there is something strange about the house—I can feel it. I even said so to John one moonlight evening, but he said what I felt was a *draught*, and shut the window.

I get unreasonably angry with John sometimes. I'm sure I never used to be so sensitive. I think it is due to this nervous condition.

But John says if I feel so I shall neglect proper self-control; so I take pains to control myself,—before him, at least,—and that makes me very tired.

I don't like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings! but John would not hear of it. He said there was only one window

and not room for two beds, and no near room for him if he took another.

He is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction. I have a schedule prescription for each hour in the day; he takes all care from me, and so I feel basely ungrateful not to value it more. He said we came here solely on my account, that I was to have perfect rest and all the air I could get. "Your exercise depends on your strength, my dear," said he, "and your food somewhat on your appetite; but air you can absorb all the time."

So we took the nursery, at the top of the house. It is a big, airy room, the whole floor nearly, with windows that look all ways, and air and sunshine galore. It was nursery first and then playground and gymnasium, I should judge; for the windows are barred for little children, and there are rings and things in the walls.

The paint and paper look as if a boys' school had used it. It is stripped off—the paper—in great patches all around the head of my bed, about as far as I can reach, and in a great place on the other side of the room low down. I never saw a worse paper in my life.

One of those sprawling flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin. It is dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough to constantly irritate, and provoke study, and when you follow the lame, uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide—plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard-of contradictions.

The color is repellant, almost revolting; a smoldering, unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight. It is a dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly

sulphur tint in others. No wonder the children hated it! I should hate it myself if I had to live in this room long.

There comes John, and I must put this away,—he hates to have me write a word.

OK, let's take stock. Our narrator has just given birth. Her husband is a capable physician who attends closely to her needs. However, he doesn't seem to believe that she is facing any real illness. The narrator doesn't seem clear herself on whether she is ill or if she is recovering.

Today, her condition would be diagnosed as post-partum depression, a very real, serious malady faced by many new mothers. When Gillman wrote this story, however, medicine was dominated by men who tended not to take women's health issues seriously. Depressed mothers were dismissed as suffering from *hysteria*, a dismissive term applied to women's supposed emotionalism. For more on this see Schurbutt.

Going forward, let's notice that the struggling mother is also a writer whose voice is continuously silenced. Indeed, her character is relentlessly constrained by social conventions which bind and limit women. The act of writing is seen as unseemly for a woman and an obstacle to a new mother's recovery. The social chains that bind the narrator are drawn tight by her husband, her sister-in-law, and the servants who displace her role as mother.

We have been here two weeks, and I haven't felt like writing before, since that first day. I am sitting by the window now, up in this atrocious nursery, and there is

nothing to hinder my writing as much as I please, save lack of strength.

John is away all day, and even some nights when his cases are serious. I am glad my case is not serious! But these nervous troubles are dreadfully depressing. John does not know how much I really suffer. He knows there is no *reason* to suffer, and that satisfies him.

Of course it is only nervousness. It does weigh on me so not to do my duty in any way! I meant to be such a help to John, such a real rest and comfort, and here I am a comparative burden already! Nobody would believe what an effort it is to do what little I am able—to dress and entertain, and order things.

It is fortunate Mary is so good with the baby. Such a dear baby! And yet I *cannot* be with him, it makes me so nervous. I suppose John never was nervous in his life. He laughs at me so about this wallpaper! At first he meant to repaper the room, but afterwards he said that I was letting it get the better of me, and that nothing was worse for a nervous patient than to give way to such fancies. He said that after the wallpaper was changed it would be the heavy bedstead, and then the barred windows, and then that gate at the head of the stairs, and so on.

"You know the place is doing you good," he said, "and really, dear, I don't care to renovate the house just for a three months' rental."

"Then do let us go downstairs," I said, "there are such pretty rooms there."

Then he took me in his arms and called me a blessed little goose, and said he would go down cellar if I wished, and

have it whitewashed into the bargain. But he is right enough about the beds and windows and things. It is as airy and comfortable a room as any one need wish, and, of course, I would not be so silly as to make him uncomfortable just for a whim.

I'm really getting quite fond of the big room, all but that horrid paper.

Out of one window I can see the garden, those mysterious deep-shaded arbors, the riotous old-fashioned flowers, and bushes and gnarly trees. Out of another I get a lovely view of the bay and a little private wharf belonging to the estate. There is a beautiful shaded lane that runs down there from the house. I always fancy I see people walking in these numerous paths and arbors, but John has cautioned me not to give way to fancy in the least. He says that with my imaginative power and habit of story-making a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies, and that I ought to use my will and good sense to check the tendency. So I try.

I think sometimes that if I were only well enough to write a little it would relieve the press of ideas and rest me. But I find I get pretty tired when I try.

It is so discouraging not to have any advice and companionship about my work. When I get really well John says we will ask Cousin Henry and Julia down for a long visit; but he says he would as soon put fire-works in my pillow-case as to let me have those stimulating people about now.

I wish I could get well faster. But I must not think about that.

So what are we thinking? Do we believe John and his sister's view of the narrator? And here is the real problem: the narrator herself doesn't seem to know whether to believe what John and his sister think and what she feels. So how shall we take the story?

Usually, we take the word of a story's narration for granted. We *trust* that its account stably reflects story reality. However, an **Unreliable Narrator** leaves us wondering: what is really true of the story world and its characters?

In this story, the narrator's own uncertainty lies at the tale's core. This writer's drive to express herself is blunted, chained, and twisted by clinical depression and by crippling social norms embodied in her husband, the patronizing doctor. She dutifully and repeatedly resolves to embrace her husband's diagnosis and her role as a deferring mother. But each time she does so, she lapses into resentful resistance: *John does not know how much I really suffer*.

> This paper looks to me as if it *knew* what a vicious influence it had!
>
> There is a recurrent spot where the pattern lolls like a broken neck and two bulbous eyes stare at you upside-down. I get positively angry with the impertinence of it and the everlastingness. Up and down and sideways they crawl, and those absurd, unblinking eyes are everywhere. There is one place where two breadths didn't match, and the eyes go all up and down the line, one a little higher than the other.
>
> I never saw so much expression in an inanimate thing before, and we all know how much expression they have! I used to lie awake as a child and get more entertainment and terror out of blank walls and plain furniture than most children could find in a toy-store.

I remember what a kindly wink the knobs of our big old bureau used to have, and there was one chair that always seemed like a strong friend. I used to feel that if any of the other things looked too fierce I could always hop into that chair and be safe.

The furniture in this room is no worse than inharmonious, however, for we had to bring it all from downstairs. I suppose when this was used as a playroom they had to take the nursery things out, and no wonder! I never saw such ravages as the children have made here. The wallpaper, as I said before, is torn off in spots, and it sticketh closer than a brother—they must have had perseverance as well as hatred. Then the floor is scratched and gouged and splintered, the plaster itself is dug out here and there, and this great heavy bed, which is all we found in the room, looks as if it had been through the wars.

But I don't mind it a bit—only the paper.

There comes John's sister. Such a dear girl as she is, and so careful of me! I must not let her find me writing. She is a perfect, and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no better profession. I verily believe she thinks it is the writing which made me sick!

But I can write when she is out, and see her a long way off from these windows. There is one that commands the road, a lovely, shaded, winding road, and one that just looks off over the country. A lovely country, too, full of great elms and velvet meadows.

This wallpaper has a kind of sub-pattern in a different shade, a particularly irritating one, for you can only see it in certain lights, and not clearly then. But in the places where it isn't faded, and where the sun is just so, I can see a

strange, provoking, formless sort of figure, that seems to sulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design.

There's sister on the stairs!

So. What really is going on with that wallpaper? At first, it is just ugly. Then it seems to suggest the bars of imprisonment. Then a woman prowls behind the pattern. Then it is infested by a whole host of women. How do we take all of this?

Is the narrator's perception of the wall paper true? What sort of truth? How does her growing obsession with the paper tell the truth of the woman's physical and mental health? You can learn much about this story and about the way narrative works by paying close attention to the progression of the narrator's account of the paper.

Well, the Fourth of July is over! The people are gone and I am tired out. John thought it might do me good to see a little company, so we just had mother and Nellie and the children down for a week.

Of course I didn't do a thing. Jennie sees to everything now. But it tired me all the same. John says if I don't pick up faster he shall send me to Weir Mitchell in the fall. But I don't want to go there at all. I had a friend who was in his hands once, and she says he is just like John and my brother, only more so! Besides, it is such an undertaking to go so far.

I don't feel as if it was worthwhile to turn my hand over for anything, and I'm getting dreadfully fretful and querulous. I cry at nothing, and cry most of the time.

Of course I don't when John is here, or anybody else, but when I am alone. And I am alone a good deal just now. John is kept in town very often by serious cases, and Jennie is good and lets me alone when I want her to. So I walk a little in the garden or down that lovely lane, sit on the porch under the roses, and lie down up here a good deal.

I'm getting really fond of the room in spite of the wallpaper. Perhaps *because* of the wallpaper. It dwells in my mind so! I lie here on this great immovable bed—it is nailed down, I believe—and follow that pattern about by the hour. It is as good as gymnastics, I assure you. I start, we'll say, at the bottom, down in the corner over there where it has not been touched, and I determine for the thousandth time that I *will* follow that pointless pattern to some sort of a conclusion.

I know a little of the principle of design, and I know this thing was not arranged on any laws of radiation, or alternation, or repetition, or symmetry, or anything else that I ever heard of. It is repeated, of course, by the breadths, but not otherwise.

Looked at in one way each breadth stands alone, the bloated curves and flourishes—a kind of "debased Romanesque" with *delirium tremens*—go waddling up and down in isolated columns of fatuity. But, on the other hand, they connect diagonally, and the sprawling outlines run off in great slanting waves of optic horror, like a lot of wallowing seaweeds in full chase.

The whole thing goes horizontally, too, at least it seems so, and I exhaust myself in trying to distinguish the order of its going in that direction. They have used a horizontal

breadth for a frieze, and that adds wonderfully to the confusion.

There is one end of the room where it is almost intact, and there, when the cross-lights fade and the low sun shines directly upon it, I can almost fancy radiation after all,—the interminable grotesques seem to form around a common centre and rush off in headlong plunges of equal distraction. It makes me tired to follow it. I will take a nap, I guess.

I don't know why I should write this. I don't want to. I don't feel able. And I know John would think it absurd. But I *must* say what I feel and think in some way—it is such a relief!

But the effort is getting to be greater than the relief. Half the time now I am awfully lazy, and lie down ever so much. John says I musn't lose my strength, and has me take cod-liver oil and lots of tonics and things, to say nothing of ale and wine and rare meat.

Dear John! He loves me very dearly, and hates to have me sick. I tried to have a real earnest reasonable talk with him the other day, and tell him how I wish he would let me go and make a visit to Cousin Henry and Julia.

But he said I wasn't able to go, nor able to stand it after I got there; and I did not make out a very good case for myself, for I was crying before I had finished. It is getting to be a great effort for me to think straight. Just this nervous weakness, I suppose.

And dear John gathered me up in his arms, and just carried me upstairs and laid me on the bed, and sat by me and read to me till it tired my head. He said I was his darling and his comfort and all he had, and that I must take care of

myself for his sake, and keep well. He says no one but myself can help me out of it, that I must use my will and self-control and not let any silly fancies run away with me.

There's one comfort, the baby is well and happy, and does not have to occupy this nursery with the horrid wallpaper. If we had not used it that blessed child would have! What a fortunate escape! Why, I wouldn't have a child of mine, an impressionable little thing, live in such a room for worlds. I never thought of it before, but it is lucky that John kept me here after all. I can stand it so much easier than a baby, you see.

Of course I never mention it to them any more,—I am too wise,—but I keep watch of it all the same. There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will. Behind that outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day. It is always the same shape, only very numerous.

And it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern. I don't like it a bit. I wonder—I begin to think—I wish John would take me away from here!

It is so hard to talk with John about my case, because he is so wise, and because he loves me so. But I tried it last night. It was moonlight. The moon shines in all around, just as the sun does.

I hate to see it sometimes, it creeps so slowly, and always comes in by one window or another.

John was asleep and I hated to waken him, so I kept still and watched the moonlight on that undulating wallpaper till I felt creepy. The faint figure behind seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out.

I got up softly and went to feel and see if the paper *did*

move, and when I came back John was awake. “What is it, little girl?” he said. “Don’t go walking about like that—you’ll get cold.”

I thought it was a good time to talk, so I told him that I really was not gaining here, and that I wished he would take me away.

“Why darling!” said he, “our lease will be up in three weeks, and I can’t see how to leave before. The repairs are not done at home, and I cannot possibly leave town just now. Of course if you were in any danger I could and would, but you really are better, dear, whether you can see it or not. I am a doctor, dear, and I know. You are gaining flesh and color, your appetite is better. I feel really much easier about you.”

“I don’t weigh a bit more,” said I, “nor as much; and my appetite may be better in the evening, when you are here, but it is worse in the morning when you are away.”

“Bless her little heart!” said he with a big hug; “she shall be as sick as she pleases! But now let’s improve the shining hours by going to sleep, and talk about it in the morning!”

“And you won’t go away?” I asked gloomily.

“Why, how can I, dear? It is only three weeks more and then we will take a nice little trip of a few days while Jennie is getting the house ready. Really, dear, you are better!”

“Better in body perhaps”—I began, and stopped short, for he sat up straight and looked at me with such a stern, reproachful look that I could not say another word.

“My darling,” said he, “I beg of you, for my sake and for our child’s sake, as well as for your own, that you will never for one instant let that idea enter your mind! There is

nothing so dangerous, so fascinating, to a temperament like yours. It is a false and foolish fancy. Can you not trust me as a physician when I tell you so?"

So of course I said no more on that score, and we went to sleep before long. He thought I was asleep first, but I wasn't,—I lay there for hours trying to decide whether that front pattern and the back pattern really did move together or separately.

On a pattern like this, by daylight, there is a lack of sequence, a defiance of law, that is a constant irritant to a normal mind. The color is hideous enough, and unreliable enough, and infuriating enough, but the pattern is torturing.

You think you have mastered it, but just as you get well under way in following, it turns a back somersault and there you are. It slaps you in the face, knocks you down, and tramples upon you. It is like a bad dream.

The outside pattern is a florid arabesque, reminding one of a fungus. If you can imagine a toadstool in joints, an interminable string of toadstools, budding and sprouting in endless convolutions,—why, that is something like it.

That is, sometimes!

There is one marked peculiarity about this paper, a thing nobody seems to notice but myself, and that is that it changes as the light changes. When the sun shoots in through the east window—I always watch for that first long, straight ray—it changes so quickly that I never can quite believe it.

That is why I watch it always. By moonlight—the moon shines in all night when there is a moon—I wouldn't know it

was the same paper. At night in any kind of light, in twilight, candlelight, lamplight, and worst of all by moonlight, it becomes bars! The outside pattern I mean, and the woman behind it is as plain as can be.

I didn't realize for a long time what the thing was that showed behind,—that dim sub-pattern,—but now I am quite sure it is a woman. By daylight she is subdued, quiet. I fancy it is the pattern that keeps her so still. It is so puzzling. It keeps me quiet by the hour.

I lie down ever so much now. John says it is good for me, and to sleep all I can. Indeed, he started the habit by making me lie down for an hour after each meal. It is a very bad habit, I am convinced, for, you see, I don't sleep. And that cultivates deceit, for I don't tell them I'm awake,—oh, no!

The fact is, I am getting a little afraid of John. He seems very queer sometimes, and even Jennie has an inexplicable look.

It strikes me occasionally, just as a scientific hypothesis, that perhaps it is the paper! I have watched John when he did not know I was looking, and come into the room suddenly on the most innocent excuses, and I've caught him several times *looking at the paper*! And Jennie too. I caught Jennie with her hand on it once.

She didn't know I was in the room, and when I asked her in a quiet, a very quiet voice, with the most restrained manner possible, what she was doing with the paper she turned around as if she had been caught stealing, and looked quite angry—asked me why I should frighten her so!

Then she said that the paper stained everything it touched, that she had found yellow smooches on all my

clothes and John's, and she wished we would be more careful!

Did not that sound innocent? But I know she was studying that pattern, and I am determined that nobody shall find it out but myself!

Life is very much more exciting now than it used to be. You see I have something more to expect, to look forward to, to watch. I really do eat better, and am more quiet than I was.

John is so pleased to see me improve! He laughed a little the other day, and said I seemed to be flourishing in spite of my wallpaper.

I turned it off with a laugh. I had no intention of telling him it was *because* of the wallpaper—he would make fun of me. He might even want to take me away.

I don't want to leave now until I have found it out. There is a week more, and I think that will be enough.

A *week more, and I think that will be enough.* Our story draws toward its end. In line with the rest of the story, the ending is bizarre and uncertain. Pay close attention to the climax of perhaps untrustworthy narrative. What actually happens?

I'm feeling ever so much better! I don't sleep much at night, for it is so interesting to watch developments; but I sleep a good deal in the daytime. In the daytime it is tiresome and perplexing.

There are always new shoots on the fungus, and new

shades of yellow all over it. I cannot keep count of them, though I have tried conscientiously. It is the strangest yellow, that wallpaper! It makes me think of all the yellow things I ever saw—not beautiful ones like buttercups, but old foul, bad yellow things.

But there is something else about that paper—the smell! I noticed it the moment we came into the room, but with so much air and sun it was not bad. Now we have had a week of fog and rain, and whether the windows are open or not, the smell is here.

It creeps all over the house. I find it hovering in the dining-room, skulking in the parlor, hiding in the hall, lying in wait for me on the stairs. It gets into my hair. Even when I go to ride, if I turn my head suddenly and surprise it—there is that smell!

Such a peculiar odor, too! I have spent hours in trying to analyze it, to find what it smelled like. It is not bad—at first, and very gentle, but quite the subtlest, most enduring odor I ever met. In this damp weather it is awful. I wake up in the night and find it hanging over me. It used to disturb me at first. I thought seriously of burning the house—to reach the smell.

But now I am used to it. The only thing I can think of that it is like is the *color* of the paper! A yellow smell.

There is a very funny mark on this wall, low down, near the mopboard. A streak that runs round the room. It goes behind every piece of furniture, except the bed, a long, straight, even *smooch*, as if it had been rubbed over and over. I wonder how it was done and who did it, and what they did it for. Round and round and round—round and round and round—it makes me dizzy!

I really have discovered something at last. Through watching so much at night, when it changes so, I have finally found out. The front pattern *does* move—and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it!

Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind, and sometimes only one, and she crawls around fast, and her crawling shakes it all over. Then in the very bright spots she keeps still, and in the very shady spots she just takes hold of the bars and shakes them hard. And she is all the time trying to climb through.

But nobody could climb through that pattern—it strangles so; I think that is why it has so many heads. They get through, and then the pattern strangles them off and turns them upside-down, and makes their eyes white! If those heads were covered or taken off it would not be half so bad.

I think that woman gets out in the daytime! And I'll tell you why—privately—I've seen her!

I can see her out of every one of my windows! It is the same woman, I know, for she is always creeping, and most women do not creep by daylight.

I see her on that long shaded lane, creeping up and down. I see her in those dark grape arbors, creeping all around the garden. I see her on that long road under the trees, creeping along, and when a carriage comes she hides under the blackberry vines. I don't blame her a bit. It must be very humiliating to be caught creeping by daylight! I always lock the door when I creep by daylight.

I can't do it at night, for I know John would suspect something at once. And John is so queer now, that I don't want to irritate him. I wish he would take another room!

Besides, I don't want anybody to get that woman out at night but myself.

I often wonder if I could see her out of all the windows at once. But, turn as fast as I can, I can only see out of one at one time. And though I always see her she *may* be able to creep faster than I can turn! I have watched her sometimes away off in the open country, creeping as fast as a cloud shadow in a high wind.

If only that top pattern could be gotten off from the under one! I mean to try it, little by little. I have found out another funny thing, but I shan't tell it this time! It does not do to trust people too much.

There are only two more days to get this paper off, and I believe John is beginning to notice. I don't like the look in his eyes. And I heard him ask Jennie a lot of professional questions about me. She had a very good report to give. She said I slept a good deal in the daytime.

John knows I don't sleep very well at night, for all I'm so quiet! He asked me all sorts of questions, too, and pretended to be very loving and kind. As if I couldn't see through him! Still, I don't wonder he acts so, sleeping under this paper for three months. It only interests me, but I feel sure John and Jennie are secretly affected by it.

Hurrah! This is the last day, but it is enough. John is to stay in town over night, and won't be out until this evening. Jennie wanted to sleep with me—the sly thing! but I told her I should undoubtedly rest better for a night all alone.

That was clever, for really I wasn't alone a bit! As soon as it was moonlight, and that poor thing began to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to help her. I pulled and she shook, I shook and she pulled, and before morning we

had peeled off yards of that paper. A strip about as high as my head and half around the room. And then when the sun came and that awful pattern began to laugh at me I declared I would finish it to-day!

We go away to-morrow, and they are moving all my furniture down again to leave things as they were before. Jennie looked at the wall in amazement, but I told her merrily that I did it out of pure spite at the vicious thing. She laughed and said she wouldn't mind doing it herself, but I must not get tired. How she betrayed herself that time!

But I am here, and no person touches this paper but me—not *alive*!

She tried to get me out of the room—it was too patent! But I said it was so quiet and empty and clean now that I believed I would lie down again and sleep all I could; and not to wake me even for dinner—I would call when I woke.

So now she is gone, and the servants are gone, and the things are gone, and there is nothing left but that great bedstead nailed down, with the canvas mattress we found on it. We shall sleep downstairs to-night, and take the boat home to-morrow.

I quite enjoy the room, now it is bare again. How those children did tear about here! This bedstead is fairly gnawed!

But I must get to work. I have locked the door and thrown the key down into the front path. I don't want to go out, and I don't want to have anybody come in, till John comes. I want to astonish him.

I've got a rope up here that even Jennie did not find. If that woman does get out, and tries to get away, I can tie

her! But I forgot I could not reach far without anything to stand on!

This bed will *not* move! I tried to lift and push it until I was lame, and then I got so angry I bit off a little piece at one corner—but it hurt my teeth.

Then I peeled off all the paper I could reach standing on the floor. It sticks horribly and the pattern just enjoys it! All those strangled heads and bulbous eyes and waddling fungus growths just shriek with derision!

I am getting angry enough to do something desperate. To jump out of the window would be admirable exercise, but the bars are too strong even to try.

Besides I wouldn't do it. Of course not. I know well enough that a step like that is improper and might be misconstrued. I don't like to *look* out of the windows even—there are so many of those creeping women, and they creep so fast.

I wonder if they all come out of that wallpaper as I did?

But I am securely fastened now by my well-hidden rope—you don't get *me* out in the road there!

I suppose I shall have to get back behind the pattern when it comes night, and that is hard! It is so pleasant to be out in this great room and creep around as I please! I don't want to go outside. I won't, even if Jennie asks me to. For outside you have to creep on the ground, and everything is green instead of yellow.

But here I can creep smoothly on the floor, and my shoulder just fits in that long smooch around the wall, so I cannot lose my way.

Why, there's John at the door! It is no use, young man,

you can't open it! How he does call and pound! Now he's crying for an axe. It would be a shame to break down that beautiful door!

"John dear!" said I in the gentlest voice, "the key is down by the front steps, under a plantain leaf!"

That silenced him for a few moments. Then he said—very quietly indeed, "Open the door, my darling!"

"I can't," said I. "The key is down by the front door under a plantain leaf!"

And then I said it again, several times, very gently and slowly, and said it so often that he had to go and see, and he got it, of course, and came in. He stopped short by the door.

"What is the matter?" he cried. "For God's sake, what are you doing!"

I kept on creeping just the same, but I looked at him over my shoulder. "I've got out at last," said I, "in spite of you and Jane! And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!"

Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time!

"*Why should that man have fainted*?" What did he see? **Narrative Conventions** lead us to expect a depiction of stable story "facts": a "real" story world with characters performing unambiguously defined acts. We certainly expect to hear about important actions and events.

But narrative "reality" doesn't very well represent actual human experience, in which facts are always gathered, processed, and told in often irreconcilable forms by people from widely differing

perspectives. Unstable narrative is explored in fascinating ways by accomplished authors and by film makers of the last few decades: what "really" happens in *The Usual Suspects*, *Mulholland Drive*, or the ending of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: a Space Odyssey*?

In "The Yellow Wallpaper," Gillman's narrative **Point of View** fractures into multiple strands arising from her own identity as a mother, a frustrated wife, and a writer struggling against the social norms that rejected women writing. The character in the story struggles to understand her own state of mind as she fluctuates between resolving to adapt to her husband's idea of her and breaking free to write. In this sometimes frustrating story, the narrative technique is deeply rooted in the themes that drive the voice.

So, … love … heartbreak … passions ashes. Few themes have been as universally explored by art. Few themes so inspire us and so profoundly lead us to despair. Where have you seen love in your favorite arts?

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PART III

CHAPTER 3: THE CLASSICAL REBORN

The term **Renaissance** is very widely known, although its significance is often murkily understood. Primarily, the term refers to groundbreaking Italian and Northern European art which, in the 14th and 15th century, broke from the "Byzantine" tradition of the medieval Church "in favor of the revival of the culture of ancient Greece and Rome" (Renaissance). In 1550, a book of art history first used the term *rinascita*, or *rebirth* to characterize an era of immense influence. Giorgio Vasari, an Italian painter and architect, named and mapped the age of the Renaissance in a book known in English as *The Lives of the Artists*.

Vasari's The Lives of the Artists (1550)

> Vasari's *Vite* was the first narrative history of art, and the model that he proposed has been qualified but never fully dislodged, and continues to exert a powerful influence on the canon of popular and academic taste. [According to Vasari,] Art was reborn in Tuscany in the 1250s and there grew in three stages to a peak of perfection in the sixteenth century (Giorgio Vasari).

The fuel that powered the Renaissance was money. In the 14th Century, Europe was transformed by commerce. International trade imported spices and silks from Asia, but sophisticated textile industries were emerging in Northern Europe and Italy. Trade

centers like Florence, Venice, and Pisa developed the beginnings of modern financial tools such as bookkeeping, insurance, and international corporations. Europe's emerging wealth was primarily centered in two areas:

- Italy, especially Venice, trading hub connecting Europe to Asian spices and silks
- The Low countries of Northern Europe, Flanders[1] and Holland, trading hubs for the Black sea and purveyors of magnificent fabrics

Guess which two regions of Europe dominated the Renaissance. Yep! Italy and the Low Countries of the North funded the spectacular achievements of their best artists.

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[1] Flanders is today the northern districts of Belgium. In Medieval times, it included parts of what we know today as The Netherlands and France. Note: The Netherlands were split into Belgium (Catholic) and Holland (Reformed) by the Reformation.

Canaletto. (c. 1740). *Venice: The Basin of San Marco on Ascension Day*. Oil on Canvas.

A great deal of this wealth was held by the Church, and bishops and popes continued to patronize art. However, after nearly 1,000 years in which the church virtually monopolized the work of artists, Renaissance era private capital began to commission work with more secular orientations. Last week, we said that the Greco-

Roman tradition of **Portraiture** was suspended during the Byzantine era. In the 14th Century, private persons began to commission artists to commemorate them in paint. In Germany, the painter Lucas Cranach the Elder made a career out of the portraits of wealthy patrons such as Dr. Johannes and Anna Cuspinian (1502).

Portrait of Dr. Johannes Cuspinian. Tempera on wood.

Portrait of Anna Cuspinian. Tempera on wood.

While private wealth expanded the range of artistic subjects, Christian themes still dominated. Wealthy patrons often commissioned art for Churches. But the subjects were transformed by their interests. Backgrounds for biblical scenes reflected contemporary lands and palaces and onlookers at a biblical event were likely to be dressed in the latest European fashions. Indeed, the faces of the figures were likely to be those of the patrons! In 1478, the Florentine artist Sandro Botticelli painted a biblical standard (*generic*) biblical scene, one very common in church art. The *Adoration of the Magi* celebrates the moment when 3 Magi (sages) visit and venerate the infant Jesus in his manger (Matthew 2.1-12). Painted into the scene in the lower left are members of the vastly wealthy Medici family, Botticelli's patrons.

		
The Adoration of the Magi. (1478). Tempera on panel.	Medici patrons (Detail 1)	Botticelli's self-portrait (Detail 2)

But who is that figure looking impassively out at the viewer (Detail 2). Why, that is Botticelli himself, a self-portrait blended slyly into the holy scene. Botticelli's presence in the painting signifies a major shift in cultural values. During the long centuries of the early Middle Ages, artists worked anonymously for the church. No one knows who designed most Medieval great churches or carved the magnificent friezes above the portals. Artists' identities as creative individuals were erased in a culture that honored only aristocratic lords and ladies and exalted members of the clergy: bishops, abbots, etc. During the Renaissance, artists began to earn reputations and, if they were good enough, fortunes. The identity of the artist gained a stature sufficient to justify self-portraits. Botticelli's embedded self-portrait typifies a vogue among Renaissance painters. Look closely and you'll see in many post Renaissance paintings small portraits of the artist gazing into viewers' eyes. Some began to paint self-portraits as standalone works. Here we see the flamboyant German master Albrecht Dürer.

		
Albrecht Dürer. (1500). *Self-portrait in a fur-trimmed coat.* Oil on limewood	Domenico Ghirlandaio (1490) *Old Man with a Young Boy.* Tempera on Wood.	Rembrandt van Rijn (1661) *Self-portrait with palette and brushes.* Oil on canvas.

Imagine yourself as a portrait painter hired to commemorate a family member. Consider your dilemma: on the one hand, you need to flatter your patrons, to make them look as good as possible. On the other hand, you need to make their images recognizable. Frequently, facial "flaws" comprise a good deal of our visual identity. Sometimes, paintings strive to achieve Aesthetic effects other than beauty. Or, perhaps, a deeper idea of beauty. Ghirlandaio's portrait of a grandfather frankly presents a homely, aging face marked by signs of decay. These visual defects contrast with the angelic beauty of a child. We might see the love passing between old man and child transcending physical flaws in a spiritual beauty. Rembrandt van Rijn, the great Dutch artist, painted many self-portraits. Rather than indulging in self-flattery, however, he ruthlessly explores the inner and outer truths of his face. In this famous self-portrait, he pitilessly examines signs of age and decay: his mortality.

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Renaissance Humanism: Rediscovering Greece

Rinascita, *rebirth*, *Renaissance* … rebirth of what? The word *Renaissance* refers explicitly to a rebirth in knowledge of the **Classical** Greek tradition which had long been lost. In the 13th Century, Greek learning began to find its way back into Europe. While Greek learning had been lost in Latin Europe, Arab and Jewish scholars had meticulously preserved them in Arabic translation. Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II[1] cultivated a multi-cultural ethos in Sicily, honoring and emulating Arab culture and scholarship. As Christian kings reconquered lands in Spain held for centuries by Islamic Arabs, Latin scholars began to recover Arab translations of the Greeks, often translated into Latin by Jewish scholars. Greek texts became available to European scholars and wealthy patrons with classical interests. Centuries later, this movement was labeled ***Humanism***.

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[1] The title Holy Roman Emperor is misleading. It refers to a more or less fictional grand authority supposedly uniting the kingdoms of Europe into a Christian whole. Early on, these emperors were German and they generally competed for power with the princes of Italy and France.

Humanism has been defined as "any philosophy, or political stance which emphasizes or privileges the welfare of humans and assumes that only humans are capable of reason" (Humanism 2018). The term has been associated with various challenges to conventional values and religion, and today people think of it as a secular opposition to faith. However,

> In the Renaissance … *humanism* was entirely consistent with religious belief, and related not to secularism but rather to the *studia humanitatis*, the liberal arts now known as the *humanities*. Renaissance humanist scholars engaged in the study of humanistic subjects (grammar, rhetoric, and history) with particular reference to the languages and literatures of classical antiquity (Humanism 2003).

Raphael's Vatican fresco *The School of Athens* honors the heroes of Greek learning who so profoundly influenced the Renaissance: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Archimedes, Epicurus, Pythagoras, Pericles, Plotinus, Euclid, Ptolemy, etc. The fresco illustrates Renaissance artists' conscious enthusiasm for Classical tradition and the honor in which Humanistic scholarship was held by the Church: this is the palace of the Pope after all. Inspired and informed by the recovery of **Classical** learning, **Renaissance** artists broke from the **Byzantine** tradition of the medieval Church "in favor of the revival of the culture of ancient Greece and Rome" (Renaissance).

Rapahael. (1510). *The School of Athens*. Fresco.

1. The Age of Giotto: A Renewed Way of seeing

Vasari's account of the Italian Renaissance was divided into three periods:

1. The age of Giotto: "artists began to imitate nature"
2. The age of Masaccio (15th Century): a "new understanding of perspective and anatomy
3. The age of Leonardo, Raphael, and Michelangelo: the "summit of perfection" in mastering and surpassing nature (Giorgio Vasari).

On Giotto di Bondone

Giotto di Bondone, Florentine painter and architect, is regarded as the founder of the central tradition of Western painting because his work broke away decisively from the stylizations of Byzantine art, introducing new ideals of naturalism and creating a convincing sense of pictorial space. His momentous achievement was recognized by his contemporaries: ... in about 1400 Cennino Cennini wrote that "Giotto translated the art of painting from Greek into Latin and made it modern." He was the first artist since antiquity to achieve widespread fame (Giotto di Bondone).

To grasp Giotto's significance, let's compare his Pieta with a standard Byzantine Madonna grouping by Giotto's master, Cimabue.

Cimabue. (c. 1290) *Madonna and Child, Saint John the Baptist, Saint Peter.* Tempera on Panel.

Giotto di Bonine. *Pieta* (Lamentation of Christ's Death). (c. 1304). Fresco.

As we have seen, the **Byzantine Icon** as practiced by Cimabue was flat, timeless, and placeless, static images of theological ideas. But Giotto's *Pieta* roils with the grief of Mary, Jesus' followers, and angels gathered to honor the divine sacrifice. Indeed, the **Genre** of the **Pieta** was innovated around this time as artists like Giotto began to concern themselves with one of the characteristics of **Classical** art: **Pathos**–emotion expressed in the figures. In the the **Fresco** series of scenes from the *Legend of St. Francis* (Assisi, Basilica of St. Francis), Giotto combines *Pathos* with **Rhythmos**, dramatizing key moments in the life of the saint.

- Francis renounces his family's wealth (the corrupting force in the Medieval Church)
- Accompanied by St. Clare, Francis blesses birds, affirming the brotherhood of creation.

St. Francis renounces worldly possessions. (c 1300)

St. Francis preaching to the birds. (c. 1300.).

Each of these frescoes presents a dramatic moment of action located in a particular place. Giotto begins to cultivate the illusion of depth in two-dimensional painting. At this point, the technique is perhaps a bit awkward. It is about to become really sophisticated.

2. Perspective—the Illusion of 3 Dimensions

Vasari's 2nd stage of the Renaissance era begins with a fusion of art and mathematics. **Byzantine** art projects very little sense of depth. In Giotto, we see a somewhat clumsy attempt to capture three dimensions in a flat painting. With the recovery of Classical mathematics, the effect of **Perspective** was about to become far more sophisticated.

The Art of Perspective

The art of depicting solid objects on a two-dimensional

or shallow surface so as to give the right impression of their height, width, depth, and position in relation to each other. Only certain cultures have embraced perspective, for example, … ancient Egyptians took no account of spatial recession.

Mathematically-based perspective, ordered round a central vanishing point, was … invented by Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446), described by Leon Battista Alberti (1404–72) in his treatise *Della Pittura*, and is often referred to as **Linear Perspective**. … The stage-like organization of pictorial space, in which the composition of a picture is conceived as though viewed through a window, remained a central feature of much western art until the later part of the 19th century (Perspective).

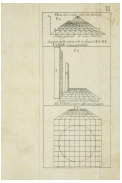
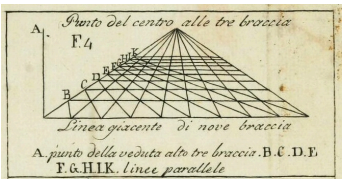


Diagram of perspective lines and vanishing point



Detail: Vanishing Point

Page 178 of Alberti's *Della Pittura* (1472) provides diagrams that capture the mathematically precise guidelines followed by **Renaissance** painters in achieving convincing effects of **Linear Perspective**. Angled lines converge in a distant **Vanishing Point** "usually located on the horizon, towards which receding lines such as railway tracks appear to converge when depicted or viewed in linear perspective" (Vanishing Point).

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The High Renaissance

The Renaissance Begins: Masaccio and Fra Angelico, Mantegna

If you would like to see the Renaissance emerging before your eyes, visit Florence, Italy. First, walk up the nave of the Basilica of Santa Maria Novella. Look for an apparently unassuming **Fresco** in a niche on the left wall: Massacio's *The Holy Trinity*. Next, in the Basilica of Santa Maria del Carmine, explore the Brancacci Chapel, which features work by several artists. Study Masaccio's *The Tribute Money*, based on the story of Jesus paying his tax by sending Peter to look for a coin in the mouth of a fish (Matthew 17.24-27). Masaccio is following Giotto's lead in dramatizing bible stories. He places three moments from the story into one pictorial frame with linear perspective creating depth of field.

Masaccio. (ca. 1427) *The Holy Trinity*. Niche Fresco.

Masaccio. (ca. 1427). The Tribute Money. Fresco

Fra Angelico. (1428). *The Annunciation*.Tempera on panel.

Now step along a few Florentine blocks the the monastery of San Marco in which the monk Fra Angelico continued the exploration of perspective. His *Anunciation* celebrated the moment of Christ's conception as a remedy for Adam and Eve's fall into sin, depicted in

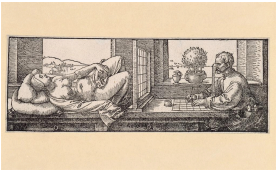
the left third of the fresco. Symbolically, **Linear Perspective** saves the world from sin. That ray of light is the Holy Spirit impregnating Mary with a divine child, Christians' Savior.

During the early Renaissance, a mania broke out for mathematically precise **Linear Perspective**. Architecture and landscapes offers the readiest subject matters for lines converging on a vanishing point in a deep distance. However, increasing sophistication in evoking depth of field also enhanced the **Mimetic** precision of organic objects, including human figures:

> **Foreshortening** is "the correct depiction in perspective of a single figure or object or part thereof in relation to its distance from the eye of the viewer" (*Foreshortening*).

We see the dramatic impact of **Foreshortening** in Mantegna's remarkable *Dead Christ*. In this unusual example of the *Pieta*, the viewer is forced to adopt a perspective confronting the physicality of dead flesh. In religious terms, this perspective compels a somber reflection on Christ's body of suffering, a major focus for piety of that age. Visually, it calls on viewers to consider the geometry of our visual experience of depth.

Andrea Mantegna. (1490). *Dead Christ*. Tempera on canvas



Albrecht Dürer. (1538). Perspective Drawing. Woodcut

Renaissance painters enhanced the naturalistic accuracy of their figures through *Foreshortening*. As we see in the Dürer woodcut, they devised drawing machines with gridlines to precisely capture

not just the outline, but also the depth of their subjects, often human models.

Van Eyck: Oil Paint Pioneer

Jan van Eyck was a Flemish master patronized by the emerging wealth of Northwestern Europe. In his *Madonna of the Fountain*, we see the Renaissance transformation of Byzantine tradition. The figures are standard fare: Madonna, Christ child, adoring angels. But, the figures are located in a specific garden with a contemporary fountain. And the **Pathos** of mother and child emerge from a moment of active, adoring intimacy.

Virgin of the Fountain (1439). Oil on oak.

Do you notice that the medium of van Eyk's *Virgin of the Fountain:* "oil on panel"? Citations for our images of art generally include this information. Why?

Well, the **Medium** is always a crucial part of an artistic work. We focus on a painting's image, but it is composed of materials and technique. And the materials not only constrain the technique, but also form part of our experience. "From the late twelfth to the early sixteenth centuries," most European painters worked in "egg tempera, in which the pigments of the paint are mixed (or 'tempered') with egg yolks." **Tempera** provided a "vivid and luminous" effect, but was limited in color options" (Tempera). It

also dried fast, restricting brushwork and texture. Jan van Eyck was among those who pioneered a new medium: oil paint.

van Eyck's Technical Influence

Van Eyck revolutionized [oil painting] technique and brought it to a sudden peak of perfection. He showed the medium's flexibility, its rich and dense color, its wide range from light to dark, and its ability to achieve both minute detail and subtle blending of tones (Oil Paint Chilvers).

Jan van Eyck's unprecedented technical mastery of light and space, together with his innovative use of oils, gained him the admiration of painters … and collectors.
… Vasari attributed the invention of oil painting to Jan van Eyck; this claim is inaccurate, but it is an extraordinary testimony to Jan van Eyck's reputation in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe (Eyck, Jan van).

The development of **Oil paint** by Flemish artists such as Van Eyck vastly increased painters' capabilities. Oil suspends and fixes color pigments, but dries slowly and permits almost infinite working and reworking by the artist. Oil paint can also be applied in layers, creating textures that painters use with great variety and effectiveness. *Impasto*, for example, applies paint "in thick solid masses" (Campbell Oil Painting).

van Eyck's *Portrait of a Man with a Red Turban* illustrates the subtlety, richness, and vividness that can be achieved in oil. For the full impact of the technique and textures of brushwork, paint, and surface, of course, one must stand before the original painting. But zoom in to gain a much richer experience. In the portrait of Gonella,

we see—gasp!—humor. Renaissance art is escaping the Church monopoly with its dour obsession with the death of Christ. Notice, too, the rich, organic modeling and colors made possible with linear perspective and oil paint.

Portrait of a Man with a Red Turban. (1433). Oil on Oak.

Gonella, Court Dwarf of Dukes of Ferrara. (1433). Oil on oak.

Arnolfini Portrait. (1434). Oil on Panel.

Now, van Eyck didn't simply pioneer oil paint. He richly explored the interplay of light and space in our vision. In Van Eyck's so-called *Wedding Portrait***[3]** of the Arnolfinis, notice the domestic details: the dress of a wealthy merchant and his wife, the furniture, the drapery, the slippers in the corner, the terrier. Notice the linear perspective of the walls and floorboards. And do you see the convex mirror on the back wall? It presents the reverse image of what we see! Renaissance painters loved to play with sight lines and visual effects.

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[3] *Wedding Portrait:* this traditional title, not chosen by van Eyck, is actually misleading. Scholars today are sure this is not a wedding, and the painting is today often entitled *Arnolfini Portrait.*

Sandro Botticelli: Piety and Myths

Few artists live out the Renaissance tensions between religious and secular commitments more dramatically than does Sandro Botticelli. The Florentine master was patronized by the wealthy and powerful Medici family in Florence, and spent his life in the city. As was the norm, "the bulk of his work was devoted to religious subjects," However, Botticelli "also painted portraits and allegorical, literary, and mythological themes" (Botticelli, Sandro). Above, we explored Botticelli's *Adoration of the Magi* last week, noting the fusion of religious subjects with contemporary figures, including Medici patrons. This time, notice the architecture's linear perspective, contemporary in design but ruined to suggest antiquity.

The Adoration of the Magi. (1478). Tempera.

Madonna and Child with Saint John the Baptist. (1468). Tempera and oil on panel.

Portrait of Man Wearing a Medal of Cosimo the Elder. (1474). Tempera.

At first glance, the *Madonna and Child* above may seem the same old thing. But notice that this moment of child care is set, not in a timeless heaven, but in a specific moment of time and in a specific place. Byzantine Madonnas frequently added saints out of time, but John the Baptist here is a young lad. When we remember that he was Jesus' older cousin (Luke 1), the moment becomes a specific memory of shared childhood.

Now consider his facial features. Botticelli remains renowned for his "draftsmanship, … an extraordinary combination of delicacy and

flowing vitality" (Botticelli, Sandro). Many of his faces achieve a luminous, idealized quality not necessarily reflective of the Mediterranean features of Florentine citizens. They harken back to Greek ideals of proportion and elegance, as we see in this portrait of a patron wearing a medallion of Botticelli's Medici masters. We see this idealism most prominently in the mythological paintings that Botticelli painted for the private enjoyment of his patrons. The Medici richly enjoyed humanistic literature and would have been familiar with Ovid and other Classical mythographers. So Botticelli sometimes set aside the task of illustrating Christianity to paint visions of a mythic world.

Botticelli, Sandro. (1478). *La Primavera*.[4] [The Allegory of Spring]. Tempera on panel

La Primavera could not have been painted in Europe before the 15th Century. It depicts, not a biblical scene, but a seasonal transformation from **Classical** myth. This image would never be commissioned for a church. It was patronized by private, Medici wealth and reflected the new dissemination of Greek mythology. From this point on, sophisticated people would have to know Ovid as well as the Bible to understand art. Can you make out any of the figures?

Who is the woman in the center? No, it is not Mary.[5] This is Venus, the Roman name for Aphrodite, Greek goddess of love. Her son, Cupid (Eros) hovers above her while Mercury[6] looks skyward and the Three Graces[7] celebrate new life. To the right, a mythic miracle unfolds before our eyes. The blue figure is Zephyrus.

personification of the West Wind. His warming breath transforms Chloris, an incarnation of winter, into Flora, goddess of vegetation.

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[4] Primavera is Italian for "First Green," i.e. spring.
[5] The Virgin was traditionally clothed in virginal blue, honored by the use of ultramarine, the most expensive pigment of the day.
[6] *Mercury*: Roman name for Hermes, messenger of the gods, always shown with wings.
[7] Three Graces: in Greek mythology, goddesses representing charm, nature, beauty, goodwill, and fertility.

3. Age of Leonardo and Michelangelo

Leonardo—Renaissance Man

Vasari's 3rd **Renaissance** stage is centered on the "big three" among revered artists of the age: Leonardo, Raphael, and Michelangelo. Today, the phrase "Renaissance Man" refers to one blessed with many gifts who achieves greatly in a variety of fields. It derives from the fact that wealthy patrons expected an artist in their employ to be ready to paint, sculpt, plan buildings, design costumes for masques, and more. One Renaissance Man reigned supreme: Leonardo da Vinci.

One of the most widely creative people in human history, Leonardo really did everything, much of it in his mind. He was one of the pre-eminent anatomists of his day, dissecting cadavers to enhance the mimetic accuracy of his sculpture and painting. He sent a letter to the Borgias volunteering to invent new war machines, including helicopters and tanks. Throughout his life, Leonardo

sought new designs and techniques, not only for art, but for technology:

Leonardo's Interests

The interests reflected in the 3,500 pages of Leonardo's notebooks include anatomy, architecture, astronomy, athletics, botany, color, drawing, geography, geology (including stratigraphy), mathematics, music, optics, painting, perspective, philosophy, sculpture, town planning, zoology, and several branches of engineering (notably hydraulic, nautical, mechanical, military, and structural), but his innovative thinking on these and other subjects made no impact on sixteenth-century culture or science, because there was no public awareness of their existence until 1570. ... The notebooks were a mass of notes rather than a series of treatises, a tribute to intelligent curiosity on a heroic scale but not a readily publishable work (Leonardo da Vinci).

Leonardo's notebooks remained obscure for centuries, in part because he wrote text backwards, a mirror image. However, his now famous sketch of Vitruvian Man shows a mathematical interest in proportion reminiscent of the Greek **Ideal**.

Vitruvian Man (1492). Pen, ink, water color, paper.

Annunciation. (1472). Oil on panel.

Madonna of the Carnation. (1478). Oil on canvas.

Like Fra Angelico's *Annunciation* (above), Leonardo's version depicts the angel informing Mary that she will bear the Christ child. This treatment, however, is one moment of time, not a timeless conflation of many eras. The depth of the painting and the rich naturalism of the landscape gain from masterful **Linear Perspective**, seen especially in the lines of the building

Like other painters else in his day, Leonardo painted Madonnas enriched by the new interests in naturalism, time and place. His *Madonna of the Carnation* captures the features of a specific model, dressed in the sumptuous fashions of 16th Century Milan. **Foreshortening** gives rich contours and textures to the figures, and the Alps rise through the windows of the room. Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks* sets new standards for dramatic setting. Behind a family grouping—Mary, an angel, young John the Baptist, and Jesus—looms a forbidding landscape of jagged rock outcroppings. An archway to the left appears to be filled with the teeth of a monster. The background almost overpowers the central grouping of iconic figures. Still, those figures are worthy of notice. They are "*composed*" (i.e. arranged) in a loose circle defined in part by their eye lines. The figures gaze lovingly at each other, forming an implied ring of intimacy. This effect reveals character (for the Greeks, *Ethos*) and also operates as a formal design feature, guiding our eyes.

Virgin of the Rocks. (1508). Oil on panel (transferred to canvas).

Mona Lisa. (1503-1506). Oil on panel.

Of course, Leonardo is most famous today for the small portrait—about 30 by 21 inches—that we know as the *Mona Lisa*, perhaps the most famous painting in the world. But what makes it so special as a painting? Again, it is difficult to get a sense of the painting's textures and techniques without standing before it. And a good look is hard to achieve. The salon of the Louvre in which the canvas hangs throngs with visitors determined to glimpse the world's most famous painting.

Everyone speaks of that enigmatic smile and we wonder, as the song goes, what the woman is thinking. We speak of the woman's enigmatic smile, but notice how the eyes look directly "into the camera," so to speak. As we just saw, eye lines can open up the inner character and they profoundly affect our own eyes' processing of the image.

A close look at the *Mona Lisa* reveals impossibly rich textures, subtle layers of light, shadow, and color. The brushwork is sublime, blending the textures of the woman and of the atmospheric background into a seamless, organic whole without artificially etched contours. Leonardo called his signature style of brushwork **Sfumato**:

Sfumato

> The blending of tones or colors so subtly that they melt into one another without perceptible transitions—in Leonardo's words, "*without lines or borders, in the manner of smoke*." Leonardo was a supreme exponent of *sfumato*, … one of the distinguishing marks of 'modern' painting (Sfumato).

European painters of the next 400 years would strive to "melt" their brushwork into the organic textures of the subject, all but erasing the traces of the medium.

Michelangelo: Christian Humanism

Today, the word **Humanism** is too often associated exclusively with secularist life philosophies. During the **Renaissance**, learning later labeled as *humanist* did influence some skeptics.[8] However, most artists, scholars, philosophers, and churchmen of the day fused classical Greek lore with the faith and ideas of the Latin church.

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[8] *Skeptics*: e.g. Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), a Dominican friar and scholar who theorized about cosmic bodies, advocated pantheism and reincarnation, and was executed by the Inquisition for heresy.

This **Christian Humanism** finds its pinnacle expression, perhaps, in Michelangelo (see this note). The deeply pious artist focused almost exclusively on Biblical themes. However, his sculpture channeled classical Greek principles. He emulates **Classical** anatomy and detailed, meticulously **Mimetic** modeling of the human body. The drapery in his **Pieta** rivals the naturalism of the

finest Greek sculptors. Through **Rhythmos** and **Pathos**, this masterpiece inspires faith and empathy with Mary holding the crucified body of her son. Notice how the living woman holds her body's weight while the limbs of Jesus' body hang loose and lifeless.

Pietà. (1498-1500). Marble. St. Peter's Basilica

David. (1504). Marble.

Michelangelo carved his *David* for the roof of the Duomo (Cathedral) in Florence. But the people of Florence loved it so much that it was placed in the Palazzo Vecchio, the city's central public square. We find again the principles of Greek sculpture: meticulous anatomy, **Rhythmos**, **Contraposto** (uneven distribution of weight on the legs) and *ethos* (*character*): the calm, confident gaze of a masterful, born leader.

Of course, this David wears no clothes. Nudes had been unknown in Christianized Europe for nearly 1,000 years. But, embodying the rebirth of Greek classicism, Michelangelo's predecessor, Donatello, shocked the Renaissance art world when his *David* wore a floral hat and nothing else. For Michelangelo, the representation of David in the nude was an act of piety. Christian **Humanist** thought of the day saw human beings as the pinnacle of God's creation. Michelangelo followed his Greek masters in depicting the male nude as the Greek **Ideal** of the human form.

Creation of Adam. (1508-1512). Ceiling fresco. Sistine Chapel

For me, the ultimate expression of **Christian Humanism** is found in Michelangelo's painting. In 1505, the sculptor was called upon to paint frescoes on the walls and ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. Though not primarily a painter, Michelangelo labored for seven years over hundreds of Biblical figures in dramatic action. The crowning glory of the room is the highest panel of the ceiling, Michelangelo's depiction of God breathing life into the stirring Adam, in Christian Humanist thinking, God's greatest creation. Christian humanists of any age may in this image find inspiration for openness to human culture in the context of faith.

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The Baroque: Step Beyond

As Hellenism followed Classical Greek style, so the **Baroque** follows the **Renaissance** Renaissance. The word *baroque* can designate "art of any time or place that shows the qualities of vigorous movement and emotional intensity." In terms of art history, it specifies 17th Century art especially in Italy, which displays "overt rhetoric and dynamic movement" (Baroque). Baroque painters moved biblical images emphatically into the often sordid environment of gritty Roman streets and cultivated dramatic extremes of emotion.

Caravaggio, the Pope's Bad Boy

> Caravaggio was an unstable, violent man who lived in a violent age. His life story, his image as a rebel against conservative values, and the powerful immediacy of his art have made him by far the best-known Italian 17th-century painter. … He was one of the greatest painters ever to have found new ways of reinventing images of Christian feeling (Langdon).

Caravaggio was as famous for his bad boy lifestyle as for his paintings. Yet his sordid life experience powered religious art that fearlessly explored the flashpoint of sin and grace. His gritty biblical scenes are vividly set in the mean streets of Rome. In *Calling of St. Matthew*, the tax collector disciple (Matthew 9.9) is called away from a gambling table in a Roman tavern.

The Calling of Saint Matthew. (1599-1600). Oil on Canvas.

The Incredulity of Saint Thomas. (ca. 1601-1602). Oil on Canvas.

David & Head of Goliath. (1610). Oil on Canvas.

Despite or perhaps because of his experiences of vice, Caravaggio captures the complexities of faith. His *Incredulity of Saint Thomas* humanizes a moment in the apostle's life all too often dismissed for faithlessness. John's gospel tells us that Thomas, absent for Jesus' appearance to the brethren (John 20.24–29). As might many of us, Thomas doubts the story:

John 20.24–29

"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

The apostle is all too often dismissed as "Doubting Thomas." Caravaggio's Thomas, however, is all too human, probing Christ's

living tissues beneath a furrowed brow that intensely seeks truth. Doubt, faith's other side, engenders an intimate encounter with the incarnate Lord. Caravaggio's life was steeped in humanity fallibility. After killing a man in a street brawl, Caravaggio was banished from Rome. For years he beseeched the Pope for pardon. As an act of penance, he painted his own face on the head of Goliath held aloft by David. Caravaggio knew how to invest himself in his work!

Caravaggio is particularly renowned for the intense contrasts in his paintings between light and shadow. The term **Chiaroscuro** has been "used to describe the effects of light and dark in a work of art, particularly when they are strongly contrasting" (Chiaroscuro). *Chiaroscuro* can be seen in Renaissance works, e.g. Leonardo's e.g. *Virgin of the Rocks*, and would feature in artistic media for centuries. In the 1960s, French film theory coined the term **Film Noir** to describe a cinematic genre found in German Expressionism, French post-war cinema, and Hollywood cinematography of the 1930s and 1940s that used intense contrast between light and shadow for thematic effect. Consider the intensity of the *chiaroscuro* in Caravaggio's pieces above.

Dutch Masters

In the 17th Century, the Netherlands commanded the greatest trading fleet and wealthiest trading colonies on earth. Dutch and Flemish merchants patronized some of the most accomplished painters in Europe. While the Italian *Baroque* was "associated with the Catholic Counter-Reformation," the Dutch Baroque reflected the Netherlands' militantly Protestant perspective. Reformed churches repudiated the Catholic veneration of saints, so the Dutch masters focused on contemporary scenes and quiet, domestic scenes (Baroque).

Johannes Vermeer

Johannes (Jan) Vermeer

In the central part of his career … Vermeer painted those serene and harmonious images of domestic life [known] for their beauty of composition, brushwork, and treatment of light. … The majority show one or two figures in a room lit from the onlooker's left, engaged in domestic or recreational tasks. The predominant colors are yellow, blue, and grey, arranged in flawlessly cool harmonies, and the compositions have a purity and dignity (Vermeer, Jan).

Vermeer was fascinated by apparently insignificant moments of domestic life. Here, a housewife stands at a window, reading a letter. As is normative in Vermeer's work, a window in the upper left lights the scene, which is framed by the wall and a curtain.

Woman reading a letter at window.(ca. 1659). Oil on canvas.

The Milkmaid. (1660).Oil, canvas

Girl with a Pearl Earring. (1665). Oil on canvas.

Vermeer's famous painting of *The Milkmaid* commemorates, not the wealthy homeowner, but a serving woman at her daily chores. The woman is lit from the upper left. Textures of dress, food, and pouring milk are exquisitely rendered and enriched by vibrant, ultramarine blues. In the famous *Girl with a Pear Earring*, however, the light source is not depicted, although the play of light is carefully delineated. The black background sets off subtle gradations of color and a face expressive of serene personality.

Rembrandt van Rijn

It is not only the quality of Rembrandt's work that sets him apart from all his Dutch contemporaries, but also its range. Although portraits and religious works bulk largest in his output, he made highly original contributions to other genres, including still-life (*The Slaughtered Ox* (Rembrandt).

In Rembrandt, we see a powerful culmination of the developments emerging from the Renaissance. The brushwork. The **Chiaroscuro**. The **Linear Perspective**. The **Foreshortening**. And the dramatic intensity that emerged during the **Baroque** era. There is much to say, for example, about the *Storm on the Sea of Galilee*, and we will return to it. The scene dramatizes (!) the incident remembered in Matthew 8, Mark 4, and Luke 8 in which Jesus calms a storm terrifying His disciples. Notice how Rembrandt uses zones of light to bring salvation to the men trapped in the darkness of the sea as a destructive element.

		
Storm on Sea of Galilee. (1633). Oil on canvas	*Slaughtered Ox*. (1655). Oil on Panel.	*The Company of Frans Banning Cocq and Willem van Ruytenburch*, AKA *The Night Watch*. (1642). Oil on canvas.

Fascinated as many painters have been with anatomy, Rembrandt transforms the genre of **Still life** by picturing the carcass of a slaughtered ox. Rembrandt's masterpiece, "so discolored with dirty varnish that it looked like a night scene," was long mislabeled *The Night Watch*. The painting, over 12 by 14 feet, "showed remarkable originality in making a pictorial drama out of an insignificant event," the mustering of a company of militia. The great canvas repays long study: "[subordinating] individual portraits to the demands of the composition," Rembrandt injects an overflowing barrel of life into the scene, dozens of figures, prominent and obscure, caught in individual moments of drama.

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The Renaissance Model of Art

So what is a painting? What do we expect it to do? Well, as we have seen, that depends on our cultural context. However, in Europe and the Americas, the model of painting that has descended from the **Renaissance** has been profoundly influential for a long, long time. Renaissance painters locked in on the moment of looking. The overarching metaphor for Renaissance painting was that of a *window on the world*, emulating our vision of a moment in time and space. This sense of the canvas as a window was so strong that Renaissance painters began placing windows in the backgrounds of paintings set in interiors. We see this **Convention** , the **Veduta**, in Leonardo's *Madonna of the Creation.* Behind the mother are windows opening onto a landscape with distant mountains.

Madonna of the Carnation. (1478). Oil on canvas.

Piero della Francesca. (1470). *Flagellation of Christ*. Oil, tempera, panel.

Jan Vermeer. *The Artist's Studio.* (1665). Oil on Canvas.

Piero della Francesca's *Flagellation***[1]** *of Christ* dramatizes a key moment from the gospels. But the work's focus is on classical style and technique. Christ's suffering is recessed and eclipsed in our awareness by sumptuous classical architecture and the elegant Greek column to which he is bound. Prominent **Linear Perspective** breaks a moment of vision down into zones of depth: foreground,

middle distance, deep distance—precisely the concerns that challenge photographers today. The right half of the image is dominated by three contemporary, enigmatic men standing in the foreground, apparently disinterested in the drama.[2]

In his *The Artist's Studio*, Vermeer takes things playfully much further. His composition doubles the act of visual **Representation**. The pictured artist–perhaps Vermeer himself–is at work capturing the image of a model on canvas. And the painting as a whole records that act of representation itself in the context of a studio divided into zones and instances of perception. The model gazes downward at fabrics on a table. The artist gazes at the model. A map covers the back wall, another example of visual representation.[5] And the actual canvas composes all with precise **Linear Perspective** delineated by in the tiles which define the depth of field.

Most remarkable is the painting's frame perspective, our own vision of the room and its nested acts of vision and representation. In the foreground, curtains open on acts of vision and representation as if for spectators in a theater. Our viewpoint over the shoulder of the artist more or less approximates his view. Partially obscured by his body is the canvas on which his image is beginning to emerge. We see not only the acts of seeing and representation of the subjects, but our own role as spectators of art.

Through Vermeer, we explore the window-like framework of painting after the Renaissance painting: **linear perspective**, **foreshortening**, brushwork, light and shadow, and the **Mimetic** value of creating a "realistic" illusion of beholding the "real thing."

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[1] Flagellation: i.e. the whipping of Christ by Roman guards (Matthew 27.26).

[2] The identity and significance of the three men has been a topic of scholarly contention for a long time.

[3] The map has political and historical significance. It defiantly represents the Protestant provinces of the

Netherlands during a time of conflict and war with the Catholic Holy Roman Empire.

Academic Art

Renaissance artistic conventions proved to be astonishingly durable. By the 19th Century, **Classical** and Renaissance models of art dominated standards of taste in the Euro-American art world. National academies, or associations of artists such as the **Académie des Beaux-Artes** in France codified rules for composition and used them to judge the works submitted for inclusion in their authorized shows. An artist whose work was shown by the *Académie* could count on large commissions from people of wealth and social standing who wished to prove their taste in purchasing paintings and sculpture. These standards heavily influenced the public in what to expect from "good" painting. The result was a powerfully authoritative set of standards that governed artists' techniques and public taste:

Academic Art

Art that is governed by rules, especially art that is sanctioned by an official institution, academy, or school. The term was originally applied in the 17th century to art that conformed to the standards set by the Académie Royale in France concerning composition, drawing, and color. It is now generally understood to mean art that is conservative and lacking in originality (Academic Art).

The rules for **Academic Art** derived from the Renaissance model of painting and its values:

- Preference for noble subjects that affirm social values
- The painting as a window on the world
- Naturalistic representation as the goal of art
- Technical prowess in linear perspective, foreshortening, and modelling
- Studio production, studied composition and meticulously worked oil paint
- Painstaking brushwork that disappears into the represented image

Jacques-Louis David's *Oath of the Horatii* exemplifies Neo-classical **Academic Art** of the 19th Century. The subject matter is noble: a legendary moment from the Roman past of civic duty as a lesson for 18th Century France. Technically, the **Linear Perspective** is perfectly laid out. The lighting is carefully controlled to highlight the men thirsting for glory and the women anticipating grief. The figures are perfectly modelled and the action—Greek **Rhythmos**—rendered dynamically. The raised arms form an rising triangle balanced by a slumping triangle of despairing women.

David, Jacques-Louis. (1784). *The Oath of the Horatii*. Oil on canvas.

Now, every classicism breeds a reaction. Notice that the contemporary definition of Academic Art above reflects a

dismissive view of "art that is conservative and lacking in originality." As we will see next week, powerful revolutions against **Academic Art** arose in the late 19th Century. For perhaps 150 years, the professional art world has come to value individual creativity, innovation, and the deconstruction of the image. Conventional and commercial artists are often marginalized and dismissed.

Yet the **Renaissance** model lives on in popular tastes. Mainstream audiences continue to hearken back to the Renaissance model in their preferences. They are put off and confused by the innovations and experiments of the so-called "Modern" period, and instinctively revert to the familiar and comprehensible conventions of Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo, and others. The Renaissance is not technically a Classical era, but it channeled the Greeks and Romans and endures today as a **Classic** approach that is hard to shake off.

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Literary Renaissances

Tips on Reading Poetry

We are about to explore the Renaissance tradition in literature. That means reading some poetry. Remember our tips for keeping your head above water reading verse.

- Read aloud, listening for rhythms, patterns.
- Recognize the plain sense of the words before looking for hidden meanings.
- Who talks to whom about what? Clearly seeing this dynamic can open many poems.
- Track themes and patterns of meaning that flow from the above.

The Renaissance also transformed literature. Patrons of the visual arts such as the Medici also patronized scholarship and literature which drew on the newly re-discovered Classical tradition. The great poets of the day emulated Greek epics and absorbed Greek myths. Yet these literary Renaissances looked forward as well as back. Francesco Petrarch was an Italian scholar, philosopher, and historian. He was also a poet who, along with his contemporary Dante, reached a wide audience by doing something that shocked the scholarly community who wrote everything in Latin. The two poets wrote verse in the contemporary language of Florence, the linguistic ancestor of modern Italian. Petrarch used the **vernacular** "for the representation in verse of his personal meditations on love and religion" (Petrarch). Drawing on the **Courtly Love** tradition,

many of the poems in his *Il Canzonieri* dwell on a woman named Laura whom he admired from afar.

Petrarch. (1368). Sonnet VII, Il Canzonieri **[1]**

Those eyes, 'neath which my passionate rapture rose,
The arms, hands, feet, the beauty that erewhile
Could my own soul from its own self beguile
And in a separate world of dreams enclose,
The hair's bright tresses, full of golden glows
And the soft lightning of the angelic smile
That changed this earth to some celestial isle,
Are now but dust, poor dust, that nothing knows.[2]

And yet I live! Myself I grieve and scorn,
Left dark without the light I loved in vain,
Adrift in tempest on a bark forlorn;
Dead is the source of all my amorous strain,
Dry is the channel of my thoughts outworn,
And my sad harp can sound but notes of pain.

---

[1] Our text of course is translated from the Medieval Italian by T. W. Higginson.
[2] What do we learn in this line? It's important!

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from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=223#audio-223-1

Last week, we explored the rhythmical bases of English poetry, especially Rhyme. We saw that a **Rhyme Scheme** divides the text into **Stanzas** that operate like prose paragraphs. OK, let's apply those concepts to Petrarch's lyric. What structure do you find? I'll bet it wasn't hard for you. We see that the poem is divided into two Stanzas: an **Octave** (A-B-A-B-A-B-A-B) and a **Sestet** (C-D-C-D-C-D). But what does that tell us? And do you recognize this pattern?

Well, notice the title: ***Sonnet*** VII. You've heard the word, but we need to recognize that, like **Haiku**, a **Sonnet** obeys a fairly strict structural rule: 14 lines. Since Petrach innovated the sonnet form, his structural version is named for him: the 14 lines of a Petrarchan or **Italian Sonnet** is divided into an Octave (or two **Quatrains**) and a sestet (Sonnet).

Remember how we said that poetic forms always contribute to the poem's thematic richness? Let's follow that lesson and explore the significance of a sonnet's structure. Start with the poem's voice: a somber, introspective reflection by an apparently sorrowing individual. The first two stanzas caress in the imagination the beauty of a beloved who is apparently distant, unapproachable. But how? Why? Well let's look at lines 8 and 9, those that bridge the poem's stanzas:

> … Are now but dust, poor dust, that nothing knows.
> And yet I live! Myself I grieve and scorn, …

Hmmm. Apparently, the beloved who is adored in the 1st two stanzas

is dead, leaving the **Persona** alone with grief and self-loathing. The poem has made a profound **Turn** from a problem in the first 8 lines to a resolution, albeit a tragic one, in the final 6. This thematically shifting Turn is a sonnet **Convention**. In an Italian Sonnet, "the transition from octave to sestet usually coincides with a ***turn*** (Italian, *volta*) in the argument or mood of the poem" (Sonnet).

When reading sonnets, recognizing the Turn injects life into the form. The boundary between the two thematic emphases helps us process its meaning and the decisive shift packs the energy of a change in direction. Don't miss the Turn in every sonnet!

The Shakespearean Sonnet

The term *English Renaissance* is reserved for the literature of the Age of Queen Elizabeth (16th-17th Centuries). Several of the poets of the day tried their hand at Petrarch's form: Michael Drayton, Sir Phillip Sydney, and, of course, Shakespeare. Being the poetic master that he was, Shakespeare decided to make a change to the Italian Sonnet form.

Shakespeare, William. **[2]** *(1609) Sonnet 18.*

Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,

And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair[3] sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to Time thou grow'st.

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

---

[2] For more information on Shakespeare's poetry, see this summary discussion.
[3] *Fair from fair*: for Elizabethans, the word *fair* suggested beauty, health, moral correctness, and a light coloring, especially of skin

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=223#audio-223-2

After last week, you are probably in a position to recognize the **Rhyme Scheme** and **Stanza** forms. And the **Iambic Meter** is as usual in English verse. There is a metrical wrinkle: Shakespeare's lines have five **Feet**. We call this Iambic **Pentameter**. In the audio recording, listen for that subtle interplay between the meter and the normal rhythm of the language.

But wait. Petrarch's pattern—**Quatrain**, quatrain, **Sestet**—is altered in Shakespeare's **Sonnet**. Three quatrains are followed by a final, stinger **Couplet**: "The **English Sonnet** (also called the Shakespearean sonnet) comprises three quatrains and a final couplet, rhyming *ababcdcdefefgg*. … The **Turn** comes with the final *couplet*" (Sonnet). This is the formula for a Shakespearean Sonnet, also called an **English Sonnet** because so many English poets have used it.

To fully grasp the structure and turn, let's try to make sense of the poem. What is the plain sense of the words? You'll notice some apostrophes that trim the words to fit the *meter* (see below). But the language isn't too hard, right? The poem's persona addresses *Thou*, obviously a beloved. In the tradition of courtly love verse (last week), the poem flatters by comparing the beloved's beauty with that of a summer's day. Not hard to follow, eh?

But what theme do we see in those comparisons? Quatrains one to three claim for the beloved a beauty superior to the flaws the poem finds in nature's splendor. The poem seeks to impress the beloved with **Hyperbole**, exaggerated expressions of flattery. OK, lots of courtly love poems make outlandish comparisons between the beloved's beauty and nature. But this one is different. Art the world over has celebrated human beauty while poignantly remembering its rapid slide into decay. This poem promises, apparently absurdly, that it can preserve the beloved's beauty forever.

> *So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,*
> *So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.*

How can the poet credibly promise eternally persistent beauty? The **Turn** into the final **Couplet** explains. Commemorated in verse, the beloved's reputation for beauty will be read age upon age. Arrogant? Perhaps. But in Shakespeare's case, no idle boast. The sonnet has lasted, now, over four centuries. Of course, we really don't know anything decisive about the beloved!

Shakespeare's **English Sonnet** form uses structural imbalance to multiply the power of the *turn* into a final theme: twelve lines over and against two lines with the impact of a punchline. The compression of that stinger **Couplet** packs more punch than the leisurely reflection of a final sestet in an **Italian Sonnet**.

Figures of Speech and the Sonnet Tradition

In English poetry, the sonnet has proven to be flexible and tenacious. Many great poets have composed sonnets: Milton (17th Century), 19th Century Romantics—Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats—, 20th Century innovators like e. e. cummings. Let's sample three very different sonneteers. As we approach these poems, let's introduce the concept of **Figurative Language**:

Figures of Speech

Figure (*figure of speech*): an expression that departs from the accepted literal sense or from the normal order of words, or in which an emphasis is produced by patterns of sound. … An especially important resource of poetry, although not every poem will use it; … constantly present in all other kinds of speech and writing, even though it usually passes unnoticed (Figure—figure of speech).

Figures of speech are usually divided into two major groups:

1. **Scheme**: patterns of sound or idea (*Schemes*)
2. **Trope**: figures that play on the meaning of words and expressions (*Tropes*)

Note: You may use the word *Trope* in the context of the world of social media. Traditionally, a *trope* is "uses words in senses beyond their literal meanings. … *Tropes* change the meanings of words, by a "turn"' of sense" (Trope).

Analysts count scores of rhetorical figures. However, there are only a few *Tropes* you need to understand to follow sophisticated conversations.

- **Simile**: "an explicit comparison between two different things, actions, or feelings, using the words 'as' or 'like,' as in Wordsworth's line: *I wandered lonely* ***as a cloud"*** (*Simile*)
- **Metaphor**: "a figure in which one thing, idea, or action is referred to by a word or expression normally denoting another … so as to suggest some common quality … assumed as an imaginary identity rather than directly stated as a comparison: e.g. referring to a man as *that pig*. … Everyday language is made up of metaphorical phrases that pass unnoticed as "dead" metaphors, like the *branch* of an organization (*Metaphor*)
- **Paradox**: "a statement or expression so surprisingly self-contradictory as to provoke us into seeking another sense or context in which it would be true. … Wordsworth's line 'The Child is father of the Man' and Shakespeare's 'the truest poetry is the most feigning' are notable literary examples"(*Paradox*)

John Donne

Oliver, Isaac. (before 1622). Portrait of John Donne.

John Donne (1572–1631) was a widely travelled courtier and diplomat for Queen Elizabeth who composed knotty, sometimes amorous verse. At 49, he became a Dean of London's St. Paul's Cathedral, composing devotions on mortality and religious verses called *Holy Sonnets*. For a century or so, Donne has been a favorite with literature teachers for thorny, hard-to-follow verse that can drive students batty. (For more information on John Donne, explore Hester's note) Indeed, Dr. Samuel Johnson, the great 18th Century critic, complained about *metaphysical poets* (Dr. Johnson's term) like Donne:

> The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtilty[4] surprises; but … though [readers] sometimes admire, they are seldom pleased (Johnson).
>
> [4] *Subtilty*: 18th Century spelling of *subtlety*.

So, have I scared you off? You're brave, right? Let's tackle one of Donne's thorniest *Holy Sonnets*. Maybe this reading will help:

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John Donne, Holly Sonnet, #10.

Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;[5]
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.

I, like an usurp'd[6] town to another due,
Labor to admit you, but oh, to no end;
Reason, your viceroy[7] in me, me should defend,
But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue.

Yet dearly I love you, and would be lov'd fain,[8]
But am betroth'd unto your enemy;
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,

Except you enthrall[9] me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish[10] me.

[5] *But knock*: Compare Revelation 3.20, *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.*
[6] Usurp'd: i.e. *usurped*, another way of saying a city under siege by an enemy.
[7] *Viceroy*: a governor ruling on behalf of a king
[8] *Fain:* i.e. gladly willing
[9] *Enthrall:* i.e. enslaved
[10] *Ravished:* in this case, raped

Try reading the sonnet aloud, listening for the rhythms and the rhyme scheme. Which is this: an **Italian Sonnet** or a **Shakespearian Sonnet**? I'll bet you can tell!

Now, the footnotes point up the difference in diction separating us from the Age of Elizabeth. Still, even with the glosses provided, can we make sense of this challenging text? Before looking for secret codes, start on a small scale. Who is talking to whom? About what?

"Batter my heart, three-person'd God"—clearly, the poem's voice directly addresses the Trinity—the Christian God in three persons. The sonnet is a prayer. But what sort of prayer with such harsh images of destruction? The difficulty of the verse matches the daunting challenge that Christians have faced through the ages, articulated by the Apostle Paul:

Romans 7.14-24

> For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. … For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing … What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? (Romans 7.14-24).

Donne gives anguished voice to the great challenge of repentance: how does a person of faith break the habits of sin and rebellion and learn to obey God's will? Donne captures the apparent impossibility of it all in a series of metaphors and paradoxes.

- *Stanza* 1: God's quiet invitations to faith seem inadequate to a sinner who feels he must be destroyed to find new life.
- Stanza 2: the poet invokes the metaphor of a walled city laboring to admit the besieging God but remaining captive to sin.
- Stanza 3: the metaphor is that of a would-be lover who must break the bonds of marriage to an evil spouse pleading with God to set him free by imprisoning him.
- Final *Couplet*: a burning paradox—one can only be free by being enslaved to God, chaste by being "ravished."

These metaphors and paradoxes open the sonnet and a new perspective on Romans 7. Remember: poetry uses everyday figures of speech. It just uses them more creatively!

Gerard Manly Hopkins: God's Elusive Grandeur

Gerard Manley Hopkins. (1918). Photograph

An Anglo-Catholic priest, Gerard Manley Hopkins felt that, as a sacrament, he should stop writing poetry. Then, in 1875, five German nuns perished aboard a sinking passenger ship, Hopkins commemorated their faith in *The Wreck of the Deutschland* and the poetic floodgates opened, often in sonnets.

Gerard Manley Hopkins. (1877) God's Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?[11]

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade;[12] bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this,[13] nature is never spent;[14]
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent

World broods[15] with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

---

[11] *Reck his rod*: that is recognize God's rod of authority
[12] *Trade*: in Victorian society, *trade* was the engine of economic growth, but it was nevertheless despised as a sign of social inferiority. The aristocrat and the gentleman or woman had independent means and did not dirty their hands with trade.
[13] *For all this*: the word *for* in this case means *despite—even though all this is true* …
[14] *Spent*: i.e. depleted
[15] *Broods*: i.e. sitting protectively over unhatched eggs, as does a mother hen

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The world is charged with the grandeur of God. This is Hopkins' great theme, one easy to misread. Hopkins never writes of God's grandeur as a glaring coat of enamel. The word "charged" should be read as elusive potentiality, a compressed, unreleased electrical force.

The first **Stanza** in this Sonnet poses a problem: why do men not recognize God's glory? The striking images suggest that divine

splendor only rarely emerges from hidden places. Light suddenly flashes from shaken foil. The iridescence of oil flashes only as it gathers "to a greatness" before dropping. One must have faithful eyes to catch these glimpses, and Stanza 2 laments the life conditions that blunt our spiritual sensitivity: the trudging, tiresome routine of life, labor and commercial trade. We can't even feel the soil through the shoes we wear.

In Stanza 3, the **Sestet**, the sonnet's **Turn** leads to redemption. Deep down in all things lies a "dearest freshness" connecting us to spirit. Dawn brings new life following darkness and over all lies the warm, loving protection of the Holy Ghost, the third divine member of the Christian Trinity.

Hopkins always experimented boldly with untraditional metrical rhythms. Read the poem aloud or listen to the audio. Feel the force of stressed syllables. A **Spondee** is a foot in which both syllables are stressed: *shook foil*; *bleared*, *smeared*; *foot feel*; *brown brink*, *world broods*, *warm breast*, *bright wings*. Each *spondee* slows the verse and confers weight on themes.

Claude McKay

Claude McKay. (N.D.) Photographic Portrait.

Born in Jamaica, Claude McKay emigrated to Harlem and became associated with the Harlem Renaissance. As a poet, he composed in highly traditional verse forms, often the sonnet. However, unlike

other writers within that movement, McKay made little effort to adopt a sophisticated cool. He raged in a full-throated roar while retaining a poet's sense of the complexity of things.

Claude McKay (1921). "*America*"

Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,
And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth,
Stealing my breath of life, I will confess
I love this cultured hell that tests my youth.

Her vigor flows like tides into my blood,
Giving me strength erect against her hate,
Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.
Yet, as a rebel fronts a king in state,

I stand within her walls with not a shred
Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer.
Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,
And see her might and granite wonders there,

Beneath the touch of Time's unerring hand,
Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand.

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What do you think? Do you find this easier reading? How does McKay use figurative language and the structure of a *Shakespearean sonnet* to rage against the social forms that bind his people? How does he use numerous **Metaphors** to process his ambiguous relationship to the "cultured hell" which he also loves? How does he see America's future?

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Irony and Social Protest

Irony and society

Let's pay special attention to a key figure of speech, **Irony**: "a subtly humorous perception of inconsistency, in which an apparently straightforward statement or event is undermined by its context so as to give it a very different significance." Among the varieties of irony, the most basic is **Verbal Irony**: "a discrepancy between what is said and what is really meant." (Irony).

All of us use irony. Every day. We make remarks expecting our listener to understand the opposite. We might say, "After beginning this adult learning program, I have all the time in the world." Knowing the context, any adult learner gets the real, ironically implied message, the opposite of what is said. Consciously or not, we know that irony is a vital social skill. Think about people who seem socially awkward. Frequently, these folks struggle in conversation because they naively miss unstated, ironic undercurrents of communication.

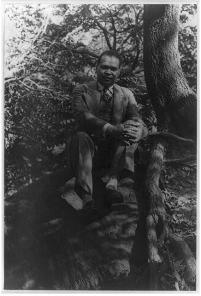
Irony furthermore serves as a marker of social class. You will recall Ryōsu Ōhashi (Japanese aesthetics) explaining that the Japanese sense of beauty is characterized by an aesthetics of "Implication, Suggestion, Imperfection." Notice that implication and suggestion work through irony. Remember, too, that Samurai culture reflected an elite social class. A preference for indirect, ironic modes of communication is common in many elite cultures which associate direct, emotional expressions to be uncouth, ill-mannered, a sign of poor breeding. The well-bred, it is thought, will restrain their expressions and be sensitive to ironic implication. It follows, then, that classical artistic genres are often heavily steeped in irony, as we, for example, in Shakespeare's sonnets.

Protest Irony

Elites often use **Irony** to ridicule the disadvantaged. But irony can work in the other direction. An elite's complacencies and illusions about the world, other people, and itself can easily become the subject of deflating irony. Comedians, for example, often ironically contrast ideas of the prominent and powerful with what the audience knows about politicians, celebrities and famous people. Artists and writers protesting the oppressive dominance of the elite often turn to irony to skewer classical values and styles.

Countee Cullen

Countee Cullen was a literary scholar who earned a Master's degree at Harvard in 1926. His great literary love was for the great English tradition which had culminated in Romantic and Victorian poetry. He was an accomplished poet who published powerful books of ironic verse displaying the subtle, elegant features of his British models.



Carl van Vechten. (1941). Countee Cullen. [Photograph].

He was also an African American at a time when mainstream society

thought it knew that advanced studies were beyond the capabilities of people called Negroes. The fact that he was published at all was a social miracle of the so-called **Harlem Renaissance**. For a decade or so, African American artists, writers, and scholars were patronized by sophisticated white benefactors. Nevertheless, Cullen could not escape the bitter bondage of African Americans.

Cullen's "Yet Do I Marvel," displays his considerable literary powers. The form is the **Sonnet**, the voice deft, elegant. The references to Greek myth in the first three sonnets testify to his mastery of the classical tradition. These arcane references lay out a series of puzzles that elude human understanding and, for each, faithfully give God the benefit of the doubt.

Countee Cullen, "Yet Do I Marvel"

I doubt not God is good, well-meaning, kind
And did He stoop to quibble could tell why
The little buried mole continues blind,
Why flesh that mirrors Him must some day die,

Make plain the reason tortured Tantalus[1]
Is baited by the fickle fruit, declare
If merely brute caprice dooms Sisyphus[2]
To struggle up a never-ending stair.

Inscrutable His ways are, and immune
To catechism by a mind too strewn
With petty cares to slightly understand
What awful brain compels His awful hand.

Yet do I marvel at this curious thing:
To make a poet black, and bid him sing!

[1] *Tantalus*: a character in Greek mythology punished in Hades by being forced to stand forever in a pool of water with fruit above his head, both of which perpetually shrink away whenever he reaches for them.
[2] *Sisyphus*: another character punished by endless frustration. Sisyphus was forced to push a large rock up a hill, only to have it perpetually fall back down just before he could reach the summit.

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But the real punch of the poem lies in the final, ironic **Couplet**. Cullen takes full advantage of the compressed power of the **Shakespearian Sonnet** form to pose a mystery that cannot be accepted by casual faith. While his faith might handle the mysteries posed in the first 3 **Stanzas**, it is crushed by the clash between a natural poetic gift and the gag that American society uses to silence Black voices.

Cullen's rage is as great as McKay's. But he expresses it through ironic suggestion. "This curious thing"—what a strange and understated form of protest. The poem never directly condemns American racism. It does command us to make an ironic and

contextual comparison between the gift of poetry and the fact of the society's treatment of black people. The bitterness lies ironically behind a cheerful façade. Another of Cullen's verses is only four lines long. It's maximally compressed irony launches a devastating attack on Whites' attitudes toward Blacks.

Countee Cullen. (1926). "For a Lady I Know"

She even thinks that up in heaven
Her class lies late and snores

While poor black cherubs rise at seven
To do celestial chores.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=228#audio-228-2

To trace the ironies here, we need to know some of the context. In Cullen's world, a "lady" would be an aristocratic woman of wealth and prestige. A "lady" allowing a black man to "know" her socially was almost unthinkable. A small cohort of sophisticated, avant-garde, elite New Yorkers were interested in African American artists and writers and would both visit them in Harlem clubs and invite them to their homes for cocktails.

The "lady" in the poem, then, approached Cullen's people from an exceptionally progressive perspective. Nevertheless, the poem

deftly captures her patronizing attitude toward a people she sees as serving children. The irony punctures her progressive affectations and indicts the wider society. If the most progressive White attitude is this, what of the rest of the violently racist society? In four ironic lines, Cullen surpasses the impact of pages of commentary.

Sherman Alexei

Sherman Alexei is a Native American of Coeur d'Alene heritage. A poet, novelist, and film-maker, he uses humor to communicate with mainstream audiences. He writes from the perspective of the "Rez" (the reservation). And his relationship with mainstream audiences who come to his readings is both amiable and touchy.

Sherman Alexei. (1996). *"How to Write the The Great Indian Novel"*

All of the Indians must have tragic features: tragic noses, eyes, and arms.
Their hands and fingers must be tragic when they reach for tragic food.

The hero must be a half-breed, half white and half Indian, preferably
from a horse culture. He should often weep alone. That is mandatory.

If the hero is an Indian woman, she is beautiful. She must be slender
and in love with a white man. But if she loves an Indian man

then he must be a half-breed, preferably from a horse culture.
If the Indian woman loves a white man, then he has to be so white

that we can see the blue veins running through his skin like rivers.
When the Indian woman steps out of her dress, the white man gasps

at the endless beauty of her brown skin. She should be compared to nature:
brown hills, mountains, fertile valleys, dewy grass, wind, and clear water.

If she is compared to murky water, however, then she must have a secret.
Indians always have secrets, which are carefully and slowly revealed.

Yet Indian secrets can be disclosed suddenly, like a storm. Indian men, of course, are storms. They should destroy the lives

of any white women who choose to love them. All white women love
Indian men. That is always the case. White women feign disgust

at the savage in blue jeans and T-shirt, but secretly lust after him.
White women dream about half-breed Indian men from horse cultures.

Indian men are horses, smelling wild and gamey. When the Indian man

unbuttons his pants, the white woman should think of topsoil.

There must be one murder, one suicide, one attempted rape.
Alcohol should be consumed. Cars must be driven at high speeds.

Indians must see visions. White people can have the same visions
if they are in love with Indians. If a white person loves an Indian

then the white person is Indian by proximity. White people must carry
an Indian deep inside themselves. Those interior Indians are half-breed

and obviously from horse cultures. If the interior Indian is male
then he must be a warrior, especially if he is inside a white man.

If the interior Indian is female, then she must be a healer, especially if she is inside
a white woman. Sometimes there are complications.

An Indian man can be hidden inside a white woman. An Indian woman
can be hidden inside a white man. In these rare instances,

everybody is a half-breed struggling to learn more about his or her horse culture.
There must be redemption, of course, and sins must be forgiven.

For this, we need children. A white child and an Indian child, gender

not important, should express deep affection in a childlike way.

In the Great American Indian novel, when it is finally written,
all of the white people will be Indians and all of the Indians will be ghosts.

Alexei's poem hangs from an ironic hook in the title. Literary folks commonly use the phrase "Great American novel" to refer to a common ambition among young writers: to compose a literary triumph that everyone will celebrate. But what audience do we mean by "everyone"? Let's remember that literary prizes are awarded by the educated, white mainstream. To achieve critical acclaim, an Indian writer would need to appeal to values and assumptions of the mainstream,

So the poem relentlessly, with sarcastic repetition recites the clichés and stereotypes by which mainstream society thinks it knows Indian cultures. Each will trigger hooting disdain from the folks on "the Rez" who know better. And mainstream readers will have trouble recognizing the lies masquerading as truths. Ironic humor punctures the illusions of an elite with little sense of its own folly.

Ironic Narrative: Guy de Maupassant

Drama, cinema, and prose fiction also make great use of irony in presenting their narratives. In addition to verbal irony, narratives often use *Dramatic irony* in which "the audience knows more about a character's situation than the character does, foreseeing an outcome contrary to" the character's expectation (Irony). *Dramatic*

irony heightens the tension of narrative and dramatic plots. "Don't open that door!" Have you ever called this to a character in a scary movie? As an experienced movie viewer, you know how scary movies work and when characters are stepping blindly into peril.

Irony can also be associated with a certain kind of *narrative voice*.**[3]** In **3rd Person Narrative**, "the narrator is not a character within the events related, but stands 'outside' those events" (Third-person narrative). Third person narrative comes in two flavors:

- **Restricted Narrative**: a *resitricted narrator* is limited to a particular viewpoint, e.g. the knowledge gathered to date by investigators in a murder mystery.
- **Omniscient Narrative**: an *omniscient narrator* is privileged with information available to many perspectives or even beyond the knowledge of anyone in the story.

[3] Written text always reflects a voicing point of view. In the cinema, point of view is, quite literally, associated with the camera. For example, a "subjective camera" takes up the vantage point of a character moving through a scene.

Omniscient narrators often go "inside" the minds of characters to share views and judgments. They may permit themselves to comment directly on the events of a story. A more limited narrative voice often opts not to offer direct commentary. Such narrators often rely on **Irony**.

Feyen-Perrin, F. N. A. (1876). *Portrait of Guy de Maupassant*. Oil on canvas.

Guy de Maupassant's *contes* (short stories) were drenched in the social ironies of the age. In the 19th Century, France was in social flux. The traditional aristocracy had inherited land-based wealth and elite status from feudal ancestors. They had always disdained the middle class of merchants and trades people, but in the industrial age, aristocratic wealth was being displaced by industrialized capital. When the *nouveau riche***[4]** middle class—the **Bourgeoisie**—tried to climb into the aristocracy, the elite used irony to ridicule their affectations of elite customs and manners. Meanwhile, writers and artists ridiculed so-called Philistines for worshipping money and social position and preferring heavy, crass, hyper-ornamented tastes.

This is the context for the social irony of "The Necklace," Maupassant's tale of a *bourgeoisie* bride striving to rise in society. Maupassant's view of Mathilde is nuanced and insightful. At times, her irritable social-climbing puts us off. At other times we sympathize with her and, especially, her long-suffering husband, a middling civil servant of moderate affluence.

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[4] *Nouveau riche*: newly rich, an expression of disdain for aristocrats belittling those with money but no claim to "breeding."

Guy de Maupassant. (1876). "The Necklace" Translated by B. Matthews.

SHE was one of those pretty and charming girls, born by a blunder of destiny in a family of employees. She had no

dowry, no expectations, no means of being known, understood, loved, married by a man rich and distinguished; and she let them make a match for her with a little clerk in the Department of Education.

She was simple since she could not be adorned; but she was unhappy as though kept out of her own class; for women have no caste[5] and no descent, their beauty, their grace, and their charm serving them instead of birth and fortune. Their native keenness, their instinctive elegance, their flexibility of mind, are their only hierarchy[6]; and these make the daughters of the people the equals of the most lofty dames.

She suffered intensely, feeling herself born for every delicacy and every luxury. She suffered from the poverty of her dwelling, from the worn walls, the abraded chairs, the ugliness of the stuffs. All these things, which another woman of her caste would not even have noticed, tortured her and made her indignant. The sight of the little girl from Brittany who did her humble housework awoke in her desolated regrets and distracted dreams. She let her mind dwell on the quiet vestibules, hung with Oriental tapestries, lighted by tall lamps of bronze, and on the two tall footmen in knee breeches who dozed in the large armchairs, made drowsy by the heat of the furnace. She let her mind dwell on the large parlors, decked with old silk, with their delicate furniture, supporting precious bric-a-brac, and on the coquettish little rooms, perfumed, prepared for the five o'clock chat with the most intimate friends, men well known and sought after, whose attentions all women envied and desired.

When she sat down to dine, before a tablecloth three

days old, in front of her husband, who lifted the cover of the tureen, declaring with an air of satisfaction, "Ah, the good *pot-au-feu*.[7] I don't know anything better than that." She was thinking of delicate repasts, with glittering silver, with tapestries peopling the walls with ancient figures and with strange birds in a fairy-like forest; she was thinking of exquisite dishes, served in marvelous platters, of compliment whispered and heard with a sphinx-like smile, while she was eating the rosy flesh of a trout or the wings of a quail.

She had no dresses, no jewelry, nothing. And she loved nothing else; she felt herself made for that only. She would so much have liked to please, to be envied, to be seductive and sought after.

She had a rich friend, a comrade of her convent days, whom she did not want to go and see any more, so much did she suffer as she came away. And she wept all day long, from chagrin, from regret, from despair, and from distress.

But one evening her husband came in with a proud air, holding in his hand a large envelope. "There," said he, "there's something for you."

She quickly tore the paper and took out of it a printed card which bore these words:—"The Minister of Education and Mme. Georges Rampouneau beg M. and Mme. Loisel to do them the honor to pass the evening with them at the palace of the Ministry, on Monday, January 18." Instead of being delighted, as her husband hoped, she threw the invitation on the table with annoyance, murmuring—"What do you want me to do with that?"

"But, my dear, I thought you would be pleased. You never go out, and here's a chance, a fine one. I had the hardest

work to get it. Everybody is after them; they are greatly sought for and not many are given to the clerks. You will see there all the official world."

She looked at him with an irritated eye and she declared with impatience:—"What do you want me to put on my back to go there?"

He had not thought of that; he hesitated:—"But the dress in which you go to the theater. That looks very well to me—" He shut up, astonished and distracted at seeing that his wife was weeping. Two big tears were descending slowly from the corners of the eyes to the corners of the mouth. He stuttered: — "What's the matter? What's the matter?"

But by a violent effort she had conquered her trouble, and she replied in a calm voice as she wiped her damp cheeks:—"Nothing. Only I have no clothes, and in consequence I cannot go to this party. Give your card to some colleague whose wife has a better outfit than I."

He was disconsolate. He began again:—"See here, Mathilde, how much would this cost, a proper dress, which would do on other occasions; something very simple?"

She reflected a few seconds, going over her calculations, and thinking also of the sum which she might ask without meeting an immediate refusal and a frightened exclamation from the frugal clerk. "At last, she answered hesitatingly:—"I don't know exactly, but it seems to me that with four hundred francs I might do it."

He grew a little pale, for he was reserving just that sum to buy a gun and treat himself to a little shooting, the next summer, on the plain of Nanterre, with some friends who used to shoot larks there on Sundays. But he said:—"All

right. I will give you four hundred francs. But take care to have a pretty dress."

The day of the party drew near, and Mme. Loisel seemed sad, restless, anxious. Yet her dress was ready. One evening her husband said to her:—"What's the matter? Come, now, you have been quite queer these last three days."

And she answered:—"It annoys me not to have a jewel, not a single stone, to put on. I shall look like distress. I would almost rather not go to this party."

He answered:—"You will wear some natural flowers. They are very stylish this time of the year. For ten francs you will have two or three magnificent roses."

But she was not convinced. "No; there's nothing more humiliating than to look poor among a lot of rich women."

But her husband cried:—"What a goose you are! Go find your friend, Mme. Forester, and ask her to lend you some jewelry. You know her well enough to do that."

She gave a cry of joy:—"That's true. I had not thought of it."

The next day she went to her friend's and told her about her distress. Mme. Forester went to her mirrored wardrobe, took out a large casket, brought it, opened it, and said to Mme. Loisel:—"Choose, my dear."

She saw at first bracelets, then a necklace of pearls, then a Venetian cross of gold set with precious stones of an admirable workmanship. She tried on the ornaments before the glass, hesitated, and could not decide to take them off and to give them up. She kept on asking:—"You haven't anything else?"

"Yes, yes. Look. I do not know what will happen to please you."

All at once she discovered, in a box of black satin, a superb necklace of diamonds, and her heart began to beat with boundless desire. Her hands trembled in taking it up. She fastened it round her throat, on her high dress, and remained in ecstasy before herself. Then, she asked, hesitating, full of anxiety:—"Can you lend me this, only this?"

"Yes, yes, certainly."

She sprang to her friend's neck, kissed her with ardor, and then escaped with her treasure.

The day of the party arrived. Mme. Loisel was a success. She was the prettiest of them all, elegant, gracious, smiling, and mad with joy. All the men were looking at her, inquiring her name, asking to be introduced. All the attaches of the Cabinet wanted to dance with her. The Minister took notice of her.

She danced with delight, with passion, intoxicated with pleasure, thinking of nothing, in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a sort of cloud of happiness made up of all these tributes, of all the admirations, of all these awakened desires, of this victory so complete and so sweet to a woman's heart.

She went away about four in the morning. Since midnight—her husband has been dozing in a little anteroom with three other men whose wives were having a good time. He threw over her shoulders the wraps he had brought to go home in, modest garments of every-day life, the poverty of which was out of keeping with the elegance of the ball dress. She felt this, and wanted to fly so as not to

be noticed by the other women, who were wrapping themselves up in rich furs.

Loisel kept her back—"Wait a minute; you will catch cold outside; I'll call a cab." But she did not listen to him, and went downstairs rapidly. When they were in the street, they could not find a carriage, and they set out in search of one, hailing the drivers whom they saw passing in the distance.

They went down toward the Seine, disgusted, shivering. Finally, they found on the Quai one of those old night-hawk cabs which one sees in Paris only after night has fallen, as though they are ashamed of their misery in the daytime. It brought them to their door, rue des Martyrs; and they went up their own stairs sadly. For her it was finished. And he was thinking that he would have to be at the Ministry at ten o'clock.

She took off the wraps with which she had covered her shoulders, before the mirror, so as to see herself once more in her glory. But suddenly she gave a cry. She no longer had the necklace around her throat!

Her husband, half undressed already, asked—"What is the matter with you?"

She turned to him, terror-stricken:—"I—I—I have not Mme. Forester's diamond necklace!"

He jumped up, frightened—"What? How? It is not possible!"

And they searched in the folds of the dress, in the folds of the wrap, in the pockets, everywhere. They did not find it. He asked:—"Are you sure you still had it when you left the ball?"

"Yes, I touched it in the vestibule of the Ministry."

"But if you had lost it in the street, we should have heard it fall. It must be in the cab."

"Yes. That is probable. Did you take the number?"

"No. And you—you did not even look at it?"

"No." They gazed at each other, crushed. At last Loisel dressed himself again. "I'm going," he said, "back the whole distance we came on foot, to see if I cannot find it." And he went out. She stayed there, in her ball dress, without strength to go to bed, overwhelmed, on a chair, without a fire, without a thought.

Her husband came back about seven o'clock. He had found nothing. Then he went to police headquarters, to the newspapers to offer a reward, to the cab company; he did everything, in fact, that a trace of hope could urge him to.

She waited all day, in the same dazed state in face of this horrible disaster. Loisel came back in the evening, with his face worn and white; he had discovered nothing.

"You must write to your friend," he said, "that you have broken the clasp of her necklace and that you are having it repaired. That will give us time to turn around." She wrote as he dictated. At the end of a week they had lost all hope. And Loisel, aged by five years, declared:—"We must see how we can replace those jewels."

The next day they took the case which had held them to the jeweler whose name was in the cover. He consulted his books. "It was not I, madam, who sold this necklace. I only supplied the case."

Then they went from jeweler to jeweler, looking for a necklace like the other, consulting their memory,—sick both of them with grief and anxiety. In a shop in the Palais Royal,

they found a diamond necklace that seemed to them absolutely like the one they were seeking. It was priced forty thousand francs. They could have it for thirty-six.

They begged the jeweler not to sell it for three days. And they made a bargain that he should take it back for thirty-four thousand, if the first was found before the end of February.

Loisel possessed eighteen thousand francs which his father had left him. He had to borrow the remainder. He borrowed, asking a thousand francs from one, five hundred from another, five here, three louis there. He gave promissory notes, made ruinous agreements, dealt with usurers, with all kinds of lenders. He compromised the end of his life, risked his signature without even knowing whether it could be honored; and, frightened by all the anguish of the future, by the black misery which was about to settle down on him, by the perspective of all sorts of physical deprivations and of all sorts of moral tortures, he went to buy the new diamond necklace, laying down on the jeweler's counter thirty-six thousand francs.

When Mme. Loisel took back the necklace to Mme. Forester, the latter said, with an irritated air:—"You ought to have brought it back sooner, for I might have needed it."

She did not open the case, which her friend had been fearing. If she had noticed the substitution, what would she have thought? What would she have said? Might she not have been taken for a thief?

——————————

Mme. Loisel learned the horrible life of the needy. She made the best of it, moreover, frankly, heroically. The frightful debt must be paid. She would pay it. They

dismissed the servant; they changed their rooms; they took an attic under the roof.

She learned the rough work of the household, the odious labors of the kitchen. She washed the dishes, wearing out her pink nails on the greasy pots and the bottoms of the pans. She washed the dirty linen, the shirts and the towels, which she dried on a rope; she carried down the garbage to the street every morning, and she carried up the water, pausing for breath on every floor. And, dressed like a woman of the people, she went to the fruiterer, the grocer, the butcher, a basket on her arm, bargaining, insulted, fighting for her wretched money, *sou* by *sou*.[8] Every month they had to pay notes, to renew others to gain time. The husband worked in the evening keeping up the books of a shopkeeper, and at night often he did copying at five sous the page.

And this life lasted ten years. At the end of ten years they had paid everything back, everything, with the rates of usury and all the accumulation of heaped-up interest.

Mme. Loisel seemed aged now. She had become the robust woman, hard and rough, of a poor household. Badly combed, with her skirts awry and her hands red, her voice was loud, and she washed the floor with splashing water.

But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she sat down by the window and she thought of that evening long ago, of that ball, where she had been so beautiful and so admired. What would have happened if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows? Who knows? How singular life is, how changeable! What a little thing it takes to save you or to lose you.

Then, one Sunday, as she was taking a turn in the Champs

Elysées, as a recreation after the labors of the week, she perceived suddenly a woman walking with a child. It was Mme. Forester, still young, still beautiful, still seductive.

Mme. Loisel felt moved. Should she speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid up, she would tell her all. Why not?

She drew near. "Good morning, Jeanne."

The other did not recognize her, astonished to be hailed thus familiarly by this woman of the people. She hesitated—"But—madam—I don't know—are you not making a mistake?"

"No. I am Mathilde Loisel."

Her friend gave a cry—"Oh!—My poor Mathilde, how you are changed."

"Yes, I have had hard days since I saw you, and many troubles,—and that because of you."

"Of me?—How so?"

"You remember that diamond necklace that you lent me to go to the ball at the Ministry?"

"Yes. And then?"

"Well, I lost it."

"How can that be?—since you brought it back to me?"

"I brought you back another just like it. And now for ten years we have been paying for it. You will understand that it was not easy for us, who had nothing. At last, it is done, and I am mighty glad."

Mme. Forester had guessed. "You say that you bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?"

"Yes. You did not notice it, even, did you? They were exactly alike?" And she smiled with proud and naïve joy.

Mme. Forester, much moved, took her by both hands:—"Oh, my poor Mathilde. But mine were false. At most they were worth five hundred francs!"

A powerful ending, right? Now, during a first reading, we don't know what will happen. Read the story again, however, and *dramatic irony* will kick in. If we know what Mme. Loisel will discover in that last conversation, dramatic irony will reshape our reading of everything she does in ignorance. Irony infuses Maupassant's narrative, allowing him to imply judgments of these characters. Yet, on some occasions, he does make direct comments in his own remote voice. Pay attention to the narrative point of view. When does the narration enter characters' minds? Which ones? Does it comment or allow us to judge for ourselves?

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[5] *Caste*: social class
[6] *Hierarchy*: a system ranking people on levels of authority and importance
[7] *Pot-au-feu*: French term for stew
[8] *Sous by Sous*: that is, penny by penny.

A powerful ending, right? Now, during a first reading, we don't know what will happen. Read the story again, however, and **Dramatic Irony** will kick in. If we know what Mme. Loisel will discover in that last conversation, dramatic irony will reshape our reading of everything she does in ignorance. **Irony** infuses Maupassant's narrative, allowing him to imply judgments of these characters. Yet, on some occasions, he does make direct comments in his own

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PART IV

CHAPTER 4: ART THAT CHALLENGES

Two weeks ago, we explored *classical* art that fits most people's expectations. One may or may not *like* Michelangelo, Vermeer, Rembrandt or Caravaggio, but many people feel comfortable with what they are trying to do. But what about uncomfortable art? Have you ever struggled with art that doesn't match your expectations? Maybe in this class? This week, we will explore more artists who broke the rules to follow their imaginations. Are you up for the encounter?

Challenging art often rebels against classical **Convention**. Remember that, as we said last night, classicism often supports and expresses the ethos of elite social castes through strict rules and conventions. But what happens when a classical model encounters resistance?

When we looked at DIdactic Art, we viewed Jacques-Louis David's **neo-classical** celebration of Napoleon Bonaparte's imperialist ambitions. His inspiring composition glorifies Napoleon's 1800 crossing of the St. Bernard Pass between Switzerland and Italy which led to decisive victories over the Austrians. David drenches his painting with Napoleonic *gloire*, showing the general astride a rising steed, The technique reflects all the lessons learned since the Renaissance: **Perspective (visual art)**, lighting, **Foreshortening**.

Jacques-Louis David. (1802). *Napoleon Crossing Saint Bernhard Pass.*

Francisco Goya. (1814). *Third of May*, 1808. Oil on canvas.

A dozen years later, the Spanish painter Francisco Goya portrayed a very different aspect of Napoleon's conquests. Now, Goya was a favored court painter in Madrid. Normally, he used traditional **Neo-Classical** technique. However, in this revolutionary painting, he captured his people's resistance to and suffering Napoleon's invading army. The image commemorates the mass execution of participants in an uprising against French rule. Goya's horror is reflected in the work's wholly revolutionary technique. He instinctively blunts the meticulous brushwork and modeling expected of **Academic Art** and allows the paint to speak for itself. This work is seen by many as a gateway to the modern, anticipating this week's themes and techniques.

Akhenaten, Unconventional Pharaoh

We have mentioned that the Egyptian obedience to a set of conventions remained unchanged for thousands of years. However, in the 14th Century BCE, a highly unconventional king named Akhenaten became Pharaoh. Akhenaten had startlingly new ideas

and ideologies, including a reformed religious vision that exalted a Sun God as a nearly monotheistic divinity.

Pharaoh Akhenaten. (14th C. BCE) Sandstone

Akhenaten, Nefertiti, Solar Disc. (c.1360 B.C)

Nefertiti. (c.1335 BCE). Painted limestone.

Out of this ideological change grew a remarkable new **Amarna** style of art. Images of the king are more individuated, even unflattering, depicting a fairly homely man with a thin neck and large nose. The forms within the images are amazingly original: graceful arcs and curves delineating limbs that seem to be in motion. For many people today, the famous bust of Nefertiti, Akhenaten's wife, is an iconic example of Egyptian art. Yet it is actually very different from the traditional style, an exercise in Amarna elegance that plays well with modern tastes.

All classicisms breed rebellions. Many remain resilient. Akhenaten's ideological, religious, and aesthetic rebellion evaporated at his death as Egypt swung back to old ways.

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Poetics of Prophecy temp

One could see Goya's painting as **prophetic art**. For most people, the word is loosely used to refer to *foretelling*—predicting the future. But the essence of prophecy is *forthtelling*—speaking truth to power. This is certainly true of Hebrew prophets such as Amos.

from the Prophecy of Amos

The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa—the vision he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel. He said:

"The Lord roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds dry up, and the top of Carmel withers."

In the 8th Century BCE, a humble shepherd named Amos rose up with a message for his people that he felt had come from the Lord. His message burns with divine anger.

Judgment on Israel's Neighbors

This is what the Lord says: "For three sins of Damascus, even for four, I will not relent.
Because she threshed Gilead with sledges having iron teeth,

I will send fire on the house of Hazael
that will consume the fortresses of Ben-Hadad.
I will break down the gate of Damascus;
I will destroy the king in the Valley of Aven
and the one who holds the scepter in Beth Eden.
The people of Aram will go into exile to Kir," says the Lord.

This is what the Lord says: "For three sins of Gaza, even for four, I will not relent.
Because she took captive whole communities and sold them to Edom,
I will send fire on the walls of Gaza that will consume her fortresses. ...
till the last of the Philistines are dead," says the Sovereign Lord.

This is what the Lord says: "For three sins of Tyre, even for four, I will not relent. ...
This is what the Lord says: "For three sins of Edom, even for four, I will not relent. ...
This is what the Lord says: "For three sins of Ammon, even for four, I will not relent. ...
This is what the Lord says: "For three sins of Moab, even for four, I will not relent. ...

At this point, Amos' audience is surely breaking out in cheers. Aram, Edom, Tyre, Ammon, Moab—these are the homelands immediately surrounding the Kingdom of Israel. Audiences always love to hear tirades against *them*, their neighbors and rivals.

At this point, Amos' audience is surely breaking out in cheers. Aram, Edom, Tyre, Ammon, Moab—these are the homelands immediately surrounding the Kingdom of Israel. Audiences always love to hear tirades against *them*, their neighbors and rivals.

The audience is also moved by the rhythms of **Rhetoric**. Last week, we looked at **Tropes**, **Figures of Speech** involving plays on words. The other kind of *Figure* is one of **Scheme**: "a general category of figurative language that includes any artful deviation from the ordinary arrangement of words" (Mann). So far, we have explored two key figures of scheme: **parallelism** and **anaphora**. Can you find examples above?

Now let's introduce another figure that is very common in Hebrew poetry and in certain kinds of free verse that we will below. A **Catalogue** is "a type of verse that "records the names of several persons, places, or things in the form of a list." It is "common in epic poetry," and in the free verse of Walt Whitman" (Catalogue Verse).

Amos composes the judgments of the Lord in a catalogue of offending nations and, furthermore, in a repeated formula: "For three sins of Tyre, even for four ..." This pattern of repetition within a list creates a rhythm for listeners to poetic oratory. You'll find it in many of the Hebrew prophets. But wait. Amos has one more offending nation, one that shocks his audience.

This is what the Lord says: "For three sins of Judah,
even for four, I will not relent.
Because they have rejected the law of the Lord
and have not kept his decrees,
because they have been led astray by false gods,
the gods their ancestors followed,
I will send fire on Judah
that will consume the fortresses of Jerusalem."

Wait ... what? Is he condemning **US?** *The Chosen People? Why?* To make his harsh points, Amos uses a **Metaphor**. Notice below the figure of a *plum line*, a weight that builders hang from a cord to

establish a true vertical line. How does this *metaphor* help Amos establish God's clear ethical standards?

> "The high places of Isaac will be destroyed and
> the sanctuaries of Israel will be ruined;
> with my sword I will rise against the house of Jeroboam."
>
> This is what he showed me: The Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, with a plumb line in his hand. And the Lord asked me, "What do you see, Amos?"
>
> "A plumb line," I replied.
>
> Then the Lord said, "Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer.
>
> "The high places of Isaac will be destroyed
>
> and the sanctuaries of Israel ruined;
> with my sword I will rise against the house of Jeroboam."

At the time Amos began to prophecy, Jeroboam II was the king of Israel. Of course, the shepherd's harsh message provokes political reprisals. Jeroboam sends a tame court prophet, Amaziah, to see off the not so humble upstart. Things do not go well.

> Then Amaziah, priest of Bethel sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel: "Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the heart of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words. 11 For this is what Amos is saying:
>
> "'Jeroboam will die by the sword,

and Israel will surely go into exile,
away from their native land.'"

Then Amaziah said to Amos, "Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. Don't prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king's sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom."

Obviously, "prophets" who represent the state—in essence, propagandists—will object to predictions of the state's fall. But his dark message also challenges the well-bred authority of a **Classical** school of prophets who gratified a royal audience by repeating formulaic visions of spiritual complacency. The elitist prophets despise Amos because this insignificant *seer*, an illiterate shepherd, doesn't fit in.

Amos answered Amaziah, "I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. But the Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.' Now then, hear the word of the Lord.

You say, "'Do not prophesy against Israel,
and stop preaching against the descendants of Isaac.'

"Therefore this is what the Lord says:
"'Your wife will become a city prostitute, and
your sons and daughters will fall by the sword.
Your land will be measured, divided up, and
you yourself will die in a pagan country.

And Israel will surely go into exile,
away from their native land.'"

This is what the Sovereign Lord showed me: a basket of ripe fruit. "What do you see, Amos?" he asked.

"A basket of ripe fruit," I answered.

Then the Lord said to me, "The time is ripe for my people Israel;
I will spare them no longer.

"In that day," declares the Sovereign Lord, "the songs in the temple will turn to wailing. Many, many bodies—flung everywhere! Silence!"

So the Lord is not happy with Jeroboam or his people. Why? Well, they must have lapsed religiously, right? But no, the problem is not a lack of religiosity. Quite the opposite:

"I hate, I despise your religious festivals;
your assemblies are a stench to me.
Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them.
Though you bring choice fellowship offerings,
I will have no regard for them.
Away with the noise of your songs!
I will not listen to the music of your harps.

I hate, I despise your religious festivals. In the Lord's eyes, the problem with the Israelites is *not* religious laxness. Amos excoriates precisely those who are meticulously observing the rituals of the faith. Piety cannot compensate for the sins that really bother God.

You levy a straw tax on the poor
and impose a tax on their grain.
Therefore, though you have built stone mansions,
you will not live in them;
though you have planted lush vineyards,
you will not drink their wine.
For I know how many are your offenses
and how great your sins.

Those who oppress the innocent and take bribes
and deprive the poor of justice in the courts.
Therefore the prudent keep quiet in such times,
for the times are evil. ...

Away with the noise of your songs!
I will not listen to the music of your harps.
But let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream!

For Amos, the great sin of the Israelites is injustice. The wealthy and the privileged prey upon the poor and the powerless. God is disgusted by hypocrisy that covers predatory corruption with a veneer of piety. As for many of the other Hebrew prophets, the theme of Amos' prophecy is social justice. His great words ring through the ages to reformers everywhere:

But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

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The Romantic Rebellion

In several European languages, a *romance* is a prose narrative, that is, a novel. (We should also note the phrase *Romance languages*, a term that refers to languages descended from Latin.) In English, the word *romance* denotes passionate love and *romantic* designates conditions leading to it. But in cultural history, *High Romanticism* was more, a rebellion against **Classicism**.

Age of Neo-classical Reason

After nearly two centuries of social chaos and bloodshed triggered by the protestant Reformation, European culture in the 18th Century embraced a vision of restraint that is often called the Enlightenment. The era celebrated Reason as the highest of human virtues, and sought to bring its order to bear on nature and on society.

In this age, empirical science staked its claim to authority. In Britain, Sir Isaac Newton applied mathematical rigor to the study of the cosmos, and Adam Smith invented economics to analyze the function of financial markets. Political philosophers in France, England, Scotland, and Germany analyzed the structure and ethics of states and government. In the English colonies of North America, revolutionaries drew on these theories to justify the radical idea of human rights. In Paris, Edinburgh, and other cities, classical models guided the purposeful re-organization of city streets and architecture.

Raguenet, J-P. (1763). A *View of Paris from the Pont Neuf*. Oil on canvas.

During this **Neo-Classical** age, traditional social and aesthetic rules strictly governed social behavior and provided standards of assessment. Arts throve insofar as they followed rules and affirmed the new versions of classical society. Of course, strict rules lead to rebellion.

The Romantic Rebellion

You may be surprised to hear that the **Romantic Era** formulated core cultural orientations that dominate contemporary Western society even today. During the late 18th and early 19th Centuries, artists and thinkers began to push back against the idea that wisdom is to be found solely in reason and tradition.

High Romanticism

A sweeping … profound shift in Western attitudes to art and human creativity that dominated much of European culture. … Its chief emphasis was freedom of individual self-expression: sincerity, spontaneity, and originality [as] new standards … replacing the imitation of classical models. … Rejecting the ordered rationality of the Enlightenment as mechanical, impersonal, and artificial, the Romantics turned to the emotional directness of personal experience and … the individual imagination. … The restrained balance valued in 18th-century culture was abandoned in favor of emotional intensity, … horror, melancholy, or sentimentality. … Romantic writers … showed a new

interest in the irrational realms of dream and delirium or of folk superstition and legend. Creative imagination [centered] Romantic views of art, which replaced "mechanical" rules of conventional form with an "organic" principle of natural growth (Romanticism).

Nature, Folk Experience, and the Imagination: William Wordsworth

William Shuter. (1798). Portrait of William Wordsworth.

Have you ever chafed at a classroom expectation that you read ponderous texts written long ago by dead wizards who make no sense to you? (I mean, not in this class, right?) If so, you may appreciate a poetic dialogue in which William Wordsworth's **Persona** responds to a friend who had been chiding him about wasting too much time exploring the woods and failing to devote enough time to study.

William Wordsworth. (1800) "The Tables Turned; An Evening -Scene, On The Same Subject"

Up ! up ! my friend, and clear your looks.
Why all this toil and trouble ?
Up ! up ! my friend, and quit your books,
Or surely you'll grow double.

The sun above the mountain's head,
A freshening lustre mellow,
Through all the long green fields has spread.
His first sweet evening yellow.

Hooks ! 'tis a dull and endless strife,
Come, hear the woodland linnet, in
How sweet his music ; on my life
There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark ! how blithe the throstle sings!
And he is no mean preacher;
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man;
Of moral evil and of good.
Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Misshapes the beauteous forms of things;
We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up these barren leaves

Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.

William Wordsworth championed the Romantic rebellion in English verse because he loved nature. I mean, he really loved Nature (capital N!). This champion of the individual imagination lived most of his life in the English Lake District. In his day, Cumbria was an isolated, neglected rural region. Yet Wordsworth tramped across its *fells* for a lifetime, watching and listening to what he saw as a natural wisdom that could inspire in ways dusty books could not. He virtually invented the tourist industry in the region, and today tens of thousands of travelers from near and far flock to the Lake District each year. (For more information on Wordsworth, explore this article: Wordsworth, William.)

Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up these barren leaves
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.

Well, there you are, the Romantic Era in a nutshell. Notice the themes compressed in these four lines:

- A suspicion of academic and scientific lore
- A reliance upon one's own sense of truth
- A conviction that the individual's heart channels wisdom
- A resolution to "go out" to encounter the world, especially of nature

The lyric above appeared first in an anthology that Wordsworth edited in 1798. *Lyrical Ballads* not only changed English verse but

helped shift broader cultural norms and values. By including the word **Ballad** in his title, Wordsworth challenged the assumption that great poetry had to emulate classical models such as the *ode* or the *elegy*. The learned might dismiss ballads as trivial verse amusements of the lower classes, but *Lyrical Ballads* insisted that poems of ordinary life were worthy of publication.

In the Preface to the 1800 edition, Wordsworth challenged everyone's idea of what poetry is. He observes that people expect from poetry a certain kind of exalted language and nobility of content. (That is, a focus on the affairs of social elites.) He acknowledges that readers may "have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness" when reading "Ballads" that use commonplace language to celebrate the experiences of humble folk. But he pronounces the collection's principles in ringing tones:

William Wordsworth. (1800). Preface to the Lyrical Ballads

The principal object [of these poems]... was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them... in a *selection of language really used by men*,[1] and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain coloring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind ... in a state of excitement. Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil ... and speak a plainer and more emphatic language. ... For *all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.***[2]**

[1] Italics added by your editor. Sadly, the language of the day tended to forget that women deserved to be mentioned.
[2] Again, italics added. This definition of poetry became a rallying cry of the age. Yet the claim that *all* good poetry is a *spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings* is very questionable and speaks for a Romantic perspective by no means shared universally.

Wordsworth's language may be a bit daunting 200 years later. But the claims of the Preface today seem so conventional that we may struggle to see how revolutionary they are:

- The experience of humble, working class people is worthy of art and poetry.
- Verse that draws on the language of everyday life can have a powerful impact.
- Poetry reflects on passions found in the individual heart.
- Great poetry breaks conventional rules to express the individual poet's imagination.

Do you shy instinctively away from poetry? If so, I'll bet that your concerns reflect the assumptions about what poetry is that Wordsworth explores in the Preface. And I'll bet that many of your concerns would fade away facing poems that speak plainly about the experiences of real people. Wordsworth's verse may or may not strike you as familiar—after all, they were written over 200 years ago. But, if we correct for the gender exclusion of Wordsworth's formulation, don't we all respond to the *language of people speaking to people*? Isn't that what the poetry in pop songs does so well?

American Romanticism: Ralph Waldo Emerson

Romanticism translated very well to the new nation of America. The early 19th Century educator and essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson embraced a transcendental vision of the human self, as expressed in essays such as "The Oversoul" and "Self-Reliance":

- Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string.
- Whoso would be a man[3] must be a nonconformist.
- Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.
- For nonconformity the world whips you with its displeasure.

If you want to understand the mainstream American perspective on life, you need to have at least a sense of the way Romanticism celebrated and explored the individual. Emerson's essay lays down the themes of individualism that drive American society and values to this day.

> *Bonus coverage*: if you'd like to read more of the perspective that, along with life on the frontiers, shaped the American mind, read Emerson's essay, "Self-Reliance."

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[3] *Whoso would be a man:* again, sadly, women are effaced, though Emerson's ideas apply well to women in a patriarchal society.

A Gentle Reminder

Tips on reading Poetry

Some of the most outspoken leaders of the Romantic Era expressed themselves in poetry. One more time, let's recall our tips for keeping your head above water reading verse.

- Read aloud, listening for rhythms, patterns.
- Recognize the plain sense of the words before looking for hidden meanings.
- Who talks to whom about what? Clearly seeing this dynamic can open many poems.
- Track themes and patterns of meaning that flow from the above.

Free Verse

Wordsworth imagines his readers asking, *In what sense is this poetry*? A kind of poetry even more revolutionary than Wordsworth could imagine debuted in America during the latter decades of the 19th Century. It came to be called *Free Verse*:

Free Verse

A kind of poetry that does not conform to any regular meter: the length of its lines is irregular, as is its use of rhyme—if any. Instead of a regular metrical pattern (Meter) it uses more flexible cadences or rhythmic groupings, sometimes supported by anaphora and other devices of repetition. Now the most widely practiced verse form in English, it has precedents in translations of the biblical Psalms … but established itself only in the late 19th … with Walt Whitman (Free Verse)

Even today, many assume that English poetry will feature **Rhyme** and **Meter**. But what if we find neither? Actually, we have been reading free verse for several weeks: the rhythms and patterns of rhetorical oratory found in Hebrew poetry: **Anaphora**, **Catalogue**, **Parallelism**. All contribute to the subtle rhythms of *Free Verse*. Now let's add one more figure: *Alliteration:*

Alliteration

The repetition of the same sounds—usually initial consonants of words…—in any sequence of words: e.g. "Landscape-lover, lord of language" (Tennyson). Now an optional and incidental decorative effect in verse or prose, it was once a required element in the poetry of Germanic languages (including Old English and Old Norse) and in

Celtic verse. Such poetry, in which alliteration rather than rhyme is the chief principle of repetition, is known as *alliterative verse* (Alliteration).

Walt Whitman Sings of Himself

Armed with a grasp of these figures of speech we are ready for the American pioneer of **Free Verse**.

Samuel Hollyer. (1854). Engraving of Whitman.

Walt Whitman was an American poet. That is, he wrote verse that expressed the American spirit in an American voice that could not have arisen anywhere else. (For more information on Whitman, explore this article: Loving.)

Walt Whitman. (1891). *"A Noiseless, Patient Spider"*

A noiseless patient spider,

I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood isolated,
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself,
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you O my soul where you stand,
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres to connect them,
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the ductile[4] anchor hold
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul.

---

[4] *Ductile*: a property attributed to metals—flexible, pliable, capable of being drawn into thin strands without breaking.

Now this poem does not establish a **Metrical** pattern. You won't find any metrical Feet or Iambs or Spondees. But it has strong albeit subtle rhythms based on patterns of **Scheme**. Try to hear them in this reading:

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=240#audio-240-1

By now, the poem's rhythms should be familiar to you. They are the same as those of Hebrew verse. Whitman's style of *free verse* is steeped in Old Testament poetics. But notice as well the poem's central **Simile**: a comparison between the poet's soul and a spider sending forth filaments of webbing to try to organize the vast world. In the second stanza, the simile becomes a **Metaphor**, the soul addressed as a spider being sending out reflective and spiritual filaments to try to gain a foothold in the wide world. This is one of American poetry's most resonant characterizations of the Romanticism's conception of human inwardness as a spiritual channel for finding wisdom in communion with the outer world, with time, space, and infinity.

The 52 cantos of *Song of Myself* comprise perhaps Whitman's most famous poem. Before proceeding, however, let's pause on that title. *Song of Myself*? What sort of colossal ego would choose such a narcissistic title and begin "I celebrate myself, and sing myself"?

The answer is, a democratically minded American mind which had adopted the Romantic conception of the self as a standard more authentic than social norms. And this, of course, is how many Americans think today, prioritizing their own viewpoints over "society's" or over those of "the experts." Whitman represented the democratic spirit of a nation eager to shrug off the traditions of the old world and follow the banner of rugged individualism.

And it isn't just egoism. In "Self-Reliance," Emerson sees the "self" as a spiritual opening onto infinity. Whitman's self lies within him and within everyone: "For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you." Today, social media venues teem with thousands of voices singing of themselves under the assumption that their thoughts, behaviors and meals are worthy,

Walt Whitman. from Song of Myself (1892).

1 I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loaf and invite my soul,
I lean and loaf at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same,
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,
Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy. ...

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52 The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of my gab and my loitering.
I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.
The last scud of day holds back for me,
It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the shadow'd wilds,
It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk.

I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,
And filter and fiber your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,
Missing me one place search another,
I stop somewhere waiting for you.

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Harlem: Prophetic Voices

Whitman sings the freedom of the thousands who spread across the Continent in a frontier that receded until it hit the Pacific. But what of those who were displaced? What of the slaves whose skin was branded with perpetual shame?...

As we see in Amos, prophetic voices often arise from minority, marginalized people. In the late 19th Century, African Americans throughout the South began to vote with their feet against the brutalities of "Jim Crow" segregation. Thousands moved to the industrial cities of the North where they could get better work and somewhat less restriction on their way of life. Many ended up In Harlem, New York City. The term *Harlem Renaissance* refers to a ...

> Resurgence in black culture, also called the New Negro Movement, which took place in the 1920s, primarily in Harlem, ... but also in major cities ... such as Chicago, Detroit, St Louis, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Boston, Atlanta and Washington, DC. ... Better known as a literary movement ... the Harlem Renaissance ... also produced many works of visual art, dance and music. The term invokes a rebirth of African American creativity ... During the Great Migration, hundreds of thousands of African Americans moved, many by train, from the rural South to the urban North in the 1910s for better jobs and living conditions. Many settled in New York where there was a plethora of publishers, museums, galleries and art schools. Also, there were dynamic leaders who provided opportunities for cultural development. ... . Additionally, whites ...as well as white corporations... were important patrons who offered fellowships and monetary prizes for art and other cultural achievements (Harlem Renaissance).

Winold Reiss. W. (c.1925). *Interpretation of Harlem Jazz I*. Ink on paper.

Artists and writers of the Harlem Renaissance faced a daunting dilemma. The racial myths supporting slavery insisted that African Americans were inferior, sub-human beings who were incapable of "classical" cultural achievements. A small but vital middle class, however, sent its children to traditionally Black colleges to prepare for professional careers such as medicine and law. Scholars like W.E.B. DuBois and James Wheldon Johnson began to publish the work of writers who demonstrated to the world that Black artists could be just as skillful and accomplished as white counterparts. African Americans determined to "advance the race" diligently sought to shake off all traces of slavery.

But how do you prove to white audiences that "you are just as good" as sophisticated White writers? Everyone, including those who sponsored African American artists, assumed that the highest culture expressed itself in the "superior" White, Anglo-American voice. Certainly, the first step in achieving elegance would be to radically eliminate the voice of the ex-slave. One couldn't be a great poet writing in the voice of the "street Negro" (to use the term of the day), could one?

W.E.B. DuBois was proud of Countee Cullen, the black poet so capable that a sample of his verse was once thought by literary scholars to be that of an English master. And Cullen was a superb poet who had as much right to compose in literary English as anyone else. But Cullen paid a price for being conventionally literary. He had to abandon the dialect in which his people spoke. Two writers refused to sacrifice their people's voices to literary ambition. These writers were often criticized by African American

intellectuals for honoring in their writing the voices which seemed to many to confirm stereotypes of Black inferiority.

Langston Hughes

Allen, James L. (1930). Langston Hughes Photograph.

Langston Hughes embodied the complex American history of race. His father was descended from black great-grandmothers and white, slave owning great-grandfathers.

> Soon after Langston's birth in 1902, his parents separated. His father, James Hughes, embittered by racist experiences in the United States, left for Mexico, where he owned a ranch, practiced law, and collected rent from tenement houses he owned. … As an artist Hughes saw life and art as closely intertwined, and there appears to be an intimate, if sometimes inverse, relationship between Hughes's family history and his commitments as an artist and opinion maker (Hughes, Langston).

By the mid-1920s, Hughes had become one of the most celebrated young members of the artist community in Harlem. But Hughes was frustrated by the tendency of older sponsors like W.E.B. DuBois and Alain Locke to push Black artists to emulate the mainstream (White)

elite. In 1925, Hughes expressed his frustration at the dilemma facing Black artists in a prophetic essay.

from Langston Hughes, "The Negroi Artist and the Racial Mountain"

We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves (quoted in Hughes, Langston).

Like Cullen, Hughes was capable of writing verse in any voice. Unlike Cullen, he chose the voice that rolled richly through Harlem streets and juke joints. This was a time when Black blues and jazz musicians were gaining a wide audience through radio, records, and performances at Harlem clubs. Jazz and blues musicians were often criticized for styles dismissed as "primitive." But Hughes was proud of his people's music. He entitled his first collection of poetry *The Weary Blues* (1926) and proved that its rhythms could lead to superb poetry. In Week 2, we explored the structure of a ***blues***: three repetitive lines followed by a resolving line. As you can see and hear, Hughes emulated that blues pattern here.

Langston Hughes (1926). "The Weary Blues"

Droning syncopated[1] tune,
Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon,
I heard a Negro play.
Down on Lenox Avenue[2] the other night
By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light
He did a lazy sway. . . .
He did a lazy sway. . . .
To the tune o' those Weary Blues.

With his ebony hands on each ivory key
He made that poor piano moan with melody.
O Blues!
Swaying to and fro on his rickety stool
He played that sad raggy[3] tune like a musical fool.
Sweet Blues!
Coming from a black man's soul.
O Blues!

In a deep song voice with a melancholy tone
I heard that Negro sing, that old piano moan—

"Ain't got nobody in all this world,
Ain't got nobody but ma self.
I's gwine[4] to quit ma frownin'
And put ma troubles on the shelf."

Thump, thump, thump, went his foot on the floor.
He played a few chords then he sang some more—

"I got the Weary Blues
And I can't be satisfied.
Got the Weary Blues
And can't be satisfied—
I ain't happy no mo'
And I wish that I had died."

And far into the night he crooned that tune.
The stars went out and so did the moon.
The singer stopped playing and went to bed
While the Weary Blues echoed through his head.
He slept like a rock or a man that's dead.

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[1] *Syncopated*: in music, a rhythm with a stress on the off beat: ta-Da, ta-DA, ta-Da. A heavy emphasis on syncopation is one of the hallmarks of jazz.
[2] *Lenox Avenue*: one of the principal streets in Harlem, New York.
[3] *Raggy*: a reference to the African American jazz tradition, one of the earliest genres of which was the *Rag*, a composition in syncopated Rag Time.
[4] *Gwine*: that is, *I am going to …*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=251#audio-251-1

A poem emulating **Blues** will certainly display rhythm. But what sort? You'll notice Rhyme and also Metrical patterns. But they keep shifting freely, liberated from strict obedience to the rules of traditional English verse forms. Actually, most of Hughes work, including "Mother to Son" (Week 1), are written in **Free Verse** influenced by the Bible and Whitman. In this next poem, Hughes

digs deeply into his ancestral roots, woven together by the courses of the great rivers of the world.

Langston Hughes (1926). "The Negro Speaks of Rivers"

I've known rivers:
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

Read this poem thoughtfully, sensitive to its themes, images, and rhythms. Listen to the audio phile below. You have the tools to process the figures of speech: **metaphors**, **anaphora**, **parallelism**, **catalogue** (**Stanza** 3).

One or more interactive elements has been excluded

from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=251#audio-251-2

Aaron Douglas: Aspects of Negro Life

Today, the Harlem Renaissance is mostly remembered for its writers. But African American painters and sculptors also flourished in a rare moment of sponsorship by mainstream wealth. In 1934, Aaron Douglas painted a series of four oils representing key eras in the history of a people. These oils are currently held in the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in the Harlem branch of the New York Public Library.

- Panel 1: *The Negro in an African Setting.* The 1st panel looks in on African people celebrating their culture, its music, its art, and its warrior pride. Notice the layered technique: flattened profiles defining zones of depth without perspective. And don't miss the haloes and shafts of light that organize the composition, centering on the cultural figurine.
- Panel 2: *From Slavery Through Reconstruction.* The 2nd panel reviews the long years of slavery, often in cotton fields, and the Union troops breaking its chains. Haloes of light focus our eyes on the Emancipation Proclamation held by a Frederick Douglas-like character looking to the Federal Congress that banned slavery in the 13th Amendment.

   

- Panel 3: *an Idyll of the Deep South*. An ***idyll*** normally celebrates rural life, and we see African Americans, freed from slavery, gathered to sing their culture. To the right we see hard labor in the fields, the only work permitted them. In the background, ghostly figures suggest lynch mobs and Jim Crow oppression. Piercing the image and its layers of light is a single ray emanating from a star and offering faith and hope.
- Panel 4: *Song of the Towers*.Again, light focuses our vision. Haloes surround the Statue of Liberty and a saxophone that celebrates the jazz music that was just beginning to earn some respect for Black culture. In the bottom corners, a man trapped in the Deep South dreams of liberty and another follows the Great Migration to the industrial cities of the North and the towers of Manhattan. But don't miss the ghostly hands of mainstream culture clawing back on those reaching for freedom.

The Glorious African American Voice: Zora Neal Hurston

I was glad when somebody told me, "You may go and collect Negro folklore" (*Mules and Men*).[5]

[5] Compare Psalm 122.1: *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.*

Born in 1891, Zora Neal Hurston grew up in the small town of Eatonville, Florida. Though she traveled far, she never really left. As James Joyce wrote in exile of Dublin, Hurston always wrote of Eatonville. Hurston recognized that the legacy of Eatonville was unique

Zora Neal Hurston. (1935-1943). [Photograph].

In the late 19th Century, Eatonville Florida was a wholly African American town. Let me repeat that. *No one* who lived in Eatonville wasn't Black. While its residents mostly worked for White employers in the surrounding towns, the residents of the town had achieved an autonomy unheard of in Jim Crow America. They had a mayor, their own shops, and even, as we learn in a memorable scene from *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, a street light! On the first page of this great novel—if only we had time to read it!—Hurston captures the liberating moment when servants return home from serving masters and mistresses:

from Chapter 1, Their Eyes Were Watching God

> The people all saw her come because it was sundown. The sun was gone, but he had left his footprints in the sky. It was the time for sitting on porches beside the road. It was the time to hear things and talk. These sitters had been tongueless, earless, eyeless conveniences all day long. Mules and other brutes had occupied their skins. But now, the sun and the bossman were gone, so the skins felt powerful and human. They became lords of sounds and lesser things. They passed nations through their mouths. They sat in judgment.

Growing up in Eatonville, Hurston had a firm conviction of the worth of her own people. Her journey to Harlem was a long one but, in 1925, she enrolled in Barnard College, Columbia University. As a Masters Degree candidate in anthropology she was required to compile an ethnography of a cultural group. She asked her mentor, the famed anthropologist Franz Boas, for permission to return to Eatonville and study her home town. "I was glad when somebody told me, "You may go and collect Negro folklore" (*Mules and Men*).

Hurston's glee at the blessing of senior faculty for her return to her hometown was far more than nostalgia. At that time, virtually the entire educated world, including many of the members of the Harlem Renaissance community, considered African American English to be a primitive, error-ridden version of the "real thing." Hurston did not.

In Eatonville, Hurston transcribed tape recordings of front porch conversations which she later incorporated into her fiction. These "lying sessions" were serious business. In a memorable scene from *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, locals gather on the porch of the community store. "Playin' de dozens," they compete with each other in ritual insults and outlandish tales.

from Chapter 6, Their Eyes Were Watching God

Sometimes Sam Watson and Lige[6] Moss forced a belly laugh ... with their eternal arguments. It never ended because there was no end to reach. It was a contest in hyperbole and carried on for no other reason. Sam would be sitting on the porch when Lige walked up- If nobody was there to speak of, nothing happened- But if the town was there like on Saturday night, Lige would come up with a very grave air- Couldn't even pass the time of day, for being so busy thinking- Then he'd say,

"Dis question done 'bout drove me crazy. And Sam, he know so much into things, Ah wants some information on de subject." ...

Sam begins an elaborate show of avoiding the struggle. That draws everybody on the porch into it. "How come you want me tuh tell yuh? You always claim God done met you round de corner and talked His business wid yuh. 'Tain't no use in you askin' me nothin. Ah'm questionizin' you."

"How you goin tuh do dat, Sam? Ah arrived dis conversation mahself? Ah'm askin you!"

"Askin' me what? You ain't told de subjick yit-"

... By this time, they are the center of the world.

"Well all right then. Since you own up you ain't smart enough tuh find out whut Ah'm talkin' 'bout Ah'll tell you- Whut is it dat keeps uh man from gettin' burnt on uh red-hot stove — caution or nature?"

"Shucks! Ah thought you had somethin' hard tuh ast me. Walter kin tell yuh dat-"

"If de conversation is too deep for yuh, how come yuh don't tell me so, and hush up? ...Ah'm uh educated man, Ah keeps mah arrangements in mah hands." ...

"And then agin, Lige, Ah'm gointuh tell yuh- Ah'm gointuh run dis conversation from uh gnat heel to uh lice- It's nature dat keeps uh man off of uh red-hot stove-"

"Uuh huuh! Ah knowed you would going tuh crawl up in dat holler![7] But Ah aims tuh smoke yuh right out- 'Tain't no nature at all, it's caution, Sam."

"'Tain't no sich uh thing! Nature tells yuh not tuh fool wid no red-hot stove, and you don't do it neither-"

"Listen' Sam, if it was nature, nobody wouldn't have tuh look out for babies touchin' stoves, would they? 'Cause dey just naturally wouldn't touch it- But dey sho will- So it's caution."

"Naw it ain't, it's nature, cause nature makes caution. It's de strongest thing dat God ever made, now. Fact is it's de onliest thing God ever made. He made nature and nature made everything else."

"Naw nature didn't neither. A whole heap of things ain't even been made yit"

"Tell me somethin' you know of dat nature ain't made."

"She ain't made it so you kin ride uh butt-hcaded cow and hold on tuh de horns."

"Yeah, but dat ain't yo' point."

"Yeah it is too."

"Naw it ain't neither."

"Well what is mah point?"

"You ain't got none, so far. ... [You] know mighty much, but [you] ain't proved it yit. Sam, Ah say it's caution, not nature dat keeps folks off uh red-hot stove."

"How is de son gointuh be before his paw? Nature is de first of everything. Ever since self was self, nature been keepin' folks off of red-hot stoves. Dat caution you talkin' 'bout ain't nothin' but uh humbug. He's uh inseck dat nothin' he got belongs to him. He got eyes, lak somethin' else; wings lak somethin' else —everything! Even his hum is de sound of somebody else."

"Man, whut you talkin' 'bout? Caution is de greatest thing in de world." ...

"Show me somethin' dat caution ever made! Look whut nature took and done. ... Now you tell me, how come, whut got intuh man dat he got tuh have hair round his mouth? Nature!"

The porch was boiling now. ...

"Look at dat great big ok scoundrel-beast up dere at Hall's fillin' station — uh great big old scoundrel. He eats up all de folks outa de house and den eat de house."[8]

"Aw 'tain't no sich a varmint nowhere dat kin eat no house! Dat's uh lie. Ah wuz dere yiste'ddy and Ah ain't seen nothin' lak dat. Where is he?"

"Ah didn't see him but Ah reckon he is in dc back-yard some place. But dey got his picture out front dere. They was nailin' it up when Ah come pass dere dis evenin'."

"Well all right now, if he eats up houses how come he don't eat up de fillin' station?"

"Dat's 'cause dey got him tied up so he can't. Dey got uh great big picture tellin' how many gallons of dat Sinclair high-compression gas he drink at one time and he's more'n uh million years old."

"'Tain't nothin' no million years old! ... How dey goin' to tell he's uh million years old? Nobody wasn't born dat fur back."

"By de rings on his tail Ah reckon. Man, dese white folks got ways for tellin' anything dey wants tuh know."

"Well, where he been at all dis time, then?"

"Dey caught him over dere in Egypt. Seem lak he used tuh hang round dere and eat up dem Pharaohs' tombstones. Dey got dc picture of him doin' it. Nature is high in uh varmint lak dat. Nature and salt. Dat's whut makes up strong man lak Big John de Conquer He was uh man wid salt in him. He could give uh flavor to anything"

"Yeah, but he was uh man dat wuz more'n man. Tain't no mo' lak him. He wouldn't dig potatoes and he wouldn't rake hay. He wouldn't take a whipping, and he wouldn't run away."

"Oh yeah, somebody else could if dey tried hard enough- Me mahself, Ah got salt in me. ...

"Lawd, Ah loves to talk about Big John. Less we tell lies on Ole John."

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[6] *Lige*: short for *Elijah*.
[7] *Holler*: i.e. a *hollow*, or low area in the landscape in which an animal might hide.

[8] The signs at Sinclair gasoline stations used to feature the stylized profile of a dinosaur. See an example: link.

Do you find this hard to read? Lots of misspelled words and poor grammar, right? Except that Hurston, a trained anthropologist, is transcribing actual speech. And the grammar is perfectly correct according to the syntax of a dialect quite different from standard, edited English. Hurston treated the tongue of her people as an actual language, and decades later linguists and educators began to understand that she was correct. African American English has its own rules and patterns. Historically, when white authors have attempted to parody it–for example Joel Chandler Harris' Uncle Remus stories–they have invariably gotten those patterns wrong. Hurston is striving to get them right.

Her care for authenticity arises from her love of the **Genre**. Hurston knows that "*playin' de dozens*," the verbal jousting of a people whose language is dismissed as "primitive," actually pulses with devastating wit and eloquence. Talented jesters earn a reputation that, in a time before radio or television, gathers the town to listen to the fun. Sam and Lige (i.e. Elijah) face off in "a contest in hyperbole and carried on for no other reason," each vying for the biggest laugh and the crowd's assent. In this case, they are exploring the nature versus nurture debate that scholars today still wrestle with. Their sham debates are studded with witticisms:

- Ah'm gointuh run dis conversation from uh gnat heel to uh lice (head to toe)
- She ain't made it so you kin ride uh butt-headed cow and hold on tuh de horns
- Ah knowed you was going tuh crawl up in dat holler! (i.e. hollow, a small valley)

- He wouldn't dig potatoes and he wouldn't rake hay. He wouldn't take a whipping, and he wouldn't run away.

"He wouldn't take a whipping, and he wouldn't run away"—whom does that describe? A heroic slave who is able stand up to a brutal institution. There is a brief mention here of Big John de Conquer, a standard character in many African American folk tales, several collected by Hurston. Big John is a noble slave who, like mythic heroes in many cultures, embodies the virtues and courage of a subdued people. The very mention of a hero who could rise above oppression interrupts the sham debate among brilliant men who must every day submit to white masters: "Lawd, Ah loves to talk about Big John. Less we tell lies on Ole John."

The direct result of Hurston's anthropological study was *Mules and Men*, a collection of her transcriptions of oral narrative and African American folk lore. In this collection, we find a range of stories told by a people struggling to survive slavery. As in all mythic systems, certain characters recur: Ol Massa (the white master of the plantation), Big John, *de debbil***[4]**), and personifications of the people. The text teems with "origin stories" that explain how things got to be what they are. In this tale, Mathilda vies with the best male story tellers to explain how, in the long run, women got the best of men.

From Chapter 2, Mules and Men

Said Shoo-pie. "Don't you know you can't git de best of no woman in de talkin' game? Her tongue is all de weapon a woman got,"

George Thomas chided Gene. "She could have had mo'

sense, but she told God no, she'd ruther take it out in hips. So God give her her ruthers. She got plenty hips, plenty mouf and no brains. "

"Oh, yes, womens is got sense too," Mathilda Moseley jumped in. "But they got too much sense to go 'round braggin' about it like y'all do. De lady people always got de advantage of mens because God fixed it dat way."

"Whut ole black advantage is y'all got?" Moseley asked, indignantly. "We got all de strength and all de law and all de money and you can't git a thing but whut we jes' take pity on you and give you."

"And dat's jus' de point," said Mathilda triumphantly, "You do give it to us, but how come you do it?" And ... Mathilda began to tell why women always take advantage of men.

You see in de very first days, God made a man and a woman and put 'em in a house together to live. 'Way back in them days de woman was just as strong as de man and both of 'em did de same things. They useter get to fussin 'bout who gointer do this and that and sometime they'd fight, but they was even balanced and neither one could whip de other one.

One day de man said to hisself, "B'lieve Ah'm gointer go see God and ast Him for a li'l mo' strength so Ah kin whip dis 'oman and make her mind. Ah'm tired of de wa things is." So he went on up to God. "Good mawnin', Ole Father."

"Howdy man. Whut you doin' 'round my throne so so dis mawnin'?"

"Ah'm troubled in mind, and nobody can't ease mah spirit 'ceptin' you."

God said: “Put yo’ plea in de right form and Ah’ll hear and answer.”

“Ole Maker, wid de mawnin’ stars glitterin’ in yo’ shin crown, wid de dust from yo’ footsteps makin’ worlds upon worlds, wid de blazin’ bird we call de sun flyin’ out of you right hand in de mawnin’ and consumin’ all day de flesh and blood of stump-black darkness, and comes flyin’ home every evenin to rest on yo’ left hand, and never once in yo’ eternal years, mistook de left hand for de right,[9] Ah ast you please to give me mo’ strength than dat woman you give me, so Ah kin make her mind. Ah know you don’t want to be always comin’ down way past de moon and stars to be straightenin’ her out and its got to be done. So giv me a li’l mo’ strength, Ole Maker and Ah’ll do it.”

“All right, Man, you got mo’ strength than woman.”

So de man run all de way down de stairs from Heben. He was so anxious to try his strength on de woman dat he couldn’t take his time. Soon’s he got in de house he hollered “Woman! Here’s yo’ boss. God done tole me to handle you which ever way.”

De woman flew to fightin’ ‘im right off. She fought ‘im frightenin’ but he beat her. She got her wind and tried ‘im agin but he whipped her agin. She got herself together and made de third try on him vigorous but he beat her every time. He was so proud he could whip ‘er at last, dat he just crowed over her and made her do a lot of things. He told her, “Long as you obey me, Ah’ll be good to yuh, but every time yuh rear up Ah’m gointer put plenty wood on yo’ back and plenty water in yo’ eyes.

De woman was so mad she went straight up to Heben and stood befo’ de Lawd. She didn’t waste no words. She

said, “Lawd, Ah come befo’ you mighty mad t’day. Ah want back my strength and power Ah useter have.”

“Woman, you got de same power you had since de beginnin’.”

”Why is it then, dat de man kin beat me now and he useter couldn’t do it?”

”He got mo’ strength than he useter have, He come and ast me for it and Ah give it to ‘im. Ah gives to them that ast, and you ain’t never ast me for no mo’ power.”

”Please suh, God, Ah’m astin’ you for it now. Jus’ gimme de same as you give him.”

God shook his head. “It’s too late now, woman. Whut Ah give, Ah never take back. Ah give him mo’ strength than you and no matter how much Ah give you, he’ll have mo.

De woman was so mad she wheeled around and went on off. She went straight to de devil[10] and told him what had happened.

He said, “Don’t be disincouraged, woman. You listen to me and you’ll come out mo’ than conqueror. Take dem frowns out yo’ face and turn round and go fight on back to Heben and ast God to give you dat bunch of keys hangin’ by de mantel-piece. Then you bring ’em and Ah’ll show you what to do wid ’em.”

So de woman climbed back up to Heben agin. She was mighty tired but she was more out-done than she was tired so she climbed all night long and got back up to Heben. When she got to heaven butter wouldn’t melt in her mouf.

“0 Lawd and Master of de rainbow, Ah know yo’ power. You never make two mountains without you put a valley in

between. Ah know you kin hit a straight lick wid a crooked stick."

"Ast for whut you want, woman."

"God, gimme dat bunch of keys hangin' by yo' mantel."

"Take em."

So de woman took de keys and hurried on back to de devil wid 'em. There was three keys on de bunch. Devil say, "See dese three keys? They got mo' power in 'em than all de strength de man kin ever git if you handle 'em right.

Now dis first big key is to de do' of de kitchen, and you know a man always favors his stomach. Dis second one is de key to de bedroom and he don't like to be shut out from dat neither and dis last key is de key to de cradle and he don't want to be cut off from his generations. So now you take dese keys and go lock up everything and wait till he come to you. Then don't you unlock nothin' until he use his strength for yo' benefit and yo' desires."

De woman thanked 'im and tole 'im, "If it wasn't for you, Lawd knows whut us po' women folks would do."

She started off but de devil halted her. "Jus' one mo' thing: don't go home braggin' 'bout yo' keys. Jus' lock up everything and say nothin' until you git asked. And then don't talk too much."

De woman went on home and did like de devil tole her. When de man come home from work she was settin' on de porch singin' some song 'bout "Peck on de wood make de bed go good."

When de man found de three doors fastened what useter stand wide open he swelled up like pine lumber after a rain. First thing he tried to break in cause he figgered his

strength would overcome all obstacles. When he saw he couldn't do it, he ast de woman, "Who locked dis do'?"

She tole 'im, "Me."

"Where did you git de key from?"

"God give it to me.

He run up to God and said, "Woman got me locked 'way from my vittles, my bed and my generations. She say you give her the keys."

God said, "I did, Man, Ah give her de keys, but de devil showed her how to use 'em!"

"Well, Ole Maker, please gimme some keys jus' lak 'em so she can't git de full control."

"No, Man, what Ah give Ah give. Woman got de key."

"How kin Ah know 'bout my generations.

"Ast de woman."

So de man come on back and submitted hisself to de woman and she opened de doors. He wasn't satisfied but he had to give in. 'Way after while he said to de woman, "Le's us divide up. Ah'll give you half of my strength if you lemme hold de keys."

De woman thought dat over so de devil popped and tol her, "Tell 'im, naw. Let 'im keep his strength and you keep y' keys."

So de woman wouldn't trade wid 'im and de man had to mortgage his strength to her to live. And dat's why de man makes and de woman takes. You men is still braggin' 'bout yo' strength and de women is sittin' on de keys and lettin' you blow off till she git ready to put de bridle on you.

[9] How is this as a parody of the catalogues of praise one might find in a sermon or psalm?
[10] *de devil:* i.e. the Devil, a stock character in African American myth. This character is really more of a trickster God than an incarnation of the Christian concept of Satan. In these tales, *de debbil* often helps characters by providing a clever solution to a threatening situation.

Cultures evolve myths to help their people navigate their environment. African American myth projected a facsimile world in which, as in reality, servitude is inescapable, but wit provides a refuge in dignity, grace and humor. In the stories, Ol Massa loses his punch and the Woman manages to rise above her double servitude of race and gender. In Eatonville, everyone was a servant, but on that front porch, story tellers competed in fantasy heroics, trading insults and making grandiose claims. Rivals "playin' de dozens" forged a tradition that eventually led to the global triumph of rap and hip hop.

Lady Day's Strange Fruit

William P. Gottlieb (February 1947). Billie Holiday at the Downbeat Jazz Club.

> Among jazz critics and historians, there is little question that Billie Holiday was the greatest jazz singer ever recorded. … Holiday created a place for herself outside the limited confines of the "girl singer" role within the big band, setting standards by which other jazz singers continued to be judged and influencing … Sarah Vaughan, Frank Sinatra, Carmen McRae, and Lena Horne (Cook).

Holiday, nicknamed "Lady Day" by saxophonist Lester Young, was known first in Harlem jazz clubs. Her musicianship transformed such standards as "Lover Man," "These Foolish Things," and "Embraceable You" into masterpieces. She was also a tough woman not afraid to fight boors and racists. In the late 1930s, the promise of the Harlem Renaissance had given way to the Depression and continued oppression of African Americans. Lynchings were common, ignored by the mainstream and remembered only by Black newspapers and journals such as *Crisis*, the publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. In 1939, Lady Day saw a way to resist.

> "Strange Fruit" is a song performed most famously by Billie Holiday, who first sang and recorded it in 1939.

Written by a white, Jewish high school teacher from the Bronx and a member of the Communist Party, Abel Meeropol wrote it as a protest poem, exposing American racism, particularly the lynching of African Americans. Such lynchings had occurred chiefly in the South but also in other regions of the United States. Meeropol set it to music and with his wife and the singer Laura Duncan, performed it as a protest song in New York venues (Strange Fruit).

Lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith. (1930). Gelatin silver prints.

Abel Meeropol. (1929): "Strange Fruit"

Southern trees bear strange fruit
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees

Pastoral scene of the gallant south
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth

Scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh
Then the sudden smell of burning flesh

Here is fruit for the crows to pluck
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck
For the sun to rot, for the trees to drop
Here is a strange and bitter crop

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Formal Elements of Art

Last week, we explored the Renaissance model of the painting as a *window on the world.* We illustrated this model with Vermeer's *The Painter and His Model as Klio*: the painter at his easel composing his image of a model, all nested within curtained framework of the painting we are viewing. The distance separating us from the painter invites us to reflect on the artist's viewpoint, his tools and media, his composition, and our own perception.

Jan Vermeer. (1660), *The Painter and his Model as Klio*. Oil on canvas.

René Magritte. (1933). *The Human Condition*. Oil on canvas.

Almost 300 years later, René Magritte toys with this notion of the painting as a window on the world. He paints a window looking out on a landscape. Centered in the pane is a canvas with an apparently, transparent canvas. The image doubles a selected rectangle of the "natural" landscape, just as paintings are supposed to do. The representational technique appears to be straightforward. And yet, we can't really be sure. Is the tree actually in the landscape or did the painter add it from imagination? The painting raises questions about paintings, and also about *The Human Condition.* The title invites us to think about the ambiguity of all human perceptions of the world around them. How much do we see and how much do we embellish?

Let's take a step back and think about the dimensions of this

model of painting. Traditional art is **Representational**. The artifact of the painting produces an image of a *visual subject*:

In this model, viewers' attention often focuses on the visual subject: *what is it? How realistically is the "real thing" depicted?* Often, viewers experience impatience or annoyance when they can't tell what the subject "is supposed to be" or if they feel the technique is awkward or inaccurate. When we focus on the subject, textures of the medium recede. Paradoxically, we admire the brushwork and pigmentation because they vanish in a rich emulation of the object.

But not all art is **representational** . We've looked at geometrical designs on ancient pottery, ***arabesques***, and architecture with linear designs. People see beauty in such compositions without asking, *what is it*? Do we critique a paisley shirt if we can't tell what its designs depict?

Clearly, something besides representation is at play in art. We could turn our attention away from its representational agency and pay attention to the **Medium**: the canvas, the paint, and the brushstrokes. We could look at color and shape and design as values in themselves. Doing so, we begin to **Foreground**—to bring to the front of our attention—the ***formal elements*** of art.

Formal Elements of Art

We do not need theory to begin to perceive formal elements of images. We do so all the time. "I really love that wallpaper"—the colors, the abstract design. These are formal art elements:

Formal Elements of Visual Art

The *formal art elements* form the basis of the language of art; they consist of eight visual parts: *line*, *color*, *form and shape*, *value*, *texture*, *space*, and *movement*.

The following bulleted list condenses definition highlights from Credo articles on formal aspects of art and design.

- **Line**: one dimensional path of a point through space (article):
  - Descriptive lines (drawn): including outlines, contour lines, and hatching lines
  - Implied lines (suggested): including edges and lines of sight (the direction in which figures in a composition are looking)
  - Direction and movement: generally, verticals, horizontals, and diagonals are directional lines, whereas zigzag and curved lines are movement lines.
- **Shape** (article): a two-dimensional area defined by a clear border or outline and possessing only height and width
- **Form** (article): a three-dimensional shape or object. … Form has height, width, and depth, and may be organic, such as a cloud, or geometric, such as a pyramid or cylinder. Organic forms suggest naturalism, while geometric forms convey artificiality.
  - **Organic**: irregular forms suggesting natural contours—clouds, bushes
  - **Geometric**: artificial, i.e. human constructions, such as pure lines, curves, angles: pyramids, cones, cylinders,

triangles, rectangles

- **Texture** (article): surface quality or appearance; how the surface feels or … would feel.
    - **Simulated**: making something look as though it is rough,
    - **Actual**: for example the surface being textured either because of thickly applied paint, or the addition of granular material to the paint, such as sand.
- **Movement** (article): component of a composition that implies or gives the sensation of activity or action and appear dynamic instead of static
    - **Optical movement**: tricking the eye into seeing movement as used in op art.
    - Repetition: using a repeated shape as seen in some cubist works; and
    - **Suggested movement**: relying on the viewer's knowledge of the subject matter to communicate the idea of movement – for example, a viewer looking at a painting of a car chase will expect the cars to be moving.
- **Value** (article): the relationship between tones (ranging from light to dark), and the degree of lightness or darkness of a color; … a scale from white to black
    - Reflected light: light that bounces off an object making it visible
    - Shading: a technique used to make a form look solid
    - **Chiaroscuro** (Italian 'light–dark'): dramatic contrast of light and dark
    - Value as mood or feeling, representing a certain frame of mind or state.
- **Color** (article): the quality or wavelength of light emitted or reflected from an object.
    - **Hue**: the name of the color achieved by mixing pigments, adding colored elements (as in a mosaic) or the like
    - **Value**, the lightness and darkness of a color
    - **Saturation (color)** or intensity: brightness or dullness of a

color
    - **Complementary colors**: hues directly across from each other on the color wheel.
    - Warm (yellow, red, orange) versus Cool (violet, green, blue) colors

Obviously, artists achieve these formal elements using media. *Color* and *Value* are captured in a mosaic by *tesserae* and in painting by pigments fixed in oil, tempera, or ink. *Texture* can be simulated, but also embodied in media and technique: e.g. brushwork leaving daubs of paint and allowing the texture of the canvas to show through.

Composition (visual): Design Principles

Formal elements are furthermore *composed*—artistically combined—to form a *design*. Core aspects of design include the following (Design Principles):

- **Unity**: the "wholeness" of composition, … parts working together creating one total picture – a seamless composition
- *Proximity* or putting objects close to one another in the composition: … When objects are placed close together the viewer's eye is forced to move from one object to the next inevitably taking in the entire composition
- *Similarity*: making things similar, also creates a sense of wholeness. Using similar textures, colors, or shapes tends to visually connect the parts of a composition.
- *Continuation:* when vision is directed by a line (actual or implied) that travels around the composition.
- *Variety and harmony:* variety pertains to differences and diversity. … Harmony in art, as in music, is the agreeable blending of elements … in a perfect balance.
- *Emphasis* (or *dominance*): the focal point of a composition, …

highlighting an element in order to control the viewer's eye and stress significance of objects.

  - **Lines of sight**: eyelines of figures in the work drawing our eyes to a subject
  - Central location in a composition
- **Rhythm** *and movement*: repeating an element creates a sense of movement, flow, or activity. In art, rhythm can be felt as well as seen.
  - Repetition of the same element or of multiple elements in a type of pattern, [1]
  - Progressive repetition of an element, very small to very large; dark to light.
- **Balance**: equal distribution of visual weight or the placement of elements evenly.
  - **Asymmetrical balance**: balance of different elements, objects, or figures with equal visual weights: e.g. large open space balancing heavy, perhaps dark zones
  - **Symmetrical balance**: balance of the same elements on both sides of an implied central vertical or horizontal axis.

Whew! That's some list. No, you are not being asked to memorize it. Yet a few moments on these pages can sensitize your awareness of the artistry at work in artistic composition.

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[1] Does this notion of repeating a form in a pattern sound familiar? It should. It is the equivalent of *scheme* figures of speech in poetry and oratory: parallelism, anaphora, etc.

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Challengers of Academic Art

In the late 19th Century, European artists began to challenge the classical model of painting. In various ways and to varying degrees, these artists shifted the focus from the visual subject to aspects of the medium:

While many artists have continued to produce **mimetic** art into our day, **Avant garde** painters and sculptors have more and more forcefully pressed viewers' awareness away from the visual subject and into puzzling contemplations of perception and artistic mediums. As the rebellions grew increasingly extreme, they left audiences uncomfortable. Even today, people often feel put off by "modern art."[1] Those who struggle to "get" challenging art will do well to begin to see it in its formal dimensions.

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[1] *Modern art*: this term is often used quite loosely to refer to styles of art that confuse viewers, often through unconventional representational techniques. The term is often unclearly associated with the *modernist* period of the 20th Century.

Impressionism

In the 1870s, artists such as Eduard Manet, Paul Cézanne, Edgar

Degas, Berthe Morisot, and Claude Monet offended the French art world by being perceived as "hostile to good manners, to devotion to form, and to respect for the masters." These artists who struggled to have their work included in shows certified by the *Academie des Beaux Arts* rebelled …

> against academic conventions to try to depict their surroundings with spontaneity and freshness, capturing an 'impression' of what the eye sees at a particular moment. … Painting out of doors, directly from nature, was one of the key characteristics of the movement. …. In trying to capture the effects of light on varied surfaces, particularly in open-air settings, Impressionists transformed painting, using bright colors and sketchy brushwork that seemed bewildering or shocking to traditionalists (Impressionism 2004).

Academic artists of the day objected to what they saw as raw, unrefined craftsmanship: "their vigorous brushwork looked sloppy and unfinished, and their colors seemed garish and unnatural" (Impressionism 2015). The academic model insisted that the painter work meticulously in a studio, working and reworking oil paint until the subjects seemed perfectly natural and all marks of the medium were submerged in the illusion of a seen reality. But these artists were not playing the *academic art* game poorly. They were playing a whole new sport: **Impressionism**.

Claude Monet

> The name *Impressionism* was coined derisively, when …critic Louis Leroy latched onto a picture by Monet, *Impression: Sunrise* …at the group's first exhibition,

heading his abusive review "*Exposition des Impressionistes*"(*Le Charivari*, 25 Apr. 1874). He dismissed the group as a whole as "hostile to good manners, to devotion to form, and to respect for the masters" (Impressionism 2004).[2]

[2] It is common for a label coined in derision to later designate a highly honored tradition. During the neo-classical era, medieval great churches in the style of Notre Dame in Paris were aesthetically condemned as *gothic* departures from classical taste, even though they were designed and built 600 years after Gothic cultures had been deeply absorbed into European identities. During the 19th Century, French novelist Victor Hugo and English critic John Ruskin brought a Romantic sensibility to a reevaluation leading to our contemporary appreciation. Today, a *gothic* church is embraced as a rich and aesthetically integrated experience.

OK, so let's look at this painting that bothered the critic enough to derisively name a movement. *What is it supposed to be?*

Claude Monet. (1872). *Impression, Sunrise*. Oil on Canvas.

At the center of the image, we see a small boat, with more receding into the distance. The waves of the sea are pretty clearly visible, and a red sun rises. Shapes loom across the water. *How skillfully does the painter emulate the look of the "real thing"?* Well, that seems less

clear. Doesn't the critic have a point? Isn't the technique crude, the figures a mess? But wait. What is that momentous title? *Impression, Sunrise.* Monet is not really painting the harbor, or even the sun itself. He is painting an *impression*. But what does that mean?

To get it, we have to see visual textures that intervene between our eyes and the visual subject. Monet attempts to capture *his subjective experience* of the scene, including atmospheric conditions that may obscure the boat, the sea, and the harbor. Monet paints, not the water, but light defused through mist. Impressionist technique …

> depicts surroundings with spontaneity and freshness, capturing an "impression" of what the eye sees at a particular moment. As the art historian César Graña put it, Impressionism "assumes a world in which moments can exist as total units of experience … and must be followed and scanned by the painter with a flashing perceptivity of his own" (Impressionism 2015).

Monet's work is always sensitive to the *conditions* of vision, as we see in his series of over 30 versions of the same "subject": the West Front of Rouen Cathedral. Atmospheric conditions, however, transform this identical subject into profoundly different experiences.

Morning Light (1893)

Fog (1893)

Sunlight (1893)

Partial Sun (1894)

Now, Monet was not innovating out of nothing. He was influenced,

as were many artists of the day, by Japanese woodcut prints that always seemed to include weather conditions. Japanese prints still festoon the walls of Monet's home at Giverny as they did in his day. Some of these prints came in series of views of the same object, inspiring the Rouen Cathedral series.

Ando Hiroshige. (1858). 100 Views of Famous Places in Edo: Squall at Ohashi. Colored woodcut.

Claude Monet. (1899). *White Water Lilies*. Oil on canvas.

Today, Monet is probably best known for his extensive series of paintings composed in his gardens at Giverny, Normandy. Thousands each year visit his home, studio, flower gardens, and meticulously fashioned lagoons. Monet designed the grounds as an artistic composition in its own right. Flower beds are arranged according to the sequence of hues in the color wheel. Ponds and bridges emulate Japanese models. The canvases he painted there are among the most popular works in the world today. Tastes have changed since that first show!

You may well be comfortable with the *White Water Lilies* piece above. Still, don't miss its departure from academic conventions. We are still looking through a window on the world. But the values of formal elements have changed. We don't find meticulous drawing and modeling of the textures of flower and bridge. Instead, daubs of paint and clearly visible brushwork create complex and subtle interplays of light and color. The medium is emerging.

en Plein-air painting: Paul Cezanne

Artists associated with **Impressionism** shared a subversive agenda: "to undermine the authority of large, formal, highly finished paintings with historical, mythological, or religious subject-matter, in favor of works that … expressed the artist's response to the world (Impressionism 2004). Such a project is unlikely to be fulfilled in the studio.

en Plein-air Painting

Used in the context of painting or sketching ***en plein-air***, "out of doors" … studies (or *études*) in oil on paper were to be made quickly on the spot and then used as points of reference back in the studio where the final, finished landscape painting was produced. … Impressionists would dispense with this distinction between sketch and finished picture and undertake their work *en plein air* (Plein-air).

Below, Paul Cézanne represents an artist at work in the *plein-air*. Some practical innovations in art equipment supported the move out of the studio. Already mixed paints were available in tubes, and canvas, easel, and brushes could be carried by hand in portable kits.

A Painter at Work. (1875). Oil on Canvas.

(1906). *Mont Sainte-Victoire*. (1906). Oil on Canvas.

Of course, artists had long worked on location. But the traditional method was to sketch preliminary studies before returning to the meticulous, time-consuming work of studio painting. Critics were appalled by the Impressionists' apparently lazy decision to hastily improvise a painting on site in an hour or two. Meticulous **Perspective**, **Foreshortening**, and modelling of the subject all diminished in value. **Forms** were suggested with brief strokes. Subtle atmospheric conditions of color were captured with daubs of paint on the canvas. What mattered was color and light.

To the artists of the early 20th Century **Avant garde**—Matisse, Picasso, Seurat—Paul Cézanne was the great master who helped them re-see the possibilities of paint. Cézanne's *Mont Sainte-Victoire* is of course a landscape. But Cézanne has flattened out the illusion of distance, almost eliminating **Linear Perspective** entirely. Daubs of paint suggest trees, and mountains, but make little attempt to capture contours. Those splotches of paint fragment the image into semi-geometrical segments which, if we pay attention, detach into discreet elements of color. We'll see below what Matisse and Picasso did with this conception of the role of paint.

Berthe Morisot

Often, discussions of Impressionism forget to mention women. With her sister Edma, Berthe Morisot received a "traditionally feminine education. Trained at home and with private tutors, her curriculum included drawing." However, "in the mid-nineteenth century respectable young ladies were not supposed to appear in public alone" or to become professional artists. Still …

> Tapping into a strong amateur feminine image-making tradition that had been gaining momentum since the late

> eighteenth century, they painted scenes of everyday feminine life, primarily portraits, domestic interiors, and family vacation spots. … Through their painting, Berthe and Edma came into contact with the circle of young Parisian artists and writers. … In particular, they became close friends with the leaders of a new generation of artists, Édouard Manet and Edgar Degas (Higonet).

The Morisot sisters faced a difficult choice and chose divergent paths. Edma married and reverted to a middle class lifestyle. Berthe chose to become …

> in effect though not in name, a progressive professional artist. … She accepted Degas's invitation to join an 1874 exhibition intended to circumvent the authority of *l'Académie des Beaux-Arts*. … Although critics noted the participation of a woman in the Impressionist movement, their reaction was rarely negative, and … seem never to have questioned her right to belong at the heart of their group. Instead, critics tended to praise Morisot's art for what they perceived as its femininity, which they saw in its subject matter, as well as in its delicate, scattered, and brightly colored style (Higonet).

Morisot's treatment of *the Harbor at Lorient* displays the characteristics of Impressionist landscape. The linear perspective is traditional, but meticulous modeling is replaced by textures of paint rendering complex interplays of light and color.

The Harbor at Lorient. (1869) Oil on Canvas.

The Cradle. (1872), Oil on Canvas.

Of *The Cradle*, Higonet writes …

> In the first Impressionist exhibition, Morisot showed a painting that epitomized her early work: *The Cradle*, painted in 1873. It shows a mother and baby, painted with light, varied, and expressive brushstrokes to render a time-honored subject in a thoroughly modern way. The image, scaled for a middle-class interior, is at once secular, tender, and analytical. Mother and baby each occupy their own areas of the image, one in full light, the other veiled, but connected to each other compositionally, as well as by the mother's gaze and gesture.

Urban Realism: Edgar Degas

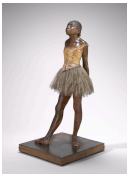
Another source of scandal was the Impressionist's subject matter. Traditional European art generally chose "noble" subjects: religious themes, classical myths, and portraits of the social elite. Classical artists rarely tackled the lives of the working poor. In the late 19th Century, however, class consciousness stirred. Honoré Balzac and Emile Zola (a close friend of Cézanne's since childhood) were writing novels of working life. And Impressionists, especially Edgar Degas, turned to the seedy bars and dance halls of the unrespectable **demi-monde**.

Like the other Impressionists, Degas aimed to give the suggestion of spontaneous and unplanned scenes and a feeling of movement, and like them, he was influenced by photography (he often cut off figures in the manner of a snapshot) and by Japanese color prints (he imitated their use of unfamiliar viewpoints). However, he had relatively little interest in landscape (he did not paint out of doors) and did not share the Impressionist concern for rendering the effects of changing light and atmosphere (Degas, Edgar).

The Absinthe Drinker brought the spotlight of a great painter's technique to an aspect of social life rarely depicted before. The figures are plain in appearance and plainly dressed, and they sit desultorily at their drinks, looking off into space and disconnected from each other. Still, daylight illuminates them openly, if not cheerfully, and there is no evidence of dissipation. By the way, do you see the compositional L figure defined by tables and back wall of the café? Do you see how those elements divide the image into zones cross cut by light?

In a Café (*Absinthe Drinker*). (1875 – 1876). Oil on Canvas.

Singer with a Glove. (1878). Pastel on canvas.



Dancer, Aged 14. (1878). Materials on wood.

In the *Singer with a Glove*, Degas applies **Impressionist** fascination with interacting colors to his favorite subject: cabaret dancers.

Notice, too, the cutting off of the image in the manner of a cropped snapshot. In later years, his eyesight failed and he began sculpting small figures, often dancers. Here, Degas captures the vulnerability and toughness of a young dancer. Look closely at her defiant stance and impassive face.

Post-Impressionism

Like many terms for "movements" in the arts, *Impressionism* is a fairly loose term. Although the innovative techniques associated with the movement transformed the possibilities for painting, Monet was really the only member of the group who remained consciously committed to Impressionist ideals throughout his career. Two painters who were heavily influenced by **Impressionist** techniques branched off in directions different enough to be labeled by a different term: **Post-Impressionism**.

Van Gogh

Born in the Netherlands, Vincent van Gogh famously sold very few paintings in his life despite having an art dealer for a brother. What he did do was paint. His father was a minister and van Gogh for a time studied theology, aspiring to the ministry. Beset by a crisis of faith, he …

> went to work as a lay preacher among impoverished miners. … In his zeal he gave away his own worldly goods to the poor and was dismissed for his literal interpretation of Christ's teaching. … Suffering acute poverty and a spiritual

crisis, … he found that art was his vocation and the means by which he could bring consolation to humanity. From this time he worked at his new "mission" with single-minded intensity, and although he often suffered from extreme poverty and undernourishment, his output in the ten remaining years of his life was prodigious: about 1,000 paintings and a similar number of drawings (Gogh, Vincent van).

Van Gogh's early work reflected in a fairly dark style his concern for the working poor. Then, in February 1886 he moved to Paris to live with his brother the art dealer. Through Theo, Vincent met many of the leading Impressionists, Degas, Pissarro, Seurat, and Toulouse-Lautrec. Van Gogh's time in Paris laid the foundation for a style which matured when he moved to Arles in Provence France. Dazzled by the quality of light in Provençal skies, his canvases exploded into life as his mental state deteriorated.

Self-portrait with Bandage. (1889). Oil on canvas

The self-portrait above shows bandages covering an ear which, during a manic episode, he lacerated with a razor. He was institutionalized for mental instability and eventually, during a time of enormous creativity, took his own life with a gunshot.

His painting … reveled in the beauty of color. Unlike the

> Impressionists, however, he did not use color for the reproduction of visual appearances.... "Instead of trying to reproduce exactly what I have before my eyes," he wrote, "I use color more arbitrarily *so as to express myself* more forcibly." Of his *Night Café* (1888), he said: "I have tried to *express* with red and green the terrible passions of human nature" (Gogh, Vincent van).

Monet painted *impressions* of scenes. By contrast, van Gogh was trying to *express* a vision arising from within. Van Gogh is not precisely identified with ***Expressionism***, but the hypnotic force of his late work seems driven by internal forces. Line and form in *The Church at Auvers* are distorted, not by atmospheric conditions, but as an expression of inner turmoil.

The Church at Auvers. (June 1890). Oil on canvas.

Wheatfield with Crows. (1890). Oil on canvas.

The Starry Night (Saint Rémy). (June 1889). Oil on canvas.

The *Wheatfield with Crows*, part of a last outburst of activity just before his suicide, teems with menace. Notice the confident brush-strokes projecting rows of wheat in single bars of color and haunting the skies with birds dashed off in brisk, angled lines. The rapid technique of the Impressionist is expressing a personal vision dramatically interweaving the light of life with dark agents of doom.

The last is one of the world's best loved paintings. Now, there is no substitute for standing in front of this work at The Museum of Modern Art in New York. Yet we can see a great deal in digital

format. The formal elements are noteworthy: the pigment and brushstrokes. The compositional balance: a dark vertical shape on the lower left balanced by the luminous moon on the upper right. The dark values of cold, blue hues. The rhythm of repeated, swirling, organic whorls. And the painting pulses with the thematic contrasts. Cosmic chill hovers over the sleeping town and the looming, sepulchral tree. Yet the mind of the artist projects a whirling inner life onto churning skies and a cold moon is transformed into the life-giving, yellow light of the sun.

Paul Gauguin and the Primitive Ideal

Van Gogh moved to Provence for the magnificent light, and he tried to convince other artists to join him. Paul Gauguin, restless and disgusted by "civilization," stayed with van Gogh for a time and then fled to the most "savage" place he could think of in the French Empire: Tahiti.

> Gauguin had had a taste for colorful, exotic places since his childhood in Peru and in 1891 he left France for Tahiti. In the account he wrote of his life there (1897) he said: "I have escaped everything that is artificial and conventional. Here I enter into Truth, become one with nature. After the disease of civilization, life in this new world is a return to health." (Gauguin, Paul).

In the late 19th Century, Europe reached the high point of its colonial domination of the world. As do all oppressing peoples, Euro-Americans justified their exploitation of other peoples with a myth of cultural superiority. *We dominate and enjoy privileges*

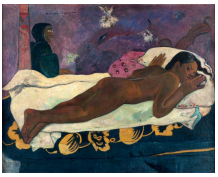
because our civilization is superior. They serve us because they are primitive and unfit for rule or independence.

However, a reaction against Euro-American colonialism was building. Over the next half century, the superiority of "civilization" began to be criticized. Gauguin was one of the artists who began to question mainstream European culture and to see virtue, even salvation in "primitivism." In time, scholarship would lead to a discovery that "primitive" cultures are far from primitive, and Gauguin's view of Tahiti was idealized and woefully misinformed. Nevertheless, his art began the process of finding value in despised cultures:

> His theory and practice of art reflected his desire to deal with earthy human feelings rather than the concerns of polite society. He was one of the first to find visual inspiration in the arts of ancient or primitive peoples, and he reacted vigorously against the naturalism of the Impressionists and the scientific preoccupations of the Neo-Impressionists. As well as using color unnaturalistically for its decorative or emotional effect, he employed emphatic outlines forming rhythmic patterns suggestive of stained glass or Japanese color prints (Gauguin, Paul).

In these samples from his Tahitian paintings, Gauguin rejects the meticulous foreshortening, drawing, and linear perspective of academic art. Like Cézanne, he flattens the depth of his visual plane, as in the mattress on which the young girl lies. He replaces these areas of technique with masterful and complex interplays of subtle shades of color.

Contes barbares (*Barbarian Tales*). (1902). Oil on canvas.



Spirit of the Dead Watching. (1892). Oil on canvas.

Thematically, Gauguin's idealized view of a nobly "primitive" people expresses a half-conscious sense of the European observer's moral ambivalence. *Barbarian Tales* depicts two young girls gazing impassively outward while a wretched European voyeur leers over their shoulders. Gauguin, who struggled to sustain marriage commitments, indulged in fairly predatory relations with young women in his "primitive" paradise (ironies intended!).

Gauguin's *Spirit of the Dead Watching* is rooted in the earth and in a half-grasped cultural tradition. The subject is the young woman Gauguin took temporarily for a wife. She is depicted on the bed, overlooked by birds and a spectral figure invoking the ancestors. But whose vision is this? The imagined vision of the European or that of the people he little understood?

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Deconstructing the Image

Montmartre, 1900

In 1900, Montmartre was a semi-rural hill just north of Paris where working people lived, worked, and gathered in taverns and dance halls. A disparate group of artists collaborated there, many living and painting in *le Bateaux-Lavoir*, a derelict factory space with cheap rent, space for painting but no running water. The artists who lived and worked there and drank in taverns such as the *Lapin Agile* gave birth to what became known as *Modern Art.*

Le Bateaux-Lavoir. (c. 1910). Anonymous Photograph.

We have seen how Classical and Renaissance artists pursued meticulous imitation of visual subjects in perspective. And we have seen Impressionism move from naturalistic mimesis to subjectivity of vision. As the 20th Century dawned, revolutionary artists in Paris began to dramatically distort and deconstruct images in pursuit of very different aesthetic values.

So buckle your seatbelts. For more than 120 years, people have been shrinking from the challenges of "modern art." Remember—you are never required to like anything in our class. But let's try to get a grip on the games that these artists are playing.

Henri Matisse and Fauvism

As is so often the case, the term **Fauvism** was originally used to by disapproving critics to disparage the *savages* led by Henri Matisse[1]:

> *Fauvism*: a movement … based on the use of intensely vivid, non-naturalistic colors. … Henri Matisse used vividly contrasting colors … and came to realize the potential of color freed from its traditional descriptive role. … The Fauves … name was given to them by critic Louis Vauxcelles who pointed to a Renaissance-like sculpture in the middle of the same gallery and exclaimed: "*Donatello au milieu des fauves*!" (*Donatello among the wild beasts*). … Fauvist pictures came in for a good deal of mockery and abuse; critic Camille Mauclair … wrote that "A pot of paint has been flung in the face of the public" (Fauvism).
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> [1] For more information on Matisse, follow up with this article.

Taking his cue especially from Cézanne, Matisse radically challenged the Renaissance idea that a painting functioned as a window on the world. His famous work, *La Danse* depicts lively women. But they dance outside of time on a shapeless, dislocated green space. While depth is inscribed in the dancers' circle, the rest of the image has been flattened to eliminate linear perspective. Figures are rendered with a few deft sketch lines and sheer colors dominate.

La Danse (*first version*). (1909).Oil on canvas.

(1948). *Two Girls, Red and Green Background*. Oil on canvas.

During the Renaissance, hundreds of portraits included ***veduta***: interior spaces with windows opening onto landscapes. Matisse's *Two Girls, Red and Green Background* reinvents the genre. Perspective has evaporated, leaving a flat image into which our visual imaginations somehow project the depth that has to be there. Pure color dominates the image, and not in any naturalistic sense. The red of the table blends seamlessly into the identical red of the dimensionless walls, playing off against pastel yellows, blues, and greens. With Matisse, the game is color, often strange, unnatural, sometimes bilious color, and free flowing forms.

Picasso and Cubism

Barcelona native Pablo Picasso first visited Paris in 1900, settling into *le Bateaux-Lavoir* for a decade. Picasso's time at *le Bateaux-Lavoir* was interrupted a few times by trips home to Barcelona to replenish his purse and restore his confidence as his circle of devotees stubbornly refused to grow sufficiently to lift him out of poverty. He struggled to find a style that would express his imagination … and sell!

Between 1900 and 1904 he alternated between Paris and Barcelona, and these years coincide with his Blue Period,

when he took his subjects from social outcasts and the poor, and the predominant mood of his paintings was one of slightly sentimentalized melancholy expressed through cold and ethereal blue tones, e.g. *La Vie*, 1903 (Picasso, Pablo).

Picasso's reputation for bewildering visual puzzles scares off many viewers. However, if one looked only at the Blue Period, one might ask what all the fuss was about. The long, lean figures are austere but elegant, quiet celebrations of the lives of the working poor.

Woman Ironing. (1904). Oil on canvas.

La Vie. (1904) Oil on canvas.

Old Guitarist. (1904). Oil on panel.

But of course Picasso didn't stop there. Around 1905, Picasso began a year's work on a large canvas that he showed no one until it was finished. Like many works of art that change the game forever, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* was not received well initially, even by friends and collaborators. The piece challenges us to think hard about what we are seeing.

Les Demoiselles d'Avignon (1907). Oil on canvas.

Some elements of the painting are traditional. The subject matter

is straightforward, if a bit sordid: the women of a brothel in Montmartre. Notice the fruit, typical components of a **Still Life**. The faces of the two central women are drawn in the traditional style of Spanish folk art. But what of those other two faces?

Our first clue rises lies in the angular, geometric features of ritual masks from African cultures. African art was at the time becoming popular among artists and sophisticated people in Paris and New York. Picasso was fascinated by the way these conventions broke the image of a face into roughly geometrical shapes. He felt liberated to fracture a composition into disparate pieces, reflecting different styles. The features of the lowest face are dramatically stylized and portrayed from multiple perspectives. This approach to presenting a human face became an often parodied trademark, but we should remember that Egyptian paintings also confront us with contrasting perspectives: profiles except for torso and eyes.

Kagle Mask. Dan People.

Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, detail.

Pende Mbuyu (Sickness) Mask. Painted wood, fiber, cloth.

The deconstruction of figures in *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* led Picasso and his close friend Georges Braque to develop a ***cubist*** approach to painting:

> A revolutionary mode of painting created jointly by Braque and Picasso in the period 1907–14. … Cubism … involved what Juan Gris … called "a new way of representing the world." Abandoning the idea of a single fixed viewpoint, … Cubist pictures used a multiplicity of

viewpoints, many different aspects of an object simultaneously depicted in the same picture. Such fragmentation and rearrangement meant that a painting [was] less a window through which an image of the world is seen, and more physical object on which a subjective response to the world is created. In the "Analytical" phase, the relatively solid massing of their earliest Cubist paintings gave way to a process of composition in which the forms of the object depicted are fragmented into a large number of small, intricately hinged planes that fuse with one another and with the surrounding space. This fascination with pictorial structure led to color being downplayed, and the archetypal Analytical Cubist paintings are virtually monochromatic, painted in muted browns or warm greys (Cubism).

An analytical cubist piece like Ma Jolie includes some elements of recognizable subjects. Can you see the woman or the guitar? But the elements of an image are fractured and reassembled in an almost completely formal composition, playing with line, figure, and value.

Georges Braque. (1913). *Woman with a Guitar*. Oil on Canvas.

Picasso. (1907). *Ma Jolie (Femme a la guitare)*. Oil on Canvas.

Picasso. (1907) Woman in an Armchair. Oil on canvas.

Picasso rather quickly moved on to experiment more and more daringly with deconstructed images. *Woman in an Armchair* deconstructs commonplace subjects and reassembles them in

extraordinary complexity. The piece works as a visual puzzle, with the woman being depicted from many perspectives at once: can you see the facing profiles? Notice how the lines of the trim on the wall create compositional lines that flatten linear perspective.

In 1936, Picasso's native Spain erupted into civil war. The fascist forces of Francisco Franco were heavily supported by Adolf Hitler's German military. On April 26th, 1937, the Luftwaffe [Air Force of Nazi Germany] bombed the Spanish town of Guernica, killing hundreds, if not thousands, and inspiring perhaps the world's greatest protest painting: Picasso's *Guernica.*

Guernica. (1939). Oil on Canvas.

Picasso composed *Guernica* to exorcise his profound distress in reading newspaper articles about the slaughter of his Spanish countrymen and women. The piece is composed in blacks and grays, emulating the tones of newsprint. Of course, as a protest, *Guernica* has a **Didactic** agenda: condemning the war crimes of the Fascist forces. Picasso uses deconstructive techniques to portray the agony of people, children, and animals dismembered by war. Some of the distorted heads expand like balloons, perhaps suggesting the accusing ghosts of the victims. That bull in the upper left has been the subject of many interpretations. It is probably safe to suggest deep links with the Spanish people who love their bulls and who have endured repeated invasions and civil wars for thousands of years. All seems to be contained in a single room with a lone light bulb telling the tale of the atrocity.

For many years, *Guernica* was referred to as the greatest painting

of the century. Whether or not we "like" it or would enjoy hanging it in our living rooms, it surely has an impact for the patient, the observant, and the thoughtful.

"The Man with the Blue Guitar"

Wallace Stevens, from "The Man with the Blue Guitar" (1937)

Wallace Stevens, from "The Man with the Blue Guitar" (1937)

I

The man bent over his guitar,
A shearsman of sorts. The day was green.

They said, 'You have a blue guitar,
You do not play things as they are.'

The man replied, 'Things as they are
Are changed upon the blue guitar.'

And they said then, 'But play, you must,
A tune beyond us, yet ourselves,

A tune upon the blue guitar
Of things exactly as they are.

Wallace Stevens wrote deeply reflective poems probing boundaries between subjectivity and "reality." "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" (1942), explores mingling imagination, faith, myth, and art. Stevens was fascinated by the way contemporary artists such as Picasso playfully and provocatively manipulated that boundary. Our excerpt

from a long poem poses the challenge faced by audiences who on the one hand want art to take them beyond their reality and on the other become frightened and impatient when they lose touch with what they know.

Surrealism

In 1900, Sigmund Freud published *The Interpretation of Dreams.* This watershed work challenged people throughout the world to consider levels of the mind other than consciousness. Freud's notion of the *traumwerke—dreamwork*—opened psychology and the arts to deep structures of meaning that found expression in the ***Surrealist*** movement:

> The central idea was to release the creative powers of the unconscious mind, … "to resolve the previously contradictory conditions of dream and reality into an absolute reality, a super-reality." It aimed at breaching the dominance of reason and conscious control by releasing primitive urges and imagery. … The movement drew liberally on Freud's theories concerning the unconscious and its relation to dreams. … Dalí, Magritte, and others painted in a scrupulously detailed manner to give a hallucinatory sense of reality to scenes that make no rational sense (Surrealism).

Salvador Dali's *The Persistence of Memory* rather plainly lays out a land and seascape with conventional perspective. The objects are all recognizable. They are also impossible, warped by the twisting effects of dreams.

The Persistence of Memory. (1931). Oil on canvas.

Carl Van Vechten. (1939). Portrait of Salvador Dali.

So what's with those drooping clocks? Let your mind play. Clocks, time dreamwork … subjective time. Remember the title: memory with all of its annoying, distorting persistence. Art is no more of a distortion of "reality" than is our all too human remembered fantasy.

By the way, Dali played a role in a major film directed by Alfred Hitchcock. In *Spellbound* (1941), Gregory Peck's character undergoes intensive psychoanalysis. Under hypnosis, he experiences a vivid dream vision. We experience that vision in a dream sequence fusing cinematography, animation, and set design, all composed by Salvador Dali.

Bonus video: Dalí, Salvador. (1945). Dream Sequence. In Alfred Hitchcock's *Spellbound*.

Abstract Art

All of which brings us to the supreme moment of art subverting classical conventions. We've seen artists distort and deconstruct the visual subject. In 20th Century ***Abstract art***, artists began to ignore the ***representation*** of a visual subject altogether:

> Abstract art does not depict recognizable scenes or objects, but is made up of forms and colors that exist for their own expressive sake. Much decorative art can be

> described as abstract, but … the term refers to modern painting and sculpture that abandon the traditional European conception of art as the imitation of nature and make little or no reference to the external visual world. Abstract art in this sense was born and achieved its distinctive identity in the second decade of the 20th century and … developed different idioms –cool geometric precision to explosive spontaneity (Abstract art).

The conceptual seeds of abstract art go back as far as Plato, 2,500 years ago (Abstract art). In the *Philebus* dialogue, Socrates says "I do not mean by beauty of form such beauty as that of animals and pictures…but straight lines and circles, and the plane or solid figures which are formed out of them … for these I affirm to be … eternally and absolutely beautiful." The 19th Century English painter Joshua Reynolds wrote, "the beauty of form alone… makes of itself a great work, and justly claims our esteem and admiration" (Abstract art).

But what is it supposed to be? Many, many viewers balk at art that represents nothing. If you are skeptical, let me remind you that you enjoy abstract designs in your home every day: Tartan plaids, polka dots, pin stripes, geometrical designs and more in clothing, wallpaper, and furniture coverings. Still, you are free to turn finally away. But I would ask you to at least briefly open yourself to the rich textures of purely formal elements composed in abstract art.

Wassily Kandinski, Pioneer of Abstraction

> Wassily Kandinsky's … coloring became very intense

> under the influence of *Fauvism*, and his forms became flatter and more attenuated until they began to lose their representational identity. … [He] described how he came to recognize that color and line in themselves could be sufficient vehicles for the expression of emotions. … He did not completely repudiate representation … but he held that the "pure" artist seeks to express only "inner and essential" feelings. … He argued that if the artist could go beyond the outer shell of appearances he could "touch the beholder's soul." Color was a prime means of achieving this goal, for he believed that colors have "a spiritual vibration" that could be linked with "a corresponding vibration in the human soul." (Kandinsky, Wassily).

Wassily Kandinsky. (1925). *Yellow*, *Red*, *Blue*. Oil on canvas.

The title of Kaninsky's *Yellow*, *Red*, *and Blue* suggests a purely formal, abstract composition. And indeed the powerful colors exert their spell along with deftly alternated geometrical and organic shapes and lines. However, I'll bet you can find represented subjects in the composition. Kandinsky pioneered abstract design while including elements of the natural.

Bands of drenching color: Mark Rothko

The canvases for which Mark Rothko is famous follow a predictable

abstract formula: horizontal bands of color. Yet many people find his work more accessible than other abstracts.

> In 1947, after his paintings had become considerably more abstract, Rothko spoke of them as "dramas; the shapes in the pictures are the performers." The paintings after 1949 feature large rectangular expanses of color arranged parallel to each other. ... The format varied little, but the color sense became more somber from the late 1950s. ... In an ill-tempered exchange with the journalist Seldon Rodman who had an anti-abstract agenda [Rothko] declared "I'm not an abstract artist...I'm not interested in the relationship of color or form or anything else. I'm interested only in expressing basic human emotions—tragedy, ecstasy, doom and so on. And the fact that a lot of people break down and cry when confronted with my pictures shows that I can communicate these basic human emotions...The people who weep before my pictures are having the same religious experience as I had when I painted them" (*Conversations with Artists*, 1957). (Rothko, Mark).

Untitled (Black, Red over Black on Red). (1964).Oil on canvas.

No.5/No.22. (1964). Oil on canvas.

So what is that brings people to tears in front of pure color and form? In part, surely we respond to the dense, drenching colors,

often deep, organic reds. But there is something mesmerizing about those borders, never geometrical, always organic, invariably layered and bleeding. The *WikiArt* gloss for *No. 5/No. 22* explores this visual ambivalence:

> The rectangles within this painting do not extend to the edges of the canvas and appear to hover just over its surface. Heightening this sensation is the effect of chromatic afterimage. Staring at each colored segment individually affects the perception of those adjacent to it. The red–orange center of the painting tints the yellow above it with just a bit of green. The yellow above seems to tint the orange with blue (No. 5; No. 22).

Grids of Eternal Order: Piet Mondrian

Before World War I, the Dutch painter Piet Mondrian painted landscapes and seascapes. Then, in Amsterdam during the war, he began to cultivate a purely formal, abstract style:

> In *Neo-Plasticism*, Mondrian limited himself to straight lines and basic colors to create an art of great clarity and discipline that he thought reflected the laws of the universe, revealing immutable realities behind the ever-changing appearances of the world. Typically he used a bold grid of black lines (all completely straight and either strictly horizontal or strictly vertical) to form an asymmetrical network of rectangles of various sizes that

were painted with a narrow range of colors (the three primaries—blue, red, and yellow—plus black, white, and initially grey). (Mondrian, Piet).

Piet Mondrian. (1930): *Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow.*

So what do we have here? Lines. Colored rectangles in primary colors. Given a ruler and an elementary paint set, a child could do this, right?

Well, no. The design turns out to be astonishingly complex, an exercise in composition. Look closely at the lines. They vary in width. Some continue to the edge of the canvas. The vertical line on the left does not, allowing the top left rectangle to open out into unbounded space. Dynamic tension between open and closed spaces always enlivens a Mondrian. Notice as well the *asymmetrical balance* that matches the large red square diagonally to the smaller blue and vertically with the yellow. Exploring a Mondrian is an exercise in analyzing composition.

Abstract Expressionism: Jackson Pollock

Perhaps the high-water mark of abstract art emerged in the 1940s—***Abstract Expressionism***:

> The first major development in American art to achieve international status and influence. … The painters embraced by the term and … shared a similarity of outlook rather than of style—a spirit of revolt against tradition and a belief in spontaneous freedom of expression. …
>
> Certain qualities are basic to most Abstract Expressionist painting: … working on a huge scale; emphasis on surface qualities so that the physical reality of the canvas is stressed. … There was a certain unity of fundamental attitudes: the glorification of the act of painting itself; the conviction that abstract painting could convey significant meaning and should not be viewed in formalist terms alone; and a belief in the absolute individuality of the artist (Abstract Expressionism).

One of the avatars of abstract expressionism was Jackson Pollock:

> Pollock is most famous for his pouring technique and for painting his large canvases on the floor using heavily loaded brushes, sticks and turkey-basters to disperse the paint. …. Pollock was not arbitrarily "dripping" paint but was concerned about, and carefully controlling, his painterly effects, despite the implications of the idea of action painting. … Pollock filled in [some] parts … so the overall aesthetic balance of lights and darks would, as he liked to say, "work." …One of the hallmarks of most of Pollock's large-scale works is that the major design elements flow from left to right, as if written out. The left edge of the work, whichever side Pollock is working from, always begins with an elegant pirouette of paint, which then

dances across the length of the canvas, until it reaches the terminal right edge (O'Connor).

Number 1 (Lavender Mist). (1950). Oil, enamel, aluminum canvas

Number 18. (1950). Oil and enamel on Masonite

Many people are completely put off by the apparent chaos of a Pollock. *Anyone can drip paint on a canvas!* Yet standing in front of one of Pollock's numbered painting is a remarkable experience. One is staggered by the density of visual elements. Globs of paint, bits of string and other materials create in his vast canvases a density of texture impossible to convey in a photograph. Not so random lines, arcs, and daubs of paint constellate, rhythmically repeat, and duel for dominance. If one gives oneself up to the sheer experience of paint, canvas, line, light, dark, , color, and especially texture, one can become rapt in a dramatic visual dialogue. We detect no represented subject, but, perhaps because of this, our eyes are absorbed in a stunningly rich encounter.

If you wonder how one could possibly "read" such a painting, explore the O'Connor article on him. O'Connor provides a fascinating analysis of Pollock's *No. 2* that unlocks the intension and design lying within the apparently chaotic visual elements. You may or may not be persuaded, but hopefully you will begin to see that work like this has great depth and richness.

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Deconstructed Narrative

We've been sampling art that challenged the basic model of *representation:* the medium projects a recognizable visual subject. In about the same time frame, ***avant-garde*** writers subjected prose narrative to the same dismantling. During the course, we have analyzed the structure of narrative thus:

As we read a novel, the words project a story: characters performing actions in a time and place. For the most part, the narration is transparent: we focus on the story and pay little attention to the words projecting the story or the voice forming the narration. But what if, like Monet's impression, the narration focuses on itself and the story recedes under the weight of the narrating voice?

Stream of Consciousness

A term used variously to describe either the continuity of impressions and thoughts in the human mind, or a special

> literary method for representing this psychological principle in unpunctuated or fragmentary forms of interior monologue. The term was coined in William James's *Principles of Psychology* (1890). … In James Joyce's novel *Ulysses* (1922), *stream-of-consciousness* represents the "flow" of impressions, memories, and sense-impressions through the mind by abandoning accepted forms of syntax, punctuation, and logical connection (Stream of Consciousness).

As viewers of abstract painting become frustrated by the erasure of a represented subject, so readers of **stream of consciousness** fiction may be frustrated by the meager insignificance of the story. To "get" such a story, one must turn one's focus away from the usual plot-centered questions—*who are they? What is the conflict? How will it resolve itself? Will they get married?*—and become absorbed in the narrating consciousness expressing itself.

Virginia Woolf, "The Mark on the Wall"

Virginia Woolf was a member of the London literary scene between the World Wars. As a social critic, she helped to define feminist thought of the time. Her novels *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* pioneered a major shift in narrative emphasis. Long passages in these novels occur within characters' minds, achieving a subjective emphasis on apparently trivial events.

Virginia Woolf (N.D.) [Photograph].

Like James Joyce, Woolf is known as an innovator of *stream of consciousness* technique. Her approach is more straightforward: whereas the verbal play in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* is so radical as to be almost unreadable in a conventional sense, Woolf's prose is clear. It is the subversion of story by reflective consciousness that is challenging. By the mid-20th Century, Woolf was "acclaimed as one of the greatest novelists in the literary canon; many of her experimental techniques (such as the use of free indirect discourse and interior monologue) have been absorbed into mainstream fiction" (Woolf, Virginia).

Virginia Woolf. (1921). *"The Mark on the Wall".*

PERHAPS it was the middle of January in the present that I first looked up and saw the mark on the wall. In order to fix a date it is necessary to remember what one saw. So now I think of the fire; the steady film of yellow light upon the page of my book; the three chrysanthemums in the round glass bowl on the mantelpiece. Yes, it must have been the winter time, and we had just finished our tea, for I remember that I was smoking a cigarette when I looked up and saw the mark on the wall for the first time. I looked up

through the smoke of my cigarette and my eye lodged for a moment upon the burning coals, and that old fancy of the crimson flag flapping from the castle tower came into my mind, and I thought of the cavalcade of red knights riding up the side of the black rock. Rather to my relief the sight of the mark interrupted the fancy, for it is an old fancy, an automatic fancy, made as a child perhaps. The mark was a small round mark, black upon the white wall, about six or seven inches above the mantelpiece.

This is the first paragraph of Woolf's groundbreaking story. The **narration** is easy enough to read. But the **story** has all but vanished. Or, rather, the whole idea of a story has been re-imagined. In this first paragraph, we find a woman smoking a cigarette and looking at a mark on the wall. She wonders what it is. The story becomes a mystery tale, but one unlike any we have seen before. *What is that mark on the wall?*

How readily our thoughts swarm upon a new object, lifting it a little way, as ants carry a blade of straw so feverishly, and then leave it.... If that mark was made by a nail, it can't have been for a picture, it must have been for a miniature—the miniature of a lady with white powdered curls, powder-dusted cheeks, and lips like red carnations. A fraud of course, for the people who had this house before us would have chosen pictures in that way—an old picture for an old room. That is the sort of people they were—very interesting people, and I think of them so often, in such queer places, because one will never see them again, never

know what happened next. They wanted to leave this house because they wanted to change their style of furniture, so he said, and he was in process of saying that in his opinion art should have ideas behind it when we were torn asunder, as one is torn from the old lady about to pour out tea and the young man about to hit the tennis ball in the back garden of the suburban villa as one rushes past in the train.

But as for that mark, I'm not sure about it; I don't believe it was made by a nail after all; it's too big, too round, for that. I might get up, but if I got up and looked at it, ten to one I shouldn't be able to say for certain; because once a thing's done, no one ever knows how it happened. Oh! dear me, the mystery of life; The inaccuracy of thought! The ignorance of humanity! To show how very little control of our possessions we have—what an accidental affair this living is after all our civilization—let me just count over a few of the things lost in one lifetime, beginning, for that seems always the most mysterious of losses—what cat would gnaw, what rat would nibble—three pale blue canisters of book-binding tools? Then there were the bird cages, the iron hoops, the steel skates, the Queen Anne coal-scuttle, the bagatelle board, the hand organ—all gone, and jewels, too. Opals and emeralds, they lie about the roots of turnips. What a scraping paring affair it is to be sure! The wonder is that I've any clothes on my back, that I sit surrounded by solid furniture at this moment. Why, if one wants to compare life to anything, one must liken it to being blown through the Tube[1] at fifty miles an hour—landing at the other end without a single hairpin in one's hair! Shot out at the feet of God entirely naked! Tumbling head over heels in the asphodel meadows like

brown paper parcels pitched down a shoot in the post office! With one's hair flying back like the tail of a race-horse. Yes, that seems to express the rapidity of life, the perpetual waste and repair; all so casual, all so haphazard….

But after life. The slow pulling down of thick green stalks so that the cup of the flower, as it turns over, deluges one with purple and red light. Why, after all, should one not be born there as one is born here, helpless, speechless, unable to focus one's eyesight, groping at the roots of the grass, at the toes of the Giants? As for saying which are trees, and which are men and women, or whether there are such things, that one won't be in a condition to do for fifty years or so. There will be nothing but spaces of light and dark, intersected by thick stalks, and rather higher up perhaps, rose-shaped blots of an indistinct color—dim pinks and blues—which will, as time goes on, become more definite, become—I don't know what….

And yet that mark on the wall is not a hole at all. It may even be caused by some round black substance, such as a small rose leaf, left over from the summer, and I, not being a very vigilant housekeeper—look at the dust on the mantelpiece, for example, the dust which, so they say, buried Troy[2] three times over, only fragments of pots utterly refusing annihilation, as one can believe.

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[1] *The Tube*: Londoners affectionately refer to their subway system as *The Tube*.

[2]*Buried Troy*: this phrase refers to the 1870s discovery by Heinrich Schliemann of the ruins of Troy which had long been thought to be a fictional

city-state only imagined in the ancient Greek legends attributed to Homer—the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Oh! dear me, the mystery of life; The inaccuracy of thought! The ignorance of humanity! A woman sits idly in a chair peering up at a mark on a wall. She considers getting up to look … and then subsides into a reflection on the nature and limitations of consciousness. If this seems outlandish, think of the ways that each of us invests significance in banal aspects of life. The nature of thought indeed! Let's continue with the story.

The tree outside the window taps very gently on the pane…. I want to think quietly, calmly, spaciously, never to be interrupted, never to have to rise from my chair, to slip easily from one thing to another, without any sense of hostility, or obstacle. I want to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard separate facts. To steady myself, let me catch hold of the first idea that passes…. Shakespeare…. Well, he will do as well as another. A man who sat himself solidly in an arm-chair, and looked into the fire, so— A shower of ideas fell perpetually from some very high Heaven down through his mind. He leant his forehead on his hand, and people, looking in through the open door,—for this scene is supposed to take place on a summer's evening—But how dull this is, this historical fiction! It doesn't interest me at all. I wish I could hit upon a pleasant track of thought, a track indirectly reflecting credit upon myself, for those are the pleasantest thoughts,

and very frequent even in the minds of modest mouse-colored people, who believe genuinely that they dislike to hear their own praises. They are not thoughts directly praising oneself; that is the beauty of them; they are thoughts like this:

"And then I came into the room. They were discussing botany. I said how I'd seen a flower growing on a dust heap on the site of an old house in Kingsway. The seed, I said, must have been sown in the reign of Charles the First.[3] What flowers grew in the reign of Charles the First?" I asked—(but, I don't remember the answer). Tall flowers with purple tassels to them perhaps. And so it goes on. All the time I'm dressing up the figure of myself in my own mind, lovingly, stealthily, not openly adoring it, for if I did that, I should catch myself out, and stretch my hand at once for a book in self-protection. Indeed, it is curious how instinctively one protects the image of oneself from idolatry or any other handling that could make it ridiculous, or too unlike the original to be believed in any longer. Or is it not so very curious after all? It is a matter of great importance. Suppose the looking glass smashes, the image disappears, and the romantic figure with the green of forest depths all about it is there no longer, but only that shell of a person which is seen by other people—what an airless, shallow, bald, prominent world it becomes! A world not to be lived in. As we face each other in omnibuses and underground railways we are looking into the mirror that accounts for the vagueness, the gleam of glassiness, in our eyes. And the novelists in future will realize more and more the importance of these reflections, for of course there is not one reflection but an almost infinite number; those are the

depths they will explore, those the phantoms they will pursue, leaving the description of reality more and more out of their stories, taking a knowledge of it for granted, as the Greeks did and Shakespeare perhaps—but these generalizations are very worthless. The military sound of the word is enough. It recalls leading articles, cabinet ministers—a whole class of things indeed which as a child one thought the thing itself, the standard thing, the real thing, from which one could not depart save at the risk of nameless damnation. Generalizations bring back somehow Sunday in London, Sunday afternoon walks, Sunday luncheons, and also ways of speaking of the dead, clothes, and habits—like the habit of sitting all together in one room until a certain hour, although nobody liked it. There was a rule for everything. The rule for tablecloths at that particular period was that they should be made of tapestry with little yellow compartments marked upon them, such as you may see in photographs of the carpets in the corridors of the royal palaces. Tablecloths of a different kind were not real tablecloths. How shocking, and yet how wonderful it was to discover that these real things, Sunday luncheons, Sunday walks, country houses, and tablecloths were not entirely real, were indeed half phantoms, and the damnation which visited the disbeliever in them was only a sense of illegitimate freedom. What now takes the place of those things I wonder, those real standard things? Men perhaps, should you be a woman; the masculine point of view which governs our lives, which sets the standard, which establishes Whitaker's Table of Precedency,[3] which has become, I suppose, since the war half a phantom to many men and women, which soon—one may hope, will be laughed into the dustbin where the phantoms go, the

mahogany sideboards and the Landseer prints, Gods and Devils, Hell and so forth, leaving us all with an intoxicating sense of illegitimate freedom—if freedom exists….

In certain lights that mark on the wall seems actually to project from the wall. Nor is it entirely circular. I cannot be sure, but it seems to cast a perceptible shadow, suggesting that if I ran my finger down that strip of the wall it would, at a certain point, mount and descend a small tumulus, a smooth tumulus like those barrows on the South Downs[4] which are, they say, either tombs or camps. Of the two I should prefer them to be tombs, desiring melancholy like most English people, and finding it natural at the end of a walk to think of the bones stretched beneath the turf…. There must be some book about it. Some antiquary must have dug up those bones and given them a name…. What sort of a man is an antiquary, I wonder? Retired Colonels for the most part, I daresay, leading parties of aged laborers to the top here, examining clods of earth and stone, and getting into correspondence with the neighboring clergy, which, being opened at breakfast time, gives them a feeling of importance, and the comparison of arrow-heads necessitates cross-country journeys to the county towns, an agreeable necessity both to them and to their elderly wives, who wish to make plum jam or to clean out the study, and have every reason for keeping that great question of the camp or the tomb in perpetual suspension, while the Colonel himself feels agreeably philosophic in accumulating evidence on both sides of the question. It is true that he does finally incline to believe in the camp; and, being opposed, *indites*[5] a pamphlet which he is about to read at the quarterly meeting of the local society when a

stroke lays him low, and his last conscious thoughts are not of wife or child, but of the camp and that arrowhead there, which is now in the case at the local museum, together with the foot of a Chinese murderess, a handful of Elizabethan[6] nails, a great many Tudor[7] clay pipes, a piece of Roman pottery, and the wine-glass that Nelson[8] drank out of—proving I really don't know what.

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[3] As we discovered in Module 1, English King Charles I, "this man of blood," fomented a series of civil wars and was executed on the order of Parliament.
[4] *Whitaker's Table of Precedency*: The Table of Precedency in *Whitaker's Almanac* laid out the castes of English society in hierarchical relationship to each other. The reference here suggests the profound disruption of traditional English society by World War I and the suggestion that new social orders could be possible.
[5] *South Downs*: the chalk hills and cliffs of Sussex in South-Eastern England are referred to as the South Downs.
[6] *Indites*: i.e., writes or composes
[7] *Elizabethan:* the age of English Queen Elizabeth I.
[8] *Tudor*: an English royal house established by Henry VII and ending when Elizabeth I died childless.
[9] *Nelson:* that is, Admiral Horatio Nelson, heroic naval leader during England's wars with Napoleon's France, killed at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.

> *.... I want to think quietly, calmly, spaciously, never to be interrupted, never to have to rise from my chair, to slip easily from one thing to another, without any sense of hostility, or obstacle. I want to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard separate facts. To steady myself, let me catch hold of the first idea that passes.*

This is both a description and an illustration of *stream of consciousness*. Notice here how character, story, and writer's persona compress into one. A novelist narrates a literary agenda attributed to a reflecting character. And here of course the reader faces the challenge. Will one sit still for this? Will one embrace a narrative of a mind in idle reflection? Or, conditioned to reading "proper stories" will one fret and cast about for an exit? If we have a bit of patience, we're in for some pretty fascinating reflections. OK, let's finish the story.

> No, no, nothing is proved, nothing is known. And if I were to get up at this very moment and ascertain that the mark on the wall is really—what shall we say?—-the head of a gigantic old nail, driven in two hundred years ago, which has now, owing to the patient attrition of many generations of housemaids, revealed its head above the coat of paint, and is taking its first view of modern life in the sight of a white-walled fire-lit room, what should I gain?—Knowledge? Matter for further speculation? I can think sitting still as well as standing up. And what is knowledge? What are our learned men save the descendants of witches and hermits who crouched in caves and in woods brewing herbs, interrogating shrew-mice and writing down the language of the stars? And the less we honor them as our superstitions dwindle and our respect for beauty and health of mind increases.... Yes, one could imagine a very pleasant

world. A quiet, spacious world, with the flowers so red and blue in the open fields. A world without professors or specialists or house-keepers with the profiles of policemen, a world which one could slice with one's thought as a fish slices the water with his fin, grazing the stems of the water-lilies, hanging suspended over nests of white sea eggs.... How peaceful it is drown here, rooted in the center of the world and gazing up through the grey waters, with their sudden gleams of light, and their reflections—if it were not for *Whitaker's Almanac*—if it were not for the Table of Precedency!

I must jump up and see for myself what that mark on the wall really is—a nail, a rose-leaf, a crack in the wood?

Here is nature once more at her old game of self-preservation. This train of thought, she perceives, is threatening mere waste of energy, even some collision with reality, for who will ever be able to lift a finger against Whitaker's Table of Precedency? The Archbishop of Canterbury is followed by the Lord High Chancellor[10]; the Lord High Chancellor is followed by the Archbishop of York.[11] Everybody follows somebody, such is the philosophy of Whitaker; and the great thing is to know who follows whom. Whitaker knows, and let that, so Nature counsels, comfort you, instead of enraging you; and if you can't be comforted, if you must shatter this hour of peace, think of the mark on the wall.

I understand Nature's game—her prompting to take action as a way of ending any thought that threatens to excite or to pain. Hence, I suppose, comes our slight contempt for men of action—men, we assume, who don't

think. Still, there's no harm in putting a full stop to one's disagreeable thoughts by looking at a mark on the wall.

Indeed, now that I have fixed my eyes upon it, I feel that I have grasped a plank in the sea; I feel a satisfying sense of reality which at once turns the two Archbishops and the Lord High Chancellor to the shadows of shades. Here is something definite, something real. Thus, waking from a midnight dream of horror, one hastily turns on the light and lies quiescent, worshipping the chest of drawers, worshipping solidity, worshipping reality, worshipping the impersonal world which is a proof of some existence other than ours. That is what one wants to be sure of.... Wood is a pleasant thing to think about. It comes from a tree; and trees grow, and we don't know how they grow. For years and years they grow, without paying any attention to us, in meadows, in forests, and by the side of rivers—all things one likes to think about. The cows swish their tails beneath them on hot afternoons; they paint rivers so green that when a moorhen dives one expects to see its feathers all green when it comes up again. I like to think of the fish balanced against the stream like flags blown out; and of water-beetles slowly raiding domes of mud upon the bed of the river. I like to think of the tree itself:—first the close dry sensation of being wood; then the grinding of the storm; then the slow, delicious ooze of sap. I like to think of it, too, on winter's nights standing in the empty field with all leaves close-furled, nothing tender exposed to the iron bullets of the moon, a naked mast upon an earth that goes tumbling, tumbling, all night long. The song of birds must sound very loud and strange in June; and how cold the feet of insects must feel upon it, as they make laborious progresses up the creases of the bark, or sun themselves upon the thin green

awning of the leaves, and look straight in front of them with diamond-cut red eyes.... One by one the fibers snap beneath the immense cold pressure of the earth, then the last storm comes and, falling, the highest branches drive deep into the ground again. Even so, life isn't done with; there are a million patient, watchful lives still for a tree, all over the world, in bedrooms, in ships, on the pavement, lining rooms, where men and women sit after tea, smoking cigarettes. It is full of peaceful thoughts, happy thoughts, this tree. I should like to take each one separately—but something is getting in the way.... Where was I? What has it all been about? A tree? A river? The Downs? Whitaker's Almanack? The fields of asphodel? I can't remember a thing. Everything's moving, falling, slipping, vanishing.... There is a vast upheaval of matter. Someone is standing over me and saying—

"I'm going out to buy a newspaper."

"Yes?"

"Though it's no good buying newspapers.... Nothing ever happens. Curse this war; God damn this war!... All the same, I don't see why we should have a snail on our wall."

Ah, the mark on the wall! It was a snail.

---

[10] *Lord High Chancelor*: highest ranking officer of state in England taking nominal precedence over the elected Prime Minister.
[11] In the hierarchy of the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury takes precedence over that of York.

Ah, the mark on the wall! It was a snail. Is this the greatest anticlimax you've ever read? In conventional story terms, nothing has happened apart from the resolution of a mystery of colossal insignificance. But then, the mark on the merely provides a structural framework for the "real story," the reflections of a woman troubled by life in a society wounded by one of the most destructive wars in human history. A woman chafing under "the masculine point of view which governs our lives, which sets the standard." A woman desperately attempting to shore up her failing faith in reason and life by compulsively citing the "Table of Precedency" governing the social order. This is perhaps not a well woman, although her struggles are all too humanly understandable. And, in fact, twenty years after writing this story, unable to face the horror of another World War, Woolf walked into the River Ouse with stones in her pockets and drowned.

It is always dangerous to equate an artist's life with her work. We can however recognize the themes of life and death, truth and delusion which this story about nothing probes. Mark Rothko, who also committed suicide, painted bands of pure color and then insisted that he was "expressing basic human emotions—tragedy, ecstasy, doom and so on." The artists and writers of the Modern era challenge our assumptions that only classical themes and compositions can have nobility, that banal aspects of life can never be as momentous as the decisions of kings. Confronted by artists playing strange games, we can turn impatiently away or we can pause, open ourselves to new experiences, and find richness in forms that seem at first to make no sense.

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PART V

CHAPTER 5: THE SPIRITUAL SUBLIME

Gerard Manley Hopkins,"The Windhover" (May 30, 1877)

To Christ our Lord

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding

High there, how he rung upon the rein of
a wimpling wing

In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding

Stirred for a bird, – the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

Brute beauty and valor and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion

Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down sillion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

My heart in hiding/Stirred for a bird. Hopkins' "The Windhover" is not easy reading, is it? We'll come back to it. But those 8 words—we can all relate to them, right? A walk in the woods and the stirring eruption of a bird in flight, rising, mastering the air, lifting our spirits.

Kano School. (16th C.). *Birds on a Marshy Stream.* Bird in Flight. Ink, color on paper.

Our spirits are similarly lifted by the bird in flight in the screen painting. *Birds on a Marshy Stream* combines the elevated spaces of Chinese landscape painting with "landscapes, birds, and figure pieces, chiefly in ink with occasional touches of pale tints" (Kano, family or school of Japanese painters). This school of art[1] reflects the influence of Zen Buddhism (Japanese Art and Architecture). We find spiritual inspiration everywhere in art … if we look.

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[1] *Kano school:* named for Kano Masanobu (c.1434–c.1530) and his sons of the Muromachi period of Japanese history.

Art all over the world asks universal human questions: *Where do I come from? Why am I here? What is this yearning inside me that doesn't seem to be satisfied by anything concrete? How do I connect with the forces that made me? What happens when I die?*

Spiritual Dimensions of Art: a class definition

- Evocation of a mysterious human inwardness …
- Yearning to transcend life & death …
- And connect with forces of creation

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The Spirit in Diverse Guises

Christian Spirituality: the Good Shepherd

Christ the Good Shepherd. (3rd C). Catacomb Fresco.

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil; for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=317#audio-317-1

Psalm 23 probes the spiritual dimensions we find in art: *human inwardness, transcendence of life and death, connection with forces of creation.* You may be surprised to find the familiar King James formulation, "valley of the shadow of death," missing. Modern translations don't use it. Hebrew scripture offered a more ambiguous vision of the afterlife than does the New Testament. Still, the spiritual images of trust in communion with God are unmistakable.

Gerard Manley Hopkins: an Epiphany of Creation

OK, are you ready to return to "The Windhover"? As we tackle this

poem, let's understand that its difficulty reflects the poet's view of faith, his lifelong struggle with sustaining his faith.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, "The Windhover" (May 30, 1877)

To Christ our Lord

I caught this morning morning's minion,[1] king-
dom of daylight's dauphin,[2] dapple-dawn-drawn
Falcon,[3] in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding

High there, how he rung upon the rein[4] of
a wimpling[5] wing

In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend:[6] the hurl
and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding

Stirred for a bird, – the achieve of, the mastery of the
thing!

Brute beauty and valor and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion

Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier![7]

No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down sillion[8]
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall[9] themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

---

[1] *Minion:* in medieval times, a loyal servant or a loved one

[2] *Dauphin*: French feudal title roughly synonymous with *prince*, the heir to the throne
[3] *Falcon:* a Windhover is a kestrel or small falcon, a bird of prey
[4] *Rung upon the rein*: a not particularly precise phrase which nevertheless suggests spiraling flight turning on the wing as a horse might be drawn in a circle by a trainer's bridle
[5] *Wimpling*: a *wimple* is cloth headdress worn by nuns and, in medieval times, by modest married women. *Wimpling* refers to the undulations and rippling corresponding to a *wimple's* folds. Thus air pressure causes the windhover's wings to ripple.
[6] *a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend:* another image of controlled, arcing movement, a skater arcing on the ice
[7] *Chevallier*: French for knight, a horseman devoted to a noble cause
[8] *Plough down sillion:* in this poem, Hopkins revived an archaic word, *sillion*, referring to the furrow left by a plough.
[9] *Gall:* harass, trouble, chafe, exasperate

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=317#audio-317-2

Our footnotes—*glosses*—testify to the poem's elusiveness. Yet it's not

that hard to grasp. Lines 1-11 paint a vivid picture, a falcon's majesty, wheeling, soaring in flight, linked rhetorically to royal splendor. The poet, his "heart in hiding," is stirred, inspired by the "achieve of, the mastery of" the bird's aeronautical skill, testimony to the so easily missed glory of God.

In the final lines, we are stirred by Hopkins' theme, divine glory in unexpected places. A ploughman follows a horse in a "shéer plod." Yet, in the turned up clay, the plough leaves behind a flashing, multi-colored sheen. As a wood fire burns down, its apparently "blue-bleak" embers ever so briefly gash themselves into God's "gold-vermilion" splendor.

Hopkins challenges us by honoring and also deviating from traditional **Sonnet** structure. All the lines of the **Octave** end in the same **Rhyme**: A-A-A-A, A-A-A-A. The lines of the **Sestet** rhyme B-C-B-C-B-C. But the stnzaic boundaries defined by Rhyme clash with apparently random line breaks, the Sestet split in. The **Turn** occurs in mid-sestet, after line 11, with the last theme of plough and fire playing out over three separate lines. Even words are fractured, split between lines with half a word serving as the rhyme. All of this complicates the form we expect and keeps us on our toes. Unexpected breaks stop us and force us to pay attention.

Hopkins' play with **Meter** fascinates lovers of muscular poetry. But the poem is also rich in **Figures of Speech**. Notice especially the **Alliteration**: ***m****orning* ***m****orning's* ***m****inion*; *–****d****om of* ***d****aylight's* ***d****auphin*, ***d****apple-****d****awn-****d****rawn* ; ***r****ung upon the* ***r****ein* . Hopkins used the term *sprung rhythm* to designate his attempt to break the bonds of meter through " writing and scanning by number of stresses rather than by counting syllables (Hopkins, Gerard Manley). Syllables spill over the meter just as a jazz musician strays outside the metrical norm with an "excess" flourish of notes. The syllables in italics pile up, overflowing the meter like Louis Armstrong's trumpet riffs. The falcon, prince of the morning, holds an arc against the wind, tethered to a single rippling wing, Hopkins' verse similarly wheels beyond and then back into meter. Some religious art stirs us, not

with the ease of its pieties, but by challenges that call us to walk tightropes of faith.

Neo-Christian Romanticism: William Blake

Hopkins' verse is hard to read and grasp. But its themes are congenial enough to those who share his Christian faith. But how does one read a poet whose spirituality challenges?

William Blake

Poet, prophet, painter, and engraver, [William Blake's] … poetry and painting were inspired by a prophetic tradition of liberty which looked to the models provided by Milton and the Bible but more fundamentally drew deeply on a popular tradition of Dissent. Blake's family provided him with a background of religious nonconformity, although its specific nature is unclear (Mee).

Blake, William. (1794). The Ancient of Days. Frontispiece. *Europe, a Prophecy*. Relief etching with watercolor.

In the Frontispiece of *Europe, a Prophecy*, Blake fuses verse with

engraving. Most of his poetry was published in illuminated books which he designed and printed at his own cost. Blake's unforgettable image of Jehovah can be seen as a conventional homage to the Judeo-Christian God. But notice the geometrical angle projected by those split, creating fingers. Blake was fascinated by physicist Isaac Newton's mathematical model of gravity and the motions of the stars. His image of Jehovah emphasizes the mathematical precision of creation.

But Blake's Jehovah was also appalled by what he saw as an unhealthy, unbalanced obsession with Reason that suppressed the imagination and other human energies. This Creator's hand may measure the heavens with a surveyor's calipers, but the light penetrating cosmic gloom is fired by passion and imagination.

In 1795, Blake self-published *Songs of Innocence and of Experience: Shewing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul*, This collection pairs poems that probe polar opposites in "Blake's vision of the interdependence of good and evil, of energy and restraint, of desire and frustration. They range from straightforward, if highly provocative, attacks on unnatural restraint … to extraordinary lyric intensity" (Songs of Innocence). Let's sample two paired poems from the collection. "The Blossom" cheerily celebrates God's creation. "The Sick Rose" worries at the sickness at Nature's core: death.

William Blake (1795) Songs of Innocence and Experience.

Title Plate.

The Blossom.

The Sick Rose.

The Blossom

MERRY, merry sparrow!
Under leaves so green,
A happy blossom
Sees you, swift as arrow,
Seek your cradle narrow
Near my bosom.
Pretty, pretty robin!
Under leaves so green,
A happy blossom
Hears you sobbing, sobbing,
Pretty, pretty robin,
Near my bosom.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=317#audio-317-3

A very pretty poem and sentiment, almost suggestive of a hallmark card, as long as we don't notice the **Irony** and the grief hiding behind the lovely surface. Now compare Blake's alternate version of nature:

The Sick Rose

O ROSE, thou art sick!
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,
Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy;
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=317#audio-317-4

OK, what does it mean to say the rose is sick? Is it infested by pests? Perhaps. Yet the "invisible worm" is shared by all living things: mortality which always coils with the passions that give life doomed to perish. In the two poems, Blake opposes both sides of life, the joy of youth's abundance and the specter that forever haunts us.

Christians may be a bit uncomfortable with Blake's bold, dissenting models of faith. We can, however, approach Blake as an artist imaging and voicing universal spiritual themes of life and death, creation and destruction, freedom and restraint.

William Butler Yeats: a Spiritual Sojourn

Have you ever struggled with your faith, vacillating between doubt and conviction? If so, you may resonate with William Butler Yeats' poems. In his early years, he toyed with ancient Celtic myths. As he aged, traumatized by the horrors of World War I, Yeats restlessly sought peace, developing a private mythology in which human experience cycles between opposite poles. In Week 2, we read one of his Crazy Jane poems, a series of reflections blending bitterness with hopeful wonder. Here is another from the series.

William Butler Yeats. (1932) *"Crazy Jane on God"*

That lover of a night
Came when he would,
Went in the dawning light
Whether I would or no;
Men come, men go;
All things remain in God.

I had wild Jack for a lover;
Though like a road
That men pass over
My body makes no moan
But sings on:
All things remain in God.

Banners choke the sky;
Men-at-arms tread;
Armored horses neigh

In the narrow pass:
All things remain in God.

Before their eyes a house
That from childhood stood
Uninhabited, ruinous,
Suddenly lit up
From door to top:
All things remain in God.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=317#audio-317-5

OK, so how is this poem spiritual? It advocates no religious doctrine or even distinct spiritual concepts.

It does, however, give voice to the sad, spiritual residue left behind after a lifetime of bitter experience. In the poem, Jane's memories evoke the age-old destiny of women who have throughout time and space known warriors who rape and "wild Jacks" who love passionately before abandoning them. As her age carries her beyond the concerns of passion and desire, she transcends their human vulnerabilities to impassively behold the eternal cycle of love and war. She offers no judgment, no affirmation of belief. In a haunting refrain, she muses on a timeless, implacable truth, "All things remain in God."

But the poem closes on a startling moment of spiritual grace, a miraculous memory of a sudden eruption of unearthly light in a ruined house. Though he wandered far from the Christianity of

his youth, Yeats treasured moments. In his great poem "Vacillation" (1932), he probes through VIII far-ranging stanzas his spiritual ambiguities, doubts, and convictions. In stanza IV he recalls another magical moment of grace, this one remembered from an afternoon in a book shop.

William Butler Yeats (1932). From "Vacillation."

IV

My fiftieth year had come and gone,
I sat, a solitary man,
In a crowded London shop,
An open book and empty cup
On the marble table-top.
While on the shop and street I gazed
My body of a sudden blazed;
And twenty minutes more or less
It seemed, so great my happiness,
That I was blessed and could bless. ...

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=317#audio-317-6

Some Christians may struggle with Yeats' decision to turn away from the Church of his baptism. Yet spiritually sensitive people of all perspectives may empathize with the honesty of his struggle to

make an authentic choice. Many people, whatever their perspective, can relate to his cycles of faith and doubt and treasure remembered moments of spiritual grace resembling that of Yeats:

> *And twenty minutes more or less*
> *It seemed, so great my happiness,*
> *That I was blessed and could bless.*

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Vacillation.

Opening to the Sublime

Beaumont, Sir George Howland. (1806). *Peele Castle in a Storm*. Oil on canvas.

One day in 1807, William Wordsworth stood before a painting of Peel Castle on the Isle of Man. He realized that he had been there:

from William Wordsworth, Elegiac Stanzas (1807)

I was thy neighbor once, thou rugged Pile!
Four summer weeks I dwelt in sight of thee:
I saw thee every day; and all the while
Thy Form was sleeping on a glassy sea.

Out of this encounter, Wordsworth composed Elegiac Stanzas (1807). Wordsworth contrasts the peaceful conditions of his visit with the tempest depicted by the painter and wonders how he, an artist in a different medium, would have rendered the scene:

Ah! then, if mine had been the Painter's hand,
To express what then I saw; and add the gleam,
The light that never was, on sea or land,
The consecration, and the Poet's dream;
I would have planted thee, thou hoary Pile
Amid a world how different from this!
Beside a sea that could not cease to smile;
On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss.

The light that never was, on sea or land. For two centuries now, this line has resonated with artists cycling between two tasks: depicting our world and injecting an inner light of the imagination. Wordsworth's reflection contrasts not only the visions of painter and poet, but also the times of his life. He realizes that with age his vision has grown wiser and darker:

Such, in the fond illusion of my heart,
Such Picture would I at that time have made:
And seen the soul of truth in every part,
A steadfast peace that might not be betrayed.
So once it would have been,—'tis so no more;
I have submitted to a new control:
A power is gone, which nothing can restore;
A ***deep distress hath humanized my Soul.***
Not for a moment could I now behold
A smiling sea, and be what I have been:
The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old;
This, which I know, I speak with mind serene.

So Wordsworth returns to Beaumont's vision of Peel Castle under very different conditions: "This sea in anger, and that dismal shore."

O 'tis a passionate Work!—yet wise and well,
Well chosen is the spirit that is here;
That Hulk which labors in the deadly swell,
This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear!
And this huge Castle, ***standing here sublime,***
I love to see the look with which it braves,
Cased in the unfeeling armor of old time,
The lightning, the fierce wind, the trampling waves.

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Standing here ***sublime***: here Wordsworth invokes a very old word that was returning to prominence in the Romantic age. In 1757, philosopher Edmund Burke published a treatise contrasting what he saw as distinct aesthetic responses:

The Sublime

> The *sublime*, which suggests infinity, vastness, darkness, solitude, and terror, and inspires a drive to self-preservation, and the *beautiful*, which consists in relative smallness, smoothness, and brightness of color, and promotes an instinct for sociability (Sublime and Beautiful).

Wordsworth's poem contrasts the sublime and the beautiful. He remembered the castle as a lovely, peaceful, pretty sight. In Beaumont's painting, he encounters a sublime vision of a ruined castle clinging to a rock, beset by turbulence of wind and sea. This is the *sublime*:

> An experience of the sublime characteristically begins with the interposition of an overwhelming force, which shatters equanimity and produces a feeling of blockage. As this power takes hold of mind and emotions, inertia becomes transport: we are hurried on as if "by an irresistible force." As the experience recedes, it leaves behind a newly invigorated sense of identity and, frequently, admiration for the blocking power (Sublime).

A key component in the sublime is danger, for example heights that project a vision out into infinity. Some people seek sublime encounters with real danger by climbing mountains or parachuting from airplanes. In art, the *sublime* is an **Aesthetic** experience, offering the thrill of danger but from a safe distance. Wordsworth is moved by "the lightning, the fierce wind, the trampling waves," but he stands safely indoors, viewing a painting. Similarly, many people

seek simulations of the sublime by riding on scary roller coasters or viewing horror films.

An experience of the sublime opens spiritual portals into the unfathomably distant, the mysteries of infinity. During the Romantic 19th Century, painters opened gateways between our experience of the world and the forces of creation and destruction.

Caspar David Friedrich

Caspar David Friedrich was " a German Romantic painter who, like Wordsworth, had a quasi-religious feeling for Nature, enhanced by a melancholy cast of mind" (Friedrich, Caspar David). As Wordsworth was responding to Beaumont's **sublime** painting, Friedrich intentionally evoked the sublime in visions of grandeur, elevated places and destructive elements. Friedrich's *Wanderer above the Sea of Mist* iconically captures the vision of the sublime–looking out into infinity! *Sea of Ice* portrays the majestic destructiveness of arctic cold. Our perspective here is detached, the aesthetic sublime, but the title informs us that a ship has been lost, the perspectives of its crew drowned by ice and water.

			
Wanderer Above the Sea of Mist. (1818).	*Sea of Ice* (Arctic Shipwreck). (1824).	*Cross on the Mountain* (1811).	*Winter Landscape.* (1811)

In 1808, [Friedrich] painted the *Cross in the Mountains* (Dresden) as an altarpiece for a private chapel, although it is a *Landscape with a Crucifix* rather than a *Crucifixion*. It started a debate on the propriety of such pantheistic implications. Ruins of Gothic abbeys in woodlands or in the snow, ghostly Gothic cathedrals emerging from mists, the enigmatic *Winter landscape* (1811: London, NG) with a cripple who has discarded his crutches lying in front of a crucifix in a snowy landscape; or glowing sunsets with figures on the shore silhouetted against the light, all have religious overtones which can be sensed but are only occasionally obvious. (Friedrich, Caspar David).

Frontier Sublime: the Hudson River School

The painterly vogue of seeking the **sublime** quickly spread to America:

The Hudson River School

a number of American landscape painters, 1825–c.1875, who were inspired by pride in the beauty of their homeland. … [They] painted the Hudson River Valley, the Catskill Mountains, and other remote and untouched areas of natural beauty (Hudson River School).

Thomas Cole. (1836). *Mount Holyoke after a Thunderstorm-The Oxbow*.

Asher Brown Durand. (1859). *The Catskills*.

Hudson River painters portrayed mountain and valley vistas from the Catskill mountains. Like Chinese landscape painters, they cultivated the sublime in vast panoramas that dwarfed human figures. In the Oxbow painting above, there is a tiny reference point for human perspective. Can you find it? The parasol on the lower right reaching across the river!

Frederick Edwin Church

> As Thomas Cole's only student, [Frederic Edwin Church] worked as a young man within the context of the Hudson River School. Soon he extended its romantic realism to treat unfamiliar, frequently awesome subjects with grander and more sensuous physical presence. His unusually extensive travels in the Americas, from the Arctic to equatorial South America, provided material for his most notable works, but he also painted views of Europe and the Middle East (Church, Frederic Edwin)

A Country Home. (1854).

Niagara. (1857).

Cotopaxi. (1862).

Our three samplings from Church's work move progressively into deeper dimensions of the sublime. *A Country Home* transforms a typical pastoral scene by pulling back, minimizing the buildings, and drawing our eyes through the opening of the clouds into cosmic light. *Niagara* places our perspective on the brink of destruction, the sublime force pulling us downward toward the rocks. In *Cotopaxi*, another waterfall seems to transport us into a primordial moment of time in which the earth itself seems to be newly born.

The Biblical Sublime: Rembrandt

Rembrandt van Rijn. Storm on Sea of Galilee. (1633). Oil on canvas.

We have explored Rembrandt's *Storm on the Sea of Galilee* in terms of technique, e.g. *chiaroscuro*, composition, etc. Let's return to it briefly as an example of the sublime. Christians tend to view this painting in biblical terms: an illustration of Jesus' power and commitment to caring for His children. The title supports that reading. Yet without the title what would we see? A classic example of the sublime: we look safely on as men cling to a frail craft, beset by the turbulence of a storm at sea.

The Existential Sublime: Edvard Munch

At a glance, the work of Edvard Munch seems a far cry from sublime landscapes. You may well be familiar with *Scream*, a work as popular as it is puzzling. We don't know anything about this tormented human figure. Unidentified agony distorts the artist's technique, the shape of the figure's body, and even the surrounding terrain. What could possibly be this disturbing?

		
Scream. (11893). Oil, tempera, pastel and crayon on cardboard.	*Melancholy*. (1895).	*Death in the Sickroom*. (1892).

Whatever it is, *Melancholy* seems to suggest that it pervades Munch's imagination. *Death in the Sickroom* invokes the core spiritual issue that troubles people in every human culture: mortality, the specter of one's own death. And that's our next focus.

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Images and Tales of Mortality

Spiritual Dimensions of Art

- Evocation of a mysterious human inwardness ...
- Yearning to transcend life & death ...
- And connect with forces of creation

These spiritual concerns constellate around the great human challenge: mortality and the yearning for transcendence. Nothing is more centrally human, or more spiritual.

Egyptian Funerary Art: Books of the Dead

All human beings share a spiritual problem: how to face death, inevitable but radically unimaginable. Ancient Egyptian art was focused intensely on mortality. Most of it was *funerary*, intended for inclusion in tombs. Even the vast monuments intended to awe onlookers and project Egyptian power were often connected with tombs. One of the most pervasive genres of Egyptian funerary art was the so-called *Book of the Dead*, inscribed on papyrus, in amulets, and inside the coffin of mummies from people at numerous strata of society.

Book of the Dead... is the name that German Egyptologists gave to the collection of writings that the ancient Egyptians called ... Chapters of the Coming Forth by Day ... in the interest of guiding the deceased through the afterlife. It first appeared ...[between] 1800 and 1530 BCE. ...

The ancient Egyptians ... believed that when one died it was necessary to have at one's disposal the chants or passwords that would call the names of the gods and thereby guarantee safe passage to ... overcome the hazards that filled the afterworld. ...

Book of the Dead (c. 1317-1285 BCE). *Psychostasis* scene (judgment of the dead before Osiris). Ink on papyrus.

The *Book of the Dead* guides the souls in safely navigating the passage into the afterlife. One of the most important tests is divine judgment: the soul of the departed comes ...

before Ausar and the forty-two judges, representing different aspects of Ma'at, Divine Justice. ...The deceased comes before the judges for the weighing of the heart by the feather of Ma'at. The deceased had to call each judge by name and give the relevant chapter, or "declaration of innocence" ... "O Far Strider of Ionnou, I have done no falsehood; O Fire-Embracer from Kherarha, I have not

robbed: "O Nosey of the city of Djehuty, I have not been greedy."

When the deceased had gone through the entire citation of the forty-two declarations of innocence, it was expected that the deceased would be declared "justified," that is, true of voice, and then ushered into the realm of the deceased where the gods await. The devourer of the dead, the demon Ammut, awaited those who would fail the test, but the outcome was always one that was optimistically successful, that is, that the deceased would be ushered into the realm of the deities (Kete Asanti)

As knowledge of Christian saints helps us process ecclesiastical art, knowledge of Egyptian deities help us to identify some key subjects and objects in this scene:

- The white-robed figure–the deceased
- Anubis, jackal-headed god leading the deceased up to and beyond the scales of judgment
- Scales of Maat on which the heart (a pot) must balance a feather of truth
- Ammit, crocodile-headed "devourer" of those who fail the test
- Thoth, the Ibis headed god who inscribes the judgment
- Osiris, enthroned king of the underworld backed by his sisters, Isis and Nephthys

The fully developed Egyptian concept of a judgment in the afterlife was influential in many cultures. Some scholars see parallels in the Christian concept of the day of judgment.

Lamentations of Job

Léon Bonnat. (c. 1860). *Job*. Oil on canvas.

We said above that the Jewish tradition did not say much about heaven or hell. But we do find in Hebrew scripture a stirring affirmation of our hope of eternal life. Job is a wise and righteous man whose faith is tested by bad fortune. He loses his herds, his children and his health. Worst of all, his friends conclude that his misfortunes MUST indicate that God is punishing him. Job persists and continues to assert his faithfulness even in a disputation with God himself. Yet job, in the depth suffering, rings out his faith in God's eternal life.

Lamentations of Job. 19.25-27 (Bible Gateway link)

For I know that my Redeemer lives,
and that at the last he will stand upon the earth;
and after my skin has been thus destroyed,
then in my flesh I shall see God,
whom I shall see on my side,
and my eyes shall behold, and not another.
My heart faints within me.

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=344#audio-344-1

The Death of Death: John Donne

Oliver, Isaac. (before 1622). Portrait of John Donne.

Like Job, John Donne finds in his faith a stirring response to death. After a secular career, Donne in 1621 entered the clergy as Dean of St. Paul's cathedral. In 1623, he contracted an illness that brought him near to death. In 1624, Donne published a series of reflections on his near-death experience. Meditation XVII attempts to bridge the gap between someone else's funeral bells and our own mortality:

John Donne. from Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions. (1624)

Perchance he for whom this bell tolls may be so ill, as that

he knows not it tolls for him. … The church is Catholic, universal, so are all her actions; all that she does belongs to all. … When she buries a man, that action concerns me: all mankind is of one author. … As therefore the bell that rings to a sermon calls not upon the preacher only, but upon the congregation to come, so this bell calls us all; but how much more me, who am brought so near the door by this sickness. …

If we understand aright the dignity of this bell that tolls for our evening prayer, we would be glad to make it ours by rising early, in that application, that it might be ours as well as his, whose indeed it is. The bell doth toll for him that thinks it doth; and though it intermit again, yet from that minute that that occasion wrought upon him, he is united to God.

Who bends not his ear to any bell which upon any occasion rings? but who can remove it from that bell which is passing a piece of himself out of this world? *No man is an island, entire of itself*; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were: any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore *never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee.*

Never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee. In these famous words, Donne offers a literary ***memento mori***, the medieval practice of keeping a skull on one's desk as a reminder of death. In this Holy Sonnet, he celebrates the triumph of faith over death.

John Donne,Holy Sonnet #10. (1633)

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well

And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

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[1] *Poppy:* in Donne's time, poppy seeds were taken to dull pain and to help one fall asleep.

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Reading Donne is always a challenge, but perhaps you are more prepared now to track the themes of the English **sonnet**. **Stanzas** 1 through 3 each answer the apparent power of death through comparisons which show its weakness. That final, stinger **couplet** embraces the triumph of Christian faith: the death of death in Christ.

Genteel Death: Emily Dickinson

Portrait of Emily Dickinson (c 1847). Daguerrotype.

Although writing in literary seclusion in western Massachusetts … Emily Dickinson invented a poetry both unprecedented in form and long-lasting in impact. She wrote as if to bid farewell to the Victorians and to urge on the modernists (Dickinson, Emily).

Emily Dickinson lived a virtually anonymous life in silent resistance to conventional social expectations. At Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, "Dickinson remained seated while everyone else stood" in affirmation of a speaker's invitation for the women to be Christian. She returned home and lived in seclusion, composing poems destined for letters to friends and her desk drawer. Among her themes was the impossible challenge of imagining death.

Emily Dickinson, I heard a Fly buzz – when I died – (591)

I heard a Fly buzz – when I died –
The Stillness in the Room
Was like the Stillness in the Air –
Between the Heaves of Storm –
The Eyes around – had wrung them dry –
And Breaths were gathering firm
For that last Onset – when the King
Be witnessed – in the Room –
I willed my Keepsakes – Signed away
What portion of me be
Assignable – and then it was
There interposed a Fly –
With Blue – uncertain – stumbling Buzz –
Between the light – and me –
And then the Windows failed – and then
I could not see to see –

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=344#audio-344-3

Dickinson's verses can seem strange. Who would imagine death as a genteel suitor or the fly buzzing in the room at the point of death? Then again, who can imagine the point of one's own death? Dickinson tackled the challenge of imagining death with the same courage she showed in resisting the social conventions which she found so stifling.

*Emily Dickenson,*Because I could not stop for Death (479)

Because I could not stop for Death –
He kindly stopped for me –
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –
And Immortality.

We slowly drove – He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility –

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess – in the Ring –
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –
We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed Us –
The Dews drew quivering and Chill –
For only Gossamer[2], my Gown –
My Tippet – only Tulle[3] –

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground –
The Roof was scarcely visible –
The Cornice[4] – in the Ground –

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity –

[2] *Gossamer*: a sheer, lightweight fabric resembling spider silk
[3] *Tulle*: a lightweight stiff fabric resembling netting used for veils and gowns. In this case, a bridal veil suggesting a wedding with death.
[4] *Cornice*: in architecture, a horizontal molding element on eaves, gables, and gutters

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://mlpp.pressbooks.pub/encounterswiththeartsartc150/?p=344#audio-344-4

In this famous poem, Dickinson imagines death as a genteel suitor calling for her in a carriage bearing her into infinity. Notice the details: the bridal veil, the destination as a *swelling in the ground*, the absorption of time into a timeless infinity. To suggest the featureless and unknowable, Dickinson catalogues features of daily life her journey leaves behind.

Mortality and the Ancestors: Frida Kahlo

Frida Kahlo[5] was born in Mexico City to a German immigrant father and a *mestizo***[6]** mother. As an artist, she worked primarily in self-portraits, albeit self-portraits of a unique type. In surreal compositions, she explored her herself internally and externally, probing the textures of her mortality. *The Two Fridas* reflects a

culturally split self, attired in dresses from each culture, with two hearts connected by a tenuous line of blood.

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[5] For more information, see this brief article on Frida Kahlo.

[6] *Mestizo*: i.e. a Mexican of mixed ethnic origins—European and indigenous

Las Dos Fridas [*The Two Fridas*]. (1939)

Broken Column. (1944). Oil on canvas.

El Sueño (La Cama) [*The Dream (The Bed)*]. (1940).

For Kahlo, art was, quite literally, a chronic wrestling with death. After suffering a crushed spine in a bus accident while a teenager, Kahlo endured numerous operation and hospital stays lying flat on her back. She painted in hospital beds, her canvases perched above her. *The Broken Column* transforms her spinal column, never whole again after the wreck, into art, a Greek architectural column. *The Dream (The Bed)* uses Surrealist visual logic to evoke a traditional paradox., In traditional cultures, children are conceived and eventually die in beds at home. Recalling that Mexican culture cultivates a very strong , we can see Kahlo's dream work connecting with those who have gone before her.

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Imagining the Unimaginable: Leo Tolstoy

Repin, I. (1887). Portrait of Leo Tolstoy. Oil on Canvas.

For our final encounter with the arts, let's tackle a *Novella*: a prose narrative longer than the usual short story but shorter than most novels. In our story, the great Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy imagines the unimaginable: death itself. "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" provides a fitting capstone for our look at the spiritual side of art.

We approach Chapter I with an unusual advantage. The story's title gives the plot away: Ilyich dies in the story. This bit of **Dramatic Irony**—our knowledge of what will happen—mutes the suspense of the plot. And the **Narration** opens in what would normally be the **Story**'s end, the *falling action* of the main character's funeral.

Leo Tolstoy. (1886). "The Death of Ivan Ilyich"

Chapter I

During an interval in the Melvinski trial in the large building of the Law Courts the members and public prosecutor met in Ivan Egorovich Shebek's private room, where the conversation turned on the celebrated Krasovski case. Fedor Vasilievich warmly maintained that it was not subject to their jurisdiction, Ivan Egorovich maintained the contrary, while Peter Ivanovich, not having entered into the discussion at the start, took no part in it but looked through the *Gazette*. "Gentlemen, Ivan Ilych has died!"

"You don't say so!"

"Here, read it yourself," replied Peter Ivanovich, handing Fedor Vasilievich the paper still damp from the press. Surrounded by a black border were the words: "Praskovya Fedorovna Golovina, with profound sorrow, informs relatives and friends of the demise of her beloved husband Ivan Ilych Golovin, Member of the Court of Justice, which occurred on February the 4th of this year 1882. The funeral will take place on Friday at one o'clock in the afternoon."

Ivan Ilych had been a colleague of the gentlemen present and was liked by them all. He had been ill for some weeks with an illness said to be incurable. His post had been kept open for him, but there had been conjectures that in case of his death Alexeev might receive his appointment, and that either Vinnikov or Shtabel would succeed Alexeev. So on receiving the news of Ivan Ilych's death the first thought of

each of the gentlemen in that private room was of the changes and promotions it might occasion among themselves or their acquaintances.

"I shall be sure to get Shtabel's place or Vinnikov's," thought Fedor Vasilievich. "I was promised that long ago, and the promotion means an extra eight hundred rubles a year for me besides the allowance."

"Now I must apply for my brother-in-law's transfer from Kaluga," thought Peter Ivanovich. "My wife will be very glad, and then she won't be able to say that I never do anything for her relations."

"I thought he would never leave his bed again," said Peter Ivanovich aloud. "It's very sad."

"But what really was the matter with him?"

"The doctors couldn't say — at least they could, but each of them said something different. When last I saw him I though he was getting better."

"And I haven't been to see him since the holidays. I always meant to go."

"Had he any property?"

"I think his wife had a little — but something quiet trifling."

"We shall have to go to see her, but they live so terribly far away."

"Far away from you, you mean. Everything's far away from your place."

"You see, he never can forgive my living on the other side of the river," said Peter Ivanovich, smiling at Shebek. Then,

still talking of the distances between different parts of the city, they returned to the Court.

Besides considerations as to the possible transfers and promotions likely to result from Ivan Ilych's death, the mere fact of the death of a near acquaintance aroused, as usual, in all who heard of it the complacent feeling that, "it is he who is dead and not I."

Each one thought or felt, "Well, he's dead but I'm alive!" But the more intimate of Ivan Ilych's acquaintances, his so-called friends, could not help thinking also that they would now have to fulfil the very tiresome demands of propriety by attending the funeral service and paying a visit of condolence to the widow.

Fedor Vasilievich and Peter Ivanovich had been his nearest acquaintances. Peter Ivanovich had studied law with Ivan Ilych and had considered himself to be under obligations to him.

Having told his wife at dinner-time of Ivan Ilych's death, and of his conjecture that it might be possible to get her brother transferred to their circuit, Peter Ivanovich sacrificed his usual nap, put on his evening clothes and drove to Ivan Ilych's house.

At the entrance stood a carriage and two cabs. Leaning against the wall in the hall downstairs near the cloak stand was a coffin-lid covered with cloth of gold, ornamented with gold cord and tassels, that had been polished up with metal powder. Two ladies in black were taking off their fur cloaks. Peter Ivanovich recognized one of them as Ivan Ilych's sister, but the other was a stranger to him. His colleague Schwartz was just coming downstairs, but on seeing Peter Ivanovich enter he stopped and winked at him,

as if to say: “Ivan Ilych has made a mess of things — not like you and me.”

Schwartz’s face with his whiskers and slim figure in evening dress, had as usual an air of elegant solemnity which contrasted with the playfulness of his character and had a special piquancy here, or so it seemed to Peter Ivanovich.

Peter Ivanovich allowed the ladies to precede him and slowly followed them upstairs. Schwartz did not come down but remained where he was, and Peter Ivanovich understood that he wanted to arrange where they should play bridge that evening. The ladies went upstairs to the widow’s room, and Schwartz with seriously compressed lips but a playful looking his eyes, indicated by a twist of his eyebrows the room to the right where the body lay.

Peter Ivanovich, like everyone else on such occasions, entered feeling uncertain what he would have to do. All he knew was that at such times it is always safe to cross oneself. But he was not quite sure whether one should make obeisance[1] while doing so. He therefore adopted a middle course. On entering the room he began crossing himself and made a slight movement resembling a bow. At the same time, as far as the motion of his head and arm allowed, he surveyed the room. Two young men — apparently nephews, one of whom was a high-school pupil — were leaving the room, crossing themselves as they did so. An old woman was standing motionless, and a lady with strangely arched eyebrows was saying something to her in a whisper. A vigorous, resolute Church Reader, in a frock-coat, was reading something in a loud voice with an expression that precluded any contradiction. The butler’s assistant, Gerasim, stepping lightly in front of Peter

Ivanovich, was strewing something on the floor. Noticing this, Peter Ivanovich was immediately aware of a faint odor of a decomposing body.

The last time he had called on Ivan Ilych, Peter Ivanovich had seen Gerasim in the study. Ivan Ilych had been particularly fond of him and he was performing the duty of a sick nurse.

Peter Ivanovich continued to make the sign of the cross slightly inclining his head in an intermediate direction between the coffin, the Reader, and the icons on the table in a corner of the room. Afterwards, when it seemed to him that this movement of his arm in crossing himself had gone on too long, he stopped and began to look at the corpse.

The dead man lay, as dead men always lie, in a specially heavy way, his rigid limbs sunk in the soft cushions of the coffin, with the head forever bowed on the pillow. His yellow waxen brow with bald patches over his sunken temples was thrust up in the way peculiar to the dead, the protruding nose seeming to press on the upper lip. He was much changed and grown even thinner since Peter Ivanovich had last seen him, but, as is always the case with the dead, his face was handsomer and above all more dignified than when he was alive. the expression on the face said that what was necessary had been accomplished, and accomplished rightly. Besides this there was in that expression a reproach and a warning to the living. This warning seemed to Peter Ivanovich out of place, or at least not applicable to him. He felt some discomfort and so he hurriedly crossed himself once more and turned and went out of the door — too hurriedly and too regardless of propriety.

Schwartz was waiting for him in the adjoining room with legs spread wide apart and both hands toying with his top-hat behind his back. The mere sight of that playful, well-groomed, and elegant figure refreshed Peter Ivanovich. He felt that Schwartz was above all these happenings and would not surrender to any depressing influences. His very look said that this incident of a church service for Ivan Ilych could not be a sufficient reason for infringing the order of the session — in other words, that it would certainly not prevent his unwrapping a new pack of cards and shuffling them that evening while a footman placed fresh candles on the table: there was no reason for supposing that this incident would hinder their spending the evening agreeably.

Indeed he said this in a whisper as Peter Ivanovich passed him, proposing that they should meet for a game at Fedor Vasilievich's. But apparently Peter Ivanovich was not destined to play bridge that evening. Praskovya Fedorovna (a short, fat woman who despite all efforts to the contrary had continued to broaden steadily from her shoulders downwards and who had the same extraordinarily arched eyebrows as the lady who had been standing by the coffin), dressed all in black, her head covered with lace, came out of her own room with some other ladies, conducted them to the room where the dead body lay, and said: "The service will begin immediately. Please go in."

Schwartz, making an indefinite bow, stood still, evidently neither accepting nor declining this invitation. Praskovya Fedorovna recognizing Peter Ivanovich, sighed, went close up to him, took his hand, and said: "I know you were a true friend to Ivan Ilych..." and looked at him awaiting some suitable response. And Peter Ivanovich knew that, just as it

had been the right thing to cross himself in that room, so what he had to do here was to press her hand, sigh, and say, "Believe me..." So he did all this and as he did it felt that the desired result had been achieved: that both he and she were touched.

"Come with me. I want to speak to you before it begins," said the widow. "Give me your arm."

Peter Ivanovich gave her his arm and they went to the inner rooms, passing Schwartz who winked at Peter Ivanovich compassionately.

"That does for our bridge! Don's object if we find another player. Perhaps you can cut in when you do escape," said his playful look.

Peter Ivanovich sighed still more deeply and despondently, and Praskovya Fedorovna pressed his arm gratefully. When they reached the drawing-room, upholstered in pink cretonne and lighted by a dim lamp, they sat down at the table — she on a sofa and Peter Ivanovich on a low pouffe, the springs of which yielded spasmodically under his weight. Praskovya Fedorovna had been on the point of warning him to take another seat, but felt that such a warning was out of keeping with her present condition and so changed her mind. As he sat down on the pouffe Peter Ivanovich recalled how Ivan Ilych had arranged this room and had consulted him regarding this pink cretonne with green leaves. The whole room was full of furniture and knick-knacks, and on her way to the sofa the lace of the widow's black shawl caught on the edge of the table. Peter Ivanovich rose to detach it, and the springs of the pouffe, relieved of his weight, rose also and gave him a push. The widow began detaching her shawl herself, and

Peter Ivanovich again sat down, suppressing the rebellious springs of the pouffe under him. But the widow had not quite freed herself and Peter Ivanovich got up again, and again the pouffe rebelled and even creaked. When this was all over she took out a clean cambric handkerchief and began to weep. The episode with the shawl and the struggle with the pouffe had cooled Peter Ivanovich's emotions and he sat there with a sullen look on his face. This awkward situation was interrupted by Sokolov, Ivan Ilych's butler, who came to report that the plot in the cemetery that Praskovya Fedorovna had chosen would cost tow hundred rubles. She stopped weeping and, looking at Peter Ivanovich with the air of a victim, remarked in French that it was very hard for her. Peter Ivanovich made a silent gesture signifying his full conviction that it must indeed be so.

"Please smoke," she said in a magnanimous yet crushed voice, and turned to discuss with Sokolov the price of the plot for the grave.

Peter Ivanovich while lighting his cigarette heard her inquiring very circumstantially into the prices of different plots in the cemetery and finally decide which she would take. when that was done she gave instructions about engaging the choir. Sokolov then left the room.

"I look after everything myself," she told Peter Ivanovich, shifting the albums that lay on the table; and noticing that the table was endangered by his cigarette-ash, she immediately passed him an ash-tray, saying as she did so: "I consider it an affectation to say that my grief prevents my attending to practical affairs. On the contrary, if anything can — I won't say console me, but — distract me, it is seeing to everything concerning him." She again took out her handkerchief as if preparing to cry, but suddenly, as if

mastering her feeling, she shook herself and began to speak calmly. “But there is something I want to talk to you about.”

Peter Ivanovich bowed, keeping control of the springs of the pouffe, which immediately began quivering under him.

“He suffered terribly the last few days.”

“Did he?” said Peter Ivanovich.

“Oh, terribly! He screamed unceasingly, not for minutes but for hours. for the last three days he screamed incessantly. It was unendurable. I cannot understand how I bore it; you could hear him three rooms off. Oh, what I have suffered!”

“Is it possible that he was conscious all that time?” asked Peter Ivanovich.

“Yes,” she whispered. “To the last moment. He took leave of us a quarter of an hour before he died, and asked us to take Volodya away.”

The thought of the suffering of this man he had known so intimately, first as a merry little boy, then as a schoolmate, and later as a grown-up colleague, suddenly struck Peter Ivanovich with horror, despite an unpleasant consciousness of his own and this woman’s dissimulation. He again saw that brow, and that nose pressing down on the lip, and felt afraid for himself.

“Three days of frightful suffering and the death! Why, that might suddenly, at any time, happen to me,” he thought, and for a moment felt terrified. But — he did not himself know how — the customary reflection at once occurred to him that this had happened to Ivan Ilych and not to him, and that it should not and could not happen to him, and that to think that it could would be yielding to

depression which he ought not to do, as Schwartz's expression showed. After which reflection Peter Ivanovich felt reassured and began to ask with interest about the details of Ivan Ilych's death, as though death was an accident natural to Ivan Ilych but certainly not to himself.

After many details of the really dreadful physical sufferings Ivan Ilych had endured (which details he learnt only from the effect those sufferings had produced on Praskovya Fedorovna's nerves) the widow apparently found it necessary to get to business.

"Oh, Peter Ivanovich, how hard it is! How terribly, terribly hard!" and she again began to weep.

Peter Ivanovich sighed and waited for her to finish blowing her nose. When she had done so he said, "Believe me..." and she again began talking and brought out what was evidently her chief concern with him — namely, to question him as to how she could obtain a grant of money from the government on the occasion of her husband's death. She made it appear that she was asking Peter Ivanovich's advice about her pension, but he soon saw that she already knew about that to the minutest detail, more even than he did himself. She knew how much could be got out of the government in consequence of her husband's death, but wanted to find out whether she could not possibly extract something more. Peter Ivanovich tried to think of some means of doing so, but after reflecting for a while and, out of propriety, condemning the government for its niggardliness, he said he thought that nothing more could be got. Then she sighed and evidently began to devise means of getting rid of her visitor. Noticing this, he put out his cigarette, rose, pressed her hand, and went out into the anteroom.

In the dining-room where the clock stood that Ivan Ilych had liked so much and had bought at an antique shop, Peter Ivanovich met a priest and a few acquaintances who had come to attend the service, and he recognized Ivan Ilych's daughter, a handsome young woman. She was in black and her slim figure appeared slimmer than ever. She had a gloomy, determined, almost angry expression, and bowed to Peter Ivanovich as though he were in some way to blame.

Behind her, with the same offended look, stood a wealthy young man, and examining magistrate, whom Peter Ivanovich also knew and who was her fiancé, as he had heard. He bowed mournfully to them and was about to pass into the death-chamber, when from under the stairs appeared the figure of Ivan Ilych's schoolboy son, who was extremely like his father. He seemed a little Ivan Ilych, such as Peter Ivanovich remembered when they studied law together. His tear-stained eyes had in them the look that is seen in the eyes of boys of thirteen or fourteen who are not pure-minded. When he saw Peter Ivanovich he scowled morosely and shamefacedly. Peter Ivanovich nodded to him and entered the death-chamber. The service began: candles, groans, incense, tears, and sobs. Peter Ivanovich stood looking gloomily down at his feet. He did not look once at the dead man, did not yield to any depressing influence, and was one of the first to leave the room. There was no one in the anteroom, but Gerasim darted out of the dead man's room, rummaged with his strong hands among the fur coats to find Peter Ivanovich's and helped him on with it.

"Well, friend Gerasim," said Peter Ivanovich, so as to say something. "It's a sad affair, isn't it?"

"It's God will. We shall all come to it some day," said

Gerasim, displaying his teeth — the even white teeth of a healthy peasant — and, like a man in the thick of urgent work, he briskly opened the front door, called the coachman, helped Peter Ivanovich into the sledge, and sprang back to the porch as if in readiness for what he had to do next.

Peter Ivanovich found the fresh air particularly pleasant after the smell of incense, the dead body, and carbolic acid.

"Where to sir?" asked the coachman.

"It's not too late even now....I'll call round on Fedor Vasilievich."

He accordingly drove there and found them just finishing the first rubber, so that it was quite convenient for him to cut in.

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[1] *Obeisance*: a socially correct showing of deferential respect

This 1st chapter sets up the story's great theme: the illusion that, contrary to Donne's meditation, death cannot be shared. *Each one thought or felt*, "*Well, he's dead but I'm alive!*" The living characters' interests in career and property contrast ironically with the inevitable destiny that has already caught up with Ilyich. And this **Irony** is actually seminal in all human experience. We live suppressing our awareness of our destiny.

Chapter II jumps back to Ilyich's youth. This *flashback* illustrates a crucial difference between **Story** and **Narration**: the temporal sequence of a flashback departs from the sequence of story events. As Chapter II begins, we return to youth's illusions of immortality.

Chapter II

Ivan Ilych's life had been most simple and most ordinary and therefore most terrible.

He had been a member of the Court of Justice, and died at the age of forty-five. His father had been an official who after serving in various ministries and departments in Petersburg had made the sort of career which brings men to positions from which by reason of their long service they cannot be dismissed, though they are obviously unfit to hold any responsible position, and for whom therefore posts are specially created, which though fictitious carry salaries of from six to ten thousand rubles that are not fictitious, and in receipt of which they live on to a great age.

Such was the Privy Councilor and superfluous member of various superfluous institutions, Ilya Epimovich Golovin.

He had three sons, of whom Ivan Ilych was the second. The eldest son was following in his father's footsteps only in another department, and was already approaching that stage in the service at which a similar sinecure would be reached. the third son was a failure. He had ruined his prospects in a number of positions and was not serving in the railway department. His father and brothers, and still more their wives, not merely disliked meeting him, but avoided remembering his existence unless compelled to do so. His sister had married Baron Greff, a Petersburg official of her father's type. Ivan Ilych was *le phenix de la famille***[2]** as people said. He was neither as cold and formal as his elder brother nor as wild as the younger, but was a happy mean between them — an intelligent polished, lively and

agreeable man. He had studied with his younger brother at the School of Law, but the latter had failed to complete the course and was expelled when he was in the fifth class. Ivan Ilych finished the course well. Even when he was at the School of Law he was just what he remained for the rest of his life: a capable, cheerful, good-natured, and sociable man, though strict in the fulfillment of what he considered to be his duty: and he considered his duty to be what was so considered by those in authority. Neither as a boy nor as a man was he a toady, but from early youth was by nature attracted to people of high station as a fly is drawn to the light, assimilating their ways and views of life and establishing friendly relations with them. All the enthusiasms of childhood and youth passed without leaving much trace on him; he succumbed to sensuality, to vanity, and latterly among the highest classes to liberalism, but always within limits which his instinct indicated to him as correct.

At school he had done things which had formerly seemed to him very horrid and made him feel disgusted with himself when he did them; but when later on he saw that such actions were done by people of good position and that they did not regard them as wrong, he was able not exactly to regard them as right, but to forget about them entirely or not be at all troubled at remembering them.

Having graduated from the School of Law and qualified for the tenth rank of the civil service, and having received money from his father for his equipment, Ivan Ilych ordered himself clothes at Scharmer's, the fashionable tailor, hung a medallion inscribed *respice finem***[3]** on his watch-chain, took leave of his professor and the prince who was patron of the school, had a farewell dinner with his comrades at

Donon's first-class restaurant, and with his new and fashionable portmanteau, linen, clothes, shaving and other toilet appliances, and a travelling rug, all purchased at the best shops, he set off for one of the provinces where through his father's influence, he had been attached to the governor as an official for special service.

In the province Ivan Ilych soon arranged as easy and agreeable a position for himself as he had had at the School of Law. He performed his official task, made his career, and at the same time amused himself pleasantly and decorously. Occasionally he paid official visits to country districts where he behaved with dignity both to his superiors and inferiors, and performed the duties entrusted to him, which related chiefly to the sectarians, with an exactness and incorruptible honesty of which he could not but feel proud.

In official matters, despite his youth and taste for frivolous gaiety, he was exceedingly reserved, punctilious, and even severe; but in society he was often amusing and witty, and always good- natured, correct in his manner, and *bon enfant*,[4] as the governor and his wife — with whom he was like one of the family — used to say of him.

In the province he had an affair with a lady who made advances to the elegant young lawyer, and there was also a milliner; and there were carousals with aides-de-camp who visited the district, and after-supper visits to a certain outlying street of doubtful reputation; and there was too some obsequiousness to his chief and even to his chief's wife, but all this was done with such a tone of good breeding that no hard names could be applied to it. It all came under the heading of the French saying: "*Il faut que jeunesse se passe*."[5] It was all done with clean hands, in clean linen, with French phrases, and above all among

people of the best society and consequently with the approval of people of rank.

So Ivan Ilych served for five years and then came a change in his official life. The new and reformed judicial institutions were introduced, and new men were needed. Ivan Ilych became such a new man. He was offered the post of examining magistrate, and he accepted it though the post was in another province and obliged him to give up the connections he had formed and to make new ones. His friends met to give him a send-off; they had a group photograph taken and presented him with a silver cigarette-case, and he set off to his new post.

As examining magistrate Ivan Ilych was just as *comme il faut***[6]** and decorous a man, inspiring general respect and capable of separating his official duties from his private life, as he had been when acting as an official on special service. His duties now as examining magistrate were fare more interesting and attractive than before. In his former position it had been pleasant to wear an undress uniform made by Scharmer, and to pass through the crowd of petitioners and officials who were timorously awaiting an audience with the governor, and who envied him as with free and easy gait he went straight into his chief's private room to have a cup of tea and a cigarette with him. But not many people had then been directly dependent on him — only police officials and the sectarians when he went on special missions — and he liked to treat them politely, almost as comrades, as if he were letting them feel that he who had the power to crush them was treating them in this simple, friendly way. There were then but few such people.

But now, as an examining magistrate, Ivan Ilych felt that everyone without exception, even the most important and

self-satisfied, was in his power, and that he need only write a few words on a sheet of paper with a certain heading, and this or that important, self- satisfied person would be brought before him in the role of an accused person or a witness, and if he did not choose to allow him to sit down, would have to stand before him and answer his questions. Ivan Ilych never abused his power; he tried on the contrary to soften its expression, but the consciousness of it and the possibility of softening its effect, supplied the chief interest and attraction of his office. In his work itself, especially in his examinations, he very soon acquired a method of eliminating all considerations irrelevant to the legal aspect of the case, and reducing even the most complicated case to a form in which it would be presented on paper only in its externals, completely excluding his personal opinion of the matter, while above all observing every prescribed formality. The work was new and Ivan Ilych was one of the 1st men to apply the new Code of 1864.[7]

On taking up the post of examining magistrate in a new town, he made new acquaintances and connections, placed himself on a new footing and assumed a somewhat different tone. He took up an attitude of rather dignified aloofness towards the provincial authorities, but picked out the best circle of legal gentlemen and wealthy gentry living in the town and assumed a tone of slight dissatisfaction with the government, of moderate liberalism, and of enlightened citizenship. At the same time, without at all altering the elegance of his toilet, he ceased shaving his chin and allowed his beard to grow as it pleased.

Ivan Ilych settled down very pleasantly in this new town. The society there, which inclined towards opposition to the governor was friendly, his salary was larger, and he began

to play *vint* [a form of bridge], which he found added not a little to the pleasure of life, for he had a capacity for cards, played good-humoredly, and calculated rapidly and astutely, so that he usually won.

After living there for two years he met his future wife, Praskovya Fedorovna Mikhel, who was the most attractive, clever, and brilliant girl of the set in which he moved, and among other amusements and relaxations from his labors as examining magistrate, Ivan Ilych established light and playful relations with her.

While he had been an official on special service he had been accustomed to dance, but now as an examining magistrate it was exceptional for him to do so. If he danced now, he did it as if to show that though he served under the reformed order of things, and had reached the fifth official rank, yet when it came to dancing he could do it better than most people. So at the end of an evening he sometimes danced with Praskovya Fedorovna, and it was chiefly during these dances that he captivated her. She fell in love with him. Ivan Ilych had at first no definite intention of marrying, but when the girl fell in love with him he said to himself: "Really, why shouldn't I marry?"

Praskovya Fedorovna came of a good family, was not bad looking, and had some little property. Ivan Ilych might have aspired to a more brilliant match, but even this was good. He had his salary, and she, he hoped, would have an equal income. She was well connected, and was a sweet, pretty, and thoroughly correct young woman. to say that Ivan Ilych married because he fell in love with Praskovya Fedorovna and found that she sympathized with his views of life would be as incorrect as to say that he married because his social circle approved of the match. He was swayed by both these

considerations: the marriage gave him personal satisfaction, and at the same time it was considered the right thing by the most highly placed of his associates.

So Ivan Ilych got married.

The preparations for marriage and the beginning of married life, with its conjugal caresses, the new furniture, new crockery, and new linen, were very pleasant until his wife became pregnant — so that Ivan Ilych had begun to think that marriage would not impair the easy, agreeable, gay and always decorous character of his life, approved of by society and regarded by himself as natural, but would even improve it. But from the first months of his wife's pregnancy, something new, unpleasant, depressing, and unseemly, and from which there was no way of escape, unexpectedly showed itself.

His wife, without any reason —*de gaiete de coeur***[8]** as Ivan Ilych expressed it to himself — began to disturb the pleasure and propriety of their life. She began to be jealous without any cause, expected him to devote his whole attention to her, found fault with everything, and made coarse and ill-mannered scenes.

At first Ivan Ilych hoped to escape from the unpleasantness of this state of affairs by the same easy and decorous relation to life that had served him heretofore: he tried to ignore his wife's disagreeable moods, continued to live in his usual easy and pleasant way, invited friends to his house for a game of cards, and also tried going out to his club or spending his evenings with friends. But one day his wife began upbraiding him so vigorously, using such coarse words, and continued to abuse him every time he did not fulfil her demands, so resolutely and with such evident

determination not to give way till he submitted — that is, till he stayed at home and was bored just as she was — that he became alarmed. He now realized that matrimony — at any rate with Praskovya Fedorovna — was not always conducive to the pleasures and amenities of life, but on the contrary often infringed both comfort and propriety, and that he must therefore entrench himself against such infringement. And Ivan Ilych began to seek for means of doing so. His official duties were the one thing that imposed upon Praskovya Fedorovna. By means of his official work and the duties attached to it he began struggling with his wife to secure his own independence.

With the birth of their child, the attempts to feed it and the various failures in doing so, and with the real and imaginary illnesses of mother and child, in which Ivan Ilych's sympathy was demanded but about which he understood nothing, the need of securing for himself an existence outside his family life became still more imperative.

As his wife grew more irritable and exacting and Ivan Ilych transferred the center of gravity of his life more and more to his official work, so did he grow to like his work better and became more ambitious than before.

Very soon, within a year of his wedding, Ivan Ilych had realized that marriage, though it may add some comforts to life, is in fact a very intricate and difficult affair towards which in order to perform one's duty, that is, to lead a decorous life approved of by society, one must adopt a definite attitude just as towards one's official duties.

And Ivan Ilych evolved such an attitude towards married life. He only required of it those conveniences — dinner at

home, housewife, and bed — which it could give him, and above all that propriety of external forms required by public opinion. For the rest he looked for lighthearted pleasure and propriety, and was thankful when he found them, but if he met with antagonism and querulousness he retired into his separate fenced-off world of official duties, where he found satisfaction.

Ivan Ilych was esteemed a good official, and after three years was made Assistant Public Prosecutor. His new duties, their importance, the possibility of indicting and imprisoning anyone he chose, the publicity his speeches received, and the success he had, made his work still more attractive.

More children came. His wife became more and more querulous and ill-tempered, but the attitude Ivan Ilych had adopted towards his home life rendered him almost impervious to her grumbling.

After seven years' service in that town he was transferred to another province as Public Prosecutor. They moved, but were short of money and his wife did not like the place they moved to. Though the salary was higher the cost of living was greater, besides which two of their children died and family life became still more unpleasant for him.

Praskovya Fedorovna blamed her husband for every inconvenience they encountered in their new home. Most of the conversations between husband and wife, especially as to the children's education, led to topics which recalled former disputes, and these disputes were apt to flare up again at any moment. There remained only those rare periods of amorousness which still came to them at times but did not last long. These were islets at which they

anchored for a while and then again set out upon that ocean of veiled hostility which showed itself in their aloofness from one another. This aloofness might have grieved Ivan Ilych had he considered that it ought not to exist, but he now regarded the position as normal, and even made it the goal at which he aimed in family life. His aim was to free himself more and more from those unpleasantness and to give them a semblance of harmlessness and propriety. He attained this by spending less and less time with his family, and when obliged to be at home he tried to safeguard his position by the presence of outsiders. The chief thing however was that he had his official duties. The whole interest of his life now centered in the official world and that interest absorbed him. The consciousness of his power, being able to ruin anybody he wished to ruin, the importance, even the external dignity of his entry into court, or meetings with his subordinates, his success with superiors and inferiors, and above all his masterly handling of cases, of which he was conscious — all this gave him pleasure and filled his life, together with chats with his colleagues, dinners, and bridge. So that on the whole Ivan Ilych's life continued to flow as he considered it should do — pleasantly and properly.

So things continued for another seven years. His eldest daughter was already sixteen, another child had died, and only one son was left, a schoolboy and a subject of dissension. Ivan Ilych wanted to put him in the School of Law, but to spite him Praskovya Fedorovna entered him at the High School. The daughter had been educated at home and had turned out well: the boy did not learn badly either.

[2] *le phenix de la famille*: i.e. *the phoenix of the family*, the child most likely to bring honor. But the phoenix is a mythical bird associated with death and resurrection.
[3] *respice finem:* a *memento mori*, reminder of mortality: *consider your end.* The motto comments ironically on the story's themes.
[4] *Bon enfant*: French for *good child*, perhaps suggesting naiveté.
[5] *Il faut que jeunesse se passé*: i.e. *children will be children*
[6] *Comme il faut*: socially correct in behavior
[7] *Code of 1864:* a legal reform package in Russia
[8] *de gaiete de Coeur*: i.e. *the joy of the heart*

Ivan Ilych's life had been most simple and most ordinary and therefore most terrible. Ilyich's life is the model of upper middle class banality. He goes to school, marries sensibly, and rises through the ranks of government bureaucracy. So what makes it terrible?

Dramatic irony does. We watch this biographical movie in the context of death. The narration offers mild sarcasm on Ilyich's fatuous complacency, but he never becomes a villain. The bite in his shortsighted view of life—"on the whole his life ran its course as he believed life should do: easily, pleasantly, and decorously"—becomes terrible in light of his destiny.

Chapter III

So Ivan Ilych lived for seventeen years after his marriage. He was already a Public Prosecutor of long standing, and had declined several proposed transfers while awaiting a more desirable post, when an unanticipated and unpleasant occurrence quite upset the peaceful course of his life. He was expecting to be offered the post of presiding judge in a University town, but Happe somehow came to the front and obtained the appointment instead. Ivan Ilych became irritable, reproached Happe, and quarreled both him and with his immediate superiors — who became colder to him and again passed him over when other appointments were made.

This was in 1880, the hardest year of Ivan Ilych's life. It was then that it became evident on the one hand that his salary was insufficient for them to live on, and on the other that he had been forgotten, and not only this, but that what was for him the greatest and most cruel injustice appeared to others a quite ordinary occurrence. Even his father did not consider it his duty to help him. Ivan Ilych felt himself abandoned by everyone, and that they regarded his position with a salary of 3,500 rubles as quite normal and even fortunate. He alone knew that with the consciousness of the injustices done him, with his wife's incessant nagging, and with the debts he had contracted by living beyond his means, his position was far from normal.

In order to save money that summer he obtained leave of absence and went with his wife to live in the country at her brother's place.

In the country, without his work, he experienced *ennui***[9]** for the first time in his life, and not only *ennui* but intolerable depression, and he decided that it was impossible to go on living like that, and that it was necessary to take energetic measures.

Having passed a sleepless night pacing up and down the veranda, he decided to go to Petersburg and bestir himself, in order to punish those who had failed to appreciate him and to get transferred to another ministry.

Next day, despite many protests from his wife and her brother, he started for Petersburg with the sole object of obtaining a post with a salary of five thousand rubles a year. He was no longer bent on any particular department, or tendency, or kind of activity. All he now wanted was an appointment to another post with a salary of five thousand rubles, either in the administration, in the banks, with the railways in one of the Empress Marya's Institutions, or even in the customs — but it had to carry with it a salary of five thousand rubles and be in a ministry other than that in which they had failed to appreciate him.

And this quest of Ivan Ilych's was crowned with remarkable and unexpected success. At Kursk an acquaintance of his, F. I. Ilyin, got into the first-class carriage, sat down beside Ivan Ilych, and told him of a telegram just received by the governor of Kursk announcing that a change was about to take place in the ministry: Peter Ivanovich was to be superseded by Ivan Semonovich.

The proposed change, apart from its significance for Russia, had a special significance for Ivan Ilych, because by bringing forward a new man, Peter Petrovich, and consequently his friend Zachar Ivanovich, it was highly

favorable for Ivan Ilych, since Sachar Ivanovich was a friend and colleague.

In Moscow this news was confirmed, and on reaching Petersburg Ivan Ilych found Zachar Ivanovich and received a definite promise of an appointment in his former Department of Justice.

A week later he telegraphed to his wife: "Zachar in Miller's place. I shall receive appointment on presentation of report."

Thanks to this change of personnel, Ivan Ilych had unexpectedly obtained an appointment in his former ministry which placed him two states above his former colleagues besides giving him five thousand rubles salary and three thousand five hundred rubles for expenses connected with his removal. All his ill humor towards his former enemies and the whole department vanished, and Ivan Ilych was completely happy.

He returned to the country more cheerful and contented than he had been for a long time. Praskovya Fedorovna also cheered up and a truce was arranged between them. Ivan Ilych told of how he had been feted by everybody in Petersburg, how all those who had been his enemies were put to shame and now fawned on him, how envious they were of his appointment, and how much everybody in Petersburg had liked him.

Praskovya Fedorovna listened to all this and appeared to believe it. She did not contradict anything, but only made plans for their life in the town to which they were going. Ivan Ilych saw with delight that these plans were his plans, that he and his wife agreed, and that, after a stumble, his

life was regaining its due and natural character of pleasant lightheartedness and decorum.

Ivan Ilych had come back for a short time only, for he had to take up his new duties on the 10th of September. Moreover, he needed time to settle into the new place, to move all his belongings from the province, and to buy and order many additional things: in a word, to make such arrangements as he had resolved on, which were almost exactly what Praskovya Fedorovna too had decided on.

Now that everything had happened so fortunately, and that he and his wife were at one in their aims and moreover saw so little of one another, they got on together better than they had done since the first years of marriage. Ivan Ilych had thought of taking his family away with him at once, but the insistence of his wife's brother and her sister-in-law, who had suddenly become particularly amiable and friendly to him and his family, induced him to depart alone.

So he departed, and the cheerful state of mind induced by his success and by the harmony between his wife and himself, the one intensifying the other, did not leave him. He found a delightful house, just the thing both he and his wife had dreamt of. Spacious, lofty reception rooms in the old style, a convenient and dignified study, rooms for his wife and daughter, a study for his son — it might have been specially built for them. Ivan Ilych himself superintended the arrangements, chose the wallpapers, supplemented the furniture (preferably with antiques which he considered particularly *comme il faut*), and supervised the upholstering. Everything progressed and progressed and approached the ideal he had set himself: even when things were only half completed they exceeded his expectations. He saw what a refined and elegant character, free from vulgarity, it would

all have when it was ready. On falling asleep he pictured to himself how the reception room would look. Looking at the yet unfinished drawing room he could see the fireplace, the screen, the what-not, the little chairs dotted here and there, the dishes and plates on the walls, and the bronzes, as they would be when everything was in place. He was pleased by the thought of how his wife and daughter, who shared his taste n this matter, would be impressed by it. They were certainly not expecting as much. He had been particularly successful in finding, and buying cheaply, antiques which gave a particularly aristocratic character to the whole place. But in his letters he intentionally understated everything in order to be able to surprise them. All this so absorbed him that his new duties — though he liked his official work — interested him less than he had expected. Sometimes he even had moments of absent-mindedness during the court sessions and would consider whether he should have straight or curved cornices for his curtains. He was so interested in it all that he often did things himself, rearranging the furniture, or rehanging the curtains. Once when mounting a step- ladder to show the upholsterer, who did not understand, how he wanted the hangings draped, he made a false step and slipped, but being a strong and agile man he clung on and only knocked his side against the knob of the window frame. The bruised place was painful but the pain soon passed, and he felt particularly bright and well just then. He wrote: "I feel fifteen years younger." He thought he would have everything ready by September, but it dragged on till mid-October. But the result was charming not only in his eyes but to everyone who saw it.

In reality it was just what is usually seen in the houses of

people of moderate means who want to appear rich, and therefore succeed only in resembling others like themselves: there are damasks, dark wood, plants, rugs, and dull and polished bronzes — all the things people of a certain class have in order to resemble other people of that class. His house was so like the others that it would never have been noticed, but to him it all seemed to be quite exceptional. He was very happy when he met his family at the station and brought them to the newly furnished house all lit up, where a footman in a white tie opened the door into the hall decorated with plants, and when they went on into the drawing-room and the study uttering exclamations of delight. He conducted them everywhere, drank in their praises eagerly, and beamed with pleasure. At tea that evening, when Praskovya Fedorovna among others things asked him about his fall, he laughed, and showed them how he had gone flying and had frightened the upholsterer.

"It's a good thing I'm a bit of an athlete. Another man might have been killed, but I merely knocked myself, just here; it hurts when it's touched, but it's passing off already — it's only a bruise."

So they began living in their new home — in which, as always happens, when they got thoroughly settled in they found they were just one room short — and with the increased income, which as always was just a little (some five hundred rubles) too little, but it was all very nice.

Things went particularly well at first, before everything was finally arranged and while something had still to be done: this thing bought, that thing ordered, another thing moved, and something else adjusted. Though there were some disputes between husband and wife, they were both so well satisfied and had so much to do that it all passed off

without any serious quarrels. When nothing was left to arrange it became rather dull and something seemed to be lacking, but they were then making acquaintances, forming habits, and life was growing fuller.

Ivan Ilych spent his mornings at the law court and came home to diner, and at first he was generally in a good humor, though he occasionally became irritable just on account of his house. (Every spot on the tablecloth or the upholstery, and every broken window- blind string, irritated him. He had devoted so much trouble to arranging it all that every disturbance of it distressed him.) But on the whole his life ran its course as he believed life should do: easily, pleasantly, and decorously.

He got up at nine, drank his coffee, read the paper, and then put on his undress uniform and went to the law courts. there the harness in which he worked had already been stretched to fit him and he donned it without a hitch: petitioners, inquiries at the chancery, the chancery itself, and the sittings public and administrative. In all this the thing was to exclude everything fresh and vital, which always disturbs the regular course of official business, and to admit only official relations with people, and then only on official grounds. A man would come, for instance, wanting some information. Ivan Ilych, as one in whose sphere the matter did not lie, would have nothing to do with him: but if the man had some business with him in his official capacity, something that could be expressed on officially stamped paper, he would do everything, positively everything he could within the limits of such relations, and in doing so would maintain the semblance of friendly human relations, that is, would observe the courtesies of life. As soon as the official relations ended, so did

everything else. Ivan Ilych possessed this capacity to separate his real life from the official side of affairs and not mix the two, in the highest degree, and by long practice and natural aptitude had brought it to such a pitch that sometimes, in the manner of a virtuoso, he would even allow himself to let the human and official relations mingle. He let himself do this just because he felt that he could at any time he chose resume the strictly official attitude again and drop the human relation. and he did it all easily, pleasantly, correctly, and even artistically. In the intervals between the sessions he smoked, drank tea, chatted a little about politics, a little about general topics, a little about cards, but most of all about official appointments. Tired, but with the feelings of a virtuoso — one of the first violins who has played his part in an orchestra with precision — he would return home to find that his wife and daughter had been out paying calls, or had a visitor, and that his son had been to school, had done his homework with his tutor, and was surely learning what is taught at High Schools. Everything was as it should be. After dinner, if they had no visitors, Ivan Ilych sometimes read a book that was being much discussed at the time, and in the evening settled down to work, that is, read official papers, compared the depositions of witnesses, and noted paragraphs of the Code applying to them. This was neither dull nor amusing. It was dull when he might have been playing bridge, but if no bridge was available it was at any rate better than doing nothing or sitting with his wife. Ivan Ilych's chief pleasure was giving little dinners to which he invited men and women of good social position, and just as his drawing-room resembled all other drawing-rooms so did his enjoyable little parties resemble all other such parties.

Once they even gave a dance. Ivan Ilych enjoyed it and everything went off well, except that it led to a violent quarrel with his wife about the cakes and sweets. Praskovya Fedorovna had made her own plans, but Ivan Ilych insisted on getting everything from an expensive confectioner and ordered too many cakes, and the quarrel occurred because some of those cakes were left over and the confectioner's bill came to forty-five rubles. It was a great and disagreeable quarrel. Praskovya Fedorovna called him "a fool and an imbecile," and he clutched at his head and made angry allusions to divorce.

But the dance itself had been enjoyable. The best people were there, and Ivan Ilych had danced with Princess Trufonova, a sister of the distinguished founder of the Society "Bear My Burden".

The pleasures connected with his work were pleasures of ambition; his social pleasures were those of vanity; but Ivan Ilych's greatest pleasure was playing bridge. He acknowledged that whatever disagreeable incident happened in his life, the pleasure that beamed like a ray of light above everything else was to sit down to bridge with good players, not noisy partners, and of course to four-handed bridge (with five players it was annoying to have to stand out, though one pretended not to mind), to play a clever and serious game (when the cards allowed it) and then to have supper and drink a glass of wine. after a game of bridge, especially if he had won a little (to win a large sum was unpleasant), Ivan Ilych went to bed in a specially good humor.

So they lived. They formed a circle of acquaintances among the best people and were visited by people of importance and by young folk. In their views as to their

acquaintances, husband, wife and daughter were entirely agreed, and tacitly and unanimously kept at arm's length and shook off the various shabby friends and relations who, with much show of affection, gushed into the drawing-room with Japanese plates on the walls. Soon these shabby friends ceased to obtrude themselves and only the best people remained in the Golovins' set.

Young men made up to Lisa, and Petrishchev, an examining magistrate and Dmitri Ivanovich Petrishchev's son and sole heir, began to be so attentive to her that Ivan Ilych had already spoken to Praskovya Fedorovna about it, and considered whether they should not arrange a party for them, or get up some private theatricals.

So they lived, and all went well, without change, and life flowed pleasantly.

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[9] *Ennui:* a state of depression characterized by listless dissatisfaction and loss of enthusiasm

"The hardest year of Ivan Ilych's life" begins with an apparently benign accident, after which "his life ran its course as he believed life should do: easily, pleasantly, and decorously." Ilyich settles into a new job and, at first, life flows pleasantly while mortality gathers its weapons.

Chapter IV

They were all in good health. It could not be called ill health if Ivan Ilych sometimes said that he had a queer taste in his mouth and felt some discomfort in his left side.

But this discomfort increased and, though not exactly painful, grew into a sense of pressure in his side accompanied by ill humor. And his irritability became worse and worse and began to mar the agreeable, easy, and correct life that had established itself in the Golovin family. Quarrels between husband and wife became more and more frequent, and soon the ease and amenity disappeared and even the decorum was barely maintained. Scenes again became frequent, and very few of those islets remained on which husband and wife could meet without an explosion. Praskovya Fedorovna now had good reason to say that her husband's temper was trying. With characteristic exaggeration she said he had always had a dreadful temper, and that it had needed all her good nature to put up with it for twenty years. It was true that now the quarrels were started by him. His bursts of temper always came just before dinner, often just as he began to eat his soup. Sometimes he noticed that a plate or dish was chipped, or the food was not right, or his son put his elbow on the table, or his daughter's hair was not done as he liked it, and for all this he blamed Praskovya Fedorovna. At first she retorted and said disagreeable things to him, but once or twice he fell into such a rage at the beginning of dinner that she realized it was due to some physical derangement brought on by taking food, and so she restrained herself and did not answer, but only hurried to get the dinner over. She regarded this self-restraint as highly praiseworthy. Having come to the conclusion that her husband had a

dreadful temper and made her life miserable, she began to feel sorry for herself, and the more she pitied herself the more she hated her husband. She began to wish he would die; yet she did not want him to die because then his salary would cease. And this irritated her against him still more. She considered herself dreadfully unhappy just because not even his death could save her, and though she concealed her exasperation, that hidden exasperation of hers increased his irritation also.

After one scene in which Ivan Ilych had been particularly unfair and after which he had said in explanation that he certainly was irritable but that it was due to his not being well, she said that he was ill it should be attended to, and insisted on his going to see a celebrated doctor.

He went. Everything took place as he had expected and as it always does. There was the usual waiting and the important air assumed by the doctor, with which he was so familiar (resembling that which he himself assumed in court), and the sounding and listening, and the questions which called for answers that were foregone conclusions and were evidently unnecessary, and the look of importance which implied that "if only you put yourself in our hands we will arrange everything — we know indubitably how it has to be done, always in the same way for everybody alike." It was all just as it was in the law courts. The doctor put on just the same air towards him as he himself put on towards an accused person.

The doctor said that so-and-so indicated that there was so- and-so inside the patient, but if the investigation of so-and-so did not confirm this, then he must assume that and that. If he assumed that and that, then...and so on. To Ivan Ilych only one question was important: was his case serious

or not? But the doctor ignored that inappropriate question. From his point of view it was not the one under consideration, the real question was to decide between a floating kidney, chronic catarrh, or appendicitis. It was not a question the doctor solved brilliantly, as it seemed to Ivan Ilych, in favor of the appendix, with the reservation that should an examination of the urine give fresh indications the matter would be reconsidered. All this was just what Ivan Ilych had himself brilliantly accomplished a thousand times in dealing with men on trial. The doctor summed up just as brilliantly, looking over his spectacles triumphantly and even gaily at the accused. From the doctor's summing up Ivan Ilych concluded that things were bad, but that for the doctor, and perhaps for everybody else, it was a matter of indifference, though for him it was bad. And this conclusion struck him painfully, arousing in him a great feeling of pity for himself and of bitterness towards the doctor's indifference to a matter of such importance.

He said nothing of this, but rose, placed the doctor's fee on the table, and remarked with a sigh: "We sick people probably often put inappropriate questions. But tell me, in general, is this complaint dangerous, or not?..."

The doctor looked at him sternly over his spectacles with one eye, as if to say: "Prisoner, if you will not keep to the questions put to you, I shall be obliged to have you removed from the court."

"I have already told you what I consider necessary and proper. The analysis may show something more." And the doctor bowed.

Ivan Ilych went out slowly, seated himself disconsolately in his sledge, and drove home. All the way home he was

going over what the doctor had said, trying to translate those complicated, obscure, scientific phrases into plain language and find in them an answer to the question: "Is my condition bad? Is it very bad? Or is there as yet nothing much wrong?" And it seemed to him that the meaning of what the doctor had said was that it was very bad. Everything in the streets seemed depressing. The cabmen, the houses, the passers-by, and the shops, were dismal. His ache, this dull gnawing ache that never ceased for a moment, seemed to have acquired a new and more serious significance from the doctor's dubious remarks. Ivan Ilych now watched it with a new and oppressive feeling.

He reached home and began to tell his wife about it. She listened, but in the middle of his account his daughter came in with her hat on, ready to go out with her mother. She sat down reluctantly to listen to this tedious story, but could not stand it long, and her mother too did not hear him to the end.

"Well, I am very glad," she said. "Mind now to take your medicine regularly. Give me the prescription and I'll send Gerasim to the chemist's." And she went to get ready to go out.

While she was in the room Ivan Ilych had hardly taken time to breathe, but he sighed deeply when she left it.

"Well," he thought, "perhaps it isn't so bad after all."

He began taking his medicine and following the doctor's directions, which had been altered after the examination of the urine. but then it happened that there was a contradiction between the indications drawn from the examination of the urine and the symptoms that showed themselves. It turned out that what was happening differed

from what the doctor had told him, and that he had either forgotten or blundered, or hidden something from him. He could not, however, be blamed for that, and Ivan Ilych still obeyed his orders implicitly and at first derived some comfort from doing so.

From the time of his visit to the doctor, Ivan Ilych's chief occupation was the exact fulfillment of the doctor's instructions regarding hygiene and the taking of medicine, and the observation of his pain and his excretions. His chief interest came to be people's ailments and people's health. When sickness, deaths, or recoveries were mentioned in his presence, especially when the illness resembled his own, he listened with agitation which he tried to hide, asked questions, and applied what he heard to his own case.

The pain did not grow less, but Ivan Ilych made efforts to force himself to think that he was better. And he could do this so long as nothing agitated him. But as soon as he had any unpleasantness with his wife, any lack of success in his official work, or held bad cards at bridge, he was at once acutely sensible of his disease. He had formerly borne such mischances, hoping soon to adjust what was wrong, to master it and attain success, or make a grand slam. But now every mischance upset him and plunged him into despair. He would say to himself: "there now, just as I was beginning to get better and the medicine had begun to take effect, comes this accursed misfortune, or unpleasantness..." And he was furious with the mishap, or with the people who were causing the unpleasantness and killing him, for he felt that this fury was killing him but he could not restrain it. One would have thought that it should have been clear to him that this exasperation with circumstances and people aggravated his illness, and that he ought therefore to ignore

unpleasant occurrences. But he drew the very opposite conclusion: he said that he needed peace, and he watched for everything that might disturb it and became irritable at the slightest infringement of it. His condition was rendered worse by the fact that he read medical books and consulted doctors. The progress of his disease was so gradual that he could deceive himself when comparing one day with another — the difference was so slight. But when he consulted the doctors it seemed to him that he was getting worse, and even very rapidly. Yet despite this he was continually consulting them.

That month he went to see another celebrity, who told him almost the same as the first had done but put his questions rather differently, and the interview with this celebrity only increased Ivan Ilych's doubts and fears. A friend of a friend of his, a very good doctor, diagnosed his illness again quite differently from the others, and though he predicted recovery, his questions and suppositions bewildered Ivan Ilych still more and increased his doubts. A homeopathist diagnosed the disease in yet another way, and prescribed medicine which Ivan Ilych took secretly for a week. But after a week, not feeling any improvement and having lost confidence both in the former doctor's treatment and in this one's, he became still more despondent. One day a lady acquaintance mentioned a cure effected by a wonder-working icon. Ivan Ilych caught himself listening attentively and beginning to believe that it had occurred. This incident alarmed him. "Has my mind really weakened to such an extent?" he asked himself. "Nonsense! It's all rubbish. I mustn't give way to nervous fears but having chosen a doctor must keep strictly to his treatment. That is what I will do. Now it's all settled. I won't

think about it, but will follow the treatment seriously till summer, and then we shall see. From now there must be no more of this wavering!" this was easy to say but impossible to carry out. The pain in his side oppressed him and seemed to grow worse and more incessant, while the taste in his mouth grew stranger and stranger. It seemed to him that his breath had a disgusting smell, and he was conscious of a loss of appetite and strength. There was no deceiving himself: something terrible, new, and more important than anything before in his life, was taking place within him of which he alone was aware. Those about him did not understand or would not understand it, but thought everything in the world was going on as usual. That tormented Ivan Ilych more than anything. He saw that his household, especially his wife and daughter who were in a perfect whirl of visiting, did not understand anything of it and were annoyed that he was so depressed and so exacting, as if he were to blame for it. Though they tried to disguise it he saw that he was an obstacle in their path, and that his wife had adopted a definite line in regard to his illness and kept to it regardless of anything he said or did. Her attitude was this: "You know," she would say to her friends, "Ivan Ilych can't do as other people do, and keep to the treatment prescribed for him. One day he'll take his drops and keep strictly to his diet and go to bed in good time, but the next day unless I watch him he'll suddenly forget his medicine, eat sturgeon — which is forbidden — and sit up playing cards till one o'clock in the morning."

"Oh, come, when was that?" Ivan Ilych would ask in vexation. "Only once at Peter Ivanovich's."

"And yesterday with Shebek."

"Well, even if I hadn't stayed up, this pain would have kept me awake."

"Be that as it may you'll never get well like that, but will always make us wretched."

Praskovya Fedorovna's attitude to Ivan Ilych's illness, as she expressed it both to others and to him, was that it was his own fault and was another of the annoyances he caused her. Ivan Ilyich felt that this opinion escaped her involuntarily — but that did not make it easier for him.

At the law courts too, Ivan Ilych noticed, or thought he noticed, a strange attitude towards himself. It sometimes seemed to him that people were watching him inquisitively as a man whose place might soon be vacant. Then again, his friends would suddenly begin to chaff him in a friendly way about his low spirits, as if the awful, horrible, and unheard-of thing that was going on within him, incessantly gnawing at him and irresistibly drawing him away, was a very agreeable subject for jests. Schwartz in particular irritated him by his jocularity, vivacity, and *savoir-faire*, which reminded him of what he had been ten years ago.

Friends came to make up a set and they sat down to cards. They dealt, bending the new cards to soften them, and he sorted the diamonds in his hand and found he had seven. His partner said "No trumps" and supported him with two diamonds. What more could be wished for? It ought to be jolly and lively. They would make a grand slam. But suddenly Ivan Ilych was conscious of that gnawing pain, that taste in his mouth, and it seemed ridiculous that in such circumstances he should be pleased to make a grand slam.

He looked at his partner Mikhail Mikhaylovich, who

rapped the table with his strong hand and instead of snatching up the tricks pushed the cards courteously and indulgently towards Ivan Ilych that he might have the pleasure of gathering them up without the trouble of stretching out his hand for them. “Does he think I am too weak to stretch out my arm?” thought Ivan Ilych, and forgetting what he was doing he over-trumped his partner, missing the grand slam by three tricks. And what was most awful of all was that he saw how upset Mikhail Mikhaylovich was about it but did not himself care. And it was dreadful to realize why he did not care.

They all saw that he was suffering, and said: “We can stop if you are tired. Take a rest.” Lie down? No, he was not at all tired, and he finished the rubber. All were gloomy and silent. Ivan Ilych felt that he had diffused this gloom over them and could not dispel it. They had supper and went away, and Ivan Ilych was left alone with the consciousness that his life was poisoned and was poisoning the lives of others, and that this poison did not weaken but penetrated more and more deeply into his whole being.

With this consciousness, and with physical pain besides the terror, he must go to bed, often to lie awake the greater part of the night. Next morning he had to get up again, dress, go to the law courts, speak, and write; or if he did not go out, spend at home those twenty-four hours a day each of which was a torture. And he had to live thus all alone on the brink of an abyss, with no one who understood or pitied him.

The illness from which Ilyich never recovers begins with “a queer taste in his mouth” and “some discomfort in his left side.” As his symptoms increase, he begs his doctor to help him understand

whether it is serious. That is, whether he should begin to consider that he might die. Try as he might, he cannot regain the complacency of life before his disease: "as soon as he had any unpleasantness with his wife, any lack of success in his official work, or held bad cards at bridge, he was at once acutely sensible of his disease." His preoccupation and his bad breath corrode his relationships in an unassailable isolation: *something terrible … was taking place within him of which he alone was aware.*

All human beings share a final destiny, yet none can share the experience of mortality. Each struggles with death as the living turn away.

Chapter V

So one month passed and then another. Just before the New Year his brother-in-law came to town and stayed at their house. Ivan Ilych was at the law courts and Praskovya Fedorovna had gone shopping. When Ivan Ilych came home and entered his study he found his brother-in-law there — a healthy, florid man — unpacking his portmanteau himself. He raised his head on hearing Ivan Ilych's footsteps and looked up at him for a moment without a word. That stare told Ivan Ilych everything. His brother-in-law opened his mouth to utter an exclamation of surprise but checked himself, and that action confirmed it all. "I have changed, eh?" "Yes, there is a change." And after that, try as he would to get his brother-in-law to return to the subject of his looks, the latter would say nothing about it. Praskovya Fedorovna came home and her brother went out to her. Ivan Ilych locked to door and began to examine himself in

the glass, first full face, then in profile. He took up a portrait of himself taken with his wife, and compared it with what he saw in the glass. The change in him was immense. Then he bared his arms to the elbow, looked at them, drew the sleeves down again, sat down on an ottoman, and grew blacker than night.

"No, no, this won't do!" he said to himself, and jumped up, went to the table, took up some law papers and began to read them, but could not continue. He unlocked the door and went into the reception-room. The door leading to the drawing-room was shut. He approached it on tiptoe and listened.

"No, you are exaggerating!" Praskovya Fedorovna was saying.

"Exaggerating! Don't you see it? Why, he's a dead man! Look at his eyes — there's no life in them. But what is it that is wrong with him?"

"No one knows. Nikolaevich [that was another doctor] said something, but I don't know what. And Seshchetitsky [this was the celebrated specialist] said quite the contrary..."

Ivan Ilych walked away, went to his own room, lay down, and began musing; "The kidney, a floating kidney." He recalled all the doctors had told him of how it detached itself and swayed about. And by an effort of imagination he tried to catch that kidney and arrest it and support it. So little was needed for this, it seemed to him. "No, I'll go to see Peter Ivanovich again." [That was the friend whose friend was a doctor.] He rang, ordered the carriage, and got ready to go.

"Where are you going, Jean?" asked his wife with a specially sad and exceptionally kind look.

This exceptionally kind look irritated him. He looked morosely at her.

"I must go to see Peter Ivanovich."

He went to see Peter Ivanovich, and together they went to see his friend, the doctor. He was in, and Ivan Ilych had a long talk with him.

Reviewing the anatomical and physiological details of what in the doctor's opinion was going on inside him, he understood it all.

There was something, a small thing, in the vermiform appendix. It might all come right. Only stimulate the energy of one organ and check the activity of another, then absorption would take place and everything would come right. He got home rather late for dinner, ate his dinner, and conversed cheerfully, but could not for a long time bring himself to go back to work in his room. At last, however, he went to his study and did what was necessary, but the consciousness that he had put something aside — an important, intimate matter which he would revert to when his work was done — never left him. When he had finished his work he remembered that this intimate matter was the thought of his vermiform appendix. But he did not give himself up to it, and went to the drawing-room for tea. There were callers there, including the examining magistrate who was a desirable match for his daughter, and they were conversing, playing the piano, and singing. Ivan Ilych, as Praskovya Fedorovna remarked, spent that evening more cheerfully than usual, but he never for a moment forgot that he had postponed the important matter of the

appendix. At eleven o'clock he said goodnight and went to his bedroom. Since his illness he had slept alone in a small room next to his study. He undressed and took up a novel by Zola, but instead of reading it he fell into thought, and in his imagination that desired improvement in the vermiform appendix occurred. There was the absorption and evacuation and the re-establishment of normal activity. "Yes, that's it!" he said to himself. "One need only assist nature, that's all." He remembered his medicine, rose, took it, and lay down on his back watching for the beneficent action of the medicine and for it to lessen the pain. "I need only take it regularly and avoid all injurious influences. I am already feeling better, much better." He began touching his side: it was not painful to the touch. "There, I really don't feel it. It's much better already." He put out the light and turned on his side … "The appendix is getting better, absorption is occurring." Suddenly he felt the old, familiar, dull, gnawing pain, stubborn and serious. There was the same familiar loathsome taste in his mouth. His heart sank and he felt dazed. "My God! My God!" he muttered. "Again, again! And it will never cease." And suddenly the matter presented itself in a quite different aspect. "Vermiform appendix! Kidney!" he said to himself. "It's not a question of appendix or kidney, but of life and…death. Yes, life was there and now it is going, going and I cannot stop it. Yes. Why deceive myself? Isn't it obvious to everyone but me that I'm dying, and that it's only a question of weeks, days…it may happen this moment. There was light and now there is darkness. I was here and now I'm going there! Where?" A chill came over him, his breathing ceased, and he felt only the throbbing of his heart.

"When I am not, what will there be? There will be

nothing. Then where shall I be when I am no more? Can this be dying? No, I don't want to!" He jumped up and tried to light the candle, felt for it with trembling hands, dropped candle and candlestick on the floor, and fell back on his pillow.

"What's the use? It makes no difference," he said to himself, staring with wide-open eyes into the darkness. "Death. Yes, death. And none of them knows or wishes to know it, and they have no pity for me. Now they are playing." (He heard through the door the distant sound of a song and its accompaniment.) "It's all the same to them, but they will die too! Fools! I first, and they later, but it will be the same for them. And now they are merry…the beasts!"

Anger choked him and he was agonizingly, unbearably miserable. "It is impossible that all men have been doomed to suffer this awful horror!" He raised himself.

"Something must be wrong. I must calm myself — must think it all over from the beginning." And he again began thinking. "Yes, the beginning of my illness: I knocked my side, but I was still quite well that day and the next. It hurt a little, then rather more. I saw the doctors, then followed despondency and anguish, more doctors, and I drew nearer to the abyss. My strength grew less and I kept coming nearer and nearer, and now I have wasted away and there is no light in my eyes. I think of the appendix — but this is death! I think of mending the appendix, and all the while here is death! Can it really be death?" Again terror seized him and he gasped for breath. He leant down and began feeling for the matches, pressing with his elbow on the stand beside the bed. It was in his way and hurt him, he grew furious with it, pressed on it still harder, and upset it.

Breathless, in despair he fell on his back, expecting death to come immediately.

Meanwhile the visitors were leaving. Praskovya Fedorovna was seeing them off. She heard something fall and came in.

"What has happened?"

"Nothing. I knocked it over accidentally."

She went out and returned with a candle. He lay there panting heavily, like a man who has run a thousand yards, and stared upwards at her with a fixed look.

"What is it, Jean?"

"No…o…thing. I upset it." ("Why speak of it? She won't understand," he thought.)

And in truth she did not understand. She picked up the stand, lit his candle, and hurried away to see another visitor off. When she came back he still lay on his back, looking upwards.

"What is it? Do you feel worse?"

"Yes."

She shook her head and sat down.

"Do you know, Jean, I think we must ask Leshchetitsky to come and see you here."

This meant calling in the famous specialist, regardless of expense. He smiled malignantly and said "No." She remained a little longer and then went up to him and kissed his forehead.

While she was kissing him he hated her from the bottom

of his soul and with difficulty refrained from pushing her away.

"Good night. Please God you'll sleep."

"Yes."

As the months go by, Ilyich finds himself surrounded by people who can see that he is dying. Ilyich begins to wrestle with the thought of his own death: "When I am not, what will there be? There will be nothing. Then where shall I be when I am no more? Can this be dying? No, I don't want to! ... What's the use? It makes no difference."

Chapter VI

Ivan Ilych saw that he was dying, and he was in continual despair.

In the depth of his heart he knew he was dying, but not only was he not accustomed to the thought, he simply did not and could not grasp it.

The syllogism he had learnt from Kiesewetter's Logic:[10] "Caius[11] is a man, men are mortal, therefore Caius is mortal," had always seemed to him correct as applied to Caius, but certainly not as applied to himself. That Caius — man in the abstract — was mortal, was perfectly correct, but he was not Caius, not an abstract man, but a creature quite, quite separate from all others. He had been little Vanya, with a mamma and a papa, with Mitya and Volodya, with the toys, a coachman and a nurse, afterwards with

Katenka and will all the joys, griefs, and delights of childhood, boyhood, and youth. What did Caius know of the smell of that striped leather ball Vanya had been so fond of? Had Caius kissed his mother's hand like that, and did the silk of her dress rustle so for Caius? Had he rioted like that at school when the pastry was bad? Had Caius been in love like that? Could Caius preside at a session as he did? "Caius really was mortal, and it was right for him to die; but for me, little Vanya, Ivan Ilych, with all my thoughts and emotions, it's altogether a different matter. It cannot be that I ought to die. That would be too terrible."

Such was his feeling.

"If I had to die like Caius I would have known it was so. An inner voice would have told me so, but there was nothing of the sort in me and I and all my friends felt that our case was quite different from that of Caius. and now here it is!" he said to himself. "It can't be. It's impossible! But here it is. How is this? How is one to understand it?"

He could not understand it, and tried to drive this false, incorrect, morbid thought away and to replace it by other proper and healthy thoughts. But that thought, and not the thought only but the reality itself, seemed to come and confront him.

And to replace that thought he called up a succession of others, hoping to find in them some support. He tried to get back into the former current of thoughts that had once screened the thought of death from him. But strange to say, all that had formerly shut off, hidden, and destroyed his consciousness of death, no longer had that effect. Ivan Ilych now spent most of his time in attempting to re-establish that old current. He would say to himself: "I will take up my

duties again — after all I used to live by them." And banishing all doubts he would go to the law courts, enter into conversation with his colleagues, and sit carelessly as was his wont, scanning the crowd with a thoughtful look and leaning both his emaciated arms on the arms of his oak chair; bending over as usual to a colleague and drawing his papers nearer he would interchange whispers with him, and then suddenly raising his eyes and sitting erect would pronounce certain words and open the proceedings. But suddenly in the midst of those proceedings the pain in his side, regardless of the stage the proceedings had reached, would begin its own gnawing work. Ivan Ilych would turn his attention to it and try to drive the thought of it away, but without success. *It* would come and stand before him and look at him, and he would be petrified and the light would die out of his eyes, and he would again begin asking himself whether *It* alone was true. And his colleagues and subordinates would see with surprise and distress that he, the brilliant and subtle judge, was becoming confused and making mistakes. He would shake himself, try to pull himself together, manage somehow to bring the sitting to a close, and return home with the sorrowful consciousness that his judicial labors could not as formerly hide from him what he wanted them to hide, and could not deliver him from *It*. And what was worst of all was that *It* drew his attention to itself not in order to make him take some action but only that he should look at *It*, look it straight in the face: look at it and without doing anything, suffer inexpressibly.

And to save himself from this condition Ivan Ilych looked for consolations — new screens — and new screens were found and for a while seemed to save him, but then they

immediately fell to pieces or rather became transparent, as if *It* penetrated them and nothing could veil *It*.

In these latter days he would go into the drawing-room he had arranged — that drawing-room where he had fallen and for the sake of which (how bitterly ridiculous it seemed) he had sacrificed his life — for he knew that his illness originated with that knock. He would enter and see that something had scratched the polished table. He would look for the cause of this and find that it was the bronze ornamentation of an album, that had got bent. He would take up the expensive album which he had lovingly arranged, and feel vexed with his daughter and her friends for their untidiness – – for the album was torn here and there and some of the photographs turned upside down. He would put it carefully in order and bend the ornamentation back into position. Then it would occur to him to place all those things in another corner of the room, near the plants. He would call the footman, but his daughter or wife would come to help him. They would not agree, and his wife would contradict him, and he would dispute and grow angry. But that was all right, for then he did not think about *It*. *It* was invisible.

But then, when he was moving something himself, his wife would say: "Let the servants do it. You will hurt yourself again." And suddenly *It* would flash through the screen and he would see it. It was just a flash, and he hoped it would disappear, but he would involuntarily pay attention to his side. "It sits there as before, gnawing just the same!" And he could no longer forget *It*, but could distinctly see it looking at him from behind the flowers. "What is it all for?"

"It really is so! I lost my life over that curtain as I might

have done when storming a fort. Is that possible? How terrible and how stupid. It can't be true! It can't, but it is."

He would go to his study, lie down, and again be alone with *It*: face to face with *It*. And nothing could be done with *It* except to look at it and shudder.

Ivan Ilych saw that he was dying, and he was in continual despair. His perspective becomes completely dominated by his emerging mortality. Whatever happens, *It* is there, deflating the significance of those trivial concerns that had once seemed so important. "*It* alone was true."

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[10] *Kiesewetter's Logic*: Johan Gottfried Kiesewetter (1766-1819) was a German philosopher and mathematician. The sequence—Caius—man—mortal—illustrates the structure of logical syllogisms.
[11] *Caius*: i.e. Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, better known as Caligula, a corrupt Roman emperor.

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Chapter VII

How it happened it is impossible to say because it came about step by step, unnoticed, but in the third month of Ivan Ilych's illness, his wife, his daughter, his son, his acquaintances, the doctors, the servants, and above all he himself, were aware that the whole interest he had for other people was whether he would soon vacate his place, and at last release the living from the discomfort caused by his presence and be himself released from his sufferings.

He slept less and less. He was given opium and hypodermic injections of morphine, but this did not relieve him. The dull depression he experienced in a somnolent condition at first gave him a little relief, but only as something new; afterwards it became as distressing as the pain or even more so.

Special foods were prepared for him by the doctors' orders, but all those foods became increasingly distasteful and disgusting to him.

For his excretions also special arrangements had to be made, and this was a torment to him every time — a torment from the uncleanliness, the unseemliness, and the smell, and from knowing that another person had to take part in it.

But just through his most unpleasant matter, Ivan Ilych obtained comfort. Gerasim, the butler's young assistant, always came in to carry the things out. Gerasim was a clean, fresh peasant lad, grown stout on town food and always cheerful and bright. At first the sight of him, in his

clean Russian peasant costume, engaged on that disgusting task embarrassed Ivan Ilych.

Once when he got up from the commode too weak to draw up his trousers, he dropped into a soft armchair and looked with horror at his bare, enfeebled thighs with muscles so sharply marked on them.

Gerasim with a firm light tread, his heavy boots emitting a pleasant smell of tar and fresh winter air, came in wearing a clean Hessian apron, the sleeves of his print shirt tucked up over his strong bare young arms; and refraining from looking at his sick master out of consideration for his feelings, and restraining the joy of life that beamed from his face, he went up to the commode.

"Gerasim!" said Ivan Ilych in a weak voice.

"Gerasim started, evidently afraid he might have committed some blunder, and with a rapid movement turned his fresh, kind, simple young face which just showed the first downy signs of a beard.

"Yes, sir?"

"That must be very unpleasant for you. You must forgive me. I am helpless."

"Oh, why, sir," and Gerasim's eyes beamed and he showed his glistening white teeth, "what's a little trouble? It's a case of illness with you, sir."

And his deft strong hands did their accustomed task, and he went out of the room stepping lightly. five minutes later he as lightly returned.

Ivan Ilych was still sitting in the same position in the armchair.

"Gerasim," he said when the latter had replaced the freshly-washed utensil. "Please come here and help me." Gerasim went up to him. "Lift me up. It is hard for me to get up, and I have sent Dmitri away."

Gerasim went up to him, grasped his master with his strong arms deftly but gently, in the same way that he stepped — lifted him, supported him with one hand, and with the other drew up his trousers and would have set him down again, but Ivan Ilych asked to be led to the sofa. Gerasim, without an effort and without apparent pressure, led him, almost lifting him, to the sofa and placed him on it.

"That you. How easily and well you do it all!"

Gerasim smiled again and turned to leave the room. But Ivan Ilych felt his presence such a comfort that he did not want to let him go.

"One thing more, please move up that chair. No, the other one — under my feet. It is easier for me when my feet are raised."

Gerasim brought the chair, set it down gently in place, and raised Ivan Ilych's legs on it. It seemed to Ivan Ilych that he felt better while Gerasim was holding up his legs.

"It's better when my legs are higher," he said. "Place that cushion under them."

Gerasim did so. He again lifted the legs and placed them, and again Ivan Ilych felt better while Gerasim held his legs. When he set them down Ivan Ilych fancied he felt worse.

"Gerasim," he said. "Are you busy now?"

"Not at all, sir," said Gerasim, who had learnt from the townsfolk how to speak to gentlefolk.

"What have you still to do?"

"What have I to do? I've done everything except chopping the logs for tomorrow."

"Then hold my legs up a bit higher, can you?"

"Of course I can. Why not?" and Gerasim raised his master's legs higher and Ivan Ilych thought that in that position he did not feel any pain at all.

"And how about the logs?"

"Don't trouble about that, sir. There's plenty of time."

Ivan Ilych told Gerasim to sit down and hold his legs, and began to talk to him. And strange to say it seemed to him that he felt better while Gerasim held his legs up.

After that Ivan Ilych would sometimes call Gerasim and get him to hold his legs on his shoulders, and he liked talking to him. Gerasim did it all easily, willingly, simply, and with a good nature that touched Ivan Ilych. Health, strength, and vitality in other people were offensive to him, but Gerasim's strength and vitality did not mortify but soothed him.

What tormented Ivan Ilych most was the deception, the lie, which for some reason they all accepted, that he was not dying but was simply ill, and the only need keep quiet and undergo a treatment and then something very good would result. He however knew that do what they would nothing would come of it, only still more agonizing suffering and death. This deception tortured him — their not wishing to admit what they all knew and what he knew, but wanting to lie to him concerning his terrible condition, and wishing and forcing him to participate in that lie. Those lies — lies enacted over him on the eve of his death and

destined to degrade this awful, solemn act to the level of their visitings, their curtains, their sturgeon for dinner — were a terrible agony for Ivan Ilych. And strangely enough, many times when they were going through their antics over him he had been within a hairbreadth of calling out to them: "Stop lying! You know and I know that I am dying. Then at least stop lying about it!" But he had never had the spirit to do it. The awful, terrible act of his dying was, he could see, reduced by those about him to the level of a casual, unpleasant, and almost indecorous incident (as if someone entered a drawing room defusing an unpleasant odour) and this was done by that very decorum which he had served all his life long. He saw that no one felt for him, because no one even wished to grasp his position. Only Gerasim recognized it and pitied him. And so Ivan Ilych felt at ease only with him. He felt comforted when Gerasim supported his legs (sometimes all night long) and refused to go to bed, saying: "Don't you worry, Ivan Ilych. I'll get sleep enough later on," or when he suddenly became familiar and exclaimed: "If you weren't sick it would be another matter, but as it is, why should I grudge a little trouble?" Gerasim alone did not lie; everything showed that he alone understood the facts of the case and did not consider it necessary to disguise them, but simply felt sorry for his emaciated and enfeebled master. Once when Ivan Ilych was sending him away he even said straight out: "We shall all of us die, so why should I grudge a little trouble?" — expressing the fact that he did not think his work burdensome, because he was doing it for a dying man and hoped someone would do the same for him when his time came.

Apart from this lying, or because of it, what most

> tormented Ivan Ilych was that no one pitied him as he wished to be pitied. At certain moments after prolonged suffering he wished most of all (though he would have been ashamed to confess it) for someone to pity him as a sick child is pitied. He longed to be petted and comforted. he knew he was an important functionary, that he had a beard turning grey, and that therefore what he long for was impossible, but still he longed for it. and in Gerasim's attitude towards him there was something akin to what he wished for, and so that attitude comforted him. Ivan Ilych wanted to weep, wanted to be petted and cried over, and then his colleague Shebek would come, and instead of weeping and being petted, Ivan Ilych would assume a serious, severe, and profound air, and by force of habit would express his opinion on a decision of the Court of Cassation and would stubbornly insist on that view. This falsity around him and within him did more than anything else to poison his last days.

Ilyich's impending death is lethal to all of his relationships. Yet one person manages to reach out to him: Gerasim, the peasant who lived on the estate. Tolstoy was an advocate for Russia's peasants who had recently been liberated from enforced servitude, the last serfs in Europe to be set free. Tolstoy romanticized the simple humanity of peasants and, in Gerasim, he portrays a man whose poverty and social limitations separate him from the aspirations and delusions of the middle class. Only Gerasim is able to connect with the dying Ilyich.

Chapter VIII

It was morning. He knew it was morning because Gerasim had gone, and Peter the footman had come and put out the candles, drawn back one of the curtains, and begun quietly to tidy up. Whether it was morning or evening, Friday or Sunday, made no difference, it was all just the same: the gnawing, unmitigated, agonizing pain, never ceasing for an instant, the consciousness of life inexorably waning but not yet extinguished, the approach of that ever dreaded and hateful Death which was the only reality, and always the same falsity. What were days, weeks, hours, in such a case?

"Will you have some tea, sir?"

"He wants things to be regular, and wishes the gentlefolk to drink tea in the morning," thought ivan Ilych, and only said "No."

"Wouldn't you like to move onto the sofa, sir?"

"He wants to tidy up the room, and I'm in the way. I am uncleanliness and disorder," he thought, and said only:

"No, leave me alone."

The man went on bustling about. Ivan Ilych stretched out his hand. Peter came up, ready to help.

"What is it, sir?"

"My watch."

Peter took the watch which was close at hand and gave it to his master.

"Half-past eight. Are they up?"

"No sir, except Vladimir Ivanovich" (the son) "who has gone to school. Praskovya Fedorovna ordered me to wake her if you asked for her. Shall I do so?"

"No, there's no need to." "Perhaps I'd better have some tea," he thought, and added aloud: "Yes, bring me some tea."

Peter went to the door, but Ivan Ilych dreaded being left alone. "How can I keep him here? Oh yes, my medicine." "Peter, give me my medicine." "Why not? Perhaps it may still do some good." He took a spoonful and swallowed it. "No, it won't help. It's all tomfoolery, all deception," he decided as soon as he became aware of the familiar, sickly, hopeless taste. "No, I can't believe in it any longer. But the pain, why this pain? If it would only cease just for a moment!" And he moaned. Peter turned towards him. "It's all right. Go fetch me some tea."

Peter went out. Left alone Ivan Ilych groaned not so much with pain, terrible thought that was, as from mental anguish. Always and for ever the same, always these endless days and nights. If only it would come quicker! If only *what* would come quicker? Death, darkness?...No, no! anything rather than death!

When Peter returned with the tea on a tray, Ivan Ilych stared at him for a time in perplexity, not realizing who and what he was. Peter was disconcerted by that look and his embarrassment brought Ivan Ilych to himself. "Oh, tea! All right, put it down. Only help me to wash and put on a clean shirt."

And Ivan Ilych began to wash. With pauses for rest, he washed his hands and then his face, cleaned his teeth, brushed his hair, looked in the glass. He was terrified by

what he saw, especially by the limp way in which his hair clung to his pallid forehead.

While his shirt was being changed he knew that he would be still more frightened at the sight of his body, so he avoided looking at it. Finally he was ready. He drew on a dressing-gown, wrapped himself in a plaid, and sat down in the armchair to take his tea. For a moment he felt refreshed, but as soon as he began to drink the tea he was again aware of the same taste, and the pain also returned. He finished it with an effort, and then lay down stretching out his legs, and dismissed Peter.

Always the same. Now a spark of hope flashes up, then a sea of despair rages, and always pain; always pain, always despair, and always the same. When alone he had a dreadful and distressing desire to call someone, but he knew beforehand that with others present it would be still worse. "Another dose of morphine—to lose consciousness. I will tell him, the doctor, that he must think of something else. It's impossible, impossible, to go on like this."

An hour and another pass like that. But now there is a ring at the door bell. Perhaps it's the doctor? It is. He comes in fresh, hearty, plump, and cheerful, with that look on his face that seems to say: "There now, you're in a panic about something, but we'll arrange it all for you directly!" The doctor knows this expression is out of place here, but he has put it on once for all and can't take it off — like a man who has put on a frock-coat in the morning to pay a round of calls.

The doctor rubs his hands vigorously and reassuringly.

"Brr! How cold it is! There's such a sharp frost; just let me

warm myself!" he says, as if it were only a matter of waiting till he was warm, and then he would put everything right.

"Well now, how are you?"

Ivan Ilych feels that the doctor would like to say: "Well, how are our affairs?" but that even he feels that this would not do, and says instead: "What sort of a night have you had?"

Ivan Ilych looks at him as much as to say: "Are you really never ashamed of lying?" But the doctor does not wish to understand this question, and Ivan Ilych says: "Just as terrible as ever. The pain never leaves me, never subsides. If only something ..."

"Yes, you sick people are always like that.... There, now I think I am warm enough. Even Praskovya Fedorovna, who is so particular, could find no fault with my temperature. Well, now I can say good-morning," and the doctor presses his patient's hand.

Then dropping his former playfulness, he begins with a most serious face to examine the patient, feeling his pulse and taking his temperature, and then begins the sounding and auscultation.

Ivan Ilych knows quite well and definitely that all this is nonsense and pure deception, but when the doctor, getting down on his knee, leans over him, putting his ear first higher then lower, and performs various gymnastic movements over him with a significant expression on his face, Ivan Ilych submits to it all as he used to submit to the speeches of the lawyers, though he knew very well that they were all lying and why they were lying.

The doctor, kneeling on the sofa, is still sounding him

when Praskovya Fedorovna's silk dress rustles at the door and she is heard scolding Peter for not having let her know of the doctor's arrival.

She comes in, kisses her husband, and at once proceeds to prove that she has been up a long time already, and only owing to a misunderstanding failed to be there when the doctor arrived.

Ivan Ilych looks at her, scans her all over, sets against her the whiteness and plumpness and cleanness of her hands and neck, the gloss of her hair, and the sparkle of her vivacious eyes. He hates her with his whole soul. The thrill of hatred he feels for her makes him suffer from her touch.

Her attitude towards him and his diseases is still the same. Just as the doctor had adopted a certain relation to his patient which he could not abandon, so had she formed one towards him — that he was not doing something he ought to do and was himself to blame, and that she reproached him lovingly for this — and she could not now change that attitude.

"You see he doesn't listen to me and doesn't take his medicine at the proper time. And above all he lies in a position that is no doubt bad for him — with his legs up."

She described how he made Gerasim hold his legs up. The doctor smiled with a contemptuous affability that said: "What's to be done? These sick people do have foolish fancies of that kind, but we must forgive them."

When the examination was over the doctor looked at his watch, and then Praskovya Fedorovna announced to Ivan Ilych that it was of course as he pleased, but she had sent today for a celebrated specialist who would examine him

and have a consultation with Michael Danilovich (their regular doctor).

"Please don't raise any objections. I am doing this for my own sake," she said ironically, letting it be felt that she was doing it all for his sake and only said this to leave him no right to refuse. He remained silent, knitting his brows. He felt that he was surrounded and involved in a mesh of falsity that it was hard to unravel anything.

Everything she did for him was entirely for her own sake, and she told him she was doing for herself what she actually was doing for herself, as if that was so incredible that he must understand the opposite.

At half-past eleven the celebrated specialist arrived. Again the sounding began and the significant conversations in his presence and in another room, about the kidneys and the appendix, and the questions and answers, with such an air of importance that again, instead of the real question of life and death which now alone confronted him, the question arose of the kidney and appendix which were not behaving as they ought to and would now be attached by Michael Danilovich and the specialist and forced to amend their ways.

The celebrated specialist took leave of him with a serious though not hopeless look, and in reply to the timid question Ivan Ilych, with eyes glistening with fear and hope, put to him as to whether there was a chance of recovery, said that he could not vouch for it but there was a possibility. The look of hope with which Ivan Ilych watched the doctor out was so pathetic that Praskovya Fedorovna, seeing it, even wept as she left the room to hand the doctor his fee.

The gleam of hope kindled by the doctor's

encouragement did not last long. The same room, the same pictures, curtains, wall- paper, medicine bottles, were all there, and the same aching suffering body, and Ivan Ilych began to moan. They gave him a subcutaneous injection and he sank into oblivion.

It was twilight when he came to. They brought him his dinner and he swallowed some beef tea with difficulty, and then everything was the same again and night was coming on.

After dinner, at seven o'clock, Praskovya Fedorovna came into the room in evening dress, her full bosom pushed up by her corset, and with traces of powder on her face. She had reminded him in the morning that they were going to the theatre. Sarah Bernhardt was visiting the town and they had a box, which he had insisted on their taking. Now he had forgotten about it and her toilet offended him, but he concealed his vexation when he remembered that he had himself insisted on their securing a box and going because it would be an instructive and aesthetic pleasure for the children.

Praskovya Fedorovna came in, self-satisfied but yet with a rather guilty air. She sat down and asked how he was, but, as he saw, only for the sake of asking and not in order to learn about it, knowing that there was nothing to learn — and then went on to what she really wanted to say: that she would not on any account have gone but that the box had been taken and Helen and their daughter were going, as well as Petrishchev (the examining magistrate, their daughter's fiance) and that it was out of the question to let them go alone; but that she would have much preferred to sit with him for a while; and he must be sure to follow the doctor's orders while she was away.

"Oh, and Fedor Petrovich" (the fiance) "would like to come in. May he? And Lisa?"

"All right."

Their daughter came in in full evening dress, her fresh young flesh exposed (making a show of that very flesh which in his own case caused so much suffering), strong, healthy, evidently in love, and impatient with illness, suffering, and death, because they interfered with her happiness.

Fedor Petrovich came in too, in evening dress, his hair curled *a la Capoul*, a tight stiff collar round his long sinewy neck, an enormous white shirt-front and narrow black trousers tightly stretched over his strong thighs. He had one white glove tightly drawn on, and was holding his opera hat in his hand. Following him the schoolboy crept in unnoticed, in a new uniform, poor little fellow, and wearing gloves. Terribly dark shadows showed under his eyes, the meaning of which Ivan Ilych knew well. His son had always seemed pathetic to him, and now it was dreadful to see the boy's frightened look of pity. It seemed to Ivan Ilych that Vasya was the only one besides Gerasim who understood and pitied him.

They all sat down and again asked how he was. A silence followed. Lisa asked her mother about the opera glasses, and there was an altercation between mother and daughter as to who had taken them and where they had been put. This occasioned some unpleasantness.

Fedor Petrovich inquired of Ivan Ilych whether he had ever seen Sarah Bernhardt. Ivan Ilych did not at first catch the question, but then replied: "No, have you seen her before?"

"Yes, in *Adrienne Lecouvreur*."[12]

Praskovya Fedorovna mentioned some roles in which Sarah Bernhardt was particularly good. Her daughter disagreed. Conversation sprang up as to the elegance and realism of her acting — the sort of conversation that is always repeated and is always the same. In the midst of the conversation Fedor Petrovich glanced at Ivan Ilych and became silent. The others also looked at him and grew silent. Ivan Ilych was staring with glittering eyes straight before him, evidently indignant with them. This had to be rectified, but it was impossible to do so. The silence had to be broken, but for a time no one dared to break it and they all became afraid that the conventional deception would suddenly become obvious and the truth become plain to all. Lisa was the first to pluck up courage and break that silence, but by trying to hide what everybody was feeling, she betrayed it.

"Well, if we are going it's time to start," she said, looking at her watch, a present from her father, and with a faint and significant smile at Fedor Petrovich relating to something known only to them. She got up with a rustle of her dress. They all rose, said good-night, and went away.

When they had gone it seemed to Ivan Ilych that he felt better; the falsity had gone with them. But the pain remained — that same pain and that same fear that made everything monotonously alike, nothing harder and nothing easier. Everything was worse.

Again minute followed minute and hour followed hour. Everything remained the same and there was no cessation. And the inevitable end of it all became more and more terrible.

"Yes, send Gerasim here," he replied to a question Peter asked.

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[12] *Adrienne Lecouvreur*: a French tragedy composed in 1849 by Ernest Legouvé and Eugène Scribe about an 18th Century actress.

As Ilyich's illness progress, he cycles through a dialogue of hope and despair: "Always the same. Now a spark of hope flashes up, then a sea of despair rages, and always pain; always pain, always despair, and always the same." Of course, the irony is that so much of life is spent with human consciousness suppressing this awareness.

Chapter IX

His wife returned late at night. She came in on tiptoe, but he heard her, opened his eyes, and made haste to close them again. She wished to send Gerasim away and to sit with him herself, but he opened his eyes and said: "No, go away."

"Are you in great pain?"

"Always the same."

"Take some opium."

He agreed and took some. She went away.

Till about three in the morning he was in a state of stupefied misery. It seemed to him that he and his pain were being thrust into a narrow, deep black sack, but though they were pushed further and further in they could not be pushed to the bottom. And this, terrible enough in itself, was accompanied by suffering. He was frightened yet wanted to fall through the sack, he struggled but yet co-operated. And suddenly he broke through, fell, and regained consciousness. Gerasim was sitting at the foot of the bed dozing quietly and patiently, while he himself lay with his emaciated stockinged legs resting on Gerasim's shoulders; the same shaded candle was there and the same unceasing pain.

"Go away, Gerasim," he whispered.

"It's all right, sir. I'll stay a while."

"No. Go away."

He removed his legs from Gerasim's shoulders, turned sideways onto his arm, and felt sorry for himself. He only waited till Gerasim had gone into the next room and then restrained himself no longer but wept like a child. He wept on account of his helplessness, his terrible loneliness, the cruelty of man, the cruelty of God, and the absence of God.

"Why hast Thou done all this? Why hast Thou brought me here? Why, why dost Thou torment me so terribly?"

He did not expect an answer and yet wept because there was no answer and could be none. The pain again grew more acute, but he did not stir and did not call. He said to himself: "Go on! Strike me! But what is it for? What have I done to Thee? What is it for?"

Then he grew quiet and not only ceased weeping but

even held his breath and became all attention. It was as though he were listening not to an audible voice but to the voice of his soul, to the current of thoughts arising within him.

"What is it you want?" was the first clear conception capable of expression in words, that he heard.

"What do you want? What do you want?" he repeated to himself.

"What do I want? To live and not to suffer," he answered.

And again he listened with such concentrated attention that even his pain did not distract him.

"To live? How?" asked his inner voice.

"Why, to live as I used to — well and pleasantly."

"As you lived before, well and pleasantly?" the voice repeated.

And in imagination he began to recall the best moments of his pleasant life. But strange to say none of those best moments of his pleasant life now seemed at all what they had then seemed — none of them except the first recollections of childhood. There, in childhood, there had been something really pleasant with which it would be possible to live if it could return. But the child who had experienced that happiness existed no longer, it was like a reminiscence of somebody else.

as soon as the period began which had produced the present Ivan Ilych, all that had then seemed joys now melted before his sight and turned into something trivial and often nasty.

And the further he departed from childhood and the

nearer he came to the present the more worthless and doubtful were the joys. This began with the School of Law. A little that was really good was still found there — there was light-heartedness, friendship, and hope. But in the upper classes there had already been fewer of such good moments. Then during the first years of his official career, when he was in the service of the governor, some pleasant moments again occurred: they were the memories of love for a woman. Then all became confused and there was still less of what was good; later on again there was still less that was good, and the further he went the less there was. His marriage, a mere accident, then the disenchantment that followed it, his wife's bad breath and the sensuality and hypocrisy: then that deadly official life and those preoccupations about money, a year of it, and two, and ten, and twenty, and always the same thing. And the longer it lasted the more deadly it became. "It is as if I had been going downhill while I imagined I was going up. And that is really what it was. I was going up in public opinion, but to the same extent life was ebbing away from me. And now it is all done and there is only death.

"Then what does it mean? Why? It can't be that life is so senseless and horrible. But if it really has been so horrible and senseless, why must I die and die in agony? There is something wrong!

"Maybe I did not live as I ought to have done," it suddenly occurred to him. "But how could that be, when I did everything properly?" he replied, and immediately dismissed from his mind this, the sole solution of all the riddles of life and death, as something quite impossible.

"Then what do you want now? To live? Live how? Live as you lived in the law courts when the usher proclaimed 'The

judge is coming!' The judge is coming, the judge!" he repeated to himself. "Here he is, the judge. But I am not guilty!" he exclaimed angrily. "What is it for?" And he ceased crying, but turning his face to the wall continued to ponder on the same question: Why, and for what purpose, is there all this horror? But however much he pondered he found no answer. And whenever the thought occurred to him, as it often did, that it all resulted from his not having lived as he ought to have done, he at once recalled the correctness of his whole life and dismissed so strange an idea.

As life's illusions dissolve, Ilyich faces the ultimate test of faith: the apparent absence of God in the face of death. Ilyich "wept on account of his helplessness, his terrible loneliness, the cruelty of man, the cruelty of God, and the absence of God. "Why hast Thou done all this? Why hast Thou brought me here? Why, why dost Thou torment me so terribly?"

Chapter X

Another fortnight passed. Ivan Ilych now no longer left his sofa. He would not lie in bed but lay on the sofa, facing the wall nearly all the time. He suffered ever the same unceasing agonies and in his loneliness pondered always on the same insoluble question: "What is this? Can it be that it is Death?" And the inner voice answered: "Yes, it is Death."

"Why these sufferings?" And the voice answered, "For no reason — they just are so." Beyond and besides this there was nothing.

From the very beginning of his illness, ever since he had first been to see the doctor, Ivan Ilych's life had been divided between two contrary and alternating moods: now it was despair and the expectation of this uncomprehended and terrible death, and now hope and an intently interested observation of the functioning of his organs. Now before his eyes there was only a kidney or an intestine that temporarily evaded its duty, and now only that incomprehensible and dreadful death from which it was impossible to escape.

These two states of mind had alternated from the very beginning of his illness, but the further it progressed the more doubtful and fantastic became the conception of the kidney, and the more real the sense of impending death.

He had but to call to mind what he had been three months before, what he was now, with what regularity he had been going downhill, for every possibility of hope to be shattered.

Latterly during the loneliness in which he found himself as he lay facing the back of the sofa, a loneliness in the midst of a populous town and surrounded by numerous acquaintances and relations but that yet could not have been more complete anywhere – – either at the bottom of the sea or under the earth — during that terrible loneliness Ivan ilych had lived only in memories of the past. Pictures of his past rose before him one after another. they always began with what was nearest in time and then went back to what was most remote — to his childhood — and rested

there. If he thought of the stewed prunes that had been offered him that day, his mind went back to the raw shriveled French plums of his childhood, their peculiar flavor and the flow of saliva when he sucked their stones, and along with the memory of that taste came a whole series of memories of those days: his nurse, his brother, and their toys. "No, I mustn't thing of that....It is too painful," Ivan Ilych said to himself, and brought himself back to the present — to the button on the back of the sofa and the creases in its morocco. "Morocco is expensive, but it does not wear well: there had been a quarrel about it. It was a different kind of quarrel and a different kind of morocco that time when we tore father's portfolio and were punished, and mamma brought us some tarts...." And again his thoughts dwelt on his childhood, and again it was painful and he tried to banish them and fix his mind on something else.

Then again together with that chain of memories another series passed through his mind — of how his illness had progressed and grown worse. There also the further back he looked the more life there had been. There had been more of what was good in life and more of life itself. The two merged together. "Just as the pain went on getting worse and worse, so my life grew worse and worse," he thought. "There is one bright spot there at the back, at the beginning of life, and afterwards all becomes blacker and blacker and proceeds more and more rapidly — in inverse ration to the square of the distance from death," thought Ivan Ilych. And the example of a stone falling downwards with increasing velocity entered his mind. Life, a series of increasing sufferings, flies further and further towards its end — the most terrible suffering. "I am flying...." He

shuddered, shifted himself, and tried to resist, but was aware that resistance was impossible, and again with eyes weary of gazing but unable to cease seeing what was before them, he stared at the back of the sofa and waited — awaiting that dreadful fall and shock and destruction.

"Resistance is impossible!" he said to himself. "If I could only understand what it is all for! But that too is impossible. An explanation would be possible if it could be said that I have not lived as I ought to. But it is impossible to say that," and he remembered all the legality, correctitude, and propriety of his life. "That at any rate can certainly not be admitted," he thought, and his lips smiled ironically as if someone could see that smile and be taken in by it. "There is no explanation! Agony, death....What for?"

What is this? Can it be that it is Death? As death becomes a reality, Ilyich faces the existential question: why? "*There is no explanation! Agony, death....What for?*"

Chapter XI

Another two weeks went by in this way and during that fortnight an even occurred that Ivan Ilych and his wife had desired. Petrishchev formally proposed. It happened in the evening. The next day Praskovya Fedorovna came into her husband's room considering how best to inform him of it, but that very night there had been a fresh change for the worse in his condition. She found him still lying on the sofa

but in a different position. He lay on his back, groaning and staring fixedly straight in front of him.

She began to remind him of his medicines, but he turned his eyes to her with such a look that she did not finish what she was saying; so great an animosity, to her in particular, did that look express. “For Christ’s sake let me die in peace!” he said.

She would have gone away, but just then their daughter came in and went up to say good morning. He looked at her as he had done at his wife, and in reply to her inquiry about his health said dryly that he would soon free them all of himself. They were both silent and after sitting with him for a while went away.

“Is it our fault?” Lisa said to her mother. “It’s as if we were to blame! I am sorry for papa, but why should we be tortured?”

The doctor came at his usual time. Ivan Ilych answered “Yes” and “No,” never taking his angry eyes from him, and at last said: “You know you can do nothing for me, so leave me alone.”

“We can ease your sufferings.”

“You can’t even do that. Let me be.”

The doctor went into the drawing room and told Praskovya Fedorovna that the case was very serious, that the only resource left was opium to allay her husband’s sufferings, which must be terrible.

It was true, as the doctor said, that Ivan Ilych’s physical sufferings were terrible, but worse than the physical

sufferings were his mental sufferings which were his chief torture.

His mental sufferings were due to the fact that that night, as he looked at Gerasim's sleepy, good-natured face with it prominent cheek-bones, the question suddenly occurred to him: "What if my whole life has been wrong?"

It occurred to him that what had appeared perfectly impossible before, namely that he had not spent his life as he should have done, might after all be true. It occurred to him that his scarcely perceptible attempts to struggle against what was considered good by the most highly placed people, those scarcely noticeable impulses which he had immediately suppressed, might have been the real thing, and all the rest false. His professional duties and the whole arrangement of his life and of his family, and all his social and official interests, might all have been false. He tried to defend all those things to himself and suddenly felt the weakness of what he was defending. There was nothing to defend.

"But if that is so," he said to himself, "and I am leaving this life with the consciousness that I have lost all that was given me and it is impossible to rectify it — what then?"

He lay on his back and began to pass his life in review in quite a new way. In the morning when he saw first his footman, then his wife, then his daughter, and then the doctor, their every word and movement confirmed to him the awful truth that had been revealed to him during the night. In them he saw himself — all that for which he had lived — and saw clearly that it was not real at all, but a terrible and huge deception which had hidden both life and death. This consciousness intensified his physical suffering

tenfold. He groaned and tossed about, and pulled at his clothing which choked and stifled him. And he hated them on that account.

He was given a large dose of opium and became unconscious, but at noon suffering returned. He drove everyone away and tossed from side to side.

His wife came to him and said: "Ivan, my dear, do this for me. It can't do any harm and often helps. Healthy people often do it."

He opened his eyes wide. "What? Take communion? Why? It's unnecessary! However…"

She began to cry. "Yes, do, my dear. I'll send for our priest. He is such a nice man."

"All right. Very well," he muttered.

When the priest came and heard his confession, Ivan Ilych was softened and seemed to feel a relief from his doubts and consequently from his sufferings, and for a moment there came a ray of hope. He again began to think of the vermiform appendix and the possibility of correcting it. He received the sacrament with tears in his eyes.

When they laid him down again afterwards he felt a moment's ease, and the hope that he might live awoke in him again. He began to think of the operation that had been suggested to him. "To live! I want to live!" he said to himself.

His wife came in to congratulate him after his communion, and when uttering the usual conventional words she added:

"You feel better, don't you?"

Without looking at her he said "Yes."

Her dress, her figure, the expression of her face, the tone of her voice, all revealed the same thing. “This is wrong, it is not as it should be. All you have lived for and still live for is falsehood and deception, hiding life and death from you.” And as soon as he admitted that thought, his hatred and his agonizing physical suffering again sprang up, and with that suffering a consciousness of the unavoidable, approaching end. And to this was added a new sensation of grinding shooting pain and a feeling of suffocation.

The expression of his face when he uttered that “Yes” was dreadful. Having uttered it, he looked her straight in the eyes, turned on his face with a rapidity extraordinary in his weakness and shouted: “Go away! Go away and leave me alone!”

Chapter XII

From that moment the screaming began that continued for three days, and was so terrible that one could not hear it through two closed doors without horror. At the moment he answered his wife realized that he was lost, that there was no return, that the end had come, the very end, and his doubts were still unsolved and remained doubts.

“Oh! Oh! Oh!” he cried in various intonations. He had begun by screaming “I won’t!” and continued screaming on the letter “O”.

For three whole days, during which time did not exist for him, he struggled in that black sack into which he was being thrust by an invisible, resistless force. He struggled as

a man condemned to death struggles in the hands of the executioner, knowing that he cannot save himself. And every moment he felt that despite all his efforts he was drawing nearer and nearer to what terrified him. he felt that his agony was due to his being thrust into that black hole and still more to his not being able to get right into it. He was hindered from getting into it by his conviction that his life had been a good one. That very justification of his life held him fast and prevented his moving forward, and it caused him most torment of all.

Suddenly some force struck him in the chest and side, making it still harder to breathe, and he fell through the hole and there at the bottom was a light. What had happened to him was like the sensation one sometimes experiences in a railway carriage when one thinks one is going backwards while one is really going forwards and suddenly becomes aware of the real direction.

"Yes, it was not the right thing," he said to himself, "but that's no matter. It can be done. But what *is* the right thing? he asked himself, and grew quiet.

This occurred at the end of the third day,[13] two hours before his death. His schoolboy son had crept softly in and gone up to the bedside. The dying man was still screaming desperately and waving his arms. His hand fell on the boy's head, and the boy caught it, pressed it to his lips, and began to cry.

At that very moment Ivan Ilych fell through and caught sight of the light, and it was revealed to him that though his life had not been what it should have been, this could still be rectified. He asked himself, "What *is* the right thing?" and grew still, listening. Then he felt that someone was

kissing his hand. He opened his eyes, looked at his son, and felt sorry for him. His wife camp up to him and he glanced at her. She was gazing at him open-mouthed, with undried tears on her nose and cheek and a despairing look on her face. He felt sorry for her too.

"Yes, I am making them wretched," he thought. "They are sorry, but it will be better for them when I die." He wished to say this but had not the strength to utter it. "Besides, why speak? I must act," he thought. with a look at his wife he indicated his son and said: "Take him away…sorry for him…sorry for you too…." He tried to add, "Forgive me," but said "Forego" and waved his hand, knowing that He whose understanding mattered would understand.

And suddenly it grew clear to him that what had been oppressing him and would not leave his was all dropping away at once from two sides, from ten sides, and from all sides. He was sorry for them, he must act so as not to hurt them: release them and free himself from these sufferings. "How good and how simple!" he thought. "And the pain?" he asked himself. "What has become of it? Where are you, pain?"

He turned his attention to it.

"Yes, here it is. Well, what of it? Let the pain be."

"And death…where is it?"

He sought his former accustomed fear of death and did not find it. "Where is it? What death?" There was no fear because there was no death.

In place of death there was light. "So that's what it is!" he suddenly exclaimed aloud. "What joy!"

To him all this happened in a single instant, and the

meaning of that instant did not change. For those present his agony continued for another two hours. Something rattled in his throat, his emaciated body twitched, then the gasping and rattle became less and less frequent.

"It is finished!" said someone near him.

He heard these words and repeated them in his soul. "Death is finished," he said to himself. "It is no more!"

He drew in a breath, stopped in the midst of a sigh, stretched out, and died. [THE END]

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[13] *End of the third day:* remember here that Christ's resurrection occurred on the third day after His crucifixion.

From that moment the screaming began that continued for three days. So Ilyich arrives at the end of his days. He screams with terror, and then, "In place of death there was light." Ilyich finds peace transcending his concerns, caring for others, and embracing faith: as Christ proclaimed on the cross, "It is finished," an apt assessment at the closing of any life. May each of us know Christ's light as we make that journey.

End of Journey

And so we arrive at the end of our journey through the arts. We've explored art from a vast array of times, places, and cultures. We've beheld its roles in affirming societies, gracing homes, commemorating lives, and challenging social elites. We've opened

our minds to innovative techniques and enjoyed familiar genres and perspectives.

Our goal has been to explore, to sample, not to systematically memorize complex terminology. Hopefully, you have connected with some verse, some tales, some paintings or sculpture. Hopefully some of our concepts have intrigued you and opened new ways of approaching the arts. Hopefully, you are called to further exploration and discovery.

May God go with you in your life journeys, your encounters with the arts, and the challenges of living by faith!