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Studies in Poetry

NEAL FRANK DOUBLEDAY

STUDIES IN

POETRY

An Introduction to
the Critical Reading of Poems

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS
New York

STUDIES IN POETRY

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C-C

For My Father

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Foreword

To the Student

Studies in Poetry is intended for use in introductory courses in literature and in composition. It is a collection of poems for careful reading and for oral or written discussion. The poems, which are grouped with special care, are to be read by themselves, and then with the questions that follow them. The poems come first, and instruction in the principles of poetry comes through the reading and discussion of particular poems. The first few sections of the book are introductory to the study of poems. But you may wish to know first something of the design of the book.

In this book are questions to accompany many poems instead of exemplary discussions of some poems. The reading of a poem requires activity on the reader's part, and questions which draw attention to what is significant, or to what may be difficult, are the best means of directing that activity. The questions are designed to help you read the poem, without imposing an interpretation upon it or doing your work for you. The purpose of introductory courses in poetry (it seems to me) is not to teach certain things *about* certain poems, or about poets, or about poetry, but to offer practice and instruction in the reading of poems.

The questions are often patently leading questions: they are, for the most part, pertinent, useful to you in your preparation, and useful in classroom discussion. You must realize that they are not intended as tests of your knowledge. They are meant to be helps in reading and discussion. Frequently a question will have no single "right answer," for questions about poems may also be questions about human experience. Nor are

the questions mutually exclusive; you may find that in answering one you have answered one or two more, for sometimes the same point is approached in more than one way. Sometimes information important to the understanding of a poem is included in the questions; you are then always expected, and usually asked, to make use of that information in your interpretation of the poem.

You are expected to have and to use a good desk dictionary, such as *The American College Dictionary* (text edition, Harper & Brothers). Because the discussion of poems requires an adequate vocabulary, some literary terms are defined in the text, and all important literary terms are, on their first appearance in the book, printed in small capitals so that you will always be aware of words that have a special use in literary discussion.

One more thing must be said: All discussion, the questions, *and* the answers you give are means to an end; the end is the experience of the poem. Analysis of a poem is often a necessary preliminary to the experience. You cannot "appreciate poetry" without trying to find out what is said in the poem; you cannot have the experience without the activity. It is understood that you cannot bring to every poem all that the poem may require. But your instructor and your textbook can supply you with necessary information; you can bring your interest and your effort. And whenever you have read one poem carefully, you have something more to bring to the next. Of course you cannot gain a wide literary experience all at once. But the poems in this book are arranged in a careful pattern and you will find, before you have gone far into it, that the reading you have done gives you an approach to the poem you are reading, and that the poems in each group provide context for, and enrich, one another.

To the Instructor

Because I have tried not to forget that a textbook is used by students and instructor together, perhaps the instructor will allow a word on his problems, which are also mine. We need to maintain at once two approaches—an approach to poems and

an approach to students—and to keep them consonant. Because our students have imperfectly developed reading skills, our concern cannot be exclusively aesthetic. Indeed, one of the best reasons for the study of poetry early in the student's college work is that the reading of poems, in which many of the resources of language are used at once, develops general reading skill rapidly.

The inductive method generally used in this book is probably much the method that many instructors have used with an anthology as the sole text. But when the student has only the poem before him in his preparation, this method is likely to result in an inadequate use of his study time. He reads the poem over and feels his full duty done—what else, he will ask, can he do? The questions which here accompany the poems —with occasional boosts over the hard spots—will help him read the poems actively and be ready to discuss them intelligently in class. And they are intended to accomplish something that exemplary analysis cannot, for they force the student back to the poem and lead him to his own consideration of it.

The poems were chosen because they are, in my opinion, good poems for classroom use. They are short, because the long poem is unwieldy in the classroom and because the student can reasonably be expected to read a short poem with great care. Many of them are poems of some difficulty—if we allow the student to read only poems within his easy grasp, poetry is not likely to seem very important to him. The collection comprises many well-known poems and some interesting ones not ordinarily found in books prepared for elementary college use, but there has been no attempt to represent the poets according to their historical importance. Instead, the poems are grouped to provide a context, not only for the student's reading but for classroom discussion. So far as is possible without clogging discussion, the technique of a poem is not considered apart from the poem's meaning and end effect.

The instructor will find it easy to select from the book, according to his interests and the needs of his class, without confusing his students; and if the book is used in single-

semester courses, he will have a considerable latitude. Probably, for most classes, the first fourteen sections should be used consecutively and entire, for they are intended to provide students with a minimum equipment of terms and a preliminary knowledge of what may go on in a poem. Sections XVII–XXV deal with certain classes of poems, and selection among them is easy; most of the later sections are so divided that parts of sections may be assigned. There is no reason, unless he finds them useful, for the instructor to organize his classroom procedure about the questions accompanying poems, which are primarily for the student's preparation. Probably it would be better not to make regular progress through the questions a fixed classroom procedure.

Suggestions for Composition Courses

Studies in Poetry offers constant opportunity for papers, short and long, in which the student gives his own form and statement to ideas he has gained in reading and in class discussion. Particularly, the book offers an opportunity to make writing a continuation of class discussion and, conversely, to use what the student has written as a basis for class discussion. I believe the most fruitful class discussion comes from the use in the classroom of short papers written by several students on topics with which the rest of the class are familiar and on which they have done some thinking. Moreover, the assignment of such short papers gives a clear purpose to student writing and offers the student incentive for clarity of statement.

Suggested subjects for papers stand at the ends of twenty-one of the sections. The instructor will probably use but few of these suggestions for the longer papers in any one term. He will find suggestions for short papers everywhere in the questions on the poems; in a number of the questions brief pieces of writing are proposed. For example, several prose accounts of poems are asked for in the course of the book, and the number may well be increased by the selection of other poems appropriate for the exercise. Extended definitions of literary

terms, carefully illustrated, are valuable practice for the student, and explanations of literary allusions in careful notes are good brief exercises. For any of these exercises and more, the student will find a point of departure in the questions and discussion.

The suggestions for papers which come at the end of sections use material in the sections as a starting point and may be assigned concurrently with the sections or later. None of these suggested subjects asks for a level of critical writing beyond the ability of undergraduates, but the assumption always is that the instructor will himself adapt the topic to the student. The list of subjects is certainly not exhaustive and the instructor—or better, the students—will think of more. In the papers, as in student writing in general, it is important that the instructor insist upon some clear indication of the sort of reader assumed by the student. If the student has in mind as he writes a reader whom he can reasonably suppose himself able to help or to inform, he can avoid inanity and pretentiousness; but if he thinks of his paper merely as the "theme" due tomorrow, he can hardly avoid one or the other.

I am grateful to the following persons for help with this book: my wife, Frances H. Doubleday; Professor Burton L. Fryxell, Fairmont State College; Professor Paul Haines, Alabama Polytechnic Institute; Miss Helen E. Honey, the Baker Library, Harvard; Professor Lucia Mirrielees, Montana State University; and Professor Mary A. Tenney, Greenville College. And, since my indebtedness is not limited to the time of writing, I wish to record my gratitude to Professors Ruth C. Wallerstein and Harry Hayden Clark, and to Philo M. Buck, Jr., Emeritus Professor of Comparative Literature, all of the University of Wisconsin. I trust that this book may reflect, however imperfectly, something of Professor Buck's approach to the study of literature.

March, 1949 NEAL FRANK DOUBLEDAY

Studies in Poetry

I

On Getting Started

In this book, for the most part, the reader starts with poems and considers them with the questions which follow. But the difficult matter of an initial approach to the reading of poems is perhaps better discussed generally and informally. You are readers of poetry, your instructor is a reader of poetry, and I am a reader of poetry; we have the same concerns and, because we are to carry out our activity together, we need to consider what those concerns are.

The reading of a poem will be often a pleasure (although no one expects to enjoy every poem he reads). College catalogues sometimes describe courses in which poems are read "frankly for pleasure." Poems should be so read, but you must put something into an activity that you expect to enjoy. If you will reflect, you will see that pleasure is commonly not a thing in itself but the accompaniment of an activity from which more than pleasure is gained. And you have to learn to read poems, just as you have to learn to carry on any activity of importance.

Shall we start with a definition of poetry, as a chemistry text leads off with a definition of chemistry? There are many definitions of poetry, but none is quite satisfactory. The trouble is that poetry records human experience and is, therefore, as hard to define as human experience itself. "Critics give themselves great labor," Matthew Arnold says, "to draw out what in the abstract constitutes the characters of a high quality of poetry. It is much better simply to have recourse to concrete examples." Certainly we shall be doing that, and we shall be considering particular poems, not poetry in the abstract. But because part of our activity is discussion, we must have terms; and perhaps you will think it convenient to have some working definition now—

not a final definition, but one to start with, which, as you go on, you may revise, or extend, or throw away. Note two things about it: It makes no absolute distinction between prose and poetry, and it says nothing about the final aim of poetry. The definition is this: Poetry is expression in words which uses relatively many of the resources of communication.[1] Some of our time will be given to the consideration of the resources of communication and especially how they are used in particular poems.

What does the poet do with the resources of communication he uses? We can answer this question satisfactorily only by saying what is done in one or another poem. And we must not have too narrow a set of expectations. We must read a poem without presupposing that we know what it is going to be like, or what it ought to be like. Inevitably we form a set of literary expectations on the basis of what we are used to in literature; but we must not decide that what we are used to is the proper thing, and that nothing else is. For example, students sometimes have said that W. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* is a poor novel because the central character is weak. Their set of literary expectations included only one sort of central character, one who is heroic, strong. It did not occur to them that a novelist might well use a character of another sort. But these students were in the process of enlarging their literary experience. Similarly, you will doubtless encounter in this book poems of a sort new to you. As your literary experience enlarges, you will find it increasingly easy to accommodate yourselves to new attitudes and manners in poems.

Theories of the art of poetry are, from the student's point of view, fearsome things, and perhaps not very profitable for him until he has read a large number of poems. Fortunately, all the problems in the reading of poetry never arise at once; we read but one poem at a time. Nor need we expect to "like poetry"; we expect to like some poems. Of course we want to be sure that,

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[1] Because the word "expression" has been given some special senses in recent criticism, it may be well to remark that the word in this definition should be taken in its ordinary sense: the setting forth of ideas, emotions, and attitudes.

when we dislike a poem, it is the poem we are disliking and not our misunderstanding of the poem. A careful and sensible approach to the reading of poems will eliminate some of the chances of misunderstanding.

A poem in a book—words printed on paper—is a set of symbols to which you must give significance. And you must do a little more than you ordinarily do in reading prose, for, as we have said, a poem uses relatively many of the resources of communication and does more than make statements. Most of you will know a poem of Browning's called "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix." You will remember that it tells a story which might have been told in prose. Here is the second stanza:

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

If you will read the stanza aloud, you will hear at once the RHYTHM of the galloping horses. This is only to say that the poem makes use of a resource that a prose version of the story would not have. Yet the rhythm is an integral part of the narrative, not something added to it. But do you see how it makes use of our experience? Had we never heard or seen a horse gallop, much of the effect of the rhythm (and the poem) would be lost to us. Rhythm is commonly a resource in poetry, but not often so obviously, and some rhythms one has to learn to hear.

As an example of another resource of communication, consider these lines from a Shakespeare SONNET we shall read in the next section:

Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee,—and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate.

The "I" of the poem does more than say he is happy; he gives us an IMAGE of happiness in the soaring and singing lark. Nor is it simply comparison: "I am as happy as a lark." We are made happy; we respond to the image of happiness by happiness—we say that it has EVOKED happiness in us.

These resources and others we shall investigate. Sometimes when you are unfamiliar with a resource used in a poem—for instance, when the poet ALLUDES to something you have not read—you may need a little help.

The Reader's First Duty

One thing you can do for yourselves. You can read with care. You ought to read each poem we consider several times, and you ought to read each poem aloud at least twice so that you will be aware of its rhythm. The poems are short—you will have time enough for several readings. The questions which accompany the poems are important primarily as they will lead you to pay close attention to the poems. Because poetry is a complex kind of expression, it needs to be read carefully, at least as carefully as you would read serious and difficult prose. But the plain fact is that many people read poetry less carefully than they read prose. Perhaps such readers gain something—but not nearly what they might. You will not enjoy a poem any the less for understanding it.

One obvious thing needs to be said: You must try to find out what unfamiliar words mean. Your instructor will remember many students who have neglected to do just that, sometimes without being very conscious of their neglect. Here is a QUATRAIN from *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám,* a little four-line poem in itself:

> *Think, in this battered Caravanserai*
> *Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day,*
> *How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp*
> *Abode his destined Hour, and went his way.*

Now obviously you have to know what a "Caravanserai" is before you can read this poem. You won't know what it may stand

for here unless you know first its LITERAL meaning, and that a dictionary will give you. Yet apparently students have recognized "caravan" in the word and have been content with that.

Sometimes, too, a word is used in a sense not familiar to the reader, and yet his very familiarity with the word betrays him. Another student found strange meaning in T. S. Eliot's lines,

Weeping, weeping multitudes
Droop in a hundred A.B.C.'s.

There is no particular reason why he should have known that there is a chain of restaurants in London called A.B.C.'s. But one should always suspect himself of ignorance. Again, Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" has the expression "naked shingles of the world." Students who know "shingle" only as a covering for a roof will lose something of the poem. A poem of Herrick's we shall be reading begins:

Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,
Why do ye fall so fast?

You know a word "pledge." Do you know what "pledges" means here?

Nor will a dictionary solve every difficulty. Words have their meaning, not alone, but in CONTEXTS. If you read these lines which begin a poem of Andrew Marvell's,

How vainly men themselves amaze
To win the palm, the oak, or bays,

you must see by the context, before you can use your dictionary intelligently, that "palm" and "oak" do not mean "palm tree" and "oak tree" here. (And are you sure you recognize the sense of "amaze" in this context?) Moreover, poets do what we all do whenever we speak earnestly; they extend the sense of words for their own purposes. Marvell, speaking of how leisurely one would love had he unlimited time, says

My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires, and more slow.

Such DICTION as this may require attention; but we expect to give poetry our attention.

Of course, it may be that words unfamiliar to you will be used occasionally in questions and comment—look them up, too. Particularly, you should be clear about literary terms and words which have a special sense or importance in the discussion of literature. In order to help you, such words are printed on their *first* appearance in the text in SMALL CAPITALS. Many of these words will be familiar to you, and some of them will be discussed in the text, though they may be used before they are discussed, as, for example, we have used rhythm and image. Use your dictionary when you need to. Students often do not realize the great importance of a careful use of terms in literary discussion. Just as an engineer who resorted continually to such words as "gadget" and "gizmo" would not be very intelligible, so the student of literature who tries to get along without the vocabulary of literary discussion will be hard to understand. And we are learning to talk about poems as well as to read them. Reading is not a purely individual activity but one of great importance in human relations, as subsequent sections of this book will make clear. You will want to discuss your reading with your fellows.

How Shall the Reader Take the Poem?

Generalization about the proper approach to poems has a limited usefulness; your problem will be the proper approach to a particular poem. But it does help to keep in mind that poems frequently have a DRAMATIC organization. A poem may present to us a situation in which a character not the poet is speaking to an auditor or to auditors described or implied. This dramatic organization is usually not made so clear as it is in plays. In many poems more is left for the reader to infer than is left for him to infer in plays and stories. If the dramatic structure of a poem offers any special difficulties, the questions will call your

attention to them. But the relationship of poet to poem so often troubles readers that it needs preliminary consideration. Sometimes, indeed, readers are troubled in this matter without seeing what it is that troubles them. What we can do for a start is to try to provide against the most usual kind of confusion.

Frequently the poet seems to be speaking directly to us in the first person. But you must be careful not to equate the "I" of the poem with the poet—or at least not to do so as a matter of course. Just as in a story the "I" character is not necessarily the writer telling his own adventures—for example, Jim Hawkins in *Treasure Island* is not Stevenson—so the "I" of the poem is not necessarily the poet recording a bit of his autobiography. The "I" is just as likely to be representative: to stand for a group of men, a human attitude, or even for all men. Students have sometimes been tempted to interpret some of Robert Frost's poems written in the first person as records of Mr. Frost's own career as a poet. What Robert Frost had to say was at once more general and more important than that. Or consider this poem:

ON HIS SEVENTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY
Walter Savage Landor (1775–1864)

I strove with none, for none was worth my strife:
Nature I loved, and next to Nature, Art;
I warm'd both hands before the fire of Life;
It sinks; and I am ready to depart.

Now the question is really not whether Landor intended the "I" of the poem to be himself—probably he did. But unless we are, for some reason, especially interested in Landor's life, it does not matter to us as readers whether Landor ever strove with anyone or not. (We may happen to know that he was a person of difficult temper and did strive with many people, but the fact is quite irrelevant to our reading of the poem.) The poem represents an elderly man coming toward the end of his life and looking back at it. The "I" has a larger and more significant antecedent, shall we say, than the man Landor.

The same considerations apply to poems that have an "I" speaker and a listener, named or implied. Here is a poem with the listener (or reader, for perhaps we may take the poem as a letter) named in the title:

TO LUCASTA, GOING TO THE WARS

Richard Lovelace (1618–1658)

Tell me not, Sweet, I am unkind,
That from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind
To war and arms I fly.

True, a new mistress now I chase,
The first foe in the field;
And with a stronger faith embrace
A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such
As you too shall adore;
I could not love thee, Dear, so much,
Loved I not Honour more.

If we know that Lovelace was a soldier and that he rode off to the wars, we naturally tend to equate Lovelace and the "I" of the poem, and perhaps here the identification does no harm. But our knowledge of Lovelace really makes no great difference to the poem; it will quite well stand by itself. And, standing by itself, the poem represents the experience of countless men less articulate than Lovelace.

Of course it may happen that knowledge of a poet's life is helpful in interpreting his poems, but such knowledge is seldom essential. Ordinarily, it is more important to know something about the period in which a poem was written and thereby what attitudes the poet assumed in his readers—what he took for granted about them. At any rate, if we can avoid the unconsidered identification of the poet and the "I" of the poem, we

shall avoid the silly mistakes people make in talking of the "sincerity" of the poet. We are to judge the poem, not the poet. Moreover, a great poet may be great enough not to be primarily concerned with himself, even while he makes use of material from his own life.

The Adequate Reader

From time to time in this book we shall be speaking of "an adequate reader" and of "reading a poem well." These expressions imply, as the foregoing discussion has also suggested, that communication depends upon the reader as well as upon the poet. An adequate reader for a particular poem must have some general reading skill. If you feel that you lack such skill, it should comfort you to know that reading poems develops general reading skill rapidly. Being an adequate reader for a given poem further depends partly upon your willingness to give the poem your attention and partly upon a knowledge and experience sufficient for the poem. It may be that the poet has assumed background in his reader that you do not possess; you need help. Some of that help this book may give; your instructor can give more. No one expects to be an adequate reader for every poem. What we can learn is how to avoid the slackness of mind with which too often people approach the reading of poetry. And you will find, when you come to know them, a surprising number of poems for which you are an adequate reader.

Summary

As we go on in our reading, you should keep in mind the matters discussed in this first section:

1. A poem may use a number of the resources of communication; it is always something more than an arrangement of words in a statement.

2. A poem may have an intention of a sort we have not previously encountered; we must not have too narrow a set of expectations.

3. The reading of a poem requires care and attention on the

part of the reader; the poet has done his part and we must do ours. And the reader's care includes making sure he knows the literal meaning of all the words in the poem.

4. The vocabulary of literary discussion is important to the reader; we must have precise terms to think with and to use in speaking and writing about poetry.

5. A poem may have a dramatic organization; we must ask on our first reading: "Who is speaking, and to whom?" Nor will we assume that the "I" of a poem is necessarily the poet or representative of the poet.

These matters will all be clear to you as you see them substantiated by your own reading of poems.

II

The Poem as a Way of Seeing

From FRA LIPPO LIPPI
Robert Browning (1812–1889)

You be judge!
You speak no Latin more than I, belike;
However, you're my man, you've seen the world
—The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colors, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises,—and God made it all!
—For what? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,
For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
The mountain round it and the sky above,
Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
These are the frame to? What's it all about?
To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at? oh, this last of course!—you say.
But why not do as well as say,—paint these
Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
God's works—paint any one, and count it crime
To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works
Are here already; nature is complete:
Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)
There's no advantage! you must beat her, then."
For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted—better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out.

1) This selection is from Browning's dramatic interpretation of the life and work of Fra Lippo Lippi, a fifteenth-century Italian painter who was a monk. Lippi has encountered the city watch at an unseemly hour and is here speaking to the captain. Be sure you know just what the monk says before you proceed with the paragraphs which follow. Why not write a statement of his ideas in your own words?

2) Fra Lippo Lippi is talking about his own art as a painter, but what he says applies equally to poems. The monk's realization of his world is itself interesting, and his words give us a starting point in discussing an important matter. A poem may have one or more of a number of intentions; an important intention may be to make us see what we are quite capable of seeing for ourselves, but do not. Coleridge speaks of this intention as "the sense of novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects." Perhaps this gift of vision is the most obvious value of literature in general; but if it is the most obvious, it is not therefore the least important. In his preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus,* Joseph Conrad puts it first: "My task . . . is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you *see.* That—and no more, and it is everything."[1]

3) The poet can make us see; he may give us the benefit of a keener vision or of a greater sensitivity than we ourselves have, just as a friend may. Aristotle long ago pointed out that much of the pleasure in poetry is the pleasure of recognition. Yet the recognition must be the act of *our* minds. If the poet is lending his mind out, we must make use of the loan. He may, if we are willing, make us see; he does not see for us. In this recognition we may love what we have overlooked "Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see."

A sonnet written by William Wordsworth may serve as an illustration.

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[1] From *The Nigger of the Narcissus* by Joseph Conrad, by permission of Doubleday & Company, Inc., and of Messrs. Wm. Heinemann, Ltd., and of the Trustees of the Conrad Estate.

COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE

Sept. 3, 1802

William Wordsworth (1770–1850)

Earth has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theaters, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

1) We are not yet ready to discuss this sonnet completely, for some of its effect depends upon the way in which the sonnet form frames the vision of the city in the morning sun—a matter that must be approached technically. But we can realize that much of the effect depends on the poem's fixing the mind upon what we have before only carelessly seen. The poet stops us, shows us what things are like: the beauty of the morning sun enfolds the city like a cloak; the peace of the city now in the morning is like the peace in nature. What other comparisons, express or implied, do you find? What about the last two lines?

2) The second and third lines of the sonnet are related to the passage from "Fra Lippo Lippi." Perhaps it is because most of us are quite capable of dullness of soul that we need poems. Yet we aren't dull about everything. Some readers are able to realize the beauty of the city in the morning for themselves. Fra Lippo Lippi would have been; perhaps you are. Let's take the monk for our example: Could he have read the poem, what

would have been his pleasure? What he says in our selection certainly indicates that he could see the city for himself. His pleasure would have been the recognition of his experience in another. In varying degrees we have that pleasure also. This value is important in reading poems; we'll discuss it in the next section and thereafter.

3) Now you should have something to do for yourselves about this poem. The sonnet is dated September 3. Wordsworth's sister, Dorothy, wrote in her journal under the date July 30, 1802: "Left London between five and six o'clock of the morning outside the Dover coach. A beautiful morning. The city, St. Paul's, with the river—a multitude of little boats, made a beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge; the houses not overhung by their clouds of smoke, and were spread out endlessly; yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a pure light, that there was something like the purity of one of Nature's own grand spectacles." Wordsworth seems to have had his sister's journal before him when he wrote the sonnet, but he and his sister were together on the trip. Discuss the relationship between some lines in the sonnet and expressions in the journal passage. What resources of communication does the poem make use of that are not used, or much used, in the journal? What difference does the rhythm make? Does the sonnet differ from the journal passage primarily by its completeness, and is that only a matter of length? Perhaps you are not yet ready to answer all these questions. Do what you can.

4) In "Westminster Bridge" we were primarily concerned with

> *The shapes of things, their colors, lights and shades,*
> *Changes, surprises.*

Much more important, Fra Lippo Lippi says, are "the figures of man, woman, child." When the poet makes us see, and see into, ourselves and our fellows, he has been lending his mind out to the greater purpose.

The following poem, first printed in the *New Yorker*, will

illustrate, perhaps as well as many an older work, how a poem may be a way of seeing into human life.

WANTED*

Samuel Yellen

Goes by the name of Bob or Harry,
Charlie, Jim, or Bill;
Last reported seen in Scranton,
Dallas, and Evansville.

Tends to fat around the waist,
No visible mark or scar;
Doesn't mind if he has a drink—
His manner is jocular.

Is fond of children, partial to women,
Likes to flash a wad;
Prefers travelling alone. Wanted
For use of the mails to defraud.

Wrote a letter to his sweetheart,
Called her Toots and Hon;
Failed to mention a little number,
Called her his Only One.

Wrote a letter to his friend,
Hoped to see him soon;
Praised him to his face, but elsewhere
Sang a different tune.

Sent a postcard to his brother,
Said he wished him well;
The thorn festering in his heart—
That he would not tell.

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Beware! This man is dangerous,
Quick to cheat and connive.
Reward for information leading
To his capture—dead or alive.

1) To some readers—perhaps to some of you?—these VERSES will not seem a poem at all. Readers whose expectations in poetry are narrow—who have read only a few of one sort of poems—may feel that this diction and this subject matter are out of place. But the diction is at the least appropriate to the subject matter. Let us see what of importance we can find in the poem.

2) The pattern and phrasing remind us of notices about criminals. But the man in the poem is not a criminal. What is the purpose of associating him with the unattractive specimens whose portraits we sometimes see in post offices? This man is quite ordinary; we know him; he lives where we do or in places much the same.

3) Perhaps we can account for the effect of the poem by the shock in the sudden connection we make between this commonplace person and a wanted criminal. The connection is jarring; it seems inappropriate because we had not thought of it before. Yet we see—the poem makes us see—that the connection has its appropriateness too. The connection made for us, we take it from there.

4) Where do we take it? It may occur to us that our notion of fraud is queerly limited. Defrauding someone out of a number of dollars is wrong, we know; these other meannesses are so familiar that we almost disregard them unless we are the victims. We may be startled to realize that this man—good old Charlie, who likes a drink, likes children, and likes to be meanly insincere—*is* commonplace in our civilization. We see this undistinguished man in a new aspect; we distinguish him, we see him freshly.

5) Is all that was said in the paragraph above in the poem? Not exactly. Was it in Mr. Yellen's mind? We don't know. The poem has made us see; what we see depends in part upon us.

And there will be small differences in how several people read the poem, for each reader brings his own experience to it. For example, one will connect the poem with a person he knows, another will remember that he has himself once failed to mention a little number, and still another may remember a brother's deceit. Nevertheless our experience is so much alike and the poet has so much controlled our seeing that, having read the poem, we share a common insight and have increased our common ground. This value in reading poems comes up for discussion in the next section.

Suggestion for a Paper: Take the quotation from Conrad as a starting point and consider the function of the literary artist as it is there stated, illustrating from your general reading in novels, short stories, plays, or poems the writer's ability to make his readers see.

III

The Poem as It Speaks for Us

WHEN IN DISGRACE

William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes
I all alone beweep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featur'd like him, like him with friends possess'd,
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee,—and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

1) In the last section we were primarily concerned with the way in which the poet may, to use Browning's expression, lend his mind out. If the poet can make us see by first seeing for us, he may also speak for us. The sonnet above exemplifies the way in which a poem may express *and* corroborate our own feelings. It has been enjoyed by countless persons. Perhaps we can see why.

2) The poem is speaking to us. Is it not also speaking *for* us? We do not much care just who is being addressed. We might find it interesting to know for sure, but the relation of the poem to Shakespeare's life is a minor consideration. We recognize a

human feeling: the sense of insufficiency relieved by affection for and from another. Our own experience is made articulate and corroborated—completed—because Shakespeare is here the man who speaks for us more fully and more accurately than we can speak ourselves. Emerson once defined the poet as "the man without impediment"; if you feel that you must have some single definition of the poet, you may take this one.

3) Do you see that this poem really does do two things at once? In reading it we hardly separate our recognition that the feeling is, or has been, our feeling too from recognition that our own feeling is more precious now that it has an expression adequate for it. And because the poem is for us expression and corroboration, we may have a number of secondary interests in it: its technical perfection, for instance, or its connection with Shakespeare's life and his other sonnets.

"The Man Without Impediment"

A fundamental motive, then, in our reading of poems comes from a deep need in ourselves—a need which, of course, is motive for many of our activities other than the reading of poetry. Emerson says: "For all men live by truth, and stand in need of expression. In love, in art, in avarice, in politics, in labor, in games, we study to utter our painful secret. The man is only half himself, the other half is his expression." And Emerson is right; we are so made that we wish to express our experience; indeed, some experience is not complete until it is made articulate. Yet most of us, however voluble we may be, are not fully articulate—we *cannot* say fully what we think and feel. Poetry can, and often does, make our experience significant in satisfactory expression. All of us feel, for example, the press of time; we are keenly aware on occasion that even while we speak of a moment as now, the moment is gone.

But at my back I always hear
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near:
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.

In these lines of Andrew Marvell's there is no new idea, no emotion beyond the range of all of us. Marvell has made the experience articulate for generations of men. Sometimes such satisfactory lines enter into the speech of man and serve in ways the poet hardly could predict. Emerson wrote of the architect of St. Peter's in Rome,

He builded better than he knew,

and men have found many uses for the line. Or the words of a poem in direct reference to a single individual may stand for, or come to stand for, a quality of the human spirit. Tennyson is saying something about the restless spirit of man when he makes the title character of his poem "Ulysses" say

I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.

Thus we often find our experience completed, because expressed, in a poem, for the poet is, as Emerson says, "the man without impediment."

Does not what has been said suggest the inadequacy of the notion that poetry is merely poets' self-expression? If I entertained that notion, I could not feel that you need be interested in the poems in this book. We go to a poem to find corroboration for our own experience, and a good poem, adequately read, is a shared experience. But perhaps we need to discuss this matter a bit further.

In the first place, the poet must speak to us by means of what he has in common with us, for there is no other way. The words he uses are the common possession of all who know his language —that's obvious enough. But those words represent things and emotions and ideas which are the common possession of mankind. We know that without some common ground of experience we cannot talk to one another at all. However individual the things the poet has to say may be, he must say them in our terms; indeed he must know what we know and what we have

felt in order to predict what we will respond to. If he does not know these things, or if we as readers are inadequate, of course communication will not be complete—often enough it is not. At any rate, the poet's problem is what H. W. Garrod calls "self-*com*pression," because the poet must put whatever *he* has to say into communal forms. Then poet and reader share an experience, and frequently the reader finds what he has felt corroborated and enriched in expression. And in reading a poem we share experience in another way. Suppose all the students in a class read a good poem well. Their common ground has been increased, their possibility of understanding one another enlarged. Well-known poems increase the common ground of thousands of persons.

A poem may have great value for us, therefore, without being, in the ordinary sense of the word, "original," although it will have qualities of its own. Indeed, when we reduce a poem to a brief prose statement of its "plain sense," our statement may be commonplace enough, particularly if the poem has one of those THEMES which, because they are fundamental in human experience, keep recurring. Such a theme is the theme of transience, of the passing away of all things and all men from this world. Because it is perhaps the most familiar of all themes in poetry, it will serve our present purpose best.

Centuries ago Isaiah said, "All flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth." Poets have used this idea and the image of the fading flower countless times. Of course transience may be represented without the image of the fading flower; it is, for example, in the quatrain from the *Rubáiyát* quoted in the first section. But we shall take as our examples poems in which the fading blossom represents transience.

TO BLOSSOMS

Robert Herrick (1591–1674)

Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,
Why do ye fall so fast?
Your date is not so past;

But you may stay yet here a while,
To blush and gently smile;
And go at last.

What, were ye born to be
An hour or half's delight;
And so to bid goodnight?
'Twas pity Nature brought ye forth
Merely to show your worth,
And lose you quite.

But you are lovely leaves, where we
May read how soon things have
Their end, though ne'er so brave:
And after they have shown their pride,
Like you a while: they glide
Into the grave.

1) We have insisted that a poem should be read carefully, and this poem will repay our attention. You have already discovered the meaning of "pledges" here. Consider now what is the effect of the word for the poem; suppose, for example, that the first line read, "Fair *blossoms* of a fruitful tree." How does the word "pledges" connect the poem to human experience? How does it prepare for lines later in the poem?

2) Consider the last stanza. What does "brave" mean here? Do you see a sort of play on words in the last stanza? What is its effect for the poem?

3) Suppose we write: "All things come to an end; and the duration of things (or persons) of great beauty is, or seems, particularly short." We have written an ABSTRACT statement of the theme of the poem. (The first two stanzas of the poem are CONCRETE.) All experience supports the proposition and we accept it readily enough. But the poem has a great deal, has it not, that our sentence lacks, for the latter is at best a partial expression. See how far you can account for the effect of the poem, using whatever may be helpful in our discussion so far. Then

go on to the following poem, which has transience for its theme and blossoms as a way of representing it. But it is, you will see, quite another expression.

LOVELIEST OF TREES[1]

A. E. Housman (1859–1936)

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

1) The poem is unpretentious, isn't it? The "I" of the poem, who has lived but twenty of the seventy years the Psalmist allots to man, is young to feel the shortness of life, the transient quality of beauty. Still, you are young, and you feel these things sometimes. The "I" stands for us; the cherry blossoms are instances of the fleeting beauty in our lives.

2) Simple as the poem seems, students have not always read it in exactly the same fashion. A girl once said that when she read it in a high-school class she took the word "snow" literally and was much discouraged about reading poems when her

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[1] From *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman. Reproduced by permission of Henry Holt and Company, Inc.; and of the Society of Authors as the Literary Representative of the Trustees of the Estate of the late A. E. Housman, and Messrs. Jonathan Cape, Ltd. publishers of A. E. Housman's *Collected Poems*.

teacher told her she was quite wrong and "snow" was a FIGURATIVE way of saying cherry blossoms. But some good readers take the word "snow" just as this girl did. For them the poem says something like this: "Since our time is short, this year 'I' will see cherry trees clothed in white twice, once with snow, once with blossoms." Do you prefer the student's reading of the poem or her high-school teacher's? Might it be read either way without particularly lessening its value?

3) Have you noticed that neither this poem nor Herrick's "To Blossoms" exploits emotion, that neither seems to insist that we feel deeply? We are not told how to feel; the poems seem to stand alone. We make the connection between them and ourselves. You will find that poets allow us to discover the significance of poems for ourselves.

4) Some writer remarks that this poem of Housman's is so simple as to elude analysis—we cannot account for its beauty. But that is not entirely true. If "Loveliest of Trees" were to come later in our study, we might consider its remarkable compression, the subtle variation in rhythm, the careful, designed relationship between the STANZA PATTERN and the development of the poem, and the relationship between SYNTAX and stanza pattern. But these things alone certainly will not account for the pleasure many readers have in the poem. The poem is important so far as it speaks for us—expresses, gracefully and restrainedly, our feeling and corroborates our experience.

Suggestion for a Paper: In this book we read but a few quatrains from Edward FitzGerald's *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*. Read the whole, and discuss the theme of transience as it appears in the poem, quoting to illustrate and substantiate your discussion.

IV

The Poem as It Unites Us

EPIGRAMS FROM THE GREEK ANTHOLOGY

[These poems come from a collection of EPIGRAMS written from the seventh century B.C. to the tenth century A.D. "Epigram" originally meant inscription; these poems are called epigrams because they are short enough to be suitable for inscription. The translation is by J. W. Mackail.[1]]

1. Once when turning over the Book of Hesiod in my hands, suddenly I saw Pyrrha approaching; and casting the book to the ground from my hand, I cried out, Why bring your works to me, old Hesiod?—Marcus Argentarius. [Hesiod, author of *Works and Days,* is a very early Greek poet.]

2. Nay by Demo's tresses, nay by Heliodora's sandal, nay by Timarion's scent-dripping doorway, nay by great-eyed Anticleia's dainty smile, nay by Dorothea's fresh-blossomed garlands, no longer, Love, does thy quiver hide its bitter winged arrows, for thy shafts are all fixed in me.—Meleager. [This epigram may be paraphrased: Since I have been taken with the charms of five girls, your quiver, Cupid, is empty; all your arrows are in my heart.]

3. Old Amyntichus tied his plummeted fishing-net round his fish-spear, ceasing from his sea-toil, and spake towards Poseidon and the salt surge of the sea, letting a tear fall from his eyelids; 'Thou knowest, blessed one, I am weary; and in an evil old age, clinging Poverty keeps her youth and wastes my limbs; give sustenance to a poor old man while he yet

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[1] Reprinted from *Select Epigrams from the Greek Anthology* by J. W. Mackail, rev. ed., 1906, by permission of Longmans, Green & Co., Ltd.

draws breath, but from the land, O ruler of both earth and sea as thou wilt.'—Macedonius.

4. Through these men's valour the smoke of the burning of wide-floored Tegea went not up to heaven, who chose to leave the city glad and free to their children, and themselves to die in forefront of the battle.—Simonides.

5. I am the tomb of one shipwrecked; and that opposite me, of a husbandman; for a common Hades lies beneath sea and earth.—Plato. [The writer of this epigram and of "A Farewell," below, is not Plato the philosopher. Hades is the place of the shades, but not necessarily a place of punishment. Do not think of it as equivalent to Hell.]

6. I Brotachus of Gortyna, a Cretan, lie here, not having come hither for this, but for traffic.—Simonides.

7. Thou hoardest thy maidenhood; and to what profit? for when thou art gone to Hades thou wilt not find a lover, O girl. Among the living are the Cyprian's pleasures; but in Acheron, O maiden, we shall lie bones and dust.—Asclepiades. ["The Cyprian" is Aphrodite (Venus), goddess of love. The Acheron is one of the rivers of Hades; here the word means the region of the Acheron.]

GREEK EPIGRAMS IN VERSE TRANSLATION

A FAREWELL

Venus, take my votive glass,
Since I am not what I was:
What from this day I shall be,
Venus, let me never see.
—Plato (translated by Matthew Prior)

UPON A MAID THAT DIED THE DAY SHE WAS MARRIED

That morn which saw me made a bride,
The evening witnessed that I died.
Those holy lights, wherewith they guide

Unto the bed the bashful bride,
Served but as tapers, for to burn,
And light my relics to their urn.
This epitaph, which here you see,
Supplied the epithalamy.
—Meleager (translated by Robert Herrick)

NO MATTER

My name, my country, what are they to thee?
What, whether proud or base my pedigree?
Perhaps I far surpassed all other men;
Perhaps I fell below them all. What then?
Suffice it, stranger, that thou seest a tomb.
Thou knowst its use. It hides—no matter whom.
—Paulus Silentiarius (translated by William Cowper)

HERACLITUS

They told me, Heraclitus, they told me you were dead,
They brought me bitter news to hear and bitter tears to shed.
I wept as I remember'd how often you and I
Had tired the sun with talking and sent him down the sky.

And now that thou art lying, my dear old Carian guest,
A handful of grey ashes, long, long ago at rest,
Still are thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales, awake;
For Death, he taketh all away, but them he cannot take.
—Callimachus (translated by William Cory)

A DEAD CHILD

The frowning fates have taken hence
Callimachus, a child
Five years of age: ah well is he
From cruel care exiled.
What though he lived but little time,

Wail nought for that at all:
For as his years not many were,
So were his troubles small.
—Lucian (translated by Timothe Kendall)

RICHES

Poor in my youth, and in life's later scenes
Rich to no end, I curse my natal hour,
Who nought enjoyed while young, denied the means:
And nought when old enjoy'd, denied the power.
—Author unknown (translated by William Cowper)

ON A FOWLER

With reeds and bird-lime from the desert air
Eumelus gather'd free, though scanty, fare,
Nor lordly patron's hand he deign'd to kiss:
Thrice thirty years he lived, and to his heirs
His reeds bequeath'd, his bird-lime, and his snares.
—Isidorus (translated by William Cowper)

1) These poems, so far removed from us in time and place, will illustrate the primary value of literature we have been discussing in Section III. An individual of active mind will wish to extend his experience by reading, but he has a deeper need to share experience and to feel with others. Matthew Arnold says in "To Marguerite":

Yes! in the sea of life enisled,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live alone.

And, if you will think about it, you will see that our most important activities—art, literature, friendship, love, religion—are all in part efforts to break down the spiritual isolation of person from person. E. B. White says:

"Don [Marquis] knew how lonely everybody is. 'Always the struggle of the human soul is to break through the barriers of silence and distance into companionship. Friendship, lust, love, art, religion—we rush into them pleading, fighting, clamoring for the touch of spirit laid against our spirit.' Why else would you be reading this fragmentary page—you with the book in your lap? You're not out to learn anything, certainly. You just want the healing action of some chance corroboration, the soporific of spirit laid against spirit. Even if you read only to crab about everything I say, your letter of complaint is a dead giveaway: you are unutterably lonely or you wouldn't have taken the trouble to write it."[2]

Any number of poems might have been taken to illustrate the communal value of poetry, but these poems are good for our purpose just because they are old and because we read them in translation in which some of the other values are necessarily lost.

2) First consider these questions in reference to all the epigrams: Are there any that have entirely lost their interest for us because so long a time has passed since they were written? Can you exemplify Mr. White's phrase "the healing action of some chance corroboration" by your own reaction to some of the poems? Do some of them touch your own experience, express what you recognize as your own emotion?

3) Has your consideration of the questions above suggested to you that we ought to be careful in speaking of originality in poetry? Much of what is interesting and important to us is really quite commonplace. A poet's originality—perhaps better to say, his individuality—is often his facility in expression, and part of that he learns from his predecessors.

4) In the epigram in prose numbered 3, how much of old Amyntichus's character is clear? (Perhaps the clause "and in an evil old age, clinging Poverty keeps her youth and wastes my limbs" needs a little explanation. Poverty is here PERSONIFIED.

[2] Reprinted from *One Man's Meat* by E. B. White, by permission of Harper & Brothers. Copyright 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941, 1942, by E. B. White.

It is as if the fisherman had always had Poverty for a wife, and though he grew older and less able to cope with her, Poverty remained the same.) Compare the epigram to the famous prayer Ajax makes when, in the *Iliad,* he is fighting desperately in the gathering darkness: "O father Zeus, deliver thou the sons of Achaians from the darkness, and make clear sky and vouchsafe sight unto our eyes. In the light be it that thou slayest us, since it is thy good pleasure that we die."[8] Is Amyntichus's fortitude any less than Ajax's?

5) Such an epitaph as 4 is closer to our experience than it would have been to the experience of college students at the beginning of this century. Do you find yourselves associating it with persons you know or of whom you have read? Do you make similar associations with any of the others?

6) Notice how much of the power of these epigrams is in their economy. Do you find that the simplicity and directness of the prose translations compensates for the fact that they lack the charm of VERSE?

7) An interesting exercise is to restate a Greek epigram in modern IDIOM and adapt it to our society. Among our epigrams in prose, 1 and 2 might be adapted to college life—1 by a mere substitution of the name of a common college textbook for Hesiod and of a familiar girl's name for Pyrrha, 2 by more considerable change. Or try restating 3 or 4 and adapting it to the conditions of modern life. Compression will be the quality to try for.

8) The Heraclitus addressed in the fourth of the epigrams in verse is not the philosopher of that name but a poet who lived in Halicarnassus, in Caria on the coast of Asia Minor. The expression "thy nightingales" may be taken to refer to his poems. Here is another verse translation:

They told me, Heraclitus, thou wert dead,
And then I thought, and tears thereon did shed,

[8] From *Iliad* XVII, translated by Lang, Leaf, and Myers. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

How oft we two talked down the sun; but thou
Halicarnassian guest! art ashes now,
Yet live thy nightingales of song: on those
Forgetfulness her hand shall ne'er impose.
—Translated by H. N. Coleridge

The two translations make the same statement. Do you find one of them more effective than the other, and can you say why? Some of you might enjoy turning some of the epigrams in prose into verse.

9) Choose two or three of the epigrams in verse and restate them as effectively as you can in a single prose sentence.

Suggestion for a Paper: Assuming a reader who has never seen *The Greek Anthology* and knows nothing of it, write a discussion of the work. Describe the collection, tell something of its history, and illustrate its content by quotation. You will want to see an edition of *The Greek Anthology* and perhaps to use *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature.*

V

The Poem as Statement

In this and the next section we are to be concerned with writing about poems, and it is important that we be clear in our own aims. We cannot "put a poem into prose." A poem is a poem by virtue of its use of resources of communication unavailable to prose. But we can use prose accounts of poems as a means of focusing our own attention and avoiding slackness of mind; and we can use prose accounts to make clear to another the way in which we understand a poem, to help another reader, and to make reading the social art that, on its highest level, it may become. Statements about what the poem says are the necessary structure—the very bones—of all interpretation and criticism. Without such statements one's account of his own experience with a poem will be flaccid.

A poem, like a passage of prose, commonly makes a statement. *It does much more than that;* but the statement is the first concern of the reader, for, if he misses it, his response to the poem can hardly take form. In the exercises in this section, you are asked merely "to put into your own words" what the poem says so far as that is possible. Whenever one asks himself, or is asked by another, what a poem—or a passage of prose, for that matter—means, his answer must take the form of a statement of his own. In no other way can one demonstrate to himself or to another his control of what he has read. You may feel that, in the following exercises, the matter is too much labored. But your instructor knows from experience that nine-tenths of the difficulty students have in the consideration of poems comes from simple misreading or incomplete reading, not from the matters in poetry that students recognize as difficult. Practice in restatement will stand you in good stead.

The following terms and procedure will be employed in the succeeding sections of the book. I. A. Richards' term *plain sense* is used to designate a brief statement of the meaning of a poem so far as a sentence or so will give that meaning. *Prose account* is used to designate as complete a statement of the meaning of a poem as may be accomplished with the ordinary means of prose. Neither the plain sense nor a prose account will convey all the meaning, for in writing ordinary prose one is limited in the resources he uses. The procedure you will have to learn, primarily, through example, by practice, and with the help of your instructor. But you will find the following suggestions helpful:

1. Read the poem as many times as are necessary for you to feel you have a control of it, and do not forget to read it aloud. Pay careful attention to the syntax: the poem is a series of sentences as well as a series of lines.

2. Use your dictionary, and use other reference books if you need to identify an ALLUSION.

3. Make your own statement; do not patch together phrases from the poem. But do not strain to find synonyms. It is not at all necessary to avoid words used in the poem when they are immediately clear, appropriate to ordinary prose, and natural to your writing.

4. Watch your sentence structure, for both clarity and proportion depend upon it. Try to write good, economical prose; make your nouns and verbs work hard; don't always be bolstering them with modifiers.

5. Try to make your account represent the attitude as well as the sense of the poem, even though you recognize that in this regard your success cannot be complete.

6. In your first exercises, do not comment upon what is being said in the poem; just restate it (you may wish in later exercises to include interpretation in a prose account).

7. Take this question as a test of a prose account: "Would it help an unperceptive reader who has read the poem to get a better comprehension of it when he returns to it?"

8. Take every opportunity to compare what you have done with the work of others in the class.

Perhaps the following pages will exemplify some of the suggestions above. Here are two quatrains and a discussion to illustrate the process of restatement.

From THE RUBÁIYÁT OF OMAR KHAYYÁM
Edward FitzGerald (1809–1883)

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers; and anon
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two—is gone.

Think, in this battered Caravanserai
Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp
Abode his destined Hour, and went his way.

The first of these two quatrains offers no great difficulty. The expression "to set one's heart upon" is familiar. We know from the adjective "worldly" that we here consider temporal things, the things of this world. We may remember the Biblical use of "ashes" for disappointment, and we still use "turns ashes in his mouth" to express disillusionment. "Anon" here, as often in Shakespeare, means "at once." With these things clear we are ready for a prose account; it might go: "What men desire in this world either proves unsatisfactory or, if it is satisfactory, is as quickly gone as snow which falls on a desert."

In the second quatrain we know the literal meaning of "Caravanserai." Remembering the quatrain above, and realizing that only the earth could be thought of as having night and day for its portals, we see that "Caravanserai" here must stand for this world. We note, too, that we are asked to contemplate the stay, not of ordinary persons, but of Sultans—the great of the earth. We may write: "Think how in this world even the greatest are like transients in an inn: they can stay but the short time their fate allows." If we wonder whether this world is here thought of

as a stage in a journey, we are probably making an inference from the poem which should not be included in the statement. Did you note that our rather rough expression for death "to check out" (as out of a hotel) has something in common with this poem?

Now let us return to the Shakespeare sonnet we considered in Section III. We can put the plain sense into a sentence: "If, when I am unfortunate and depressed, I think of you and remember my great good fortune in having your affection, I am completely happy and satisfied with my life." A prose account may take us a long way toward achieving the experience of the poem; at the least we shall have paid close attention to the poem. Such questions will arise as the full meaning of "And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries." Is the line a statement about prayer? Are the cries bootless because they receive no answer, or are they in themselves foolish and without point? If heaven is deaf, would cries trouble it? We may have to pause on single words: In Shakespeare's English, "haply" may mean "by chance" or "fortunately"—how shall we take it here? And the striking figure in lines 10–12 will be enhanced for us by the careful consideration that restatement will make necessary. We see that it is not simply a SIMILE, for "state" not "lark" is the subject of "sings." Let's try a prose account:

"When I think myself unfortunate and disliked, I weep alone for my condition and make foolish prayers which God will not grant and seems not to hear. I am discontented with myself and my life. I envy a man with better prospects; I envy him even his appearance and his friends. I desire one man's skill and another's range of ability; but I dislike doing what ordinarily I enjoy.

"Yet, when I have come almost to despise myself, fortunately I think of you. Then my condition seems entirely changed, and for foolish prayers and cries I substitute praise, as naturally as the lark sings in the sky in the early morning. The knowledge of your love makes me so happy that I would not change places with any king."

If this prose account does not indicate your reading of the poem, you may correct it. (For example, is "naturally" in the next-to-last sentence justified by the poem?) You understand, of course, that to arrive at a prose account is never the end for which we read a poem; but a prose account is often a means toward comprehension and a device to use in interpretation. Prose restatement frequently demonstrates—as in this instance—how much of the poem we cannot put into ordinary prose, because the means of ordinary prose are insufficient for the communication of experience. You will have noted that my three accounts make what was concrete and immediate in the poems into generalizations, into statements we can accept intellectually without being much concerned by them. In the account of the second quatrain quoted from the *Rubáiyát* all that remains of the vivid concreteness of the poem is the simile "like transients in an inn"—which is not much. Yet this sort of translation is part of the process of comprehension, whether or not we write it down.

We go now to a poem for you to work on:

THE BATTLE-FIELD

William Cullen Bryant (1794–1878)

Once this soft turf, this rivulet's sands,
  Were trampled by a hurrying crowd,
And fiery hearts and armèd hands
  Encountered in the battle-cloud.

Ah! never shall the land forget
  How gushed the life-blood of her brave—
Gushed, warm with hope and courage yet,
  Upon the soil they fought to save.

Now all is calm, and fresh, and still;
  Alone the chirp of flitting bird,
And talk of children on the hill,
  And bell of wandering kine, are heard.

No solemn host goes trailing by
The black-mouthed gun and staggering wain;
Men start not at the battle-cry,
Oh, be it never heard again!

Soon rested those who fought; but thou
Who minglest in the harder strife
For truths which men receive not now,
Thy warfare only ends with life.

A friendless warfare! lingering long
Through weary day and weary year,
A wild and many-weaponed throng
Hang on thy front, and flank, and rear.

Yet nerve thy spirit to the proof,
And blench not at thy chosen lot.
The timid good may stand aloof,
The sage may frown—yet faint thou not.

Nor heed the shaft too surely cast,
The foul and hissing bolt of scorn;
For with thy side shall dwell, at last,
The victory of endurance born.

Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again;
Th' eternal years of God are hers;
But Error, wounded, writhes in pain,
And dies among his worshippers.

Yea, though thou lie upon the dust,
When they who helped thee flee in fear,
Die full of hope and manly trust,
Like those who fell in battle here.

Another hand thy sword shall wield,
Another hand the standard wave,
Till from the trumpet's mouth is pealed
The blast of triumph o'er thy grave.

1) This poem is not difficult, and it deals with general ideas of a sort that may be effectively handled in prose, so that a prose account may be in itself more than usually satisfactory. You may find that for this poem your prose account will have fewer words than the original.

2) It is clear on first reading that the poem is not primarily a description of a battlefield. What do the first four stanzas contribute to the poem?

3) Compare the last four stanzas with this passage from John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*:

VI

Prose Accounts of Poems

In this second exercise with prose accounts of poems the difficulty is stepped up. Your prose account of each of these poems must make clear your interpretation. A careful consideration of the questions for each poem will help you in writing the prose account.

TO HEAR AN ORIOLE SING[1]

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)

To hear an oriole sing
May be a common thing,
Or only a divine.

It is not of the bird
Who sings the same, unheard,
As unto crowd.

The fashion of the ear
Attireth that it hear
In dun or fair.

So whether it be rune,
Or whether it be none,
Is of within;

[1] From *Poems by Emily Dickinson* edited by Martha Dickinson Bianchi and Alfred Leete Hampson. Reprinted by permission of Little, Brown and Company.

The "tune is in the tree,"
The sceptic showeth me;
"No, sir! In thee!"

1) What is the sense of "fashion" in the third stanza? What does "rune" mean in the next? What force has "only" in the first stanza?

2) Note that the poem becomes dramatic in the last stanza, and that the opposed views of the sceptic and "I" point up the theme.

3) What is the plain sense of the poem? Compare the following stanza, which is Section iv of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode." (The lady addressed is Dorothy Wordsworth, but the direct address has no particular significance in interpreting this stanza.)

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!
And would we ought behold, of higher worth,
Than the inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the earth—
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!

4) Do you find that your statement of the plain sense of "To hear an oriole sing" will also cover the stanza from Coleridge? Which expression is for you the more effective? Can you say why?

5) Write a careful prose account of "To hear an oriole sing."

6) Does this poem of Miss Dickinson's have any bearing on the active reading of poems?

APPRECIATION[2]

George Meredith (1828–1909)

Earth was not Earth before her sons appeared,
Nor Beauty Beauty ere young Love was born:
And thou when I lay hidden wast as morn
At city-windows, touching eyelids bleared;
To none by her fresh wingedness endeared;
Unwelcome unto revellers outworn.
I the last echoes of Diana's horn
In woodland heard, and saw thee come, and cheered.
No longer wast thou then mere light, fair soul!
And more than simple duty moved thy feet.
New colours rose in thee, from fear, from shame,
From hope, effused: though not less pure a scroll
May men read on the heart I taught to beat:
That change in thee, if not thyself, I claim.

1) This sonnet is not very difficult, but it is somewhat compressed and you may welcome a hint or two. The plain sense of lines 3–6 seems to be "Before I met you, you were like a beautiful morning with none to feel its beauty." The first two lines suggest an interpretation for the whole sonnet. Do you need to consult a mythological dictionary to see why the reference to Diana is appropriate? What are the present relations between the "I" of the poem and the woman addressed?

2) Your consideration of "To hear an oriole sing" ought to help you with this sonnet, for the two poems are related in idea (this is not to say that they say precisely the same thing).

3) Even if you are still bothered by the sonnet, go ahead with the prose account. The process of putting the poem into your own words will clarify your ideas about it. Because your prose account will function as interpretation, the meaning ought to be more explicit than it is in the poem. Doubtless you will have to use more words than there are in the original.

[2] Reprinted from *Poems* by George Meredith, by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

4) If you will now compare the sonnet and your prose account of it, you will see how important the form of the sonnet was to the expression, for the form imposed a clear and precise organization of the experience. Note that both in the pattern of the RHYMES and in the development of idea there is a sort of division between the first eight and the last six lines. Perhaps your prose account needs a little revision so that it, too, may suggest that division. The rhyming pattern of "When in disgrace" is not the same as the pattern in this sonnet, but there is much the same sort of division, which the prose account suggests by paragraphing.

A LECTURE UPON THE SHADOW

John Donne (1572–1631)

Stand still, and I will read to thee
A Lecture, love, in Love's philosophy.
These three hours that we have spent,
Walking here, two shadows went
Along with us, which we ourselves produc'd;
But, now the sun is just above our head,
We do those shadows tread;
And to brave clearness all things are reduc'd.
So whilst our infant loves did grow,
Disguises did, and shadows, flow,
From us, and our cares; but, now 'tis not so.

That love hath not attain'd the high'st degree,
Which is still diligent lest others see.

Except our loves at this noon stay,
We shall new shadows make the other way.
As the first were made to blind
Others; these which come behind
Will work upon ourselves, and blind our eyes.
If our loves faint, and westwardly decline;
To me thou, falsly, thine,
And I to thee mine actions shall disguise.

The morning shadows wear away,
But these grow longer all the day,
But oh, love's day is short, if love decay.

Love is a growing, or full constant light;
And his first minute, after noon, is night.

1) We have noted that what one expects from poetry, and to a considerable extent what one enjoys in poetry, depend upon what sort of poems he has read. Donne's is a love poem of a kind with which you may not be familiar; it may seem strange to you. You don't have to like it, but perhaps the close attention writing a prose account requires will help you get used to this sort of poem.

2) On first reading, would you say that the appeal of the poem is primarily to the intellect or to the emotions? Or does the poem appeal to both intellect and emotions? Does its intellectual appeal keep it from being a good love poem?

3) On first reading, Donne's syntax may seem difficult, but there is nothing in the poem you cannot understand if you will read with care. If the poem bothers you, read it aloud, slowly, and with careful attention to the punctuation. If you will do that, such reversal of normal sentence order as

To me thou, falsly, thine,
And I to thee mine actions shall disguise

won't trouble you much. And perhaps you may find that there is a compensation for the difficulty of the syntax in the compression and vigor of the statement.

4) The poem turns on the sort of comparison called an ANALOGY. You will recall analogies in textbooks or lectures, particularly in science, for it is often possible to make a difficult matter clear by using the reader's, or listener's, knowledge of a familiar fact or process. An instructor in physics, for example, may make an analogy between the waves which spread outward when one drops a pebble in a pool and sound waves.

5) Now are you sure you are clear about the analogy? Is love necessarily like the shadows which fall from two individuals as they walk through the day? That is, must the analogy be complete? Does the poem mean that the analogy between the shadows that fall during a day and the experience of lovers ought to be complete? How far must the analogy hold?

6) If you keep your prose account in good proportion, you will need to consider the form of the poem. Do you see that to a considerable extent the subject matter dictates the form? The first stanza and the following COUPLET bring the analogy to noon and to the maturity of love. Would quatrains such as those used in Bryant's poem have been appropriate for this one? What function have the two couplets?

7) Donne is noted for the vigor and imaginative power of his figures of speech and the concentration of his lines. This poem does not illustrate the full measure of his power, but it is characteristic. Do any lines strike you as particularly interesting?

8) Now write a careful prose account of the poem. Watch your sentences; make them hold together ideas that belong together. Consider paragraphing and proportion.

9) If you succeeded in your prose account, you will find it has considerable interest in itself. What, then, was the advantage of using verse in a complex stanza pattern? Consider how the stanza pattern organizes the material.

10) The rhythm of this poem is rough, and not *in itself* particularly pleasing. Donne himself says of his verse: "I sing not Syren-like to tempt; for I am harsh." But is the rhythm appropriate to the matter of the poem? Would concentrated thought and smooth rhythm go well together?

VII

Poet and Reader

Do you remember the following assertions?—they came early in this book: (1) "A poem in a book—words printed on paper—is a set of symbols to which you must give significance"; and (2) "However individual the things the poet has to say may be, he must say them in our terms; indeed he must know what we know and what we have felt in order to predict what we will respond to." It is now time to see how these two assertions are related, and how they may be substantiated in the discussion of a particular poem.

THE SOLITARY REAPER
William Wordsworth (1770–1850)

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,

Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;—
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

1) The poem was suggested by a sentence in a book by a friend of Wordsworth, Thomas Wilkinson's *Tours to the British Mountains*: "Passed a female who was reaping alone: she sang in Erse, as she bended over her sickle; the sweetest human voice I ever heard: her strains were tenderly melancholy, and felt delicious, long after they were heard no more." Of course, Wordsworth had himself seen reapers and doubtless heard them singing at their work, but there is a clear relationship between this sentence and the poem. If you will read stanzas 1 and 4 together you will see that they are primarily a METRICAL restatement of Wilkinson's sentence. Perhaps not a great deal more is accomplished by them than was accomplished by the sentence. You might note that the first stanza is in the present tense and the fourth in the past. Is the shift in tenses inconsistent? And for one line in the fourth stanza the Wilkinson sentence makes no suggestion: "As if her song could have no ending."

2) So far as the poem recounts an incident, the Wilkinson sentence might be used as a statement of its plain sense. And the plain sense is part of our experience with the poem. But there is much more. We can safely assume here that the poet wishes to communicate the experience of hearing a girl sing in Erse, that is, Gaelic, a language he does not understand. The experience is unique, his own; his reader has not had it. The poet can communicate it only if he can lead each of his readers to combine *his own* experience so that it may approximate the new experience, the experience the poet would communicate. We can also assume that in the process of communication the poet's experience subtly changes and becomes, as he puts it in terms of ours, less personal.

Our question is, what happens in stanzas 2 and 3? Or to put it another way: How is the generalized expression, "her strains were tenderly melancholy," of the Wilkinson sentence (or "a melancholy strain" of stanza 1) developed in stanzas 2 and 3? But the question needs breaking down.

3) Ought one to say, as students sometimes have said, that Wordsworth compares the song of the reaper to the song of the nightingale and to the song of the cuckoo? Is it like either or both? Could it be like both? If the poet is not comparing, what is he doing?

4) Although readers who live in England—for whom Wordsworth intended the poem—have heard nightingales, any connection they may have between nightingales and Arabian sands is a literary one. Would a reference to a nightingale singing in an English village have done just as well? What suggestion, important to the poem, would be lacking? Must American readers depend upon literary experience a bit more than English readers do?

5) The Cuckoo we are asked to think of breaks a silence in the farthest Hebrides. We are asked to think of a cuckoo apart from what is familiar to us. Suppose a reader with a mistaken notion about the location of the Hebrides. Would such ignorance much affect his comprehension of the poem?

6) The first line of stanza 3 asks a question for which two

answers are suggested. Is the reader to take one of the alternatives and reject the other?

7) Perhaps no lines in English poetry are better known than these two:

> *For old, unhappy, far-off things,*
> *And battles long ago:*

Do they for you call up particular images and associations? Will every reader respond to them in the same manner? On what will the response depend?

8) An eleven-year-old boy, asked about these lines, mentioned *Ivanhoe* and stories about King Arthur. His literary experience is great enough for him to respond to the lines; perhaps when he is older his response will be less specifically connected to particular literary experiences. But it may be more complex, for the lines will call up more remembered emotion. Do you see that the poet can predict that these lines will have some effect on any literate person, and that what they do is to pull into the present experience of the poem some of the reader's previous literary experience?

9) You have been going through these two stanzas in such detail because they illustrate in a manner easy to grasp the way in which the poet uses our experience. The girl sang alone, the first stanza tells us, "a melancholy strain." The effect of her song can only be communicated by making us feel. It is unlikely that the poet's problem presented itself to him in our terms, but we can state it something like this: "What in my readers' experience can I call up and combine toward a new experience for them?" The questions above have forced us to separate some of the elements of our experience that the poet chose to use. That separation may help us realize each element more distinctly and so far be justified; it has moreover taught us something about the way this poem works. But at this moment the elements of the poem may be more distinct than they would normally be in our reading of it, and more distinct than they

ought to be. If we return to the poem on another occasion they will assume their proper relation. For no one of these references to our experience has its effect alone. In a manner that eludes any analysis possible to us (and, I suspect, to anyone) a group of responses is called up in our reading, each impulse subtly affected by its association with the others. And these responses are further controlled by the rhythm of the poem, by its rhyming pattern, and by other elements in it—all of which we are now ignoring in an effort not to complicate our discussion.

10) Our concern with what the poet does is only to help us understand what we do as readers. Our consideration of "The Solitary Reaper" interprets the proverb Emerson quotes: "He that would bring home the wealth of the Indies, must carry out the wealth of the Indies." We comprehend a poem with what we bring to it. Perhaps no two of us will have precisely the same experience with a poem, because we do not bring identical experience to it. Yet persons who emphasize that difference in readers too often forget that the poem itself combines and controls the experience we bring to it, and that, if the poem is successful, the poet must have been successful in predicting what common ground of experience his readers share—so far as he communicates, he must work in that common ground.

A reader's experience with a poem, then, is not of a different order from his other experience. But it is often more highly organized, for over the poem there is the poet's control. Although our experience with a poem is limited and concentrated in a way our other experience is not, there can be no realm of poetic experience apart from ordinary life.[1]

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[1] Students sometimes ask this question about the poem as experience: How do we know that the poet intends to communicate? It may be that poets have sometimes written private poems. We cannot say, of course, what the poet must do; but we can take it for granted that if a poem is a private poem it cannot profitably be discussed. And indeed, a private poem can hardly be considered a poem at all, for the poem that never has adequate readers never becomes functional, never has its full life. "Earth was not Earth before her sons appeared"—a poem is hardly a poem without its readers.

TO AUTUMN

John Keats (1795–1821)

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
  Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
  With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
  And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
    To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
  With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
    For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
  Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
  Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
  Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
    Spares the next swath and all its twinèd flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
  Steady thy laden head across a brook;
  Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
    Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
  Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
  And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
  Among the river sallows, borne aloft
    Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
  Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
  The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
    And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

1) We have remarked that the responses of several readers of a poem will differ as their experience differs. What, for instance, would a reader who had always lived in the tropics make of this poem? Would not his interest differ *in kind* from yours? Does the fact that Keats is assuming readers who live in England make much difference in your reading? Had Keats lived where you do, what detail might he have used?

2) Keats once said, comparing himself to Byron, "There is a vast difference between us: he describes what he sees—I describe what I imagine. Mine is the hardest task. . . ." Do you think Keats's generalization about his poems applies to this poem? Obviously Keats had seen the detail he uses: bending apple trees, gleaners carrying sheaves of grain on their heads, oozing cider-presses, stubble-fields at sunset, and the rest. What is it that keeps this poem from being merely a collection of detail, or even the sum of its detail? Does not Keats mean, in saying "I describe what I imagine," that he gives to the material he uses a new unity? Our primary concern, then, in the discussion of "To Autumn" must be to see how the poem combines and controls the experience we bring to it. The questions which follow are devoted to that concern.

3) Autumn is not addressed as "thee" until the second stanza. But is the image we attain of a personified autumn dependent entirely on stanza 2? Is there an advantage in our being allowed to realize the personification gradually?

4) We are likely to think of personification, which is a kind of SYMBOL, as a "poetic" device. But do we not continually personify some aspects of nature? Do you remember the representations of winds on old maps, or, in our time, cartoonists' representations of old man winter? It is not only Greek mythology that illustrates the human tendency to think of nature in human terms. But is this tendency limited to our thinking about nature? Do we not commonly create symbols, or accept those created by others, for groups of persons or of ideas, in the effort to unify what is complex or detailed? What are we doing when we talk about "labor" or "the consumer" or "the American" or "the college boy" or "old man winter"? Are we not in saying

"the American" creating a symbol to represent a large number of ideas about what Americans are like or should be like? Such symbols—sometimes called "fictions"—are a sort of coin of the mind, generalized from experience and standing for it, enabling us to deal with a great segment of our experience at once. How far is the effect of this poem accounted for by the way in which it gives us a satisfactory symbol for our experience?

5) Stanza 2 has a pictorial quality; perhaps a painter could translate Keats's conception of autumn into the medium of oils. But stanza 2 is not a single "picture"; the description is not static. Indeed, the old idea that a poem is a "speaking picture" confuses the techniques and the possibilities of two arts. Keats's stanza exemplifies a recognized principle in writing description that, inasmuch as words are apprehended in a time sequence (not simultaneously as the details of a painting are), description is best when there is much movement in it. Go over the stanza carefully to see how the description is kept from being static.

6) When we speak of IMAGERY we commonly mean the "mental pictures" which arise when we respond to words or expressions—visual imagery. But we extend the meaning of imagery to include other responses, and we can say that there is much sound imagery in the last stanza. What common quality have the sounds? What does the "music" of autumn add to the experience of the poem? Have we here abandoned the personification of autumn?

7) We are not yet ready to discuss some of the means by which this experience is controlled, but we are able to consider the general pattern of the poem. Can you distinguish the contribution made by each of the three stanzas to the whole experience of the poem? Does the organization of the stanzas depend upon rhyming pattern alone?

8) The discussion of this poem offers us a convenient opportunity to recapitulate our remarks about what a poem may do for us. Obviously, the primary value of "To Autumn" is not in its plain sense, and any prose account we might make would have, in itself, little importance. We know that this is not always true of a poem; our prose accounts of "A Lecture upon the

Shadow," for example, retained much of the experience of the poem. There is, however, implicit in the poem an attitude we may describe: a serene acceptance of transience, an acceptance of beauty that will soon be gone. This attitude is clear to us if we know the contrasting attitude in some of Keats's other poems; in one of them he says that melancholy always accompanies the perception of beauty:

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die.

Beyond the serenity of the poem—an attitude in itself valuable —the poem might, for a given reader, have one of these four values, or a combination of them, for they are not mutually exclusive:

1. The poem might call vividly to the reader's attention beauty which had been present to him every autumn of his experience but of which he had been only partially aware.

2. The poem might express for the reader his own emotions and attitudes with a fullness and precision of which he is incapable; his experience with autumn would then be complete because expressed.

3. The poem might give to the reader a unifying symbol for his experience with autumn—experience attained both in his "actual" encounters with the things of autumn and in this poem —which would remain a delight to him.

4. The poem might offer the reader a corroboration of his own feeling and attitude, the pleasure of shared experience.

Does the poem have one of these values for you?

VIII

The Poem as Record

The several poems we have been considering range in date over centuries. But there was no special effort to choose poems separated in time; in illustrating the use of poetry, one is likely to take poems from several periods. And have you been very conscious of differences in time? Herrick and Housman, born more than 250 years apart, speak for us with equal pertinence on the same theme; Shakespeare's "When in disgrace" is as available a poem to us as it was to Elizabethans; the Greek epigrams are timeless; Donne's "A Lecture upon the Shadow" may have the accent of the seventeenth century, but what it says about the experience of lovers is valid in the twentieth. Of course the poems of one generation that subsequent generations preserve and value are those with general human reference. For this reason the tradition of great poetry is a record and testimony of the oneness of humanity.

But poems are also records of contemporary feeling, of the states of mind which belong to a generation because of its position in history. Frequently they are the most available records of the special ideals and values of particular times. When a poem has special reference to contemporary events and persons it may be called TOPICAL. In a topical poem the poet may assume knowledge on the part of his readers which readers of another generation do not have. But often the reading of an old topical poem is worth the trouble it costs us. And poems which are not topical in the ordinary sense may record intimate and vital things about a generation which escape the generalizations of historians and biographers. For example, if "Wanted" should be read a century hence, it might enable another generation to realize the kind of concern sensitive persons in our time feel

about the ethical quality of our life. And let us consider this poem:

$E = MC^2$

Morris Bishop*

What was our trust, we trust not;
What was our faith, we doubt;
Whether we must or must not,
We may debate about.
The soul, perhaps, is a gust of gas
And wrong is a form of right—
But we know that Energy equals Mass
By the Square of the Speed of Light.

What we have known, we know not;
What we have proved, abjure;
Life is a tangled bowknot,
But one thing still is sure.
Come, little lad; come, little lass—
Your docile creed recite:
"We know that Energy equals Mass
By the Square of the Speed of Light."

1) This poem was first printed in 1946. Who evolved the formula which serves as a title? When? Is the poet's assumption that the reader will recognize the formula a reasonable one? Does the poet assume that the reader understands the formula? If you do not recognize the formula, what does that show about you?

2) Does the poet express any doubt about the formula? What is implied in speaking of it as a creed? Why is it a *docile* creed?

3) How valid is the comment the poem makes on our generation? According to the poem what do we believe and what

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do we doubt? Put your answer into a careful statement and see whether you have stated the plain sense of the poem.

It has been particularly poets who have recorded the distress of their generations when new ideas have upset old assurances and men's knowledge has seemed to outrun men's faith. Consider the following quatrains:

From IN MEMORIAM A. H. H.[1]
Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892)

Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life;

. . . . .

"So careful of the type?" but no.
From scarped cliff and quarried stone
She cries, "A thousand types are gone:
I care for nothing, all shall go.

"Thou makest thine appeal to me:
I bring to life, I bring to death:
The spirit does but mean the breath:
I know no more." And he, shall he,

Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,
Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,
Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was love indeed
And love Creation's final law—
Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shriek'd against his creed—

[1] From *The Works of Tennyson.* Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,
Who battled for the True, the Just,
Be blown about the desert dust,
Or seal'd within the iron hills?

No more? A monster then, a dream,
A discord. Dragons of the prime,
That tare [tore] each other in their slime,
Were mellow music match'd with him.

1) These stanzas are selected from sections lv and lvi of *In Memoriam*. *In Memoriam* was published in 1850 and Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. Tennyson has been influenced here by pre-Darwinian scientific writers in whom the idea of the struggle for existence—"Nature, red in tooth and claw"—had emerged. Note that in the second and third quatrains the poet makes Nature speak. Put into literal language what she says.

2) Tennyson is remembering the confidence in a beneficent Nature which many men before his time had been able to feel. He might have remembered Wordsworth's faith that

. . . *Nature never did betray*
The heart that loved her;

and that one might hear in Nature

The still, sad music of humanity.

These lines from "Tintern Abbey" imply that Nature, like man, is moral. To Tennyson and his generation the idea that Nature must be thought of as amoral—simply not concerned with right or wrong—was startling. Be sure you are clear about the question which begins "And he, shall he" in the third quatrain and continues for three more. And what is the comparison in the last quatrain?

3) With the help of the suggestions above, you should be

able to write a clear prose account of this selection. When you have it clear, you will have understood something of the way in which intelligent and sensitive persons in the middle nineteenth century thought and felt about the new science. Do you see that these quatrains are a more distinct record in one way than a passage from a history of nineteenth-century thought could possibly be? They communicate the emotion itself; they do more than make a statement about it.

4) The attitude in these quatrains is not Tennyson's final attitude; if he records the doubts and troubles of his generation, he records its typical faith in Progress:

And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

In Memoriam is an important part of the intellectual history of modern times. And it is a testimony—as is Mr. Bishop's poem for that matter—that the necessity of faith is felt in every generation.

Poems as Records of National Feeling

Poems are likely to record whatever is important to men and touches their lives. If, for example, we want to know how Elizabethans felt about their England, we shall discover their emotion in the poetry in which they treated English history. The Battle of Agincourt we read about in Shakespeare's *Henry V* is primarily important, not as a description of a battle in 1415, but as a symbol of Elizabethan national feeling, as King Harry himself becomes the ideal *English* king. Michael Drayton's "Ballad of Agincourt" is equally a record of Elizabethan feeling. Here is the last stanza:

Upon Saint Crispin's Day
Fought was this noble fray;
Which Fame did not delay
To England to carry.

O, when shall English men
With such acts fill a pen?
Or England breed again
Such a King Harry?

Likewise, much of what is most significant in our own national life is illuminated for us by poems. Emerson looks back at Lexington and Concord in much the same way that Shakespeare and Drayton look back at Agincourt, and his poem, written in 1837, represents the national spirit of a youthful nation:

CONCORD HYMN[2]

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882)

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world.

The foe long since in silence slept;
Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;
And Time the ruined bridge has swept
Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream,
We set to-day a votive stone;
That memory may their deed redeem,
When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Spirit, that made those heroes dare
To die, and leave their children free,
Bid Time and Nature gently spare
The shaft we raise to them and thee.

The history of the period of our War between the States is incomplete without the poems of the time. The historians tell

[2] The selections from Emerson in this book are used by courtesy of Houghton Mifflin Company, authorized publishers.

us primarily what happened; the poets tell us what was felt. It is only in the work of the Southern poets, for example, that the Northerner can readily realize the South's serene conviction of the rightness of its cause. Here are the last three stanzas of Henry Timrod's "Charleston," written while the city (referred to as "she") was awaiting attack, attack that finally came by sea and land in April, 1863:

But still, along yon dim Atlantic line,
The only hostile smoke
Creeps like a harmless mist above the brine,
From some frail, floating oak.

Shall the Spring dawn, and she still clad in smiles,
And with an unscathed brow,
Rest in the strong arms of her palm-crowned isles,
As fair and free as now?

We know not; in the temple of the Fates
God has inscribed her doom;
And, all untroubled in her faith, she waits
The triumph or the tomb.

We shall take for extended examination a poem of the tense period before the outbreak of the war. It was written in 1850—the year of the publication of *In Memoriam*. Together the two poems illustrate something of the range of men's emotion that poetry records. Our poem is a topical one concerning Daniel Webster and his crucial speech to the Senate on March 7, 1850 (known as the Seventh of March Speech).

ICHABOD[3]

John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892)

So fallen! so lost! the light withdrawn
Which once he wore!

[3] The poems of Whittier in this book are used by courtesy of Houghton Mifflin Company, authorized publishers.

The glory from his gray hairs gone
Forevermore!

Revile him not, the Tempter hath
A snare for all;
And pitying tears, not scorn and wrath,
Befit his fall!

Oh, dumb be passion's stormy rage,
When he who might
Have lighted up and led his age,
Falls back in night.

Scorn! would the angels laugh, to mark
A bright soul driven,
Fiend-goaded, down the endless dark,
From hope and heaven!

Let not the land once proud of him
Insult him now,
Nor brand with deeper shame his dim,
Dishonored brow.

But let its humbled sons, instead,
From sea to lake,
A long lament, as for the dead,
In sadness make.

Of all we loved and honored, naught
Save power remains;
A fallen angel's pride of thought,
Still strong in chains.

All else is gone; from those great eyes
The soul has fled:
When faith is lost, when honor dies,
The man is dead!

Then pay the reverence of old days
To his dead fame;
Walk backward, with averted gaze,
And hide the shame!

1) Quite possibly your knowledge of American history is sufficient background for this poem. If it is not, any good college textbook in American history will give you the background you need. Whittier was himself an active and influential abolitionist. You may need to look up a picture of Webster. Why is knowledge of Webster's personal appearance desirable?

2) If you do not recognize the Biblical allusion in the title look up 1 Samuel 4:19–22. One college textbook has a footnote to the poem which says that "Ichabod" means "inglorious." Is that adequate knowledge, or does the Biblical allusion suggest a more complex attitude than "inglorious" implies? Do you see that the title is an integral part of the poem?

3) On the basis of your knowledge of Webster's career, explain what is meant in the third stanza. Does the fourth stanza mean that Webster is going to hell? How are the third and fourth stanzas related?

4) Whittier wrote about his poem: ". . . My admiration of the splendid personality and intellectual power of the great senator was never stronger than when I laid down his speech, and, in one of the saddest moments of my life, penned my protest." Is there evidence in the poem that this was the poet's attitude? In what stanza particularly?

5) Write a careful prose account of the poem.

6) The consideration of this poem will point up an important matter in the use of poems as records. Whittier here speaks for many New Englanders, and makes articulate their feeling about Webster's Seventh of March Speech. We know, therefore, how men of Whittier's political opinions felt on this occasion, and we know vividly and fully. Beyond that realization, the poem is important as a poem on fallen greatness; but we need not take it as a statement of how we should feel about Webster. In the perspective of a hundred years, can we see motives in Webster that Whittier, in his earnestness for his cause, could

hardly be expected to see? Your instructor may wish you to write a short discussion of this poem as record. In any case define carefully just what it is a record of. If you do write such a discussion, you will want to see a later poem of Whittier's about Webster, "The Lost Occasion."

7) Some of Whittier's poems are, in the opinion of many readers, marred by diffuseness. Do you see an implied comparison, running through the poem, which helps to give it unity—and which suggests an attitude toward Webster? How is the poem making use of our previous literary experience?

8) Some people—perhaps some of you?—have a notion that poets are removed from life. Our poems will frequently illustrate the close connection between the life of a generation and its poetry, even when we are not particularly considering the poem as record.

A Transition

We have been considering the use of poems; there is much we have left unconsidered and to which we shall return. But, in order that we may discuss poems more fully, it is time now to think about the means the poet uses—such resources of communication as rhythm and metaphor. And in the next sections you must keep in mind that these means *are* resources, not just something added for decoration. We shall never understand anything important about them unless we see them in relation to the poem and as they function in the poem. We are *not,* therefore, turning *from* a consideration of poems to a consideration of means; we are extending our consideration of poems.

Suggestions for Papers: (a) Develop question 6 following "Ichabod" into an extended paper. (b) If you have some knowledge of biology, illustrate the stanzas from *In Memoriam* by concrete example. (c) Take Morris Bishop's poem as a starting point for a discussion of the neglect of moral or religious values in American education *as you know it.* (d) Discuss some novel or other literary work you have read as it is a valuable record of the attitudes, emotions, and daily life of a past generation. Your instructor can give you any number of suggestions.

IX

Imagery

A BIRTHDAY[1]

Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)

My heart is like a singing bird
  Whose nest is in a watered shoot:
My heart is like an apple-tree
  Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
  That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
  Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a daïs of silk and down;
  Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
  And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
  In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
  Is come, my love is come to me.

1) We are to concern ourselves with imagery in this section, but we shall start by examining a poem, in order to keep before us the fact that imagery is part of the stuff of the poem and must be discussed in relation to the poem. When you read "A Birthday" your reading was accompanied by certain visualizations: in the first four lines visualizations of a singing bird and a laden

[1] From *The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti.* Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

apple tree. These visualizations—or, if you like, mental "pictures"—were indeed part of the process of reading; they marked your response to the words of the poem. We can start, then, with one of the definitions of the word "image" in *The American College Dictionary*: "a mental picture or representation."[2] But "image" is used in the discussion of poetry also for the word or group of words which stimulates the response, which calls up the mental representation. "Imagery" is a collective term for a group of images in this second sense, often for similes and METAPHORS which result for the reader in images. And, although the word "image" in its primary sense has to do with things seen, it has been extended to cover the other senses; for example, it is usual to speak of sound imagery, as we did in reference to the last stanza of "To Autumn," or of a tactile image.

2) It may be that Miss Rossetti's poem seemed to you, on first reading, rather slight. You will be interested, then, to see whether attention to the way in which the imagery is combined enriches it for you. But first, do you know all the words? What is a "halcyon sea"? What is "vair"? What is a "daïs"? And how about the title? Do you take "Birthday" in exactly its ordinary sense? Does it imply just the beginning of a new year in the age of the "I" of the poem? Where in the poem does the full meaning of the title become clear?

3) The first stanza is developed in a series of three similes, which present the reader with three images. Comment on the order in which they come, and the way in which they are interpreted in the last two lines.

4) In the second stanza the "I" of the poem asks for a daïs decorated in a most exotic fashion. The imagery in the first four lines is of familiar, English things; that in the second stanza suggests the strange and unfamiliar East. And have you noted that the last two lines of the first stanza are transitional, and that they say, directly enough, that the imagery of the first stanza is insufficient to represent the experience?

[2] From *The American College Dictionary*, copyright, 1947, by Random House; Text Edition, copyright, 1948, by Harper & Brothers.

5) If the experience is represented by two kinds of imagery, may we conclude that it is characterized by two kinds of feeling? Is it not the imagery itself that conveys to us the double nature of the experience of falling in love, an experience which seems, at the same moment, natural and inevitable *and* strange and wonderful? Has it occurred to you that it would be very difficult to write a prose account of this poem without including a good deal of interpretation?

6) How far does a full realization of the imagery depend upon the reader's literary experience? If the words "halcyon," "vair," and "pomegranates" were strange to you, has the dictionary given you a full imaginative grasp of the imagery? When you meet these words in another place, will they have gained significance for you through your encounter with them here?

Imagery as a Resource of Communication

The questions above must have suggested to you that one's response to a word—even the image that arises for him when he sees the word—depends upon his experience with it. A full discussion of imagery, which would involve us in psychology and perhaps physiology, is quite beyond the scope of this book. But we do need to discuss it fully enough so that the term will become useful to us, and so that we understand something of the way our experience is evoked by the imagery in a poem.

We must keep in mind the double use of the word "image." Some days ago all of you read in a Shakespeare sonnet: "the lark at break of day arising/From sullen earth." In one of the ways we use the term, we say that all of you read the same image. But inasmuch as these words called up a somewhat different response in each of you—a response depending upon your experience and your facility in the formation of images—we also say that each has had his own image of the lark arising. For some of you there will be connected images which—perhaps for no apparent reason—are called up by the central image.

We respond to the imagery in a poem according to our nature—even according to our physical make-up. Indeed, our bodies are probably involved to a greater extent than we suspect,

although we may be aware of such responses as the activity of the salivary glands when we read a description of food we like. Consider this stanza from Keats's "The Eve of St. Agnes":

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth, and lavender'd,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
From Fez; and spiced dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

As the literary experiences of the readers of this poem will not be identical, there will be a difference in their responses to the names Fez, Samarcand, and Lebanon—"cedar'd Lebanon" is, in fact, a Biblical allusion. And, more important in this example, as readers have differing experiences with food they will react differently to the names of the dainties in the closet. For those who dislike sweet things the stanza will be unpleasant—there may well be readers for whom it is repulsive.

But this stanza is hardly representative of our central concern with imagery, for in it—at least as we read it now, out of the context of the poem—the interest is in sensuous response for its own sake. Imagery, as we are primarily concerned with it, is a means of communication and a means through which we attain our experience of the poem. Nothing could confuse the issue more completely, therefore, than to say that one poet's imagery is better than another's. Rather, one poet writes a better poem than another. No poet (unless he be a bad one) includes imagery as an added attraction to his poem. Imagery is the stuff of communication, and discussion of it is inseparable from the discussion of the poem. Let's look at the first stanza of John Donne's "The Good-Morrow":

I wonder, by my troth, what thou and I
Did, till we loved? were we not weaned till then?
But sucked on country pleasures, childishly?

Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers' den?
'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.
If ever any beauty I did see,
Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.

The plain sense of the stanza seems to be that the lives of two persons since they have been in love have had a wholly new significance. But in reading the poem, we are made to *feel* the insignificance of the lovers' life previous to their love. Take the line "Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers' den?" The Seven Sleepers, according to the legend, were seven Christian youths who, walled up in a cavern by a persecutor, miraculously slept 187 years, though the time seemed to them but a few hours. But see what happens to the allusion with the word "snorted." The image that arises for us is one of uncouth oblivion. It is beside the point to say it is not a pretty image in itself; it does not exist by itself.

One more use of the term "imagery" we must remark. It is often convenient and proper to think and speak of rhythms as a kind of imagery when they are representational and there is an easily describable response to them. Dancing rhythms, galloping rhythms, and marching rhythms are of this kind. We have had an example of a galloping rhythm in Browning's "How They Brought the Good News." When Walt Whitman, in his "Pioneers! O Pioneers!" would represent the steady but unmilitary advance of American pioneers, he writes stanzas of representational rhythm:

Come my tan-faced children,
Follow well in order, get your weapons ready,
Have you your pistols? have you your sharp-edged axes?
Pioneers! O pioneers!

For we cannot tarry here,
We must march my darlings, we must bear the brunt of danger,
We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O you youths, Western youths,
So impatient, full of action, full of manly pride and friendship,
Plain I see you Western youths, see you tramping with the foremost,
Pioneers! O pioneers![3]

And there are many rhythms which may well be considered imagery. In Sidney Lanier's "Song of the Chattahoochee" the rapidity of the rhythm is the sound image of the hurrying river:

Out of the hills of Habersham,
Down the valleys of Hall,
I hurry amain to reach the plain,
Run the rapid and leap the fall,
Split at the rock and together again,
Accept my bed, or narrow or wide,
And flee from folly on every side
With a lover's pain to attain the plain
Far from the hills of Habersham,
Far from the valleys of Hall.[4]

A little less obvious is the effect of the rhythm in Tennyson's

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

Here the rhythm is an image of the sound of the sea, and combines with a visual image.

Now we shall examine two poems together, poems which have subjects enough alike to make comparative discussion possible.

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[3] From *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman. Copyright 1924 by Doubleday & Company Inc.

[4] Reprinted from *Poems of Sidney Lanier*, by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

From PARADISE LOST
Book IV

John Milton (1608–1674)

Now came still Evening on, and Twilight gray
Had in her sober livery all things clad;
Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale.
She all night long her amorous descant sung:
Silence was pleased. Now glowed the firmament
With living Saphirs; Hesperus, that led
The starry host, rode brightest, till the Moon,
Rising in clouded majesty, at length
Apparent queen, unveiled her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.

TO THE EVENING STAR[5]

William Blake (1757–1827)

Thou fair-hair'd angel of the evening,
Now, whilst the sun rests on the mountains, light
Thy bright torch of love; thy radiant crown
Put on, and smile upon our evening bed!
Smile on our loves, and, while thou drawest the
Blue curtains of the sky, scatter thy silver dew
On every flower that shuts its sweet eyes
In timely sleep. Let thy west wind sleep on
The lake; speak silence with thy glimmering eyes,
And wash the dusk with silver. Soon, full soon,
Dost thou withdraw; then the wolf rages wide,
And the lion glares thro' the dun forest:
The fleeces of our flocks are cover'd with
Thy sacred dew: protect them with thine influence.

[5] Text of *Poetical Works of William Blake*, edited by John Sampson. By permission of the Clarendon Press, Oxford.

1) The passage from *Paradise Lost* has a unity of its own and may be considered apart from its context. It comes, however, just before a scene in which Adam and Eve retire for the night, and, considering the matter of Blake's poem, it seems likely that Blake recalled not only the passage from Milton here printed but its context too. How much have the Milton passage and Blake's poem in common?

2) Here, as always in Milton, one must pay careful attention to the diction. What, for example, does "apparent" mean in its context? What is Hesperus? Is "livery" an appropriate and effective word here? Why?

3) How many senses are appealed to by the imagery in this passage? Do images of personified Evening, Twilight, and Silence arise for you? Consider the second line and the last line: Do you see that the personification is made use of to evoke a complex pair of images?

4) Discuss the way in which static description is avoided. About how much time elapses in the course of the description?

5) Does the rhythm of the passage from Milton, or of the Blake poem, have any of the effect of an image? It is obvious, is it not, that such a stanza as that quoted from Lanier above would be impossible for these poems, and that the rhythm here is not representational of any sort of movement. The Milton passage is a part of an epic in BLANK VERSE (unrhymed five-stress verse). Do you think that Blake may use blank verse because he is here influenced by Milton? As you read the poem, are you conscious of any describable effect of the rhythm?

6) In "To the Evening Star," such expressions as "the sun rests on the mountains" and "thy west wind sleep on the lake" are metaphors, a way of language we shall be considering soon. Discuss now the images they present.

7) Discuss the effect of the high contrast introduced by the last four lines of Blake's poem.

8) Both poems are concerned with the representation of the effect of silence—which, if you will think of it, will appear a very difficult thing to do. In Milton's poem, what do the words "Silence was pleased" convey to you? And consider Blake's ex-

pression: "speak silence with thy glimmering eyes"; will it stand logical analysis? But is it effective? Consider, also, in Blake's poem the things we are asked to think of the Evening Star doing.

9) Now go back to Section VII and look at questions 2–5 following "To Autumn." Do some of the same considerations arise in our present discussion?

10) In the Milton passage there are several personifications around which the imagery is organized; in the Blake poem there is a single personification. Do you find it easier to sustain imaginatively the single personification of the Blake poem than to combine imaginatively the several personifications of the Milton passage? That is to ask, isn't it, whether the Blake poem is for you a more unified experience than the Milton passage. It is not so necessarily—it may be.

11) These two selections, in some ways so much alike, have two marked differences, largely accounted for when we remember that Blake wrote his poem to stand alone and that the Milton passage is part of a larger whole. First, the Blake poem has an interest that the Milton passage does not have, for the form the poet has chosen—an address to the evening star—gives the poem a dramatic pattern and the reader a point of view. Second, and this matter is perhaps a consequence of the first, there is in "To an Evening Star" an immediate connection between evening and human experience which Milton does not make in the particular passage we are using. If you found an intensity in the Blake poem that the Milton passage lacks, perhaps these things account for it.

12) Centuries ago Longinus pointed out that in a poem the vital elements of an experience are made to form a single body. Certainly we have seen that the moment we begin to consider imagery we come also to consider organization.

X

Allusion

IT IS A BEAUTEOUS EVENING
William Wordsworth (1770–1850)

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
The holy time is quiet as a Nun
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea:
Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.
Dear Child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine:
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
And worship'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

1) The matter we are to consider in this section, allusion, is closely connected with imagery; indeed, a literary allusion may be a complex kind of image. We start with this sonnet because its imagery has something in common with that of the poems we have just been considering, and because it has a striking literary allusion. First consider how many separable images the OCTAVE (the first eight lines of the sonnet) presents. Note that the feeling of quiet is first evoked by an image which comes in a simile. What is the sense of "broods" in line 5?

2) How far does the first image of the adoring nun control the subsequent images? Note that the poet has taken eight lines

to establish a feeling of religious awe before he comes to the central statement of the poem, and that our comprehension and reception of the statement are much affected by the feeling established.

3) Not long ago, in a class of senior students, no one was able to interpret the line

Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year.

If you do not recognize the allusion, read the sixteenth chapter of Luke; in it you will find the parable of Lazarus and a certain rich man. Could students who so blandly overlooked this allusion fully comprehend the poem?

4) We know, from twentieth-century studies of Wordsworth's life, what Wordsworth's first readers did not know: that the child addressed is the natural daughter of Wordsworth and a Frenchwoman, Annette Vallon. Much has been made of the matter. For the reader who would attain the experience of the poem, is this fact vital? Is knowledge of the parable vital?

Literary Allusion and Modern Readers

One of the difficulties in reading poems in our time is that we do not have the uniformity of literary experience that poets were once able to count on in their readers. Once educated persons knew the Bible and, at the least, portions of the Latin classics. The poet knew that he and his readers shared certain literary experiences; in our poem, for instance, Wordsworth's assumption that his readers would recognize an allusion to a parable in Luke was entirely justified. Many of us encounter difficulties with what doubtless seemed obvious allusions when the poems were written. Yet literary allusion is a more important matter in the reading of poetry than is usually recognized in the classroom.

A poet must make use of the information and experience he shares with his readers. One kind of experience men may share is literary experience, and poets find allusion to the work of their

predecessors an important resource. A quotation, a reference, any way of allusion to a piece of literature in the reader's memory may call up an emotion that will add its weight to his experience of the poem. Sometimes an allusion may be designed to evoke a rather general sort of literary experience; as we have seen, Wordsworth's lines

> *For old, unhappy, far-off things,*
> *And battles long ago:*

may recall various literary experiences in several readers yet have a similar effect on each. But often the allusion is more specific. Keats wrote in "Ode to a Nightingale":

> *Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!*
> *No hungry generations tread thee down;*
> *The voice I hear this passing night was heard*
> *In ancient days by emperor and clown:*
> *Perhaps the self-same song that found a path*
> *Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,*
> *She stood in tears amid the alien corn;*
> *The same that oft-times hath*
> *Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam*
> *Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.*

Keats could assume that his readers were perfectly familiar with the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament, and that three lines of his stanza were sufficient to recall the emotion that attended their experience with it. It is not necessary, of course, that the good reader for "Ode to a Nightingale" recall all the detail of the story of Ruth; what is important is the contribution that the recalled emotion, evoked by the allusion, makes to the present experience with the poem.

When the reader does not recognize an allusion, a part of the poem will be obscure to him. In the classroom and in textbooks, literary allusions are commonly explained; a large part of the task of editing the older poets for modern readers is the identifi-

cation of literary allusion. But such identification is only an expedient. A footnote can make you "understand" an allusion; it can hardly supply the emotion the allusion is intended to evoke. For example, the last two lines of Wordsworth's "The world is too much with us" are

> *Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;*
> *Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.*

The footnote writer can identify Proteus and Triton, or the reader to whom the names are unfamiliar can look them up in a handbook (and he would do well to do so); but neither footnote nor handbook can supply the emotion that the names awaken in readers familiar with classical story. The ideal reader for these lines would have read of Proteus in the fourth book of Homer's *Odyssey* and of Triton, say, in Virgil's *Aeneid* (Book I, ll. 142–156 and Book VI, ll. 156–176). The special student of literature will recall not only the old stories but later uses of them—for instance, a line in Edmund Spenser's "Colin Clout's Come Home Again":

> *Is Triton blowing loud his wreathèd horne.*

All this is not to depreciate the usefulness of reference books and explanations—they are most helpful when their limitations are recognized.

But allusion is not always so direct as these examples from "Ode to a Nightingale" and "The world is too much with us." The first two lines of a poem of Blake's are

> *And did those feet in ancient time*
> *Walk upon England's mountains green?*

Unless the reader actually remembers Isaiah 52:7—"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace"—he is unlikely to realize that

there is any allusion. And there may be allusion of a complex sort in which a previous literary experience is recalled partly for the sake of contrast. These lines in Milton's "Lycidas" censure the religious establishments of the poet's day:

> *Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold*
> *A sheep hook, or have learnt aught else the least*
> *That to the faithful Herdman's art belongs!*
> *What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;*
> *And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs*
> *Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;*
> *The hungry sheep look up and are not fed, . . .*

In "Lycidas," Milton is writing in a tradition of pastoral poetry which in its first examples dealt charmingly with gentle shepherds and well-kept sheep in pleasant pastures. Most readers will recognize readily enough the use of the shepherds to stand for clergymen—pastors—but the full IRONIC contrast is present only to those with some knowledge of pastoral poetry. Somewhat the same sort of difficulty may be encountered in contemporary poetry; for example, T. S. Eliot in the second section of "The Waste Land" PARODIES the description of Cleopatra's barge in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (II, 2). The reader who misses the parody misses the intended effect.

This frank discussion of a problem in the reading of poems should not discourage you. We may admit the difficulty of literary allusion without being disturbed by it. After all, your literary experience grows constantly, and your instructor and textbook can help a great deal. The first step in solving any difficulty is recognizing it.

We proceed now with a poem of Whittier's which makes an uncommonly large use of Biblical allusion and reminiscence. Written in 1865, it is the poet's celebration of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which abolished slavery. Before you read the poem, read Exodus 14 and 15 in the King James Version of the Bible, which is, of course, the version Whittier used.

LAUS DEO!

John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892)

It is done!
Clang of bell and roar of gun
Send the tidings up and down.
How the belfries rock and reel!
How the great guns, peal on peal,
Fling the joy from town to town!

Ring, O bells!
Every stroke exulting tells
Of the burial hour of crime.
Loud and long, that all may hear,
Ring for every listening ear
Of Eternity and Time!

Let us kneel:
God's own voice is in that peal,
And this spot is holy ground.
Lord, forgive us! What are we,
That our eyes this glory see,
That our ears have heard the sound!

For the Lord
Of the whirlwind is abroad;
In the earthquake He has spoken:
He has smitten with this thunder
The iron walls asunder,
And the gates of brass are broken!

Loud and long
Lift the old exulting song;
Sing with Miriam by the sea,
He has cast the mighty down;
Horse and rider sink and drown;
"He hath triumphed gloriously!"

Did we dare,
In our agony of prayer,
Ask for more than He has done?
When was ever his right hand
Over any time or land
Stretched as now beneath the sun?

How they pale,
Ancient myth and song and tale,
In this wonder of our days,
When the cruel rod of war
Blossoms white with righteous law
And the wrath of man is praise!

Blotted out!
All within and all about
Shall a fresher life begin;
Freer breathe the universe
As it rolls its heavy curse
On the dead and buried sin!

It is done!
In the circuit of the sun
Shall the sound thereof go forth.
It shall bid the sad rejoice,
It shall give the dumb a voice,
It shall belt with joy the earth!

Ring and swing,
Bells of joy! On morning's wing
Send the song of praise abroad!
With a sound of broken chains
Tell the nations that He reigns,
Who alone is Lord and God!

1) The central allusion of the poem in the fifth stanza—it is pointed up by direct quotation—is an excellent example of al-

lusion used to evoke an emotion from a past literary experience in order to reinforce the present experience. Why is the allusion to Miriam's song especially appropriate in this poem?

2) In order to understand the seventh stanza, read Numbers 17 and look up Psalms 76:10. Does the allusion here seem as effective as the allusion in the fifth stanza?

3) Throughout the poem there is reminiscence of the Old Testament. Take the fourth stanza as an example. It has its full effect only for the reader who makes a number of connections with such passages in the Old Testament as are here indicated: Psalms 148:8 speaks of "stormy wind fulfilling his word"; the Lord speaks to Job from the whirlwind (Job 38:1); "the Lord hath his way in whirlwind" (Nahum 1:3); the whirlwind "shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked" (Jeremiah 23:19); Isaiah threatens a visitation of "the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake" (Isaiah 29:6); Psalms 107:16 is "For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder."

4) Now this question arises: Suppose that for some student among you, none of these allusions and reminiscences was familiar, but that he has now looked up the references given in questions 1 and 2 and has paid attention to the quotations in 3. Is that student in the same position as the reader Whittier assumed, one long familiar with the Old Testament? I think we must answer "No." It is one thing to have an emotion recalled, another to search out the source of an allusion. Yet the student has done a great deal; he has made himself an adequate reader for the poem. And the very phrases Whittier uses, if he comes on them again in another piece of writing, will have a freight of emotion because of his experience with them here.

5) Like Whittier's "Ichabod," "Laus Deo!" is important as record. What does its dependence upon Biblical sources suggest about the quality of the exaltation Whittier would express for his generation?

6) You will have noticed, of course, that rhythm and rhyme in this poem are representational of the sound of bells rung in exaltation. Now the emotion the allusion and reminiscence

evoke, and the emotion rhythm and rhyme induce, must combine if the poem is to have its intended effect. Consider the fifth stanza as an instance of such combination. (You might be interested to compare Poe's "The Bells," a technical exercise on the sound of bells.)

7) You ought to make yourselves familiar with a Bible concordance, which is an alphabetical index to the Bible word by word. There are concordances, also, to Shakespeare and other major poets.

The Allusiveness of Words

From time to time we shall have occasion to discuss allusions in various poems. There remains one consideration to deal with now: the vague allusiveness a single word may have. We ordinarily do not examine our response to single words—words have their meaning and effect in contexts. Yet words themselves do get freighted for us, and the emotional freight they carry affects the way we take them in contexts. The allusiveness of words is one of the resources of communication, as important in prose as it is in verse.

We may not always be conscious of just what it is that affects us. In reading Keats's line

From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon

we probably do not make a conscious connection between the place names and our previous reading, but they are much more to us than merely names on a map. We may not be able to tell the value of a "doubloon" in modern money, but the word recalls not so much the detail as the feeling of pirate tales we have enjoyed. The commonest sort of words—children and home, evening and midnight, oak and elm—may have literary associations for us. Keats is remarking the allusiveness of a word for him when, in his "Ode to a Nightingale," he begins the stanza following the one quoted above with these lines:

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!

And if, for the reader of the "Ode to a Nightingale," the word "forlorn" has not been allusive, it becomes so by Keats's use of it here. What is sometimes called the "connotation" of a word is largely its allusiveness. And when the allusiveness of a word is fixed by continued use to the same purpose in the same emotional contexts, we may have what is called a "stock response" to it.

XI

Metaphor

In our discussions of imagery and of allusion we started with a poem and let it take us into the consideration of a resource of communication. With metaphor we shall investigate the term first, because many people—and probably some of you—have the mistaken notion that metaphor is something exclusively "poetic." To be sure, metaphor is important in poetry, but you must not think of it only as a device or decoration poets use; in poetry, as in our ordinary speech, it is a vital resource in language. We can hardly expect to realize the way in which metaphor is used in a poem unless we are first aware of its importance in ordinary speech. In prose and poetry alike, metaphor is our chief means of providing an image to stand for an idea; metaphors, therefore, are the most important sort of imagery.

A metaphor is usually defined as an implied or a tacit comparison, a comparison without the "like" or the "as" which would make it a simile. And often this definition is adequate; when we say, for example, "He is the black sheep of the family," we are making a comparison between the least admirable member of a family and a single black sheep in a flock, a comparison we could express as a simile. But, to begin with, we best think of a metaphor as an extension in which a word has been made to do more work than it does in its literal sense, an extension in which we are sometimes aware of a comparison. We cannot always make a metaphor into a simile. The Greek word from which metaphor comes means "to carry over"; you can think of a metaphor carrying over a word to a use beyond its literal sense.

By the "literal sense" of a word, we designate what we now consider the simple or primary meaning, which is often, though not always, the first meaning the word had in its history.

"To sift" is literally to put through a sieve; by extension we speak of "sifting the evidence"—when it is sifted, perhaps we "weigh" it. We are no longer much aware of the comparison the words once implied; they are useful now for their economy of expression. Such metaphors are common; newspaper headline writers, for example, are fond of certain metaphors because the words for them are conveniently short: "probe," "hit," "bare," "flay." The extension of such a word as "flay," literally "to skin alive," is ridiculous in many headlines if the reader remembers the literal sense and is aware of an implied comparison. Metaphors so long used that they are standard expressions are sometimes called "fossil" or "dead" metaphors, terms which are themselves metaphorical.

Indeed, the extended meaning of a word often seems to us as common as its literal meaning. The metaphorical "rank" in "a rank offense against decency" is not much less common than the literal use of rank in "a rank growth of weeds." Sometimes a metaphorical expression is the only standard one: "dead-end street," for example. When the literal meaning is forgotten some of the vividness of the metaphor is lost: Probably most people do not associate "racked with pain" with the medieval instrument of torture, the rack; and few of the people who once used the slang expression "he made me the goat" knew about the ancient Hebrew scapegoat. And, of course, many users of a word taken into English with its metaphorical sense established are unaware of its literal sense. For example, do you think of "precipitate" as having the literal sense "head first"?

But common metaphors sometimes keep alive and vivid. Perhaps this is particularly true of the metaphors used to describe what goes on in the mind, even though we have virtually no means but metaphor when we would speak of intellectual or emotional events. We *grasp* an idea, *wrestle* with a problem, *grapple* with a new concept, *plow* through a book, *leap* to a conclusion; our attention *wanders,* our enthusiasm *dies;* an idea *clicks,* a thought *strikes* us. Or we make our adjectives metaphorical and speak of a *sharp* distinction, a *brilliant* exposition, *foggy* thinking. We are equally prone to metaphor in speaking

of the manifestations of emotion in a friend: his brow *clouds,* his face *darkens,* he *breaks out* in anger, he *storms,* he is *beside himself* with wrath; or perhaps his face *lights up,* his brow *clears,* a smile *breaks out,* and he is *carried away* with joy. If you look for literal equivalents for these metaphors, you will find it difficult sometimes to supply them. If you try to make these metaphors similes, you will come to expressions much less economical, or perhaps fail. Take such a common expression as "to patch up a quarrel." Can you think of a simile or of a literal expression which will say exactly what you mean by "they patched up their quarrel"?

We have been considering common, even trite, metaphors in order to enforce the point that metaphor is a familiar use of language. Yet these commonplace metaphors have shown us that we accomplish by their use things we cannot in literal language. Obviously, the usefulness of our stock of words is thus extended. More than that, we gain, often, a considerable condensation; try to translate "leap to a conclusion" into entirely literal language and see how much longer the expression becomes. And we achieve a concreteness and vividness that the literal expression of the same idea would lack; even such worn metaphors as "to plow through a book" or "his smile breaks out" are a kind of imagery.

In good poems, metaphors are frequently highly individual extensions of words in which the poet makes a word or expression serve his purpose, perhaps in a fashion it had never served before. "A command of metaphor," Aristotle says, "cannot be imparted by another; it is a mark of genius." Aristotle implies that the making of a metaphor is not a logical process; nor does our comprehension of metaphor involve logical analysis.

We shall now consider some metaphors in poems we have already read; you will need to look back frequently to find the metaphor in its context.

Sometimes the very organization of a poem depends upon a central metaphor. The title of Miss Rossetti's "A Birthday" is itself a metaphor and, because we comprehend its full significance only in the last lines, controls the poem. You will remem-

ber how careful Bryant is in "The Battle-field" to prepare for his metaphorical treatment of the struggle between truth and error. In "Ichabod" the metaphor that Webster is a fallen angel is always before us; look back to see in how many ways it is enforced in the poem. Mr. Yellen's "Wanted" has a somewhat similar controlling metaphor; we are to think throughout of the typical good fellow of our civilization in terms of a wanted criminal, though literally he is not one. In each of these instances, we must ourselves contribute largely if the metaphor is to be realized.

And in general, the realization of metaphor depends upon our own imaginative effort, and our pleasure in metaphor is the sign of our successful activity. You will remember the line from Wordsworth's "It is a beauteous evening":

The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the sea.

When we read the line successfully we connect the gentleness of heaven with a mother's care—though probably we make no *comparison* between heaven and a brooding bird. Or take the metaphor in Miss Dickinson's lines:

The fashion of the ear
Attireth that it hear
In dun or fair.

We must make connections here of the most complex sort. The poise in either of these metaphors is very delicate. A paraphrase of Wordsworth's line might easily be ridiculous; the tacit comparison in Miss Dickinson's lines—if there is one—can hardly be put into a simile. And it is best not to put overmuch emphasis on the likeness between simile and metaphor, for a simile is distinguishable as a matter of syntax, but a metaphor is a subtle way of seeing or connecting. Nor is the presence of "like" or "as" in an expression a sure sign no metaphor is present. Consider these lines from "Westminster Bridge":

This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning.

If we omitted "like a garment," we should have remaining a metaphor: The city now doth wear the beauty of the morning. Perhaps the prepositional phrase "like a garment" but interprets the metaphor.

Usually a simile evokes two images and points out their likeness in one or more respects. This quatrain turns on a simile:

> *The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon*
> *Turns Ashes—or it prospers; and anon*
> *Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,*
> *Lighting a little hour or two—is gone.*

Men's achievement and snow on the desert are alike of brief duration. Such a simile as this points out a resemblance that inheres in, or is part of, the things compared. A metaphor may, and frequently does, require much more activity on our part; it may require us to see, or to think of, one thing in terms of another. And it may discover a likeness which exists only in the context of a particular experience.

Indeed, metaphor is the chief means by which poets bring together and suggest the resemblance of things which are ordinarily disparate but which have a significant likeness in a particular experience. The first quatrain of one of Shakespeare's sonnets is

> *That time of year thou mayst in me behold*
> *When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang*
> *Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,*
> *Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.*

How much these lines connect!—the late middle years of a man's life, the choir (the place for the singers) of a ruined church, and the leafless branches of fall; the joy of youth and the contrasting desolateness of age. The most striking metaphor, "bare ruin'd choirs," is a connection that depends not primarily upon any likeness in the choir of a church and the branches of trees in themselves. The connection and the likeness arise in the context of the experience.

Or take the first stanza of our Housman poem:

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

We are asked to think of the tree in terms of a girl dressed in white for Easter communion, and not only for the likeness in white bloom and a white dress. We are to feel also that the cherry tree is precious in the way an innocent girl is precious. Frequently a metaphor makes a complex connection in a single word. In the first line of Herrick's "To Blossoms,"

Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,

the word "pledges" at once connects the blossoms with the sons of men.

In experiences accompanied by intense emotion, the connections made between things ordinarily disparate may be startling. Look back at the third of the Greek epigrams in Section IV. In it we are asked to think of Poverty as a wife, demanding more than an old man can give. The sexual metaphor throws the pathetic weakness of old Amyntichus into striking relief. Only less startling is the metaphor in Lovelace's "To Lucasta," in which we are asked to think of warfare as a mistress and the soldier embracing her—and then, in the last stanza, to think of both a literal and a metaphorical mistress. The qualities of concreteness and compression in metaphor are often accompanied, when disparate things are suddenly connected for the sake of a new attitude, by PARADOX and ironic contrast. Biblical poetry is particularly rich in paradox: the Psalmist laments, "My tears have been my meat day and night"; the writer of Proverbs says, "The wicked man is snared by the transgression of his own lips"; the writer of Ecclesiastes says, "The lips of a fool will swallow himself up." And we shall have occasion to remark irony and paradox in poems we shall consider.

Moreover, metaphors are frequently the means of suggesting a judgment or of imposing an attitude at the very moment an

idea is expressed or a thing or action described. If you choose to say "Jack pried into the matter" instead of "Jack looked into the matter," you suggest a judgment of Jack. And note the effect of the italicized words in this sentence from the Beards' description of our Gilded Age: "Able to hold their own socially, if not politically, these select families had absorbed with facility the *seepage* of rising fortunes that gradually *oozed* into their ranks—until the *flood* of the new plutocracy descended upon them." The first line of our quatrain from the *Rubáiyát* is likewise a good example of a metaphor that implies an attitude and a judgment:

Think, in this battered Caravanserai.

The judgment is in the choice of the metaphor itself. We are to think of this world not as a home, not as our possession, but as a battered inn, a place where one stays because one has to. We must ever be alert for metaphors which impose attitudes and judgments—in prose as well as in poems—for we want to know how we come by them.

The next poem is a difficult—and rewarding—one which will illustrate a number of the matters we have been discussing. You will be asked for detailed and careful consideration. Such care and such detail are necessary in learning to be aware of the most subtle resource of language. And this poem is interesting enough to bear detailed discussion.

WHAT SOFT, CHERUBIC CREATURES[1]

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)

What soft, cherubic creatures
  These gentlewomen are!
One would as soon assault a plush
  Or violate a star.

[1] From *Poems by Emily Dickinson* edited by Martha Dickinson Bianchi and Alfred Leete Hampson. Reprinted by permission of Little, Brown and Company.

Such dimity convictions,
A horror so refined
Of freckled human nature,
Of Deity ashamed,—

It's such a common glory,
A fisherman's degree!
Redemption, brittle lady,
Be so ashamed of thee.

1) This poem requires a considerable activity on the part of the reader, for the metaphors carry highly compressed meaning and the expression is ELLIPTICAL throughout. The last two lines in the first stanza are an instance of ellipsis: we expect "as soon assault a plush *as* . . ." What are other ellipses in the poem?

2) If one is to comprehend a metaphorical poem, he must first know the literal sense of the words used. Do you need to look up "cherubic," "dimity" and "redemption"? Be sure you find the definition of "cherubic" most appropriate here. Look for a definition of "redemption" marked theological—perhaps you will find it under "redeem" instead of the substantive form.

3) Do you see that the metaphor "dimity convictions," in joining such disparate things as convictions and dimity, carries a judgment about these gentlewomen? You must realize of course that the soft, refined material called dimity (often delicately patterned in floral design) was worn by women of Miss Dickinson's generation in the afternoon for polite and leisurely occasions. And how about "freckled human nature"? Does "freckled" suggest that the blemishes on human nature are, or may be, of a sort we rather like? Or are we to remember that "these gentlewomen" would have taken great pains to avoid freckles?

4) Human nature is certainly common, but what are the implications of "common glory"? And what meaning, or what image, arises for you in "fisherman's degree"? Has the poet taken "fisherman" just as an instance of an ordinary man? Has the word other suggestions? How many of the twelve disciples were fishermen?

5) The ellipses in the first two stanzas are easy enough to fill in; the last stanza may bother you a bit. Try thinking of it as dramatic: the first two lines as what one of these gentlewomen says, or would say; the last two as the comment of the individual speaking in the first two stanzas. We might write some such prose account of the last two lines as this: "If you, my fine lady, are ashamed of human nature, Redemption (or God's grace) will be (or may be) ashamed of you." The meaning seems to be that one must recognize one's human nature before he can be raised above it.

6) Can you explain or justify the apparent contradiction between the image in "soft, cherubic creatures" and the image in "brittle lady"?

7) Write an interpretive account of the whole poem, filling in the ellipses and expanding the metaphors. In order to be sure of giving a full account, assume you are writing for an unperceptive reader who needs much help.

THE SNOW-STORM

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882)

Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,
Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the fields,
Seems nowhere to alight: the whited air
Hides hills and woods, the river, and the heaven,
And veils the farm-house at the garden's end.
The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's feet
Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit
Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed
In a tumultuous privacy of storm.

Come see the north wind's masonry.
Out of an unseen quarry evermore
Furnished with tile, the fierce artificer
Curves his white bastions with projected roof
Round every windward stake, or tree, or door.
Speeding, the myriad-handed, his wild work

So fanciful, so savage, nought cares he
For number or proportion. Mockingly,
On coop or kennel he hangs Parian wreaths;
A swan-like form invests the hidden thorn;
Fills up the farmer's lane from wall to wall,
Maugre the farmer's sighs; and at the gate
A tapering turret overtops the work.
And when his hours are numbered, and the world
Is all his own, retiring, as he were not,
Leaves, when the sun appears, astonished Art
To mimic in slow structures, stone by stone,
Built in an age, the mad wind's night-work,
The frolic architecture of the snow.

1) If you had read this poem without the first section, you might not have been aware that it was incomplete. But do you see that in the first nine lines the poet establishes a point of view, and therefore defines and limits the scene he describes? This first part, indeed, establishes a dramatic frame for the description, and we think of the speaker in the poem addressing his housemates.

2) What words and expressions in the first section do you consider metaphorical?

3) This poem may be taken as an example of a poem with a controlling metaphor. The first line in the second section suggests that the metaphor arose in the perception of the likeness of piled snow and masonry. Yet the poem seems to have taken shape in Emerson's mind around another metaphor; he wrote in his journal: "Instead of lectures on Architecture, I will make a lecture on God's architecture, one of his beautiful works, a Day. I will draw a sketch of a winter's day. I will trace as I can a rude outline of the far-assembled influences, the contribution of the universe wherein this magical structure rises like an exhalation, the wonder and charm of the immeasurable deep." Consider the way in which the sustained metaphor gives organization and movement to the description.

4) The last four lines have the effect of paradox. Until we

come to them, we are led to think of the north wind's work with snow as like man's architecture. Suddenly the metaphor is reversed: "astonished Art" is to mimic the work of the "fierce artificer." Emerson's metaphor is more than a way of speaking; a passage from his *Nature* will help us interpret:

"The standard of beauty is the entire circuit of natural forms, —the totality of nature; . . . Nothing is quite beautiful alone; nothing but is beautiful in the whole. A single object is only so far beautiful as it suggests this universal grace. The poet, the painter, the sculptor, the musician, the architect, seek each to concentrate this radiance of the world on one point, and each in his several work to satisfy the love of beauty which stimulates him to produce. . . . Thus in art does Nature work through the will of a man filled with the beauty of her first works."

5) "Man," Emerson tells us, "is an analogist, and studies relations in all objects. . . . All the facts in natural history taken by themselves, have no value, but are barren, like a single sex. But marry it to human history, and it is full of life." If you live where snowfall is heavy, have you not carried through part of the imaginative process in this poem—have you not seen piled snow as masonry and frolic architecture? Compare Keats's "To Autumn" as another illustration of our tendency to see the things of nature in human terms. Emerson remarks: "But is there no intent of an analogy between man's life and the seasons? And do the seasons gain no grandeur or pathos from that analogy?"

Suggestion for a Paper: Write a discussion of the use of metaphor in the work of some competent writer of prose. You might consider a number of editorials by one writer. V. L. Parrington's *Main Currents in American Thought* and R. H. Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* are both interesting for highly metaphorical style.

XII

Irony and Paradox

WHEN I WATCH THE LIVING MEET[1]

A. E. Housman (1859–1936)

When I watch the living meet,
And the moving pageant file
Warm and breathing through the street
Where I lodge a little while,

If the heats of hate and lust
In the house of flesh are strong,
Let me mind the house of dust
Where my sojourn shall be long.

In the nation that is not
Nothing stands that stood before;
There revenges are forgot,
And the hater hates no more;

Lovers lying two by two
Ask not whom they sleep beside,
And the bridegroom all night through
Never turns him to the bride.

1) IRONY is easier to illustrate than to define. We shall examine this poem carefully before attempting any definition.

[1] From *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman. Reproduced by permission of Henry Holt and Company, Inc.; and of the Society of Authors as the Literary Representative of the Trustees of the Estate of the late A. E. Housman, and Messrs. Jonathan Cape, Ltd. publishers of A. E. Housman's *Collected Poems*.

Consider all the metaphorical expressions and point out those which provide for contrast.

2) Considering their relation to the whole poem, what are the implications of the expressions "the moving pageant file" and "where I lodge"?

3) The second stanza turns on the contrast between two metaphors: "the house of flesh" and "the house of dust." If, in the next two stanzas, the metaphors change, is the same contrast maintained? Note that "the nation that is not" is a paradoxical expression—an apparent contradiction.

4) In the last stanza we are to think of graves as beds, and of the dead as lovers. Now there is a possible analogy between the grave and a bed, and we commonly speak of the dead going to their rest. But it is not only the implied comparison that is effective here; within the comparison there is a startling contrast in which disparate things—sexual experience and death—are brought suddenly together. As one might expect, poets before Housman have used this juxtaposition. You will remember this epigram from *The Greek Anthology*:

> *Thou hoardest thy maidenhood; and to what profit? for when thou art gone to Hades thou wilt not find a lover, O girl. Among the living are the Cyprian's pleasures; but in Acheron, O maiden, we shall lie bones and dust.*

Because he gives it greater concentration, Andrew Marvell makes the statement in this epigram unforgettable:

> *The grave's a fine and private place,*
> *But none, I think, do there embrace.*

Emerson uses the juxtaposition of "lust" and "grave" in a simile; when the "I" of "Hamatreya" has learned that the earth endures and man's possession of any part of it passes, he says

> *When I heard the Earth-song*
> *I was no longer brave;*
> *My avarice cooled*
> *Like lust in the chill of the grave.*

In these lines, as in the last stanza of the Housman poem, the contrast is pointed up by paradoxical statement. There is a somewhat similar paradox—though it comes to us in questions—in this stanza from Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard":

> *Can storied urn or animated bust*
> *Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?*
> *Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,*
> *Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of Death?*

But do you find this stanza as effective as any one of the passages quoted above? Can you explain your reaction?

The Perception of Irony

Perhaps now we may approach the definition of irony. When we say that a statement is ironic, we mean that there is a contrast between the literal sense of the words and their implication. An UNDERSTATEMENT is but one example of this verbal irony. We do not perceive the irony in a statement without knowing the context of the statement; if, for example, your instructor spoke of you as "my young scholars," one would have to know something of you and of him before one could be sure of his intention.

A second sort of irony is the irony we recognize in an event or situation when what exists or what results seems to us the opposite of, or in high contrast to, what is appropriate. We say that the death of a man on the eve of his long-planned-for retirement is ironic—Ivan Bunin's short story, "The Gentleman from San Francisco," is built about such an ironic death.

A third sort of irony you may know by the term "dramatic irony"—it depends on a contrast between knowledge the audience has and the words or action of a character in a play. The old Greek dramatists managed it by using plot material well known to their audiences; Shakespeare frequently employs it—an instance is the "porter scene" in *Macbeth,* when the drunken porter, pretending he is porter of hell-gate, is, the reader or

spectator knows, closer to the truth than he realizes. The term "dramatic irony" is used to describe the same sort of contrast when it appears in literary forms other than plays; in Poe's well-known story, "The Cask of Amontillado," there is a central dramatic irony which makes possible much verbal irony. A very subtle sort of dramatic irony is used in Ring Lardner's "Haircut," for the character who tells the tale does not understand the implications of the action presented to the reader through him. And instances of this sort of irony will be apparent in poems we shall be reading.

Each of these three sorts of irony depends upon a contrast that the reader must himself make; the writer gives him the materials for the contrast, but the reader must perceive the irony. And we may, indeed, use the term "irony" whenever two ideas or two impulses are so brought together that one is thrown into high relief, or that both are. The ironic contrast may be achieved by a metaphor: The Psalmist's "My tears have been my meat day and night" is one example; the last stanza of Housman's "When I watch the living meet" is another. But irony may be perceived in such a simple statement as that of the discrepancy between expectation and fulfillment; irony is the memorable quality of the Greek epigram we read some time ago: "I Brotachus of Gortyna, a Cretan, lie here, not having come hither for this, but for traffic."

The effect of a poem may depend primarily on the reader's perception of its irony. You will find several such poems in this book, and irony is at least an element in much of the poetry that seems important to you. The poet who would achieve an easy acceptance cannot afford irony, for he dares not demand the activity irony requires of the reader. But the poet who would write seriously and honestly about human experience recognizes that life itself is ironic, that man is a creature of great potentiality and disappointing achievement, of desires and impulses inevitably thwarted, whose experience and whose works are transient.

We cannot illustrate the range of irony by a few examples. But perhaps two poems, in which the irony is rather obvious,

will be a sort of preliminary exercise toward the interpretation of poems which come later in the book.

From THE RUBÁIYÁT OF OMAR KHAYYÁM
Edward FitzGerald (1809–1883)

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep:
And Bahrám, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep.

Here two ironic images reinforce each other: the lion and lizard inhabiting the ruins of a once splendid oriental court; the wild ass—a particularly timid beast—stamping on the grave of "that great Hunter." Perhaps the next poem will seem no more complex than this stanza from the *Rubáiyát*. But read it more than once before you consider the questions about it.

RICHARD CORY[2]
Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869–1935)

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
"Good-morning," and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place.

[2] Reprinted from *The Children of the Night* by Edwin Arlington Robinson, by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.

1) On a first reading, you were doubtless aware that in the sordid death of Richard Cory there is a certain mockery of what seems right and proper. You could hardly be unaware of the irony; the poem is so constructed that the contrast between Cory's apparent grace of life and his death comes startlingly in the last line. Have we here no more than a trick of structure—the sort of surprise ending admired in an O'Henry story? We may need to push our consideration further.

2) A poet, like a storyteller in prose, may make one of several assumptions concerning the persons he writes about. He may, for example, assume OMNISCIENCE—complete knowledge of their motives and character. This poem is dramatic. What are the limits of the supposed speaker's knowledge? How is his point of view made clear to us?

3) This limited point of view identifies the supposed speaker with the common folk who look with envy or admiration at Richard Cory. Does the reader also tend to identify himself with the "people on the pavement"?

4) Why is the attitude of the ordinary citizens of the town so emphasized? Is the central irony pointed up and enriched because we have taken the point of view of those who envied him? Does an idea about humanity which can be stated outside the terms of the poem arise for us?

5) Consider the diction. Do you find many metaphors? Can you point out lines in which the diction is remarkably neutral? Is the poem therefore less impressive? Or does understatement sometimes make for intensity of expression? What is the effect of the one clearly metaphorical expression: "waited for the light"? What is implied by it?

PARADOX

A paradox is a statement which, taken literally, is self-contradictory or contradictory to reason or common sense. But a

paradox may have a meaning other than its literal or surface meaning; it may be significant within the context of a particular experience. You will remember the last stanza of "To Lucasta, Going to the Wars":

Yet this inconstancy is such
As you too shall adore;
I could not love thee, Dear, so much,
Loved I not Honour more.

The statement is paradoxical enough, but you understand it without trouble because you have a context for it and see its significance for the experience of the poem.

Because a paradox may have a double signification, it may be a vehicle for irony, offering the reader a contrast, if he will make it, between the literal, apparently contradictory statement and another implication. For instance, Macbeth says, when the news of his wife's death comes to him during the attack on the castle:

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

This series of paradoxes jars us into a realization of the depth of Macbeth's disillusion. We have in them, of course, oppositions to common sense, impossibilities, for shadows fall from realities, actors imitate life, life is not a tale—we tell tales about life. The paradoxes make sense only in the context of our realization of Macbeth's predicament. To him, weary with sinning and everywhere thwarted, life seems not the source of fable, but the fable itself.

When an experience is of great intensity, the poet may find paradox his readiest means of communication, for paradox jars the reader out of his usual lassitude of mind, jars him into awareness. When John Donne, in "The Sun Rising," would represent

an all-absorbing love, a love sufficient to itself and seeming to exist by itself, he writes:

She'is all States, and all Princes, I,
Nothing else is.
Princes do but play us; compar'd to this,
All honor's mimic; All wealth alchemy.

Do you see what is happening? The ordinary sort of comparison (say, "we are as happy as kings") is, for this experience, entirely insufficient. In Donne's paradox the lovers' experience becomes the standard—the reality and absolute. If comparisons be made, let the glory of princes be compared to this love, and let it be realized that their glory is an imitation, a remove from reality. This love is the reality: "Nothing else is." The lines

. . . *compar'd to this,*
All honor's mimic; All wealth alchemy.

merely interpret the paradox. Perhaps the experience itself is paradoxical, for it denies that life is what common sense would have it be.

Let us now consider a complete poem which turns about a paradox.

HOLY THURSDAY[3]

William Blake (1757–1827)

Is this a holy thing to see
In a rich and fruitful land,
Babes reduc'd to misery,
Fed with cold and usurous hand?

Is that trembling cry a song?
Can it be a song of joy?
And so many children poor?
It is a land of poverty!

[3] Text of *Poetical Works of William Blake,* edited by John Sampson. By permission of the Clarendon Press, Oxford.

And their sun does never shine,
And their fields are bleak and bare,
And their ways are fill'd with thorns:
It is eternal winter there.

For where'er the sun does shine,
And where'er the rain does fall,
Babe can never hunger there,
Nor poverty the mind appal.

1) Do you see that the title provides the initial ironic contrast in the poem? How? How does this ironic contrast suggest the paradoxes which follow? What is the first statement in the poem that may be considered a paradox?

2) What is the antecedent for "their" in the third stanza?

3) You must notice that the relationship between the third and fourth stanzas is indicated by "for." What is being said? Is it not that the land in question is a land of misery, a barren land, and that it must be, for wherever heaven's sun and rain make a land rich and fruitful, there cannot be poverty and hungry children? But as a matter of fact, poverty and plenty do coexist—the poem simply says what isn't so.

4) Or does it? The poem says that misery in a rich and fruitful land is impossible. And it forces us, in considering the paradox, to turn the statement round—to say that a rich and fruitful land, a pleasant land, is impossible where there is misery. We are jarred into the realization that what is so, is appalling; in our moment of vision we recognize that what we have considered the norm is itself the paradox, that it does not make sense. The poem has become for us a way of seeing.

5) You will better realize the power of paradox if you will try to say without paradox what Blake is saying here. And, of course, an ordinary prose statement of the central idea of the poem will lack the extraordinary vividness of the imagery in the poem—which also makes us see.

Suggestions for Papers: (a) Take one of the short stories mentioned in this section and write an analysis of its irony as you

perceive it. (b) Read several poems by E. A. Robinson and write a little essay on Robinson's treatment of character. Your instructor can suggest appropriate poems. (c) Take the idea of Blake's "Holy Thursday" as a starting point for a discussion of the economic life of your town or state.

XIII

Rhythm and Meter

Rhythm in poems is so important a matter that perhaps it might well have been our first concern in this book. Yet, in the poems we have been discussing you have been instinctively aware of some large part of the effect of rhythm and were often able to realize what the rhythm of a particular poem contributed to the whole effect—you needed help first where your instinct was less sure. Of course, instinct is not enough, and your apprehension of rhythm will develop as you read more and more poems—aloud at first, silently when you become able to apprehend a rhythm without the aid of the voice. Textbooks and instructors can do little more than hasten the process by focusing your attention and by suggesting that, in this poem or that, there is something to hear that you may miss.

The apprehension of the rhythm of a poem does not, to be sure, come by itself, but as a part of one's experience with the poem. Rhythm ought to be discussed, then, as it has its function in particular poems. Indeed, the meaning of the words in a poem and the rhythmical pattern they make are not finally separable. This fact is obvious when one remembers his experience with a poem, and any study of PROSODY in which it is forgotten is likely to be a pretty barren exercise.

Let us consider again the octave of a Wordsworth sonnet:

> *It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,*
> *The holy time is quiet as a Nun*
> *Breathless with adoration; the broad sun*
> *Is sinking down in its tranquillity;*
> *The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea:*

Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.

Certainly our perception of the rhythm in this poem is not just a recognition of the pattern of unaccented and accented syllables, or even of conformity to and deviation from what we consider to be a "regular" or normal pattern. The rhythm we give to the lines when we read them is directed and controlled by our comprehension of their sense. But the relationship is reciprocal; the pattern of accented syllables is appropriate to the sense and affects the reader's attitude just as really as the statement the lines make. You have been aware of this reciprocal relationship in your classroom experience, for doubtless you have noticed that when a student reads a poem aloud without fully comprehending it he distorts or destroys its rhythm. But, if it is unlikely that you will read properly a line you do not understand, it is quite probable that you will read well a line you do understand—the rhythm will take care of itself. Do not, then, allow considerations of prosody to override considerations of syntax. For example, even if we discover in the last two lines of the passage above a pattern of regular alternation of unaccented and accented syllables, the rhythmical effect of the lines is not determined by that pattern alone, but as much by the differing degrees of STRESS we give the words in our recognition of meaning and attitude. When we say differing degrees of stress, we usually mean differing degrees of loudness. But stress or accent may be any one or more of several means of making a word or syllable stand out among others: for example, raising or lowering the pitch of the voice, speaking a word very softly, or prolonging a syllable in pronunciation. You do not need to be concerned with what to do; you will naturally do the right thing when you read a poem with understanding.

You should remember, too, that there is a natural tendency to impose a rhythm on recurring sounds. To take a simple example, you know that you hear the ticks of a clock in groups or patterns although they actually come with complete regularity, and that

you can change the pattern of the ticks at will. You impose on them what is called a subjective rhythm. The same tendency may be observed in listening to the clicking of the wheels of a train over the rails. This tendency to find a pattern in recurring sounds is effective in reading a poem and is directed by the sense and the emotion of the poem.

Just here, then, is the difficulty in the discussion of rhythm. We assume that the poet intends, and that his poem has for him, a particular effect; yet the rhythm a reader gives to his reading of the poem will, and should, reflect his interpretation of the poem, and even his reaction to it. Quite adequate readers will differ slightly in their interpretations and markedly in their reactions—prosody is, therefore, a contentious subject. But the intention of this section is not to expose you to a science of English verse; it is merely to present certain terms and to keep clear certain distinctions so that we shall be able to think and talk about rhythm in poems. Your instructor may wish to extend this discussion, and perhaps to modify it. We shall approach these matters through a comparative consideration of two poems.

THE PASSIONATE SHEPHERD TO HIS LOVE

Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593)

Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That valleys, groves, hills, and fields,
Woods, or steepy mountains yields.

And we will sit upon the rocks,
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle;

A gown made of the finest wool,
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;
Fair linèd slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold;

A belt of straw and ivy-buds
With coral clasps and amber studs—
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me and be my love.

The shepherd swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May morning—
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my love.

DELIGHT IN DISORDER

Robert Herrick (1591–1674)

A sweet disorder in the dress
Kindles in clothes a wantonness:
A Lawn about the shoulders thrown
Into a fine distraction:
An erring Lace, which here and there
Enthralls the Crimson Stomacher:
A Cuff neglectful, and thereby
Ribbands to flow confusedly:
A winning wave (deserving Note)
In the tempestuous petticoat:
A careless shoe-string, in whose tie
I see a wild civility:
Do more bewitch me, than when Art
Is too precise in every part.

1) These two poems are, we say, in the same METER, but that is not to say that they have precisely the same rhythmical effect. The terms "rhythm" and "meter" are much confused by students, and inasmuch as the distinction between them is not

absolute, we must discuss the terms themselves. A broad definition of *rhythm* might be: "regularity of recurrence in time." That definition covers such uses of the term as "the rhythm of the seasons" or "the rhythm of the tides." But we are using the term in particular reference to language. Our most ordinary remark may have some rhythm, and if we write careful prose, we may produce sentences which have a marked and pleasant rhythm, sentences in which the accented syllables recur with enough regularity to please a reader. In *verse* the recurrence of accents or *stresses* is planned. "Verse," then, is a collective term for writing that has a patterned rhythm; *a verse* means a single line in a patterned rhythm.[1] In verse there are a number of familiar patterns of recurring stresses which we distinguish as one or another *meter,* or measure; for example, the four-stress verse of Marlowe's poem is called, according to a much used convention, iambic tetrameter. The designation of the meter indicates the way in which the stresses fall in the pattern line; the norm is eight syllables with the stresses falling on the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth. Only—and this you must be clear about—a poem in a given meter will not conform to the metrical pattern exactly. The pattern will be discernible, but there will be frequent deviations from it. We expect a particular pattern, and we are interested and gratified when the verses conform to it *and* when they depart slightly from it. Coleridge puts it more accurately than I have, but in somewhat more difficult terms: "As far as metre acts in and for itself, it tends to increase the vivacity and susceptibility both of the general feelings and of the attention. This effect it produces by the continued excitement of surprise, and by the quick reciprocations of curiosity still gratified and still re-excited, which are too slight indeed to be at any one moment objects of distinct consciousness, yet become considerable in their aggregate influence."

[1] The word "verse" is used incorrectly to mean a stanza, except in reference to hymns, where the usage seems to be standard. "Verse" implies nothing about value, and therefore serves sometimes as a noncommittal term; a modest poet may prefer "my verse" or "my verses" to "my poems." In such expressions as "light verse," "occasional verse," and *vers de société* it suggests a modest intention.

In order to separate the effect Coleridge describes from the whole effect of a poem, one would have to beat out the rhythm, or devise some other way of focusing one's whole attention on it. The point is that the more sensitive to rhythmical effects the poet is, the more subtle and interesting his deviation from the normal pattern will be. Various rhythmical effects within the same metrical pattern are, in part, the result of deviations from the pattern. But, although we expect and welcome differences in the way in which stresses fall in the lines, there is a certain constancy in the time relation of the lines in good verse—in the duration of the lines as we read them. Unfortunately, we have no adequate terms to designate that time relation, but we are certainly aware that the pattern of stressed syllables occurs within a time measure.[2]

2) Now let us apply these generalizations to the poems above. Marlowe's poem is, we say, fairly "regular," because the pattern is maintained in something more than half the lines. Its meter may be called octo-syllabic verse, or four-stress iambic, or iambic tetrameter—or your instructor may prefer another description. The important thing is to be aware of the pattern. The first two lines are "regular"—they conform to the metrical pattern exactly. Do you find a stanza in which all four lines conform to the metrical pattern exactly? Where is there deviation from the pattern? Do you find the rhythm of the poem interesting?

3) Compare "Delight in Disorder." We may say that it has the same meter as Marlowe's poem, and the pattern of the rhymes is the same (Marlowe's poem is, to be sure, divided into stanzas, but they are not closely knit). Yet obviously the rhythmical effect of "Delight in Disorder" is very different from that of "The Passionate Shepherd." Read the poem aloud until you believe you have it right (in the fourth line, the "tion" in "distraction" should be pronounced as two syllables). Then mark

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[2] The instructor may wish to consult a book to which I am indebted on this point: T. S. Omond, *English Metrists in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (London, 1907), pp. 87–90 and 240–242.

the stressed syllables throughout the poem as you have read it—do not try to impose the normal pattern on any line. You may wish to distinguish syllables which do not have a full accent but to which you give some stress; a convenient way is to use an acute accent (´) for a full stress and a grave accent (`) for a partial stress:

Do more bewitch me than when Art

Note how frequently one of two rhyming syllables receives but a partial stress.

4) What is the connection between the rhythmical effect of "Delight in Disorder" and the subject matter and attitude of the poem? Would as much conformity to the metrical pattern as there is in Marlowe's poem be appropriate here? We may expect that in good poems the rhythm will both suggest and enforce the attitude of the poem; certainly the relative smoothness of the rhythm in "The Passionate Shepherd" is consonant with an invitation to idyllic love. But do you see that the rhythm of Herrick's poem is very closely related to attitude—almost representational? State as precisely as you can how rhythm and attitude are here related.

Song from CYMBELINE
William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

Fear no more the heat o'the sun,
  Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
  Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages.
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o'the great;
  Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;
Care no more to clothe and eat;
  To thee the reed is as the oak.

The sceptre, learning, physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning-flash,
Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone;
Fear not slander, censure rash;
Thou hast finish'd joy and moan.
All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee, and come to dust.

I WANDERED LONELY AS A CLOUD

William Wordsworth (1770–1850)

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;

And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

1) These two poems have the same stanza pattern: six lines of four-stress verse, rhyming *ababcc*—that is, the first and third lines, and the second and fourth lines rhyming together, and the stanza closed with a couplet. Read both poems aloud, carefully.

2) The rhythmical effect of one is very different from that of the other, is it not? That difference is to be accounted for in several ways. One reason for it is outside the scope of prosodic analysis; our apprehension of the sense of the words as we read them directs the way in which we handle the rhythm, and this direction will be more marked in second and subsequent readings. But there are metrical differences, too, and the four-stress line in each poem is used as is consonant with the matter and attitude of the poem.

3) Mark the stressed syllables in each poem, distinguishing the lighter stresses with a grave mark. Be sure that your marking really does indicate your reading—not some pattern you suppose the line ought to have.

In Shakespeare's song, it is convenient to consider that such a line as

To thée the reéd is às the oák

is the normal line, and that in lines like

Féar no móre the héat o'the sún

the initial unstressed syllable is omitted. But most of the lines of the poem do begin with an accented syllable. In "I wandered lonely as a cloud" such lines as

Tóssing their héads in sprightly dánce

may be considered to have the regular order of unstressed-stressed initially reversed. But deviations from the pattern, in these and other ways, are far from being failures to maintain the pattern. Indeed, they make the poem metrically interesting. These poems furnish us with concrete illustrations of what Coleridge meant when he spoke of "the continued excitement of surprise" and of "curiosity still gratified and still re-excited." The balance is delicate; the skillful writer of verse never deviates from his pattern so far that the pattern is not implied, nor so persistently that it is forgotten by the reader.

4) But there are, too, a number of other considerations: Watch the way in which the long vowels come in the song by Shakespeare, and the way in which they prolong the accented syllables. And, in reading the poem, do you not find that the refrain and the repetition of line patterns lead you to increase the stress you give to accented syllables? Often in this song the end of a line comes at a division of the syntax and coincides with a mark of punctuation. Does not this coincidence make you the more aware of the line pattern? Compare "I wandered lonely as a cloud." Do syntax and metrical pattern there have a somewhat different relationship?

You will come to realize as we examine more poems that there are two patterns to consider, the syntactical pattern playing against the metrical pattern and modifying its effect slightly. The varying relationships of these two patterns account for the most interesting and subtle rhythmical effects.

Suggestion for a Paper: Using material from Sections I, IX, X, and XIII, write a discussion of representational rhythm. Your instructor can suggest poems for further illustration.

XIV

Rhythm and Meter

(Continued)

Five-Stress Verse

The most used meter in English poetry is the five-stress verse in which the pattern line has ten syllables and the stresses fall on the second, fourth, sixth, eighth, and tenth. We have had examples of it in sonnets, in the blank verse of Blake's "To the Evening Star" and a selection from *Paradise Lost,* in the complex stanzas of "To Autumn," and in other poems. But our poems have by no means illustrated the great variety of ways in which five-stress verse has been used. And in this exercise we shall content ourselves with considering small segments of its possible range.

From AN ESSAY ON CRITICISM
Alexander Pope (1688–1744)

Some beauties yet no Precepts can declare,
For there's a happiness as well as care.
Music resembles Poetry, in each
Are nameless graces which no methods teach,
And which a master-hand alone can reach.
If, where the rules not far enough extend,
(Since rules were made but to promote their end)
Some lucky Licence answer to the full
Th' intent propos'd, that Licence is a rule.
Thus Pegasus, a nearer way to take,
May boldly deviate from the common track;
From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art,

Which without passing thro' the judgment, gains
The heart, and all its end at once attains.

1) Pope is saying that, although there are established principles in poetry, they are not binding upon poets who have the creative ability to ignore them and yet to attain the end of pleasing and touching the reader. The passage is particularly appropriate to a discussion of meter, for good poets have commonly been impatient of the rules of prosody. Do you need to look up the allusion to Pegasus?

2) The verse form Pope uses here is called the CLOSED or HEROIC COUPLET: each two rhyming lines are a unit of the sense. (Lines 3–5 are a triplet, a fairly frequent variation. The name "heroic" comes from the use of such verse in the heroic play.) Pope's verse is thought by some persons to be too "regular" and therefore monotonous. Perhaps these persons, or some of them, have not read Pope's verse carefully enough to hear the subtle variation for which it is distinguished—or perhaps their tastes have been conditioned by a too exclusive attention to other poetic styles. It is true that we can pick out couplets which are entirely "regular": for example, lines 12–13. But point out lines in which there is subtle variation, accounted for by partial stresses, or by the interplay of syntactical and metrical patterns, or by both. (If you do not feel that you are sufficiently aware of this variation, try giving the passage a reading with somewhat exaggerated attention to the punctuation.) And note the way in which the couplet pattern lends itself to incisive statement.

3) Five-stress verse in couplets may be used, however, for effects quite different from the effect of these lines of Pope's. The next selection is an example.

From ENDYMION

John Keats (1795–1821)

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never

Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits.

1) You notice at once that these couplets are not closed and that many of the lines are run-on—that both the sense and the CADENCE carry over into the next line. (A line that is not run-on may be called "end-stopped.") Try to describe, in general terms, the effect of the running-on of a large proportion of the lines. Do run-on lines tend to emphasize or to obscure the rhymes? Consider particularly the double rhymes: ever-never, breathing-wreathing.

2) Keats's line

Some shape of beauty moves away the pall

has as regular an alternation of unstressed-stressed syllables as Pope's line

And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art.

If one considers these lines in isolation, they have much the same rhythmical effect. But lines of verse do not come in isolation—an obvious fact, but often forgotten. Consider such lines as

. . . yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits.

Are you not aware that in them the interplay of syntactical and metrical pattern is of particular importance and complexity? But, if you care to mark the stressed syllables in the whole passage, you will see that there is also a considerable deviation from the pattern line. Consider especially (and in their relationship to the context) the lines:

Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
Therefore, on every morrow are we wreathing

Mark the stresses in these lines, distinguishing partial stresses. Can you find lines in the selection from Pope that vary as much from the pattern line as these do? If the whole of the Keats passage were made up of such lines, do you think the effect would be pleasing? Why not?

3) You have noted that in a poem written in stanzas, or in a sonnet, the rhymes make a pattern which helps to organize the poem. In this passage the effect is somewhat different, is it not? We may consider that the rhymes here make a third pattern, playing against the pattern of the syntax by giving a slight emphasis to the ends of lines, increasing our consciousness of the lines as metrical units. But since the syntax so seldom allows us to pause on a rhyming word, the effect of Keats's verse is as much like that of blank verse with extended cadences as it is like that of Pope's couplets.

4) Compare the effect of Keats's run-on couplets with that of Shakespeare's blank verse in the passages which follow. The first is certainly familiar to you; it is from *The Merchant of Venice* and is a part of Portia's speech to the Duke's court in behalf of Antonio. The second passage, which represents the blank verse of Shakespeare's late plays, is from *The Tempest.* Prospero, who speaks it, has presented, through his magic art, a masque. The masque has just come to an end.

From THE MERCHANT OF VENICE
William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless'd;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway,
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself,
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice.

From THE TEMPEST
William Shakespeare

. . . be cheerful, sir:
Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

1) Give these two passages much the same sort of consideration you gave to the passages from Pope and Keats. Read them aloud until you feel the rhythm; if you mark the stresses, let your marking indicate *your* reading as accurately as possible.

2) In which of the two passages is there the greatest coincidence of metrical and syntactical pattern? In which does the syntactical pattern play against the metrical pattern? Which passage has for you the more interesting rhythm? Do you find

the rhythmical effect of the passage from *The Tempest* in any way like the rhythmical effect of the passage from "Endymion"?

3) We are not, of course, interested in saying that any one of these passages of five-stress verse is superior in rhythmical effect to another, although we may certainly have personal preferences. Each one of them has the great virtue of a rhythmical effect appropriate to the matter of the passage itself. And in the Shakespeare passages you might well consider the speaker as well as the matter. You doubtless know *The Merchant of Venice* well enough for such consideration; Prospero is an old man, of great wisdom and a chastened spirit, at peace with the world and with himself.

Metrical Terms

Our discussion of rhythm and meter has been a preliminary one, and we shall return to some of the matters already considered. But before leaving this first discussion, you should gain at least a recognition knowledge of the terms conventionally used to describe and distinguish meters. Possibly your instructor will wish you to use them in discussion. Remember to read aloud the examples of meters given below, so that you will know how the meters sound, as well as how they are defined.

Kinds of verse are distinguished from one another by the pattern of the line, and the metrical unit of the line is called the *foot*. In English verse, a foot is composed of one accented and one or two unaccented syllables,[1] the kind of foot depending upon the arrangement of those syllables. We say that there are five feet in the line

Some shape of beauty moves away the pall

considering that an unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable makes a single foot. A foot so composed is called an

[1] A foot composed of two stressed syllables is called a *spondee*, and a foot composed of two unstressed syllables, a *pyrrhic*. But these terms are used principally to describe deviations from the pattern line; there cannot be, of course, spondaic or pyrrhic *meters* in English verse—our pronunciation does not allow them.

iamb, and meter in which such feet clearly predominate is called *iambic*. Meters are further distinguished by the number of feet in the line; the four-stress verse of "I wandered lonely as a cloud" may be called *iambic tetrameter*, and blank verse may be described as unrhymed *iambic pentameter*. All our examples in this section have been in iambic verse, which is much more common in English than any other sort. In iambic verse, tetrameter and pentameter are common, *trimeter* (three-stress) and *hexameter* (six-stress) less so.

A second sort of foot is the *anapest*: two unaccented syllables followed by an accented syllable. Here is an example of *anapestic trimeter*. It is the first stanza of *Verses Supposed to be Written by Alexander Selkirk* by William Cowper (1731–1800).

I am mónarch of áll I survéy,
My right there is none to dispute;
From the centre all round to the sea,
I am lord of the fowl and the brute.
Oh, solitude! where are the charms
That sages have seen in thy face?
Better dwell in the midst of alarms,
Than reign in this horrible place.

You will find some iambs in these verses, and frequently iambs and anapests are used together, as in the opening lines of that pleasant poem "The Secretary" by Matthew Prior (1664–1721):

While with lábour assíd'ous due pléasure I míx,
And in one day atone for the bus'ness of six,
In a little Dutch-chaise on a Saturday night,
On my left hand my Horace, a Nymph on my right.
No Memoire to compose, and no Post-Boy to move,
That on Sunday may hinder the softness of love;
For her, neither visits, nor parties of tea,
Nor the long-winded cant of a dull refugee.

This night and the next shall be her's, shall be mine,
To good or ill fortune the third we resign:
Thus scorning the world, and superior to fate,
I drive on my car in processional state; . . .

Anapests are frequently used for a representational effect—of mood, as in this poem of Prior's, or of movement, as in the stanza of "How They Brought the Good News" quoted in the first section.

Iambic and anapestic meters are called *rising meters,* because they go from unaccented to accented syllables—iambic, *duple-rising;* anapestic, *triple-rising.* There are also two *falling meters,* in which the accented syllable comes first in the foot. They are not so common as the rising meters, and will seem to some ears unnatural in English verse, particularly as they have sometimes been used by poets to parade their metrical skill.

The *trochee* (*duple-falling*) is a foot composed of an accented syllable followed by an unaccented syllable. Longfellow's *Hiawatha* is an example of *trochaic tetrameter.* Browning has an interesting poem, "One Word More," in which he uses *trochaic pentameter* in order to distinguish the poem particularly from his other work:

Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,
Lines I write the first time and the last time.

. . . . .

He who writes, may write for once as I do.

The *dactyl* (*triple-falling*) is a foot composed of an accented syllable followed by two unaccented syllables. *Dactylic hexameter* is the meter of Virgil's *Aeneid,* but in Latin, as in Greek, the principle of verse is not accent but quantity, the length of syllables. Longfellow's *Evangeline* is an imitation (but not a reproduction) in English verse of Virgil's meter:

This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks.

Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade" is a familiar example of dactylic verse:

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volley'd and thunder'd.

Since the falling meters are relatively uncommon and difficult to handle, they are most often used for particular effects. You will do well to ask yourselves, when you encounter one of them, why the meter is appropriate to the poem.

XV

By Way of Review

The poems in this section and the next give us an opportunity to go back over some of the matters we have been discussing. Of course, every new poem is a new experience, and these poems are a review only in that we shall see in them the resources of communication we have considered used in ways new to us. In discussing these poems, try to use precisely the terms you have learned.

From A SATYR AGAINST MANKIND
John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester (1648–1680)

Were I, who to my cost already am,
One of those strange, prodigious Creatures, *Man*,
A Spirit free, to choose for my own share,
What sort of Flesh and Blood I pleas'd to wear,
I'd be a Dog, a Monkey or a Bear,
Or any thing, but that vain Animal,
Who is so proud of being rational.
The Senses are too gross; and he'll contrive
A sixth, to contradict the other five:
And before certain Instinct, will prefer
Reason, which fifty times for one does err—
Reason, an *Ignis fatuus* of the Mind,
Which leaves the Light of Nature, Sense, behind.
Pathless, and dangerous, wand'ring ways, it takes,
Through Error's fenny Bogs, and thorny Brakes:
Whilst the misguided Follower climbs with pain,
Mountains of Whimseys, heapt in his own Brain,
Stumbling from thought to thought, falls headlong down
Into Doubt's boundless Sea, where like to drown,

Books bear him up a while, and make him try
To swim with Bladders of Philosophy,
In hopes still to o'ertake the skipping Light:
The Vapor dances, in his dazzled sight,
Till spent, it leaves him to eternal night.
Then old Age, and Experience, hand in hand,
Lead him to Death, and make him understand,
After a search so painful, and so long,
That all his Life he has been in the wrong.
Huddled in Dirt, the reas'ning Engine lies,
Which was so proud, so witty, and so wise.

1) What is the meter of this poem? Compare the passages by Pope and Keats quoted in Section XIV. Do Wilmot's couplets resemble those of Keats?

2) How does your dictionary define SATIRE? Does this passage fulfill the definition? What is an *ignis fatuus?* Note the derivation of the term and the contrast with "the Light of Nature, Sense." What do "Nature" and "Sense" mean in this context? Is "Sense" merely equivalent to "sensation"? Who is the "misguided Follower"?

3) From the twelfth line of the poem to the end we have an extended metaphor. ALLEGORY is sometimes defined as extended metaphor. See what your dictionary has to say about allegory. How long a period in the life of the "misguided Follower" is implied in the extended metaphor?

4) Writers in the seventeenth century used capital letters more freely than we do today, and a modern editor might print this poem without capitalizing such words as "doubt," "age," and "death." Do the capital letters serve any purpose?

5) In line 12 "Reason" is an *ignis fatuus,* which is, by line 24, "spent." What, then, is the "reas'ning Engine" of line 29?

6) Blown-up bladders were once used to keep bathers afloat, as people now sometimes use inner tubes. Cardinal Wolsey says, in the play *Henry VIII*:

> *I have ventur'd,*
> *Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,*
> *This many summers in a sea of glory, . . .*

Might a modern poet write, assuming the line did not destroy the rhythm of his poem: "To swim on inner tubes of philosophy"?

7) Presumably you, as college students, have a high regard for reason. What would the "I" of this passage prefer to it? If reason is not a trustworthy guide, what is? But is the faculty of reason really being attacked here? Is it, in your opinion, well to depend upon reason alone, or to exploit any faculty at the expense of others? Just how, according to the passage, has the "misguided Follower" been wrong all his life? There are three adjectives in the last line. Are all of them to be taken literally?

8) Write a careful statement of the plain sense of the poem.

APPARENTLY WITH NO SURPRISE[1]

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)

Apparently with no surprise
To any happy flower,
The frost beheads it at its play
In accidental power.
The blond assassin passes on,
The sun proceeds unmoved
To measure off another day
For an approving God.

1) A poem in a book as you come to it for the first time is, we have said, a set of symbols to which you must give significance. But you have learned that the extent to which you must contribute varies—that some poems demand much more of you than others. This poem demands a great deal. Perhaps the way in which it makes its demand may be suggested by a comparison with Herrick's "To Blossoms." Go back to Section III and read that poem again before you go on with these questions.

2) Consider the first two stanzas of Herrick's poem by themselves. The theme of transience is represented by the imagery

[1] From *Poems by Emily Dickinson* edited by Martha Dickinson Bianchi and Alfred Leete Hampson. Reprinted by permission of Little, Brown and Company.

but not stated in general terms. So in Miss Dickinson's poem a theme is represented but not stated. "To Blossoms" goes on to make the generalization in the third stanza; there is no comparable generalization in Miss Dickinson's poem—it leaves the statement of theme to the reader. What that theme is may be suggested to you if you will go back and read over the stanzas from *In Memoriam* and the accompanying questions in Section VIII, remembering that "Apparently with no surprise" and *In Memoriam* are not so very far apart in time.

3) We have noted in "To Autumn" and "The Snow-Storm" the tendency—a common one—to see nature in human terms, and we remember Emerson's questions: "But is there no intent of an analogy between man's life and the seasons? And do the seasons gain no grandeur or pathos from that analogy?" Now this poem's metaphors do make us see the autumn frost and flower in human terms. But is not the intent of the analogy ironical? In this short poem every word counts. Note how the first line directs our reaction. What is the effect of the last line? Do you see how the reference to the sun enforces the concept of impersonality in nature?

4) In order to be sure of your control of this poem, write a short comparative discussion of it and the stanzas from *In Memoriam*. And perhaps before you do so it would be well to review the discussion of irony in Section XII.

Before you read the following poem, read the story of the Witch of Endor, 1 Samuel 28:3–25.

THE BELLS OF LYNN[2]

Heard at Nahant

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882)

O curfew of the setting sun! O Bells of Lynn!
O requiem of the dying day! O Bells of Lynn!

[2] The poems of Longfellow in this book are used by courtesy of Houghton Mifflin Company, authorized publishers.

From the dark belfries of yon cloud-cathedral wafted,
Your sounds aerial seem to float, O Bells of Lynn!

Borne on the evening wind across the crimson twilight,
O'er land and sea they rise and fall, O Bells of Lynn!

The fisherman in his boat, far out beyond the headland,
Listens, and leisurely rows ashore, O Bells of Lynn!

Over the shining sands the wandering cattle homeward
Follow each other at your call, O Bells of Lynn!

The distant lighthouse hears, and with his flaming signal
Answers you, passing the watchword on, O Bells of Lynn!

And down the darkening coast run the tumultuous surges,
And clap their hands, and shout to you, O Bells of Lynn!

Till from the shuddering sea, with your wild incantations,
Ye summon up the spectral moon, O Bells of Lynn!

And startled at the sight, like the weird woman of Endor,
Ye cry aloud, and then are still, O Bells of Lynn!

1) Some lines in this poem are clearly six-stress iambic (a six-stress line is also called an ALEXANDRINE). Point out lines in which there is a regular alternation of unstressed-stressed syllables, and lines in which there is considerable play against that pattern. What is the effect of the marked pause (called a CAESURA) in both lines of the first stanza and in the second lines of subsequent stanzas? How frequently are there caesural pauses in the first lines of stanzas? Note that the pauses come at various places in the first lines of stanzas, regularly in the second lines. The pattern of the caesuras plays against the line pattern. We have not before considered this rhythmical effect.

2) What is fortunate for the poem in the combination of sounds that make up "Bells of Lynn"? (The letters *l* and *n* are

sometimes called semi-vowels.) What examples of ASSONANCE and ALLITERATION can you find in the poem?

3) You were aware, even on the first reading of the poem, that the sound of bells far off across the water is in the poem itself. Using your answers to questions 1 and 2, point out as fully as you can how this effect is accomplished.

4) Discuss the choice and order of detail in stanzas 4, 5, and 6. Question 5 following "To Autumn" in Section VII may suggest some pertinent considerations here.

5) The metaphor in stanza 7 is like metaphors in the Bible (for example: "Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together."—Psalms 98:8). Does it seem extravagant here? Might it have seemed so earlier in the poem?

6) The direct allusion to the story of the Witch of Endor has the form of a simile, but note that the metaphors in the stanza above are controlled by the simile to come. Discuss the importance of the allusion to the poem, reviewing Section X if you need to.

EVENING QUATRAINS

Charles Cotton (1630–1687)

The day's grown old, the fainting sun
Has but a little way to run,
And yet his steeds, with all his skill,
Scarce lug the chariot down the hill.

With labour spent, and thirst opprest,
Whilst they strain hard to gain the West,
From fetlocks hot drops melted light,
Which turns to meteors in the night.

The shadows now so long do grow,
That brambles like tall cedars show,
Mole-hills seem mountains, and the ant
Appears a monstrous elephant.

A very little, little flock
Shades thrice the ground that it would stock;
Whilst the small stripling following them,
Appears a mighty Polypheme.

These being brought into the fold,
And by the thrifty master told,
He thinks his wages are well paid,
Since none are either lost, or stray'd.

Now lowing herds are each-where heard,
Chains rattle in the villain's yard,
The cart's on tail set down to rest,
Bearing on high the Cuckold's crest.

The hedge is stripped, the clothes brought in,
Nought's left without should be within,
The bees are hiv'd, and hum their charm,
Whilst every house does seem a swarm.

The cock now to the roost is prest;
For he must call up all the rest;
The sow's fast pegg'd within the sty,
To still her squeaking progeny.

Each one has had his supping mess,
The cheese is put into the press,
The pans and bowls clean scalded all,
Rear'd up against the milk-house wall.

And now on benches all are sat
In the cool air to sit and chat,
Till Phoebus, dipping in the West,
Shall lead the world the way to rest.

1) A few passages in this poem need explanation; these out of the way, the poem offers no difficulties: The first and last

stanzas allude to the story of Phaethon; in line 16 "a mighty Polypheme" alludes to Polyphemus, the Cyclops in the *Odyssey* (you may consult *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* for both of these allusions). Your dictionary will give you the old meanings of "told" (line 18) and "villain" (line 22). In lines 23–24, the two-wheeled cart, being "on tail set down to rest," has its thills at an angle of about forty-five degrees. The thills are said to resemble the horns supposed to grow from the head of a husband whose wife has been unfaithful—surely a somewhat strained figure of speech. Line 25 refers to the custom of hanging clothes to dry on hedges. Does the fact that many readers will need some, at least, of these explanations mean that Cotton's diction is difficult or obscure?

2) Coleridge called Cotton's style "the neutral style," the style common to both poetry and prose. Referring to a volume of Cotton's poems, he says: "There are not a few poems replete with every excellence of thought, image and passion which we expect or desire to see in poetry of the milder muse; and yet so worded, that the reader sees no reason why he might not have said the very same in an appropriate conversation, and cannot conceive how indeed he could have expressed such thoughts otherwise, without loss or injury to the meaning." Is this judgment supported by our poem? Is all the imagery appropriate to conversation? Given the subject matter, does the diction seem inevitable? In answering these questions, you must of course remember that the readers Cotton had in mind had had classical educations, and that the allusions in this poem were to them commonplaces.

3) Is there not, moreover, some real advantage in alluding to the chariot of the sun in the first *and* the last stanza? And is not Cotton throughout observing the same principle of description that we have noted in "To Autumn" and "The Bells of Lynn"? Can you formulate the principle so that it might serve you in your own descriptive writing in prose?

4) Point out instances of accurate observation on the poet's part. If you are familiar with life on a farm, consider what detail a modern poet might use for a similar description.

5) Coleridge speaks in the passage quoted above of Cotton's poems as examples of "the milder muse." Read again Blake's "To the Evening Star" and the accompanying passage from Milton. What qualities of these poems are quite lacking in "Evening Quatrains"? Would such description as Cotton's have been as effective in prose?

6) "Evening Quatrains" is, in my opinion, rather a pleasant poem; quite possibly you have formed no taste for poetry of "the milder muse." Yet there is a place for poems which are no more than pleasant, just as there is a place for music which does not move us greatly. Decide whether or not the reading of the poem is a pleasure to you, and state as clearly as you can why it is or is not.

Suggestions for Papers: (a) "Evening Quatrains" is the third of a series of four poems on morning, noon, evening, and night. They may be found in *Poems of Charles Cotton,* edited by John Beresford. Write a little essay on the poems as they represent country life in Cotton's England. Other poems in the first section of the volume will furnish additional material. (b) Here are some of the Biblical allusions we have encountered in poems:

1. *Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year.*
2. *Perhaps the self-same song that found a path*
   Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home
   She stood in tears amid the alien corn.
3. *Sing with Miriam by the sea.*
4. *And startled at the sight, like the weird woman of Endor,*
   Ye cry aloud, and then are still, O Bells of Lynn!

Using these passages as illustrations, write a paper in which you consider the importance of Biblical allusion in poetry. Assume your reader has not read the portions of the Bible alluded to.

XVI

By Way of Review

(Continued)

I

FIVE POEMS[1]

Anna Ulen Engleman (1873–1943)

IN A VACANT LOT

Teasel weeds
Breast high in golden rod
And Queen Anne's lace,
Blackened and sered by winter's grime and dirt,
Stand like Russian peasants,
Clad in old worn smocks
And mangy fur hats.

VANITY

We saw a lake with a permanent wave
One day in winter weather.
A chilling breeze and a little freeze
Had done the work together.

A. W. O. L.

Summer is a thoughtless jade.
In winter, when we need her most,

[1] Mrs. Engleman wrote her poems with no thought of publication, and in her lifetime they were read by but a few close friends. These five poems have been printed only once before their use here: in a volume for private circulation, *Autumn Offerings*, published by the English Department of Cornell College, Iowa. They are printed here by permission of Mrs. Engleman's son, Mr. Buryl F. Engleman.

She's frivoling the hours away
Along some sunny southern coast.

AUTUMN'S VANGUARD

Little gum trees, slender maples
Standing at the forest's edge,
Crimson banners all unfurled;
Stately, steady, waiting, ready,
For th' order from their Captain
To advance upon the world.

SEA GULLS

A myriad of tiny boats
Sat, riding on the sea.
With sudden creaking cries they rose
And wheeled away from me.

Far, far they went, into the blue
Away beyond the shore,
But presently they settled down;
There were my boats once more.

1) You will remember what Browning, in the poem quoted in Section II, makes Fra Lippo Lippi say about the artist's function. But we have come to understand that it is not only the vision of

things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see

that interests us in poems. The poet sees the thing *his* way; if his mind is interesting and well furnished, his way is interesting to us. Is not the theme of Miss Dickinson's "To hear an oriole sing" illustrated by any one of these poems?

2) Review the discussion of metaphor and see how much of it may be illustrated by these poems. Here are some suggestions:

How many of the poems illustrate the way in which a metaphor may bring together things ordinarily held disparate? Are the metaphors merely implied comparisons? We may say that "In a Vacant Lot" is built around a simile: teasel weeds are like Russian peasants. But did you note that you are seeing the teasel weeds as persons before the comparative word "like" is introduced? If you come from a coastal region, you could probably recognize what is being described in "Sea Gulls" without the title, and some one of us, on a day when he was alert enough to mark the resemblance, might say, "Why, those gulls at rest look like boats." What is gained by the metaphor?

3) What term have we for the sort of statement "A. W. O. L." makes?

4) "In a Vacant Lot" is in what is called "free verse"—verse which does not have an established pattern. "Autumn's Vanguard" has a marked rhythm and pattern and is metrically very interesting. Mark the accents and describe the pattern. What does the rhythm of "Autumn's Vanguard" contribute to the poem? How does it reinforce—indeed, become part of—the metaphor? Do you note one line in particular that has an obvious representational rhythm most skillfully used? Presumably the poet could have used the metrical pattern of this poem in "In a Vacant Lot." Would it have been appropriate there?

II

From THE BUILDING OF THE SHIP

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882)

Thou, too, sail on, O Ship of State!
Sail on, O UNION, strong and great!
Humanity with all its fears,
With all the hopes of future years,
Is hanging breathless on thy fate!
We know what Master laid thy keel,
What Workmen wrought thy ribs of steel,
Who made each mast, and sail, and rope,

What anvils rang, what hammers beat,
In what a forge and what a heat
Were shaped the anchors of thy hope!
Fear not each sudden sound and shock,
'T is of the wave and not the rock;
'T is but the flapping of the sail,
And not a rent made by the gale!
In spite of rock and tempest's roar,
In spite of false lights on the shore,
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea!
Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee,
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,
Are all with thee,—are all with thee!

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN![2]

Walt Whitman (1819–1892)

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;

[2] From *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman. Copyright 1924 by Doubleday & Company Inc.

Here Captain! dear father!
The arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
But I with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

1) These poems have a value as record and we must note their dates. Longfellow's was first printed in 1849, a year in which Americans were much concerned about the Union (Whittier's "Ichabod," you remember, was written in 1850). This is the last section of the poem, the only section which has specific application to national affairs. This section made an immediate impression. It was recited on many stages (the great actress Fanny Kemble is said to have recited it with marked effect); it was frequently reprinted in newspapers; it moved Lincoln deeply. Indeed, its history comes down close to our own day, for in a speech to the British nation and the Empire in 1941, Winston Churchill, then prime minister, quoted the first five lines of it, which had been quoted to him in a letter from President Roosevelt introducing Wendell Willkie. "O Captain! My Captain!" was written in 1865, the year of Lincoln's assassination. It is not characteristic of Whitman's style, for he ordinarily uses long, unrhymed, rhythmical but not metrical lines, as in the passage quoted below. Whitman also wrote our great elegy for Lincoln, "When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd."

2) Consider first the rhythm of the Longfellow passage. Does it represent the emotion? Is it appropriate to the speaker you assume for the lines and representational for his feeling? Compare

this passage with the poems in four-stress verse in Section XIII. Can you account for some of the rhythmical effect? Make use of the terms you have learned.

3) Doubtless much of the original popularity of this passage is to be accounted for by its timeliness; the poet made articulate his countrymen's own feeling in a skillfully extended metaphor. Longfellow's contemporaries show their recognition of the power of the metaphor by their own use of it. For example, Daniel Webster uses it to great effect in his Seventh of March Speech; James Russell Lowell lets a stanza of his "The Washers of the Shroud" (1861) echo Longfellow:

> *God, give us peace! not such as lulls to sleep,*
> *But sword on thigh, and brow with purpose knit!*
> *And let our Ship of State to harbor sweep,*
> *Her ports all up, her battle-lanterns lit,*
> *And her leashed thunders gathering for their leap!*

Why is this metaphor a particularly fortunate one? (This is a rather complex question—you may need to review the discussion of metaphor.) In considering Longfellow's use of the metaphor, note the consistency of its extension. Note, too, that an extended metaphor has separate metaphors for its parts.

4) Do you think it likely that Whitman's poem was at all affected by the previous existence of Longfellow's? Surely almost all of Whitman's first readers would have known "The Building of the Ship" or at least our section from it. Does Whitman's poem allude, in effect, to Longfellow's? Can its way of speaking of Lincoln as the dead captain be considered a further extension of the metaphor in our section of "The Building of the Ship"? Do you think the internal rhymes effective and appropriate?

5) Longfellow did not originate the metaphor "ship of state," but he made it particularly available to his countrymen. What was their need for it? Why were the several literal terms for the nation insufficient? One of the reasons is that any literal term has a limited meaning. This metaphor may be taken by the mind

to stand for the whole complex of ideas, emotions, and attitudes—geographical, political, emotional, spiritual—which in our history have gathered around the union of the states. A striking example is a second use of the metaphor by Whitman, even in a poem which begins with quite a different metaphor, "Thou Mother with thy equal brood":

> *Sail, sail thy best, ship of Democracy,*
> *Of value is thy freight, 'tis not the Present only,*
> *The Past is also stored in thee,*
> *Thou holdest not the venture of thyself alone, not of the Western continent alone,*
> *Earth's* résumé *entire floats on thy keel O ship, is steadied by thy spars,*
> *With thee Time voyages in trust, . . .*[3]

Is Whitman's contention that the destiny of all peoples is bound up in the destiny of the United States anywhere stated or implied in the passage from Longfellow?

6) Review Section VIII, and consider the passage by Longfellow and "O Captain! My Captain!" as records of American feeling.

III

TO AN ATHLETE DYING YOUNG[4]

A. E. Housman (1859–1936)

> The time you won your town the race
> We chaired you through the market-place;
> Man and boy stood cheering by,
> And home we brought you shoulder-high.

[3] From *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman. Copyright 1924 by Doubleday & Company Inc.

[4] From *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman. Reproduced by permission of Henry Holt and Company, Inc.; and of the Society of Authors as the Literary Representative of the Trustees of the Estate of the late A. E. Housman, and Messrs. Jonathan Cape, Ltd. publishers of A. E. Housman's *Collected Poems*.

Today, the road all runners come,
Shoulder-high we bring you home,
And set you at your threshold down,
Townsman of a stiller town.

Smart lad, to slip betimes away
From fields where glory does not stay,
And early though the laurel grows
It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes the shady night has shut
Cannot see the record cut,
And silence sounds no worse than cheers
After earth has stopped the ears:

Now you will not swell the rout
Of lads that wore their honours out,
Runners whom renown outran
And the name died before the man.

So set, before its echoes fade,
The fleet foot on the sill of shade,
And hold to the low lintel up
The still-defended challenge-cup.

And round that early-laurelled head
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,
And find unwithered on its curls
The garland briefer than a girl's.

1) The first line is metrically a pattern line. Do many of the lines conform precisely to the pattern?

2) The poet makes use of an ironic analogy, speaking of the funeral of a young athlete in the terms of one describing a victory. How many stanzas are used to establish the analogy? How is it reinforced in the rest of the poem? Is it effective?

3) The poem is so concentrated and precisely worked out

that every word deserves attention. In the next-to-last stanza what is the "sill of shade" with its "low lintel"? In the last line, the girl's garland is a headdress worn by unmarried girls. What do "laurel" and "rose" stand for?

4) The second line in the last stanza is a literary allusion. "Strengthless dead" is Homer's epithet, and its use here is intended to recall to the reader Homer's description of the shades who flock about the newcomer in the afterworld. Homer describes the shades as peculiarly intangible beings, spiritually as well as physically impotent; he makes the shade of Achilles say, "Nay, speak not comfortably to me of death, oh great Odysseus. Rather would I live on ground as the hireling of another, with a landless man who had no great livelihood, than bear sway [be king] among all the dead that be departed."[5] Students have sometimes misinterpreted Housman's poem, supposing that the poet is thinking of the afterlife as a reward. Do you see that such a reading is unlikely for one who recognizes the literary allusion? But even the student who does not recognize the allusion should not so misinterpret. If he does, is he not simply assuming that the poem says what he expects or desires it to say?

5) What is the theme of this poem? In one or two careful sentences, state the theme abstractly, quite outside the terms of the poem.

6) This has been a favorite poem among college students and has often been reprinted in books intended for their use. Can you see why it may have an appeal to students? Will students frequently agree that dying young is a good? Imagine two readers, one himself an athlete, the other cynical about college athletics. Will the attitudes they bring to the poem make any difference in their reading of it?

7) This is the third poem by Housman we have discussed. Suppose you had been given "To an Athlete Dying Young" with the poet's name withheld. What characteristics of the poem would lead you to attribute it to Housman? If you need to look

[5] From *Odyssey* XI, translated by Butcher and Lang (Modern Readers Series). Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

back at the other Housman poems, do so. But first see if you can answer the question without rereading them.

A Transition

In the sixteen sections we have been over our primary intention has been, of course, just what it will be in subsequent sections—to read carefully a number of poems. But we have been trying, also, to get a minimum critical equipment, to learn what we need most to know for the discussion of poems. We shall keep on using this equipment; in the questions which follow poems, you will be asked about such matters as rhythm and imagery and irony. But increasingly you must be aware of these things for yourselves—aware of metrical pattern even when your attention is not called to it, aware of metaphor when the metaphor is not pointed out.

While our primary intention remains the same, our secondary intention in the next few sections is to learn about some of the classes of poems. Now poems are classified in various ways: by form, by subject matter, by attitude, and by other attributes. We need terms in order to organize our literary experience and knowledge, just as, for example, we need terms in order to organize our knowledge of plant life. Nor should we be surprised to find that we need more than one basis of classification for poems. When we consider plants from one point of view, we distinguish an herb from a flower, but we may from another point of view put the herb and the flower together in the same class. Of course, we shall remember that classification of poems is a means and a convenience, nothing more.

The next few sections, then, differ from the foregoing particularly as the poems are grouped in certain recognized classes. At one time we shall read a number of narrative poems grouped together, at another a number of sonnets, at another a number of satires. The sonnets, for example, are grouped according to their metrical form and rhyming pattern, the satires according to attitude and intention. Yet obviously a poem may be at once a sonnet and a satire. If we put a sonnet with a satirical intention

with a group of sonnets, it is because we are at the moment giving our attention to metrical form. If we put a sonnet with a group of satires in various meters, it is because we are at the moment giving first consideration to attitude. And in any one of the following groups of poems—the narrative poems in the next section, for instance—we are still concerned with the resources of communication we have been discussing.

Suggestion for a Paper: Take question 6 following the selections from Longfellow and Whitman as a starting point for an extended discussion. You may wish to consult an American history, or Carl Sandburg's *Abraham Lincoln, the War Years*.

XVII

Narrative Poems. The Folk Ballad

The three narrative poems in this section, although widely separated in time and place, have much in common. "The Song of Deborah," scholars believe, dates from about 1200 B.C. and celebrates an incident in the settlement of the tribes of Israel in Canaan. It is one of the earliest pieces of Hebrew literature. There is a prose account—probably written later—of the same incident in Judges 4. You would do well to read it.

The ballad of "Sir Patrick Spence," Scottish in origin, is what is called a FOLK BALLAD, that is, a narrative poem sung as popular entertainment and ordinarily the work of several, perhaps of many, poets. Some one singer must have given the ballad its original impetus, but as it was transmitted from singer to singer stanzas were added and the ballad was otherwise modified. Many ballads come down to us in several versions, as does this one. Probably "Sir Patrick Spence" recounts an ill-fated journey to Norway about 1281 and the wreck on the return.

"John Henry" is a nineteenth-century American Negro ballad. John Henry is a folk hero who lives in many ballads and prose accounts, and apparently oral traditions about him are still current. The ballad of "John Henry" came into being through much the same process as "Sir Patrick Spence" did.

THE SONG OF DEBORAH

Judges 5:12, 19–31 (King James Version)

12. Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.

19. The kings came and fought, then fought the kings of

Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they took no gain of money.

20. They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.

21. The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength.

22. Then were the horsehoofs broken by the means of the pransings, the pransings of their mighty ones.

23. Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

24. Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

25. He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish.

26. She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples.

27. At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

28. The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?

29. Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself,

30. Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey; to every man a damsel or two; to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needlework, of divers colours of needlework on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?

31. So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might.

1) Is the narrative clear to you? The Canaanites seem to have had the superior forces; according to Judges 4:3 their

forces include "nine hundred chariots of iron." In verse 20 the antecedent of "They" is "the stars." Although this verse is metaphorical, the next one is literal enough, for Deborah and Barak had chosen a time to fight when the river Kishon was in flood. Verse 22 suggests the confusion in the hemmed-in army of Sisera. Verse 23 is transitional; the inhabitants of Meroz are in high contrast to Jael, whom the poet sees as an example of heroic patriotism. Sisera has taken refuge in Jael's tent, and Jael takes an opportunity, apparently while Sisera is eating, to rid Israel of an enemy. In verse 28 there is a sudden change of scene and we see Sisera's mother awaiting his return as—she expects —a conqueror.

2) The principles of Old Testament verse are not the same as the principles of verse originally written in English, for the translators of the King James Version retained the characteristics of Hebrew verse where they could. The numbered paragraphs of this selection (called "verses" in a specialized use of the word in reference to the Bible) may be considered structural units. The chief characteristic of Old Testament verse is PARALLELISM. You will remember Miriam's song, which you looked up in connection with Whittier's "Laus Deo!":

> *Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously;*
> *the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.*

Here the second element is a concrete restatement of the first. And often there is statement and restatement of the same idea, with the second statement developing or reinforcing the first:

> *The heavens declare the glory of God;*
> *and the firmament sheweth his handywork* (Psalms 19:1).

Sometimes the parallelism is very like what the rhetoric books call a balanced sentence:

> *The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart:*
> *the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening*
> *the eyes* (Psalms 19:8).

Biblical scholars distinguish and name several types of parallelism, but for our purposes a recognition of the principle of parallelism is sufficient. Point out instances of parallelism in "The Song of Deborah." Do you find any which specifically resemble the examples above?

3) Comment on verse 27. What is the effect of the repetition? Consider it as here set up to emphasize the parallelism:

> *At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down:*
> *at her feet he bowed, he fell:*
> *where he bowed, there he fell down dead.*

4) Mark Twain says the Old Testament writers have "the faculty of sinking themselves out of sight and making the narrative stand out alone and seem to tell itself." We think of this poem as the work of Deborah herself—that remarkable woman who rallied and led her people in a successful campaign. But whether by Deborah or another, the poem is a fine example of the OBJECTIVE NARRATION characteristic of Old Testament narrative, whether in prose or verse. What do you think are the means by which the narrative attains its immediacy? Discuss the dramatic organization of the poem. Where are there changes of scene? What is the effect of verses 28–30? What term describes it?

SIR PATRICK SPENCE

i

The king sits in Dumferling toune,
  Drinking the blude-reid wine:
"O whar will I get guid sailor,
  To sail this schip of mine?"

ii

Up and spak an eldern knicht,
  Sat at the kings richt kne:
"Sir Patrick Spence is the best sailor
  That sails upon the se."

iii

The king has written a braid letter,
And signd it wi his hand,
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spence,
Was walking on the sand.

iv

The first line that Sir Patrick red,
A loud lauch lauched he;
The next line that Sir Patrick red,
The teir blinded his ee.

v

"O wha is this has don this deid,
This ill deid don to me,
To send me out this time o' the yeir,
To sail upon the se!

vi

"Mak hast, mak haste, my mirry men all,
Our guid schip sails the morne:"
"O say na sae, my master deir,
For I feir a deadlie storme.

vii

"Late late yestreen I saw the new moone
Wi the auld moone in her arme,
And I feir, I feir, my deir master,
That we will cum to harme."

viii

O our Scots nobles wer richt laith
To weet their cork-heild schoone;
Bot lang owre a' the play wer playd,
Thair hats they swam aboone.

ix

O lang, lang may their ladies sit,
Wi thair fans into their hand,
Or eir they se Sir Patrick Spence
Cum sailing to the land.

x

O lang, lang may the ladies stand,
Wi thair gold kems in their hair,
Waiting for thair ain deir lords,
For they'll se thame na mair.

xi

Haf owre, haf owre to Aberdour,
It's fiftie fadom deip,
And thair lies guid Sir Patrick Spence,
Wi the Scots lords at his feit.

1) It seems best to retain the old spellings in this ballad; they may look queer but if you read the poem aloud they will give you little trouble. In stanza 3, "a braid letter" is a broad letter—probably we should say an imposing or official letter. The meaning of the last line in stanza 8 is that their hats floated above them. "Kems" (stanza 10) are combs. "Haf owre to Aberdour" is halfway between Norway and Aberdour—Sir Patrick and his crew are halfway home at the time of the wreck.

2) Note that the structure of this poem is dramatic, and that the scene changes with no explicit transition. The first two stanzas are one division of the ballad; in the third the scene has changed and Sir Patrick receives the king's letter. Where are other such divisions?

3) There are a number of versions of this ballad; the one we use is among the shortest. You may be interested to compare the nineteen-stanza version used in *The Oxford Book of English Verse,* which has six stanzas on the shipwreck. Comment on the

proportion given to the various parts of the narrative in our version.

4) A characteristic of the old ballads is their INCREMENTAL REPETITION, that is, repetition with addition so that the narrative does not lose its forward movement entirely. This characteristic is not so marked in "Sir Patrick Spence" as in some ballads, but it is clearly exemplified in stanzas 9 and 10, where the device is used most strikingly. In stanza 4 the incremental repetition is of a somewhat different sort: the repetition of stock lines which appear in other ballads of the same period. The ballad singer's hearers were doubtless pleased to recognize what they had heard before, just as the hearers of the Homeric poems were pleased to recognize such familiar epithets as "wine-dark sea." Can you give examples of incremental repetition from narratives you know? How about certain fairy tales? How about Old Testament narrative—the story of Joseph, for instance?

5) The meter of this poem is what is called BALLAD METER or, particularly in reference to hymns, COMMON METER. Either term designates a stanza in which lines 1 and 3 have four stresses, and lines 2 and 4—the rhyming lines—have three stresses. (Not all of the old ballads are in this stanza, but so many are that it takes the name "ballad meter.") In modern times the meter has been much used in hymns and in such LITERARY BALLADS as Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and Keats's "La Belle Dame sans Merci." You should fix the stanza pattern in your mind, and perhaps mark the stresses in three or four stanzas to see how stresses are likely to fall in the old ballad. Stanza 10 is interesting metrically.

6) We shall be concerned in the next section with the literary ballad, but perhaps you would be interested to read now Longfellow's "The Wreck of the Hesperus," a literary ballad in ballad meter, in which there are some echoes of "Sir Patrick Spence."

7) What, in your opinion, are the qualities which have preserved this old rhymed narrative? What makes it interesting today?

JOHN HENRY[1]

A Negro Folk Ballad

i

John Henry was a li'l baby, uh-huh,
Sittin' on his mama's knee, oh, yeah,[2]
Said: "De Big Bend Tunnel on de C. & O. road
Gonna cause de death of me,
Lawd, Lawd, gonna cause de death of me."

ii

John Henry, he had a woman,
Her name was Mary Magdalene,
She would go to de tunnel and sing for John,
Jes' to hear John Henry's hammer ring,
Lawd, Lawd, jes' to hear John Henry's hammer ring.

iii

John Henry had a li'l woman,
Her name was Lucy Ann,
John Henry took sick an' had to go to bed,
Lucy Ann drove steel like a man,
Lawd, Lawd, Lucy Ann drove steel like a man.

iv

Cap'n says to John Henry,
"Gonna bring me a steam drill 'round,
Gonna take dat steam drill out on de job,
Gonna whop dat steel on down,
Lawd, Lawd, gonna whop dat steel on down."

[1] Reprinted from *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (Macmillan, 1934) by John A. and Alan Lomax. By permission of the Republic National Bank of Dallas, Independent Executor of the Estate of John A. Lomax, Deceased.

[2] The syllables "uh-huh" and "oh, yeah" are to be repeated in each stanza.

v

John Henry tol' his cap'n,
Lightnin' was in his eye:
"Cap'n, bet yo las' red cent on me,
Fo' I'll beat it to de bottom or I'll die,
Lawd, Lawd, I'll beat it to de bottom or I'll die."

vi

Sun shine hot an' burnin',
Wer'n't no breeze a-tall,
Sweat ran down like water down a hill,
Dat day John Henry let his hammer fall,
Lawd, Lawd, dat day John Henry let his hammer fall.

vii

John Henry went to de tunnel,
An' dey put him in de lead to drive;
De rock so tall an' John Henry so small,
Dat he lied down his hammer an' he cried,
Lawd, Lawd, dat he lied down his hammer an' he cried.

viii

John Henry started on de right hand,
De steam drill started on de lef'—
"Before I'd let dis steam drill beat me down,
I'd hammer my fool self to death,
Lawd, Lawd, I'd hammer my fool self to death."

ix

White man tol' John Henry,
"Nigger, damn yo' soul,
You might beat dis steam an' drill of mine,
When de rocks in dis mountain turn to gol',
Lawd, Lawd, when de rocks in dis mountain turn to gol'."

x

John Henry said to his shaker,
"Nigger, why don' you sing?
I'm throwin' twelve poun's from my hips on down,
Jes' listen to de col' steel ring,
Lawd, Lawd, jes' listen to de col' steel ring."

xi

Oh, de captain said to John Henry,
"I b'lieve this mountain's sinkin' in."
John Henry said to his captain, oh my!
"Ain' nothin' but my hammer suckin' win',
Lawd, Lawd, ain' nothin' but my hammer suckin' win'."

xii

John Henry tol' his shaker,
"Shaker, you better pray,
For, if I miss dis six-foot steel,
Tomorrow'll be yo' buryin' day,
Lawd, Lawd, tomorrow'll be yo' buryin' day."

xiii

John Henry tol' his captain,
"Looka younder what I see—
Yo' drill's done broke an' yo' hole's done choke,
An' you cain' drive steel like me,
Lawd, Lawd, an' you cain' drive steel like me."

xiv

De man dat invented de steam drill,
Thought he was mighty fine.
John Henry drove his fifteen feet,
An' de steam drill only made nine,
Lawd, Lawd, an' de steam drill only made nine.

xv

De hammer dat John Henry swung
It weighed over nine pound;
He broke a rib in his lef'-han' side,
An' his intrels fell on de groun',
Lawd, Lawd, an' his intrels fell on de groun'.

xvi

John Henry was hammerin' on de mountain,
An' his hammer was strikin' fire,
He drove so hard till he broke his pore heart,
An' he lied down his hammer an' he died,
Lawd, Lawd, he lied down his hammer an' he died.

xvii

All de womens in de Wes',
When dey heared of John Henry's death,
Stood in de rain, flagged de eas'-boun' train,
Goin' where John Henry fell dead,
Lawd, Lawd, goin' where John Henry fell dead.

xviii

John Henry's lil mother,
She was all dressed in red,
She jumped in bed, covered up her head,
Said she didn' know her son was dead,
Lawd, Lawd, didn' know her son was dead.

xix

John Henry had a pretty lil woman,
An' de dress she wo' was blue,
An' de las' words she said to him:
"John Henry, I've been true to you,
Lawd, Lawd, John Henry, I've been true to you."

1) John Henry has the stature of a folk hero and is the embodiment of qualities his creators admired. Just what are his

attributes? Do you know the Paul Bunyan stories? If you do, you will be able to make some comparisons between the lumberjacks' folk hero and John Henry, folk hero of Negro workers. Do you see how each represents the attitudes of the group that created him?

2) Do you see a conflict in the poem that is particularly representative of its time? What is the poem's significance in our cultural history?

3) Compare this poem in detail with the two just preceding. Is there incremental repetition in "John Henry"? Could stanzas be cut from the description of the contest without loss? Is the structure comparable to that of "Sir Patrick Spence"? Is the narration objective?

4) Support, as fully as you can on the evidence of the poems themselves, the statement that "the ballad of 'John Henry' came into being through much the same process as 'Sir Patrick Spence' did."

5) Carefully consider and compare the concluding portions of the three poems. What effect do they have in common? Why is the irony in the last three stanzas of "Sir Patrick Spence" somewhat more intense than that in the last three stanzas of "John Henry"? Or compare the use made of John Henry's mother with the use made of Sisera's mother in "The Song of Deborah."

6) In your opinion, is there as good reason to read "John Henry" in college classes as there is to read "Sir Patrick Spence," a ballad which has been familiar to generations of college students? If you would like to read other American folk ballads, you might take a look at "Frankie and Johnny," "Jesse James," or "Casey Jones." Good and easily available collections of American folk literature are *A Treasury of American Folklore,* edited by B. A. Botkin; *The American Songbag,* edited by Carl Sandburg; and *American Ballads and Folk Songs,* edited by John A. and Alan Lomax.

Suggestions for Papers: (a) Try putting the ballad of John Henry into an effective prose narrative. If you feel the need of additional material, consult Guy B. Johnson's *John Henry* (Chapel Hill, 1929). (b) Question 6 following "John Henry" will suggest a number of subjects for papers.

XVIII

The Folk Ballad and the Literary Ballad

THE DAEMON LOVER

i

"O where have you been, my long, long love,
This long seven years and mair?"
"O I'm come to seek my former vows
Ye granted me before."

ii

"O hold your tongue of your former vows,
For they will breed sad strife;
O hold your tongue of your former vows,
For I am become a wife."

iii

He turned him right and round about,
And the tear blinded his ee:
"I wad never hae trodden on Irish ground,
If it had not been for thee.

iv

"I might hae had a king's daughter,
Far, far beyond the sea;
I might have had a king's daughter,
Had it not been for love o thee."

v

"If ye might have had a king's daughter,
Yer sel ye had to blame;
Ye might have taken the king's daughter,
For ye kend that I was nane.

vi

"If I was to leave my husband dear,
And my two babes also,
O what have you to take me to,
If with you I should go?"

vii

"I hae seven ships upon the sea—
The eighth brought me to land—
With four-and-twenty bold mariners,
And music on every hand."

viii

She has taken up her two little babes,
Kissd them baith cheek and chin:
"O fair ye weel, my ain two babes,
For I'll never see you again."

ix

She set her foot upon the ship,
No mariners could she behold;
But the sails were o the taffetie,
And the masts o the beaten gold.

x

She had not sailed a league, a league,
A league but barely three,
When dismal grew his countenance,
And drumlie grew his ee.

xi

They had not sailed a league, a league,
A league but barely three,
Until she espied his cloven foot,
And she wept right bitterlie.

xii

"O hold your tongue of your weeping," says he,
"Of your weeping now let me be;
I will shew you how the lilies grow
On the banks of Italy."

xiii

"O what hills are yon, yon pleasant hills,
That the sun shines sweetly on?"
"O yon are the hills of heaven," he said,
"Where you will never win."

xiv

"O whaten a mountain is yon," she said,
"All so dreary wi frost and snow?"
"O yon is the mountain of hell," he cried,
"Where you and I will go."

xv

He strack the tap-mast wi his hand,
The fore-mast wi his knee,
And he brake that gallant ship in twain,
And sank her in the sea.

1) The diction of this ballad needs little explanation; perhaps you need to be told that "drumlie" in stanza 10 means "gloomy." Note how the use of the present perfect tense in stanza 8 speeds the narrative. It is dramatically right even if it

is inconsistent with the past tense in the next stanza. What characteristics of ballad style has "The Daemon Lover" in common with "Sir Patrick Spence"? Compare the ballads in detail.

2) Some versions of this ballad differ markedly from the version here printed. One of them, thirty-two stanzas long, had this for a title when it was printed as a broadside:

> *A Warning for Married Women, being an example of Mrs Jane Reynolds (a West-country woman), born near Plymouth, who, having plighted her troth to a Seaman, was afterwards married to a Carpenter, and at last carried away by a Spirit, the manner how shall presently be recited. To a West-country tune called "The Fair Maid of Bristol," "Bateman," or "John True."*

The spirit-lover is named:

> *"James Harris is my name," quoth he,*
> *"Whom thou didst love so dear,*
> *And I have traveld for thy sake*
> *At least this seven year."*

He has, as in our ballad, seven ships upon the sea, and a beautiful ship to carry his love away in. But we are told only that

> *And so together away they went*
> *From off the English shore,*
> *And since that time, the woman-kind*
> *Was never seen no more.*

The last stanzas record the grief and end of the bereaved husband:

> *And in this sad distracted case*
> *He hangd himself for woe*
> *Upon a tree near to the place;*
> *The truth of all is so.*

3) It may be that the title of the ballad quoted above records the incident in which the story in our ballad had its inception.

If this be true, then our ballad is a reworking of the story, and the result of a more conscious art than that of the broadside ballad. Do you see that the first stanzas of our ballad are rather homely and realistic? Consider, for instance, stanza 2 or stanza 5. Are the concluding stanzas of our ballad designed merely to heighten the interest of the story—perhaps to make it sensational?

4) Assuming that the broadside ballad does really have the clear connection with an actual incident it purports to have, and that our ballad is later, what exactly is the effect of the changes made in our ballad? What do you suppose the motive for them to be? Does the transformation of James Harris to the devil have moral implications? Do you suspect an allegorical intent in our ballad?

5) Consider the advantages of the ballad form for the story. Could this story have been as effectively presented in prose? Do you see that the ballad, as used here or in "Sir Patrick Spence," is as much a dramatic form as it is a narrative form?

THOMAS RYMER AND THE QUEEN OF ELFLAND

i

True Thomas lay oer yond grassy bank,
And he beheld a ladie gay,
A ladie that was brisk and bold,
Come riding oer the fernie brae.

ii

Her skirt was of the grass-green silk,
Her mantel of the velvet fine,
At ilka tett of her horse's mane
Hung fifty silver bells and nine.

iii

True Thomas he took off his hat,
And bowed him low down till his knee:

"All hail, thou mighty Queen of Heaven!
For your peer on earth I never did see."

iv

"O no, O no, True Thomas," she says,
"That name does not belong to me;
I am but the queen of fair Elfland,
And I'm come here for to visit thee.

["Harp and carp, Thomas," she said,
"Harp and carp along wi' me:
And if ye dare to kiss my lips,
Sure of your body I will be."

"Betide me weal, betide me woe,
That weird shall never danton me."
Syne he has kissed her rosy lips,
All underneath the Eildon Tree.]

v

"But you maun go wi me now, Thomas,
True Thomas, ye maun go wi me,
For you maun serve me seven years,
Thro weel or wae as may chance to be."

vi

She turned about her milk-white steed,
And took True Thomas up behind,
And aye wheneer her bridle rang,
The steed flew swifter than the wind.

vii

For forty days and forty nights
He wade thro red blude to the knee,
And he saw neither sun nor moon,
But heard the roaring of the sea.

viii

O they rade on, and further on,
Until they came to a garden green:
"Light down, light down, ye ladie free,
Some of that fruit let me pull to thee."

ix

"O no, O no, True Thomas," she says,
"That fruit maun not be touched by thee,
For a' the plagues that are in hell
Light on the fruit of this countrie.

x

"But I have a loaf here in my lap,
Likewise a bottle of claret wine,
And now ere we go farther on,
We'll rest a while, and ye may dine."

xi

When he had eaten and drunk his fill,
"Lay down your head upon my knee,"
The lady sayd, "ere we climb yon hill,
And I will show you fairlies three.

xii

"O see not ye yon narrow road,
So thick beset wi thorns and briars?
That is the path of righteousness,
Tho after it but few enquires.

xiii

"And see not ye that braid braid road,
That lies across yon lillie leven?
That is the path of wickedness,
Tho some call it the road to heaven.

xiv

"And see not ye that bonnie road,
Which winds about the fernie brae?
That is the road to fair Elfland,
Where you and I this night maun gae.

xv

"But Thomas, ye maun hold your tongue,
Whatever you may hear or see,
For gin ae word you should chance to speak,
You will neer get back to your ain countrie."

xvi

He has gotten a coat of the even cloth,
And a pair of shoes of velvet green,
And till seven years were past and gone
True Thomas on earth was never seen.

1) This ballad is somehow connected with a historical person, Thomas of Erceldoune, known as Thomas the Rhymer, a prophet who lived in the thirteenth century. His power as a seer may be supposed to arise from the experience the ballad records. The ballad may have had the same source as a fifteenth-century poem about him. The two stanzas in brackets, following stanza 4, come from another version of the ballad, and are here included to make the narrative a bit clearer. The expression "harp and carp" seems to mean "sing with a harp." In stanza 2, "ilka tett" means "each lock"; "fairlies," in 11, means "wonders"; the "lillie leven" in 13 is a lawn covered with lilies.

2) Certain interesting portions of fairy lore are incorporated in this ballad. The elf queen is not a diminutive creature; and, although she is a being of great beauty—so beautiful that Thomas mistakes her for the Virgin Mary—she is not entirely beneficent. Ordinarily encounters with elves and fairies were dangerous; he who came into the power of one of them might

lose his hold on the human world. In another version of the ballad, the elf queen says

Ilka seven years, Thomas,
We pay our teindings [tithes] unto hell,
And ye're sae leesome and sae strang
That I fear, Thomas, it will be yeresell.

Because Thomas has kissed the elf queen, she has power over him for seven years, but she considerately provides food of this earth (stanza 10). Had Thomas eaten the food of fairyland he could never have returned. The ballad suggests the quality of the non-human world in which its scene is laid. Note particularly the remarkable seventh stanza. And note that the three fairlies are the road to heaven, the road to hell, *and* the road to elfland.

3) Compare the general structure of this ballad with that of "Sir Patrick Spence" and with that of "The Daemon Lover." Is this ballad as dramatic as they are? Consider such transitional lines as "O they rade on and further on" and "When he had eaten and drunk his fill." Can you parallel them with lines from either of our other old ballads?

4) Does this ballad seem to you like either of the other two old ballads in spirit and tone? Is it, by the way, in the ballad stanza?

5) Which of our three old ballads demands the greatest contribution from the reader and the most activity on his part? Do you find that you enjoy most when you are most active?

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

John Keats (1795–1821)

O what can ail thee Knight at arms
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has withered from the Lake
And no birds sing!

O what can ail thee Knight at arms
So haggard, and so woe begone?
The Squirrel's granary is full
And the harvest's done.

I see a lilly on thy brow
With anguish moist and fever dew,
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
Fast withereth too—

I met a Lady in the Meads
Full beautiful, a faery's child
Her hair was long, her foot was light
And her eyes were wild—

I made a Garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant Zone
She look'd at me as she did love
And made sweet moan—

I set her on my pacing steed—
And nothing else saw all day long
For sidelong would she bend and sing
A faery's song—

She found me roots of relish sweet
And honey wild and manna dew
And sure in language strange she said
I love thee true—

She took me to her elfin grot
And there she wept and sigh'd full sore,
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
With Kisses four.

And there she lulled me asleep
And there I dream'd Ah Woe betide!

The latest dream I ever dreamt
On the cold hill side

I saw pale Kings and Princes too
Pale warriors death pale were they all
They cried La belle dame sans merci
Thee hath in thrall.

I saw their starv'd lips in the gloam
With horrid warning gaped wide
And I awoke, and found me here
On the cold hill's side

And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering;
Though the sedge is wither'd from the Lake
And no birds sing—

1) This poem may be called a "literary ballad" to distinguish it from a "folk ballad." A literary ballad is a ballad by a single poet which has some of the characteristics of the old ballads and is intended to remind us of them. Compare this ballad in detail with "Sir Patrick Spence," and point out how the two ballads are alike.

2) Consider particularly Keats's use of the ballad stanza. What modification has he made in it, and what effect does he gain?

3) Keats took his title from an old French poem by Alain Chartier, which he knew in translation. This title seems to have haunted Keats's imagination; a character in "The Eve of St. Agnes" sings a song called by it. Consider how the poem fulfills the suggestions of the title.

4) Keats's ballad has two versions—an accidental resemblance to the old ballads. The one used here is a manuscript version; when Keats printed the poem he made a number of changes. Some of the changes were in single words, but "Knight at arms" becomes "wretched wight" in both of the first two stanzas, and the eighth and ninth stanzas become:

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she gaz'd and sighed deep,
And there I shut her wild sad eyes—
So kiss'd to sleep.

And there we slumber'd on the moss,
And there I dream'd, ah woe betide,
The latest dream I ever dream'd
On the cold hill side.

Does it seem to you that the change is for the better?

5) The general resemblance between "Thomas Rymer and the Queen of Elfland" and "La Belle Dame sans Merci" hardly needs pointing out. Indeed, the old ballad helps us interpret Keats's poem, for, having read it, we are not likely to associate Keats's word "faery" with the fairies of modern stories for children—like the elf queen, the Lady in the Meads is neither diminutive nor beneficent. Both Thomas and the knight at arms kiss the beings they encounter, and what is involved in the act is clear from the old ballad. Thomas does not eat the food of elfland and so may eventually return to this world; the knight at arms, having eaten of the food of fairyland, can never, we may assume, throw off the spell. But, close as the resemblance is, would you say that Keats is merely writing an imitation of the folk ballads, using traditional material? Are you willing to say that the chief difference between "La Belle Dame sans Merci" and such a ballad as "Thomas Rymer" is that Keats's art is more disciplined and his rhythm more subtle than that of the old ballad makers?

6) How important is literary allusion and reminiscence to this poem? May it be considered, in meter and structure as well as matter, a complex sort of literary allusion? (You may wish to look back at Section X.)

7) Walter Pater called "La Belle Dame sans Merci" an example of "aesthetic poetry"; others have called it "pure poetry." Pater meant that the ballad evokes only our literary experience and that it is, therefore, removed from life. "Pure poetry" ap-

parently means—to those who use the term—poetry that has its importance quite apart from our ordinary moral and intellectual concerns. Do you find the poem without implications that touch the ordinary concerns of men?

8) It may well be that all Keats consciously intended in writing the poem was to give a fairy story a superb form—we cannot know, and we can only infer his intention in our reading of the ballad. Some of us, in our reading, are likely to find that the poem does have a connection with human conduct. It may recall to us certain similar stories: Odysseus and his seven-year stay on Calypso's island perhaps, or Tannhäuser and his seven years in Venusberg. Do you think of others? Moreover, we may note the insistence on the pallor of the knight at arms and the thralls of La Belle Dame—her service makes them wraith-like. And the knight at arms loiters alone, separate from humanity, where no birds sing. It is not hard to see the knight at arms as the man who has cultivated one set of sensibilities—the imagery suggests the aesthetic sensibilities—at the expense of his other faculties *and* his human sympathy. The horror in the poem—there is horror in it, is there not?—is the solitude of the knight at arms. Obviously, if one looks at the poem in this fashion, a good many moral considerations come in. But you need not agree with the interpretation suggested here. If you care to attack it, your attack will lead you to consider the poem with special care. You may come out with an interpretation of your own; or you may conclude that you like best to think of the poem as a fairy story made effective by all Keats's skill.

9) Your experience with poetry thus far has shown you that any two adequate readers will not have precisely the same experience with a poem, and the discussion above is intended to suggest that in this ballad there is room for considerable divergence. Admitting the necessity of divergent reaction and interpretation, you still have two questions to ask yourselves. The first is this: Is my reading of the poem so peculiar to my temperament or special background of experience that I cannot expect others to have an understanding of the poem like mine? The other question you must ask in all humility: Does my in-

terpretation arise from my ignorance or my carelessness? If these two questions have been honestly asked and answered, you will usually find, even in such a poem as "La Belle Dame sans Merci," that the common ground of experience you share with others is more important than your private interpretation. Yet you may quite properly be pleased to have a private interpretation, too.

XIX

Character in Poems

I

Two Poems on Cardinal Wolsey

A great character—whether a historical personage or the creation of an artist—represents some permanent quality in human nature and has a persistent life in literature. But such characters are continually reinterpreted for successive generations, sometimes by critics, sometimes in new treatments by poets. The reinterpretations are often most significant for what they tell us about the times in which they were written.

Our two treatments of Cardinal Wolsey are passages from, first, a play, and second, a long poem. But each has a unity of its own, and we can consider it as a separate poem. Before you read them, read an account of Wolsey's career in a history of England (John Richard Green's account in *A Short History of the English People* is vivid). The passage from *King Henry the Eighth* is ascribed to John Fletcher (1579–1625), although the play is partly by Shakespeare and included in his works. The passage comes near the end of Act III; to this point in the play, Wolsey is a leading character. Dr. Johnson's "The Vanity of Human Wishes" is a long DIDACTIC poem; in it Wolsey is one of the several examples of pride and its inevitable fall.

From KING HENRY THE EIGHTH

Farewell! a long farewell, to all my greatness!
This is the state of man: to-day he puts forth
The tender leaves of hopes; to-morrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him;
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost;
And, when he thinks, good easy man, full surely

His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,
And then he falls, as I do. I have ventur'd,
Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
This many summers in a sea of glory,
But far beyond my depth: my high-blown pride
At length broke under me, and now has left me,
Weary and old with service, to the mercy
Of a rude stream, that must forever hide me.
Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye:
I feel my heart new open'd. O! how wretched
Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours!
There is, betwixt that smile we would aspire to,
That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,
More pangs and fears than wars or women have;
And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,
Never to hope again.

From THE VANITY OF HUMAN WISHES

Samuel Johnson (1709–1784)

In full-blown dignity, see Wolsey stand,
Law in his voice, and fortune in his hand:
To him the church, the realm, their pow'rs consign,
Thro' him the rays of regal bounty shine,
Still to new heights his restless wishes tow'r,
Claim leads to claim, and pow'r advances pow'r;
Till conquest unresisted ceas'd to please,
And rights submitted, left him none to seize.
At length his sov'reign frowns—the train of state
Mark the keen glance, and watch the sign to hate.
Where-e'er he turns he meets a stranger's eye,
His suppliants scorn him, and his followers fly;
At once is lost the pride of aweful state,
The golden canopy, the glitt'ring plate,
The regal palace, the luxurious board,
The liv'ried army, and the menial lord.
With age, with cares, with maladies oppress'd,

He seeks the refuge of monastic rest.
Grief aids disease, remember'd folly stings,
And his last sighs reproach the faith of kings.

1) In the first passage Wolsey is presented dramatically—the poet's success will depend upon his ability to speak in Wolsey's own character. The facts of Wolsey's career are already in the audience's possession, and the cardinal judges his life in retrospect. In your opinion, is the Wolsey here presented really a contrite man?

2) Discuss the two extended metaphors by which Wolsey represents his career. Which is the more generalized? Which applies more precisely to Wolsey? What are the suggestions in the simile "he falls like Lucifer"? In what poem earlier in this book have we encountered an allusion to the fall of Lucifer? Compare the use of the allusion there.

3) Our selection from "The Vanity of Human Wishes" is almost all that Johnson has to say in the poem about Wolsey. What assumptions is the poet making about his reader's background?

4) Perhaps you have wondered why Johnson chose to use Wolsey as one of his examples. Do you think he is trying to rival Fletcher? Certainly comparison between the Johnson passage and the treatment of Wolsey in the play is inevitable. Was the previous treatment in the play an advantage to Johnson? But are not the intentions of the two poets quite different? State in careful sentences what you believe to have been the intention of each. Do not these intentions involve quite different points of view?

5) Generations of readers have found this speech of Wolsey's moving. Are you much moved by Johnson's description of Wolsey's career? If you are not, does that mean that Johnson has failed so far as you are concerned?

6) Consider the appropriateness of blank verse for Wolsey's speech, and of the closed couplets for the Johnson passage.

7) Most of you, because you are used to the dramatic form and not much used to such poems as Johnson's, will like Wol-

sey's speech better than you do the passage from "The Vanity of Human Wishes." Perhaps you are right in your preference. But let us see what case we can make for the passage by Johnson. In the first place, it is from a masculine sort of poem, which makes its appeal primarily to the intellect and which asks us, not to feel for or with Wolsey, but to see his career as representative of the careers of ambitious men of too little conscience everywhere. Moreover, it is done with considerable skill. Such couplets as

> *Where-e'er he turns he meets a stranger's eye,*
> *His suppliants scorn him, and his followers fly;*

have an admirably concise vigor. The march of the couplets themselves suggests the inevitability of Wolsey's fall. The poem recalls to us our concrete knowledge of the facts of the cardinal's life and makes us see Wolsey stand and then fall. Perhaps in the word "see" we have a suggestion of its kind of success. We are asked to observe, not to feel.

8) Now write a short paragraph pointing out what you take to be the excellences of the passage from the play.

II

Two Poems on Ulysses

Our two poems are interpretations of the character of Ulysses, or, as Homer calls him, Odysseus—a figure who remains more fully alive in the imagination of mankind than any other in Greek literature. Many of you will remember that it was he who devised the stratagem of the wooden horse which led to the destruction of Troy. Homer tells us his subsequent history in the *Odyssey*. He incurred the wrath of Poseidon (Neptune) the sea-god and, though always a favorite of Athene, goddess of wisdom, endured all sorts of vicissitudes. Finally, after ten years of wandering, he returned alone to his native Ithaca, having lost all his men and ships, and found his wife, the wise Penelope, staving off a horde of suitors. Knowing that they would never admit his identity, he killed them all and, at the end of the

poem, resumed his rule of Ithaca. The chief characteristics of Ulysses as Homer presents him are fortitude, wisdom (or sometimes craftiness), curiosity, and a great love for his wife and native land. In Tennyson's "Ulysses" we are to think of Ulysses speaking some time after his return, in a period of his life that Homer does not record.

In the first of the three parts of Dante's *Divine Comedy,* the *Inferno,* we meet Ulysses, swathed in flame, in the circle of hell reserved for the evil counselors. Dante, as an Italian, uses the tradition that Roman civilization stemmed from Troy; to him, therefore, the Trojan horse was something other than a clever stratagem. But the inhabitants of Dante's hell have whatever dignity they had in this life; they are, indeed, essentially unchanged. On the insistence of Virgil, Dante's guide through the infernal regions, Ulysses tells the story of his last journey and death. The story is original with Dante; there is no suggestion for it in the Homeric account, except in the insatiable curiosity of the hero himself. The passage we use is *Inferno* XXVI, ll. 90–142, as translated by John Carlyle.

Tennyson knew the account Dante makes Ulysses give of his last journey. He probably remembered, too, that in the *Odyssey* Ulysses makes a visit to the afterworld and learns from the shade of the seer Tiresias that he will, when he has settled up the matter of the suitors and reestablished his rule in Ithaca, meet his death after a last journey.

From THE INFERNO

Dante Alighieri (1265–1321)

When I departed from Circe, who beyond a year detained me there near Gaeta, ere Aeneas thus had named it, neither fondness for my son, nor reverence for my aged father, nor the due love that should have cheered Penelope, could conquer in me the ardour that I had to gain experience of the world, and of human vice and worth; I put forth on the deep open sea, with but one ship, and with that small company, which had not deserted me.

Both the shores I saw as far as Spain, far as Morocco; and saw Sardinia and the other isles which that sea bathes round. I and my companions were old and tardy, when we came to that narrow pass, where Hercules assigned his landmarks to hinder man from venturing farther; on the right hand I left Seville; on the other, had already left Ceuta.

"O brothers!" I said, "who through a hundred thousand dangers have reached the West, deny not, to this brief vigil of your senses that remains, experience of the unpeopled world behind the Sun. Consider your origin: ye were not formed to live like brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge." With this brief speech I made my companions so eager for the voyage, that I could hardly then have checked them; and, turning the poop towards morning, we of our oars made wings for the foolish flight, always gaining on the left.

Night already saw the other pole, with all its stars; and ours so low, that it rose not from the ocean floor. Five times the light beneath the Moon had been rekindled and quenched as oft, since we had entered on the arduous passage, when there appeared to us a Mountain, dim with distance; and to me it seemed the highest I had ever seen. We joyed, and soon our joy was turned to grief: for a tempest rose from the new land, and struck the forepart of our ship. Three times it made her whirl round with all the waters; at the fourth, made the poop rise up and prow go down, as pleased Another, till the sea closed above us.

ULYSSES[1]

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892)

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.

[1] From *The Works of Tennyson.* Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known: cities of men,
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains: but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.
This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,

When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.
There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

1) Possibly the selection from Dante needs a little explanation. Ulysses says that when he came to the Strait of Gibraltar, marked by the Pillars of Hercules—for Homer the westward limit of the civilized world—he persuaded his men to sail westward (the poop is the after section of the ship) and southward (always gaining on the left). They crossed the equator and saw the southern stars and, finally, the Mount of Purgatory, which

Dante locates in the Southern Hemisphere. In the last sentence, "as pleased Another" means "as pleased God."

2) This question is for those of you who have read the *Odyssey*. Both Dante and Tennyson depart from the account of Ulysses' career in Homer. But do they depart from the character as Homer represents it? Probably your answer to this question will not be an unqualified one.

3) Define as precisely as you can the relationship between Tennyson's poem and Dante's. Just how is Tennyson indebted to Dante? Remember that such indebtedness does not make "Ulysses" the less important; a poet's literary experience is as legitimate material for his poetry as any other sort of experience.

4) Since we must read the passage from the *Inferno* in translation, our comparison of the two poems must be tentative. John Carlyle's prose reproduces the directness and vigor of Dante; it does not, of course, reproduce the music of his TERZA RIMA. But even in this limited kind of comparison, you can see that Dante's style is distinguished for its economy and Tennyson's for its elaborate development of idea and feeling. Find particular passages to compare.

5) These are dramatic poems—in each we hear Ulysses speak and understand him as we infer his character from his words. Such poems as Tennyson's are called DRAMATIC MONOLOGUES—we read some of Browning's in the next section. How does the *manner* in which each Ulysses speaks contribute to our understanding of his character? Which Ulysses has for you the greater verisimilitude?

6) A great character in literature—Hamlet or Huck Finn, for instance—has two kinds of interest for us. We are interested in the character as he is an individual, and we are interested in him as he is representative, as he embodies interests and attitudes common to humanity. Discuss these interests in the two poems. Is the representative quality of the character greater in one than in the other?

7) In Tennyson's time, new developments in industry and new ideas in science and religion brought with them many prob-

lems and made the age a period of intellectual distress. We are the inheritors of the same problems and the same distress. Do you think that Tennyson's Ulysses seems as much a Victorian as a Homeric Greek? Discuss, with reference to particular passages.

8) "Ulysses" interests us for the complex attitude toward life there presented. In order that you may be sure you comprehend this attitude fully, write an interpretative account of the poem in as good prose as you can. Make clear the implications of such lines as

> *I am a part of all that I have met;*
> *Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'*
> *Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades*
> *For ever and for ever when I move.*

9) The blank verse in "Ulysses" is worth particular consideration. Notice the way in which the metrical unit of the five-stress line is played against the syntax. Comment on the effect of the full stops within the line. Pick out a passage and mark the stresses as you read it. What is the proportion of run-on lines in the passage you chose to mark?

10) Your instructor may wish you to compare with "Ulysses" two poems written by contemporaries of Tennyson that have to do with old age and aspiration: Browning's "Rabbi Ben Ezra" and Longfellow's "Morituri Salutamus." It would be an interesting exercise. And you would enjoy, too, Edwin Arlington Robinson's "Mr. Flood's Party"—a poem which represents a quite different aspect of old age.

Suggestions for Papers: (a) Write a comparative discussion of Dante's Ulysses and Tennyson's Ulysses and let the comparison lead into a consideration of the human traits they represent. (b) Take question 10 following "Ulysses" as a starting point for a comparative paper.

XX

A Browning Group

Here is a group of poems by a single poet; reading one will help you read another. They are dramatic poems; Robert Browning, who is distinguished for this sort of poetry, creates a character and makes him speak. The activity such poetry demands on the reader's part makes it particularly interesting. The "story" is, at least in part, implied, not explicit; and we must infer the motives and attitudes of the speaker. We have seen that the reading of any good poem involves a collaboration of poet and reader; in these poems you will be particularly conscious of your contribution, although perhaps it is not greater than it has been in some of the other poems we have read. We shall start with a pair of short, closely related poems.

I

MEETING AT NIGHT

Robert Browning (1812–1889)

The gray sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,

And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

PARTING AT MORNING

Round the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim:
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me.

1) Who is speaking in "Meeting at Night"? Does "Parting at Morning" have the same speaker? (People have differed on this matter; the antecedent of "him" in the third line of "Parting at Morning" has been taken to be the lover by some readers. Does this reading seem likely to you? Why or why not?)

2) What sort of story do you infer? Do you see that the poems hardly more than suggest a story? You ought not to be surprised, therefore, if several members of the class have differing notions about the story.

3) What is meant by "the need of a world of men for me"? Does it seem to you that much of the particular significance of the poems inheres in this line?

MY LAST DUCHESS

Ferrara

Robert Browning

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)

And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 't was not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
"Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
"Must never hope to reproduce the faint
"Half-flush that dies along her throat": such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 't was all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
"Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
"Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet

The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

1) If, as is likely, you are already familiar with this poem, see whether a reconsideration of it yields anything new for your experience with it. Ferrara is a city in Italy, the scene of the poem; the Duke is a nobleman of sixteenth-century Italy, a period in which Browning was greatly interested. Who is the Duke's auditor? On what occasion is the Duke speaking?

2) What characteristics in the Duke—in particular what paradoxical characteristics—interest the poet especially?

3) Pick out for discussion several passages in the poem in which the Duke reveals his nature. For instance, how do you take the following lines?

Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)

Has the Duke no skill in speech? Or again, what is the effect of turning the attention to the statue in the concluding lines of the poem? The Duke's every sentence needs consideration.

4) Do you see that the effect of this poem depends upon a special sort of irony: a contrast between the way in which the reader (partly through inference) understands and judges what the Duke says and the apparent meaning of his words? There is, too, another contrast: between the reader's judgment of the Duke and the Duke's own estimate of his character and motives. Do you need to review the section on irony?

5) Write, in explicit prose narrative, an account of the Duchess's life with her husband, so far as it may be inferred from the poem.

II

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH

Rome, 15—

Robert Browning

Vanity, saith the preacher, vanity!
Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?
Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not! Well—
She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!
What's done is done, and she is dead beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.
Life, how and what is it? As here I lie
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" Peace, peace seems all.
Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace;
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know:
—Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
He graced his carrion with, God curse the same!
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence
One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
And up into the aery dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk:
And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
With those nine columns round me, two and two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands:
Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse.

—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,
Put me where I may look at him! True peach,
Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!
Draw close: that conflagration of my church
—What then? So much was saved if aught were missed!
My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig
The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,
Drop water gently till the surface sink,
And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not, I! . . .
Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft,
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli,*
Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst!
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black—
'T was ever antique-black I meant! How else
Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath?
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
And Moses with the tables . . . but I know
Ye mark me not! What do they whisper thee,
Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at!

Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then!
'T is jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve.
My bath must needs be left behind, alas!
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs?
—That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
Tully, my masters? Ulpian serves his need!
And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,
And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke!
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,
And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work:
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, popes, cardinals and priests,
Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
—Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best!
Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope
My villas! Will ye ever eat my heart?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,

They glitter like your mother's for my soul,
Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave me, there!
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it! Stone—
Gritstone, a-crumble! Clammy squares which sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world!
Well, go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row: and, going, turn your backs
—Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for peace,
That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was!

1) Like "My Last Duchess" this poem reflects Browning's interest in the Italian Renaissance, and the Bishop, like the Duke, is intended to be in some respects typical. Most of you, however, will have little basis for a judgment of the accuracy with which Browning represents the paradoxical elements in Renaissance life. But there is good reason to suppose that the poem offers an insight into the period: Ruskin, who had long studied the Renaissance, says, "I know of no other piece of modern English, prose or poetry, in which there is so much told, as in these lines, of the Renaissance spirit,—its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, and of good Latin." You will do well to return to this passage after you have considered the poem, to see what lines in particular represent the traits Ruskin lists.

2) You will need to use your dictionaries often in reading

this poem. And here are two bits of explanation: An "olive-frail" (line 41) is a sort of basket. "Elucescebat" (line 99) means "he was famous." The Bishop does not consider the word good Latin. Note his great delight in the Latin of Cicero (Tully) in lines 76–79. Rabelais had a similar feeling about good Latin; Renaissance men took a sort of sensuous pleasure in it.

3) This poem is comparable in method to "My Last Duchess"; but the Bishop in his partial delirium reveals himself more fully than the Duke does, for the Duke is speaking as guardedly as he cares to. Where are clear indications of the Bishop's delirium?

4) How does the opening line, which is a quotation from Ecclesiastes, a book in the Old Testament, suggest a theme for the poem? The Bishop, on his deathbed, has gathered his sons about him ("nephew" was not uncommon as a polite term for the son of an ecclesiastic) to give directions for his tomb. How much do we know of his life by line 10?

5) What disparate elements in the Renaissance character are suggested by lines 68–84?

6) Ruskin, in the sentence quoted above, does not include sincere religious feeling in his list of the characteristics of the Renaissance spirit. Is it possible, do you think, that the Bishop, however unbecoming an ecclesiastic some of his tastes and desires may be, is a sincerely religious man? We have observed in "My Last Duchess" the paradoxical combination of the Duke's real love of art and his cold cruelty. Is the Bishop less sincere when he speaks of "the blessed mutter of the mass" than he is when he speaks of precious stones or of his rivalry with Gandolf?

7) Question 6 brings us to a general consideration in the study of literature. Is it not true that the characters in the simpler sorts of fiction and drama are more consistent than people usually are? Are we not likely to apply to a character in literature standards which come from the conventions of the literature we know best? Is the Bishop, for instance, less consistent than people are in life?

8) A famous interpreter of Browning says of the Bishop: "Of

course his mind is wandering, or he would not speak with such shameless cynicism." Can you accept this statement? Is the Bishop cynical?

9) Write a brief account of the Bishop's character as you see it.

Suggestions for Papers: (a) Take question 5 following "My Last Duchess" for extended treatment. (b) Let your instructor suggest two or three more of Browning's dramatic monologues for you to read, and write a paper defining the dramatic monologue as Browning uses it. Assume a reader unfamiliar with Browning's work and illustrate generously. (c) Assuming a reader who has read both poems, discuss Tennyson's "Ulysses" and "My Last Duchess" (or "The Bishop Orders His Tomb") as examples of dramatic monologues, making clear the difference in technique.

XXI

Lyrics

The word LYRIC is one of the least precise of literary terms. It is often used to designate poems which are not primarily narrative or EPIC or something else, and to cover poems so disparate that no strictly defined term could describe them. Nor can one maintain an absolute distinction between narrative and lyric poetry, or between dramatic and lyric poetry; a song-like poem may tell a story, and a lyric may be dramatic so far as it implies the character and situation of him who makes or sings the song. Yet the derivation of the word—lyric originally meant a poem to be sung with the lyre—suggests the way to use it. And we do need a word for poems which have a song-like quality and in which the expression *seems* unpremeditated and simple. These will have for their subject matter, of course, whatever men sing about: religious emotion, love, grief, past happiness, desire, aspiration.

The poems in this and the following section we call lyrics because they have a song-like quality—we instinctively recognize them as songs. They are not primarily reflective; but that does not mean that they are all feeling and no thought. A religious lyric, for instance, may arise from thought even if the thought appears only as affirmation.

We are concerned in this section with poems which illustrate something of the range of the lyric. The poems will require little analysis; they are primarily lyric and are apprehended immediately. Lyrics in which the emotion is at all complex, or which for other reasons need any considerable discussion, are reserved for the next section.

Song from TWELFTH NIGHT

William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

O mistress mine, where are you roaming?
O, stay and hear; your true love's coming,
That can sing both high and low.
Trip no further, pretty sweeting,
Journeys end in lovers meeting—
Every wise man's son doth know.

What is love? 'tis not hereafter.
Present love hath present laughter;
What's to come is still unsure.
In delay there lies no plenty;
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty—
Youth's a stuff will not endure.

Song from TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA

William Shakespeare

Who is Silvia? what is she?
That all our swains commend her?
Holy, fair, and wise is she;
The heaven such grace did lend her,
That she might admirèd be.

Is she kind as she is fair?
For beauty lives with kindness:
Love doth to her eyes repair,
To help him of his blindness;
And being help'd, inhabits there.

Then to Silvia let us sing,
That Silvia is excelling;
She excels each mortal thing
Upon the dull earth dwelling;
To her let us garlands bring.

1) Perhaps you need to be told that in "Who is Silvia?" "Love" in line 8 means Cupid—certainly the poems need no other explanation. They are examples of the ability that Shakespeare and other Elizabethan lyric writers had to imply a tune in their verses—an ability in which perhaps no later English poet save Burns has rivaled them. If you do not know Schubert's setting for "Who is Silvia?" try to hear it.

2) "O mistress mine" has a familiar theme; we shall read poems that treat it quite differently. And we have read Housman's "Loveliest of trees." Compare it with "O mistress mine" to mark how differently the same theme may be treated in two poems.

3) How much of the effect of these poems depends upon rhythm and rhyme? Note carefully the rhyming patterns of both poems. And turn back to the song from *Cymbeline* in Section XIII to mark how different its rhythmical effect is. See if you can describe the connection between rhythm and attitude in these poems.

SONG

Ben Jonson (1572–1637)

Still to be neat, still to be drest,
As you were going to a feast;
Still to be powdered, still perfumed:
Lady, it is to be presumed,
Though art's hid causes are not found,
All is not sweet, all is not sound.

Give me a look, give me a face,
That makes simplicity a grace;
Robes loosely flowing, hair as free:
Such sweet neglect more taketh me
Than all the adulteries of 'art:
They strike mine eyes, but not my heart.

HYMN TO DIANA

Ben Jonson

Queen and huntress, chaste and fair,
Now the sun is laid to sleep,
Seated in thy silver chair,
State in wonted manner keep:
Hesperus entreats thy light,
Goddess excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade
Dare itself to interpose;
Cynthia's shining orb was made
Heaven to clear when day did close:
Bless us then with wishèd sight,
Goddess excellently bright.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart,
And thy crystal-shining quiver;
Give unto the flying hart
Space to breathe, how short soever:
Thou that mak'st a day of night—
Goddess excellently bright.

1) Although the verse of the "Song" has Jonson's characteristic precision and grace, the idea and attitude might have been expressed at any time—the poem is, in fact, a translation of a poem in Latin. Compare Herrick's "Delight in Disorder," Section XIII. The relationship of the two poems will be clear to you, but consider the difference in effect of Jonson's lyrical verse and Herrick's representational rhythm.

2) Diana, virgin goddess of the moon and the chase, was a favorite mythological figure in Elizabethan literature. From one point of view, Jonson's "Hymn to Diana" may be considered an extended and graceful literary allusion, recalling most of the familiar attributes of Diana. (Perhaps you should look up Diana in Gayley's *Classic Myths in English Literature and Art.*) In-

terpret, however, the second stanza, and comment on Jonson's success in fusing science and MYTH.

3) We do not believe in Diana, nor did the Elizabethans. Yet certainly the poem would fail were there not some imaginative acceptance of Diana as a goddess while we read it. How far does the success of the poem depend upon our natural tendency to personify the things of nature? Is it possible that certain religious habits of mind of the Christian reader carry over in the reading of "Hymn to Diana"? How important is the rhythm of the poem to its total effect? Does the rhythm have the effect of INCANTATION? Consider the effect of the refrain.

4) Compare the selections from Milton and Blake in Section IX with this poem. The personification of Diana in the "Hymn to Diana" was established in myth centuries before Jonson used it. Does it, therefore, have an immediacy of effect lacking in the personifications in the selections from Milton and Blake? Consider, too, the effect of the blank verse in these selections, and compare Jonson's lyrical stanzas.

SONG

John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester (1648–1680)

Absent from thee I languish still,
Then ask me not, when I return?
The straying fool 'twill plainly kill
To wish all day, all night to mourn.

Dear, from thine arms then let me fly,
That my fantastic mind may prove
The torments it deserves to try,
That tears my fixed heart from my love.

When, wearied with a world of woe,
To thy safe bosom I retire,
Where love and peace and honour flow,
May I contented there expire.

Lest once more wandering from that heaven
I fall on some base heart unblessed,
Faithless to thee, false, unforgiven,
And lose my everlasting rest.

1) This is one of several poems Rochester addressed to his wife. Would that fact be clear to the reader from the poem itself? Consider the metaphors of the last stanza. What is the nature of the love they represent?

2) But is not the poem organized about those metaphors? Are they not prepared for in the first stanzas? Mark the skillful way in which Rochester uses the stanza, and how gracefully each stanza is a unit in the development of the whole. Consider the coincidence of sentence and stanzaic structure.

ODE, WRITTEN IN THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR, 1746

William Collins (1721–1759)

How sleep the Brave, who sink to Rest,
By all their Country's Wishes blest!
When Spring, with dewy Fingers cold,
Returns to deck their hallow'd Mold,
She there shall dress a sweeter Sod,
Than Fancy's Feet have ever trod.

By Fairy Hands their Knell is rung,
By Forms unseen their Dirge is sung;
There Honour comes, a Pilgrim grey,
To bless the Turf that wraps their Clay,
And Freedom shall a-while repair,
To dwell a weeping Hermit there!

1) Collins is careful to include a date in his title. What war was going on in 1746? Did it affect America? But does the poem for us depend in any way on its contemporary reference?

2) The poem represents allegorical figures attending the

graves of the brave—allegorical figures, it may be noted, without religious significance. Would human figures have been as effective—the wives and children of the slain, or the patriots of the time, for instance? Consider in your answer that the poem is very short. What attitude toward the dead do these figures suggest? Do you think the intention may be to lift the praise of these slain above time and circumstance, and to concentrate attention only on their sacrifice for their country? Are the allegorical figures then an effective means?

IN THE BLEAK MID-WINTER[1]

Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)

In the bleak mid-winter,
Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
Snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter,
Long ago.

Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him,
Nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away
When He comes to reign:
In the bleak mid-winter
A stable-place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty,
Jesus Christ.

Enough for Him, whom cherubim
Worship night and day,
A breastful of milk
And a mangerful of hay;

[1] From *The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti.* Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

Enough for Him, whom angels
  Fall down before,
The ox and ass and camel
  Which adore.

Angels and archangels
  May have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim
  Thronged the air;
But only His mother
  In her maiden bliss,
Worshipped the Beloved
  With a kiss.

What can I give Him,
  Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd,
  I would bring a lamb,
If I were a Wise Man,
  I would do my part—
Yet what I can I give Him,
  Give my heart.

1) This modern Christmas carol, intended primarily for children, has the directness of emotion of the old carols. The poet has given the Christian reader a song which seems the reader's own; indeed in many great lyrics, secular and religious, the poet is so much singing for the reader that the reader forgets the poet. But this is not to say that such lyrics are artless or spontaneous; "art is perfect," Longinus says, "just when it seems to be nature." Consider, in this poem, the graceful way in which Christian doctrine arises from the Nativity story. Note the impressive contrast of the images in the third stanza. You might mark the stresses throughout in order to see as well as hear the subtly various pattern of these lines and to realize how little use the conventional terms of metrics may be for some verse. Note, too,

how effective the contracted last line becomes in the last stanza. Compare Keats's "La Belle Dame sans Merci."

WHERE GO THE BOATS?[2]

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894)

Dark brown is the river,
Golden is the sand.
It flows along for ever,
With trees on either hand.

Green leaves a-floating,
Castles of the foam,
Boats of mine a-boating—
Where will all come home?

On goes the river
And out past the mill,
Away down the valley,
Away down the hill.

Away down the river,
A hundred miles or more,
Other little children
Shall bring my boats ashore.

1) This poem, from *A Child's Garden of Verses,* is a good example of the sort of singing stanzas that charm children fortunate enough to hear them. Are the rhythm and organization also representational? What gives the poem its flowing movement?

2) Adults as well as children are likely to find the verse pleasant. Is the poem anything more than pleasant verse for you? Does it have any implication?

[2] Reprinted from *The Complete Poems of Robert Louis Stevenson* by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

SONG

Oliver Goldsmith (1730–1774)

When lovely woman stoops to folly,
And finds too late that men betray,
What charm can soothe her melancholy,
What art can wash her guilt away?

The only art her guilt to cover,
To hide her shame from every eye,
To give repentance to her lover,
And wring his bosom—is to die.

THE BANKS O' DOON

Robert Burns (1759–1796)

Ye flowery banks o' bonnie Doon,
How can ye blume sae fair!
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae fu' o' care!

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonnie bird,
That sings upon the bough;
Thou minds me o' the happy days
When my fause luve was true.

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonnie bird,
That sings beside thy mate;
For sae I sat, and sae I sang,
And wistna o' my fate.

Aft hae I roved by bonnie Doon,
To see the woodbine twine;
And ilka bird sang o' its luve,
And sae did I o' mine.

Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose
Upon a morn in June;
And sae I flourish'd on the morn,
And sae was pu'd or' noon.

Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose
Upon its thorny tree;
But my fause luver staw my rose,
And left the thorn wi' me.

1) You may know Goldsmith's lyric in its context in *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Compare Burns's dramatic treatment of the same theme. Does any moral judgment arise from it?

2) Perhaps you need to be told that "And sae was pu'd or' noon" means "and so was picked before noon." "Staw" in the last stanza means "stole." Compare this poem with the folk ballads. In what ways does it resemble them? Consider the effect of the incremental repetition. Is it dramatically appropriate to the singer and her situation?

3) The singer identifies herself with the bird and the rose. (Note that her similes develop into metaphors.) What is the significance of these metaphors in representing her own attitude toward her unhappiness? Is she contrite?

XXII

Lyrics

(Continued)

I

The lyrics in this section will require somewhat more discussion than did those in the last. We shall take for our first poems two ancient Hebrew lyrics: the first six verses of the nineteenth Psalm, which were apparently written to stand alone, and the Elegy over Saul and Jonathan, both attributed to King David.

Some of the Psalms seem to be personal, but they are never so specialized in feeling that the reader of religious sensitivity cannot share fully the experience of the poem—the familiar twenty-third Psalm is an example. But more frequently the Psalms represent the religious experience of the group to which their poets belonged; they are devotional poetry with a liturgical purpose and communal emotion.

David's Elegy over Saul and Jonathan is an early example of an ELEGY which seems to have the immediacy of lyric. Yet the attitude in it is complex. David, although he had respected Saul as the rightful king of Israel—the Lord's anointed—had also intended to be the next king of Israel and was in fact at enmity with Saul and the head of a revolutionary party. Jonathan, David's great good friend, was Saul's son. Father and son fell in the same battle with the Philistines, enemies of Israel, and therefore of David as well as of Saul. Read the account of Saul's last battle in 1 Samuel 31 and 2 Samuel 1:1–17 before you read the poem.

PSALM 19:1–6

1. The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

2. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

3. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.

4. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,

5. Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

6. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

1) Because we read this Psalm in translation, its quality as song is partly lost to us. We can recognize, however, its immediacy of expression—the way in which the poet makes articulate for his fellows their awe before the beauty and the wonder of the world, their realization of the Creator in his creation. We are interested when a poet sings what he feels, but the greatest lyric poems give men songs for what they feel.

2) You may wish to review what was said in Section XVII about parallelism in Old Testament verse. Consider the effect of the parallelism here. Is the effect at all comparable to that of the incremental repetition of the old ballads? Parallelism is not restricted to Old Testament verse. Consider these famous lines from *Macbeth* (II, 2, ll. 61–64):

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

And the concluding lines of Whitman's "Who Learns My Lesson Complete?" are interesting here, for their import is like that of the poem we are considering:

And that the moon spins round the earth and on with
the earth, is equally wonderful,

And that they balance themselves with the sun and stars is equally wonderful.

Can you think of other examples of parallelism outside of Old Testament verse?

3) What do you take the sense of verse 3 to be? (Perhaps the "where" should be omitted.) What is the antecedent of "them" in verse 4?

4) Compare the representation of the movement of the sun in verses 5 and 6 with the myth Ovid tells of the chariot of the sun (it is used in Cotton's "Evening Quatrains"). Note how the Hebrew poet limits himself to simile.

DAVID'S ELEGY OVER SAUL AND JONATHAN

2 Samuel 1:19–27

19. The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!

20. Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

21. Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.

22. From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.

23. Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

24. Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

25. How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places.

26. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very

pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

27. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

1) A little explanation is indicated: In verse 20, Gath and Askelon are two of the five royal cities of the Philistines. It was apparently the women in Old Testament times who sang in celebration of victories; we have noted an instance in Miriam's song after the crossing of the Red Sea. In verse 21, the mountains of Gilboa are the scene of the battle. David's address to them is an instance of the human tendency imaginatively to involve nature in one's grief; countless poets after David have done the same thing. Perhaps "nor fields of offerings" should read "ye fields of death." Consider the use of parallelism in the poem.

2) What, if any, are the religious implications of the poem?

3) It cannot be proved that the Elegy was written by David himself, but Old Testament scholars are generally content to ascribe it to him. Does the poem seem to you to express the complex emotion a man in David's position might have felt? David was ambitious for the throne of Israel. But his great friend, and his friend's father, David's enemy *and* king, had been killed in valiant battle with the national enemy, the Philistines. How much of David's situation is clearly implied in the poem?

4) Discuss the effect of the refrain of the poem: "How are the mighty fallen!" What are its implications?

5) What qualities does the poem have which make it permanently interesting and much quoted? Does it transcend the immediate circumstances of David's grief?

II

THE BALLAD OF DEAD LADIES

François Villon (1431–after 1463)

Tell me now in what hidden way is
Lady Flora the lovely Roman?

Where's Hipparchia, and where is Thaïs,
Neither of them the fairer woman?
Where is Echo, beheld of no man,
Only heard on river and mere,—
She whose beauty was more than human? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

Where's Héloise, the learned nun,
For whose sake Abeillard, I ween,
Lost manhood and put priesthood on?
(From Love he won such dule and teen!)
And where, I pray you, is the Queen
Who willed that Buridan should steer
Sewed in a sack's mouth down the Seine? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

White Queen Blanche, like a queen of lilies,
With a voice like any mermaiden,—
Bertha Broadfoot, Beatrice, Alice,
And Ermengarde the lady of Maine,—
And that good Joan whom Englishmen
At Rouen doomed and burned her there,—
Mother of God, where are they then? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,
Except with this for an over-word,—
But where are the snows of yester-year?
—Translated by Dante Gabriel Rossetti

1) Villon was a paradoxical person, a poor scholar of the University of Paris who narrowly escaped hanging for theft, a poet of sensitivity and skill. You would be interested to read Stevenson's short story about him, "A Lodging for the Night." The word ballad in the title translates the French *ballade*—not a folk poem, but a fixed and difficult poetic form. The four lines which finish off the poem are called an "envoy." Ordinarily good lyric verse is nearly untranslatable; the translation here is

unusually successful, for Rossetti was a skillful poet in his own right.

2) In a common use of the word, this poem is not original. Its theme of transience is the most common of themes in lyric verse; its formula is so common that it has a name: the *ubi sunt* formula. Many poets before and after Villon ask where are such and so many persons, the beautiful and the great; Villon himself has two "ballads of the old time lords"—one has the refrain, "But where is the doughty Charlemaigne?" and the other, "The wind carries their like away."

3) You know about some of the women whose names appear in this poem, but a number are unfamiliar to you. Are these unfamiliar names at all evocative? (Make sure of at least three: Thaïs, Héloise, and Joan of Arc.) Did you note the appearance of Echo, a mythological figure, among women from history? Is she out of place?

4) The refrain of this poem—*Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?*—has been translated "But what has become of last year's snow?" Do you like Rossetti's line better? Can you say why?

5) If this poem is not original in the sense of being new or markedly different from all other poems, what accounts for its charm and its persistence over centuries? How much does its effect depend upon the power of literary allusion? Does the very persistence of the theme in poetry suggest that the power of the poem is its satisfactory expression of a commonplace reflection? How important is the refrain in fixing and intensifying the emotion? Can you remember a line in a poem we have read in which "snow" is used to enforce the transitory quality of the things men set their hearts upon?

From THE LOTOS-EATERS[1]

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892)

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives

[1] From *The Works of Tennyson.* Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

And their warm tears: but all hath suffer'd change:
For surely now our household hearths are cold:
Our sons inherit us: our looks are strange:
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
Or else the island princes over-bold
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings
Before them of the ten years' war in Troy,
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
Is there confusion in the little isle?
Let what is broken so remain.
The Gods are hard to reconcile:
'Tis hard to settle order once again.
There *is* confusion worse than death,
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
Long labour unto aged breath,
Sore task to hearts worn out by many wars
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,
How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly)
With half-dropt eyelid still,
Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
His waters from the purple hill—
To hear the dewy echoes calling
From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine—
To watch the emerald-colour'd water falling
Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine!
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the pine.

1) This selection might well have been placed among dramatic poems—yet it is a part of a choral song. Like Tennyson's "Ulysses" it has its inception in the *Odyssey*. Homer tells, in a few lines, how some of Odysseus' men fell in with the lotus-eaters, "men who browse on a food of flowers"; how themselves eating of the lotus, they lost all desire to return to their homes and all memory of them; and how they were brought back to

their ships by force. Be sure you read the passage from "The Lotos-Eaters" aloud often enough to realize and reproduce its languor in your reading.

2) This selection will repay as extended an analysis as your instructor cares to have you make. Notice particularly that every device of rhythm or sound is a part of the communication—not a decoration added to the poem as in some of Poe's poems. You find the rhythm and the sound of the two stanzas different; it is only in the second, for instance, that double rhymes are used. How is that difference in rhythm and sound related to the burden of the song in each stanza?

3) Consider the effect of the complex pattern of the rhymes. Why would a fixed pattern—quatrains rhyming *abab*, for instance—be incongruous in this poem?

4) We have recognized that the rhythm we give a poem as we read it is controlled by our apprehension of its meaning. Observe here how the languorous images affect, and even direct, the reading of the poem. But note, too, that there is the greatest care for metrical effect. What, for instance, is the metrical means by which the movement of line 24 is retarded to accord with the sense?

5) Look up the names of the plants in the second stanza. Note the carefully subdued imagery of color and sound. What colors and sounds particularly contribute to the whole effect?

6) In our discussion of "Ulysses" we realized that Tennyson was able to make a Homeric character representative. Is this poem only an elaborate reproduction of a Homeric fancy? In what way is the poem representative? Do the lotus-eaters have anything to do with you? Is their condition mere laziness? There is a kind of laziness of soul called sloth, accounted one of the seven deadly sins.

BERMUDAS

Andrew Marvell (1621–1678)

Where the remote Bermudas ride
In th' ocean's bosom unespy'd,
From a small boat that row'd along,
The list'ning winds receiv'd this song:

"What should we do but sing His praise,
That led us through the wat'ry maze,
Unto an isle so long unknown,
And yet far kinder than our own?
Where He the huge sea-monsters wracks,
That lift the deep upon their backs.
He lands us on a grassy stage,
Safe from the storms, and prelate's rage.
He gave us this eternal spring,
Which here enamels everything,
And sends the fowls to us in care,
On daily visits through the air.
He hangs in shades the orange bright,
Like golden lamps in a green night,
And does in the pomegranates close
Jewels more rich than Ormus shows.
He makes the figs our mouths to meet,
And throws the melons at our feet.
But apples plants of such a price,
No tree could ever bear them twice.
With cedars, chosen by His hand,
From Lebanon, He stores the land,
And makes the hollow seas, that roar,
Proclaim the ambergris on shore.
He cast (of which we rather boast)
The gospel's pearl upon our coast,
And in these rocks for us did frame
A temple, where to sound His Name.
Oh let our voice His praise exalt,
Till it arrive at heaven's vault,
Which thence, perhaps, rebounding, may
Echo beyond the Mexique Bay."

Thus sang they, in the English boat,
An holy and a cheerful note;
And all the way, to guide their chime,
With falling oars they kept the time.

1) Marvell was a Puritan, and this poem was apparently suggested by the experiences of some friends of his. It was written about 1653. What was happening in England just before 1653? If "prelate" in line 12 refers to a particular person, who would that person be?

2) The song of the exiles is set in what may be called a frame. How does the frame help us to realize the rhythm of the song? The four-stress couplet is used by Marvell in several poems, but does it not, as used here, become a representational rhythm?

3) What is ambergris? What are the literary allusions in the names Ormus and Lebanon? Comment upon the contrast, explicit and implicit, between the British Isles and the Bermudas.

4) One of the images in this poem is especially famous and frequently quoted. Which do you think it would be? Which is so striking that it would stick in a reader's memory?

5) Discuss the imagery in general. Consider particularly the relationship between the couplet structure and the images.

Suggestion for a Paper: Considering Psalm 19 and David's Elegy, the Song of Deborah (Section XVII), the Song of Miriam (with which you became acquainted in Section X), and other pieces of Old Testament poetry (perhaps Job 38 and a few other Psalms), write a paper on the poetry of the Old Testament.

XXIII

The Sonnet Form

SCORN NOT THE SONNET

William Wordsworth (1770–1850)

Scorn not the Sonnet; Critic, you have frowned,
Mindless of its just honours; with this key
Shakspeare unlocked his heart; the melody
Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound;
A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound;
With it Camoëns soothed an exile's grief;
The Sonnet glittered a gay myrtle leaf
Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned
His visionary brow: a glow-worm lamp,
It cheered mild Spenser, called from Faeryland
To struggle through dark ways; and, when a damp
Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
The Thing became a trumpet; whence he blew
Soul-animating strains—alas, too few!

1) Since a large portion of the best poems in our language are sonnets, we need to pay attention to the form itself. Moreover, careful attention to the structure of sonnets will help us to be aware of the importance of poetic form and to realize what varied uses a particular form may have. As you may have gathered from the sonnet above, the sonnet form came to England from Italy, although English poets have used it in their distinctive fashions. If you do not recognize all the poets the sonnet names, look them up.

2) Wordsworth wrote this poem about 1827. In the eighteenth century the sonnet form, despite its use by the great poets

Wordsworth mentions and many others, had for a time fallen out of favor. Wordsworth's own use of it did much to reinstate it. His contention in this sonnet—that although the sonnet is a brief poem-form it may effectively be used in many ways—is important to us. This section and the next will illustrate Wordsworth's descriptions of the sonnets of Shakespeare, Milton, and Spenser, and we shall see a number—by no means all—of the uses of the sonnet.

The Italian Sonnet

From HOLY SONNETS
John Donne (1572–1631)

At the round earth's imagin'd corners, blow
Your trumpets, Angels, and arise, arise
From death, you numberless infinities
Of souls, and to your scattered bodies go;
All whom the flood did, and fire shall, o'erthrow,
All whom war, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies,
Despair, law, chance hath slain, and you whose eyes
Shall behold God, and never taste death's woe.
But let them sleep, Lord, and me mourn a space,
For, if above all these, my sins abound,
'Tis late to ask abundance of Thy grace,
When we are there. Here on this lowly ground,
Teach me how to repent; for that's as good
As if Thou hadst seal'd my pardon, with Thy blood.

1) If you will mark off the rhyme scheme of the sonnet (and you had best do so by putting the letters for the rhyming words just after them) you will find that the rhyming organization consists of two groups of rhymes: the first eight lines, which we call the OCTAVE, *abbaabba,* and the last six, the SESTET, *cdcdee.* The sestet may have any combination of two or three rhymes; by the strictest convention, it does not end in a couplet, but this convention is often ignored, as Donne has ignored it

here. Sonnets following this rhyme pattern are called Italian or Petrarchan. The sonnet is almost always in five-stress verse. Now formulate and write down a careful one-sentence definition of the Italian sonnet.

2) But marking out the rhyme scheme is not enough. If we are to appreciate what a poet is doing with the sonnet form, we must see how he uses the rhyme pattern he has chosen. Do you see that the Italian form is particularly useful to Donne in this poem? What means does he use to give us a sense of the vast number of the risen dead on judgment day? Comment on the use of the present imperative in the octave. Consider the sudden and effective change of tone which comes at the first line of the sestet. Do you see that the rhyming pattern binds together the two divisions of the poem, and that, most effectively, the "I" of the poem, his sin and contrition, are balanced against the procession of all men come to judgment?

3) Frequently poets find the octave-sestet division useful in the organization of a sonnet. Go back to Wordsworth's "Composed upon Westminster Bridge (Section II) and consider the relationship of the rhyming pattern and the syntactical structure. You will see there how the Italian form lends itself to economy of expression. The very difficulty of the form may be an advantage to the poet, helping him to achieve that compression which is a prime quality of great poetry.

4) Carefully consider the form of "It is a beauteous evening" (Section X). Note the surprise as the sestet begins with a direct address: "Dear Child! dear Girl!" And note the high contrast between the conscious solemnity of the attitude expressed in the octave and the immediacy of religious experience attributed to the child.

5) Go back to Meredith's "Appreciation" (Section VI) and discuss the way in which the poet uses the rhyming pattern to bind together and mark off units of his thought.

6) There need not, however, be any clear break or transition at the beginning of the sestet of an Italian sonnet. Sometimes, indeed, a poet will carefully avoid letting the end of a sentence come at the last word of the octave, even when there is a transition in thought coming approximately at the octave-sestet divi-

sion—some sonnets of Milton's are examples. And in "Scorn not the sonnet" you will notice that the last line of the octave is a run-on line. Why would a clear break between octave and sestet be inappropriate in this sonnet? Do you see that the matter of the sonnet determines the way the form is used?

7) Perhaps the considerations in the last few questions will be clearer if you will compare "Scorn not the sonnet" and "It is a beauteous evening"; in that comparison you will realize how differently a poet may use the sonnet form, and you will begin to learn that poets *use* the form as an instrument.

8) Students sometimes feel that the sort of consideration and comparison you have just been asked to carry on is not very rewarding. It is in recognition of the naturalness of that feeling that we have used sonnets already studied, so that the technical consideration could be carried forward rapidly. But attention to the technique of poetry *is* finally rewarding; much of the pleasure a good reader gains from a good poem is his delight in the skill of the poet. You know perfectly well how much pleasure there is watching anything done well: the precision of the chorus line in a review, a complex shift by a football team, the activity of a highly competent craftsman. The more you know about what these persons are doing, the greater your enjoyment of their skill. The skill of the poet is subtle; if we retreat into lassitude of mind we are likely to miss it altogether. Perhaps it may help you to realize something of the technique of the sonnet if you will find and read two sonnets on the sonnet: Wordsworth's "Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room" and Dante Gabriel Rossetti's prefatory sonnet to *The House of Life,* "A sonnet is a moment's monument." Both of these have special reference to the Italian form.

The English Sonnet

THAT TIME OF YEAR

William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

That time of year thou mayst in me behold

Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west;
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

1) This sonnet is in the English—or as it is perhaps more commonly called the Shakespearean—form. Shakespeare was not the first poet to use the form which bears his name; the introduction of the Italian sonnet form into English verse is credited to Sir Thomas Wyatt and the invention of the English form to Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and sonnets were written in England before 1550. Because the English language is comparatively poor in rhymes and the octave of the Italian sonnet therefore offers some difficulty, the English sonnet is perhaps a bit easier than the Italian for English poets. The rhyming organization may be described as three quatrains and a couplet. Mark the rhyme scheme of this sonnet and learn it. Write a one-sentence definition of the English sonnet.

2) There is a brief discussion of the first quatrain of this sonnet in Section XI. Note that each of the three quatrains presents an image of fading youth and energy, and that the couplet makes an application. Write a prose account of this sonnet. Perhaps you should review the discussions of Shakespeare's "When in disgrace" in Sections III and V before you do so.

3) Discuss the way in which the rhyming pattern of this poem binds together and marks off imagery and thought. You will see that here Shakespeare makes a somewhat different use of the resources of the English sonnet from the use made of

them in "When in disgrace." Notice that in "When in disgrace" there is an octave-sestet division; the first two quatrains are a long adverbial clause and there is a marked change of tone in the third quatrain.

FULL MANY A GLORIOUS MORNING

William Shakespeare

Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy;
Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace:
Even so my sun one early morn did shine,
With all-triumphant splendour on my brow;
But out! alack! he was but one hour mine,
The region cloud hath mask'd him from me now.
Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth;
Suns of the world may stain when heaven's sun staineth.

POOR SOUL, THE CENTRE OF MY SINFUL EARTH

William Shakespeare

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
Fool'd by these rebel powers that thee array,
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?
Then, soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;

Within be fed, without be rich no more:
So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,
And Death once dead, there's no more dying then.

1) It is difficult to select only a few sonnets from the wealth of Shakespeare's sonnet sequence, a connected group of 152 poems. These sonnets are not stanzas in a long poem; each is complete in itself and may stand alone. The Elizabethan sonnet sequence was commonly a highly personal form, and there has been much discussion of the autobiographical nature of Shakespeare's sonnets—a matter that need not much concern us. The first of the sonnets above is perhaps addressed to a particular reader, a patron with whom Shakespeare is temporarily out of favor, but we have no trouble in connecting it with the general experience of mankind. The second is interesting for its indication of a certain asceticism in Shakespeare's nature.

2) In "Full many a glorious morning" consider the analogy between the sun and the patron—"my sun." Discuss the way in which the rhyme pattern is used in the organization of the poem and, in particular, the relationship of the rhyme pattern and the parts of the analogy. (In line 5, "anon" means "suddenly"; consider "stain" in the last line an intransitive verb.)

3) In "Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth" you will find a very complex set of metaphors. State the plain sense of the sonnet in literal language. (Does "aggravate" in line 10 have its usual modern sense here?)

4) Compare the way in which the English form is used in this sonnet with its use in "That time of year." Do you see that this sonnet has, in effect, an octave-sestet division?

SINCE THERE'S NO HELP

Michael Drayton (1563–1631)

Since there's no help, come, let us kiss and part.
Nay, I have done, you get no more of me.
And I am glad, yea, glad with all my heart,
That thus so cleanly I myself can free;

Shake hands for ever, cancel all our vows,
And when we meet at any time again,
Be it not seen in either of our brows
That we one jot of former love retain.
Now at the last gasp of Love's latest breath,
When, his pulse failing, Passion speechless lies,
When Faith is kneeling by his bed of death,
And Innocence is closing up his eyes—
Now, if thou wouldst, when all have given him over,
From death to life thou might'st him yet recover.

1) To whom is the "I" of the poem speaking? Discuss the dramatic nature of this sonnet, and the element of surprise. Is there anything amusing about the sonnet? Would you say that it had an element of WIT or of HUMOR? (Which is the better term here?) Do you think of the "I" of the sonnet as a very young man? Is there anything about the attitude in the poem that would suggest that he is not?

2) Write a prose account of the sonnet. In your account communicate the sense without using the personifications of the third quatrain. (Notice lines 9 and 10; does "Love" personify the same emotion as "Passion"?)

3) Consider sentence structure and rhyme pattern together. What is the effect of having the third quatrain and the couplet both begin with the word "Now"? How does the use of the final couplet here compare with its use in "That time of year"? One sometimes sees the sonnet defined as a reflective poem. But this poem is certainly dramatic. How has Drayton been able to make the English sonnet form an effective resource in a dramatic poem? Would the Italian form have been equally useful here?

4) Drayton wrote many sonnets, but this is the only one which has been frequently reprinted and is known to many readers. What qualities do you think have preserved it?

XXIV

Some Uses of the Sonnet

The poems in this section will illustrate something of the variety of use to which poets have put the sonnet form. For each sonnet, consider the way in which the poet employs the rhyme pattern for his particular intention. Your attention will be called to any deviation from the norms of the Italian and the English sonnet.

I

MOST GLORIOUS LORD OF LYFE

Edmund Spenser (1552–1599)·

Most glorious Lord of lyfe, that on this day
Didst make thy triumph over death and sin,
And having harrowd hell, didst bring away
Captivity thence captive, us to win:
This joyous day, deare Lord, with joy begin,
And grant that we, for whom thou diddest dye,
Being with thy deare blood clene washt from sin,
May live for ever in felicity:
And that thy love we weighing worthily,
May likewise love thee for the same againe;
And for thy sake, that all lyke deare didst buy,
With love may one another entertayne.
So let us love, deare love, lyke as we ought:
Love is the lesson which the Lord us taught.

1) "This day" is Easter. In reference to the first quatrain see Ephesians 4:8–10. Comment on the dramatic situation in this

sonnet, and the way in which it is pointed up by a special use of the couplet.

2) For the most part, English poets have been content with the Italian or the English form of the sonnet, but there has been occasional variation. Spenser's sonnets are rhymed in his own fashion and illustrate his skill with intricate rhymes. What is the rhyme scheme? What is the effect of the linked rhymes?

ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEDMONT

John Milton (1608–1674)

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered Saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshiped stocks and stones,
Forget not: in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple Tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundredfold, who, having learnt thy way,
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

1) "Thy slaughtered saints" refers to the Protestants of Piedmont, a section of northwest Italy, who were in 1655 driven from their homes by the soldiers of the Duke of Savoy. Milton, as Latin secretary of Cromwell's government, had written a formal protest. Line 4 refers to the time before the Reformation, when England was a Roman Catholic country. "The triple Tyrant," line 12, means the Pope; Milton refers to his triple crown. In lines 10–14 Milton may be thinking of Tertullian's words: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." "Babylonian woe" is such woe as is prophesied for Babylon in Revelation 18. Babylon and the Roman Catholic Church were

often identified by Protestants of Milton's time. Would Milton's first readers have needed all this explanation? Can such textbook notes as these provide sufficient background for a full understanding of the poem? Why not?

2) Is this sonnet divided into octave and sestet? Can you see a reason for Milton's choice in the matter?

3) Read the sonnet aloud, overemphasizing the rhyme words. What is unusual and interesting about the rhymes? The run-on lines? How do these things contribute to the experience? Are they important?

4) Keeping in mind your answers to questions 2 and 3, discuss in detail the way Milton adapts the form he uses to the special effect desired in this poem. Perhaps it will help to compare this sonnet to some one of the other Italian sonnets we have read.

TO THE LORD GENERAL CROMWELL

John Milton

Cromwell, our chief of men, who through a cloud
Not of war only, but detractions rude,
Guided by faith and matchless fortitude,
To peace and truth thy glorious way hast ploughed,
And on the neck of crownèd Fortune proud
Hast reared God's trophies, and his work pursued,
While Darwen stream, with blood of Scots imbrued,
And Dunbar field, resounds thy praises loud,
And Worcester's laureate wreath: yet much remains
To conquer still; Peace hath her victories
No less renowned than War: new foes arise,
Threatening to bind our souls with secular chains.
Help us to save free conscience from the paw
Of hireling wolves, whose Gospel is their maw.

1) The full title of this sonnet is: "To the Lord General Cromwell, on the proposals of certain ministers at the committee for propagation of the gospel." Milton objected to a proposal

to limit the privilege of speaking from the pulpit; his sonnet, therefore, is not only praise of Cromwell but also an attempt to influence him. "Darwen stream," "Dunbar field" and "Worcester" are scenes of Cromwell's victories. "Hireling wolves" is Milton's epithet for a paid clergy. What does "whose gospel is their maw" mean?

2) Note the way in which the octave-sestet division is here handled—a fashion typical in Milton's sonnets. Note also the use of run-on lines and the marked metrical pauses in some lines. The Italian sonnet, as we have seen, does not ordinarily end with a couplet, nor does Milton usually put a couplet at the end. Why is it effective here?

3) Wordsworth, you remember, says of Milton's use of the sonnet:

> . . . *in his hand*
> *The Thing became a trumpet; whence he blew*
> *Soul-animating strains—alas, too few!*

How well do these lines describe our two Milton sonnets? Is Wordsworth's metaphor apt? What are the chief technical means by which Milton's sonnets gain their effect?

LONDON, 1802

William Wordsworth (1770–1850)

Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee: she is a fen
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,

So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

1) This sonnet is one of the many poets have written in celebration of their great predecessors. Can you see any evidence that Wordsworth, in this poem addressed to Milton and honoring him, is careful to write in Milton's manner? Compare this sonnet to the Milton one above. Do not expect, however, exact or minute correspondence. You would be interested, also, to compare Oliver Wendell Holmes's *"Christo et Ecclesiæ"* with Milton's "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont." Holmes's sonnet is a direct imitation of Milton's. And you might read Longfellow's sonnet called "Milton" and compare Longfellow's interest in Milton with Wordsworth's.

II

OZYMANDIAS

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822)

I met a traveler 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.

1) Diodorus Siculus, a Sicilian historian who wrote in Greek about 40 B.C., called the tomb of Rameses II at Thebes, the

ruined ancient capital of Egypt, the tomb of Ozymandias. Rameses (or Ramses) II died about twelve hundred years before Christ. Do you need to know anything about Rameses II in order to understand the poem fully? Is "Ozymandias" perhaps a better title for the poem than "Rameses II" would be?

2) Lines 6–8 are difficult and elliptical. Expand them in a manner which will make their meaning clear. (Whose was the hand that mocked? Whose was the heart that fed?)

3) How much do you know about Ozymandias from the evidence which, according to the poem, remains? What do you know about the sculptor?

4) What is the central irony in the poem? What means does the poet use to exploit it?

5) This sonnet conforms to neither the Italian nor the English pattern. The form Shelley has devised is certainly entirely adequate for his material. Do you think it would be a generally useful form?

TO AN INDEPENDENT PREACHER[1]

Who preached that we should be
"In Harmony with Nature"

Matthew Arnold (1822–1888)

"In harmony with Nature?" Restless fool,
Who with such heat dost preach what were to thee,
When true, the last impossibility—
To be like Nature strong, like Nature cool!
Know, man hath all which Nature hath, but more,
And in that *more* lie all his hopes of good.
Nature is cruel, man is sick of blood;
Nature is stubborn, man would fain adore;
Nature is fickle, man hath need of rest;
Nature forgives no debt, and fears no grave;
Man would be mild, and with safe conscience blest.

[1] From *The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold.* Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends;
Nature and man can never be fast friends.
Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave!

1) Arnold has much to say here; the sonnet deserves careful attention. Just what is the antithesis the poet makes between Man and Nature? What does "Nature" mean in this context? Can you find a satisfactory dictionary definition for the word in the sense here used? What are concrete examples of what Arnold means by the italicized *more* in line 6? You will find it helpful to review the selection from Tennyson's "In Memoriam" and the discussion thereof in Section VIII.

2) Considering the matter of this sonnet, is the form Arnold devises appropriate? How does the form differ from that of the English sonnet? From that of the Italian sonnet?

TREAD SOFTLY! ALL THE EARTH IS HOLY GROUND[2]

Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)

Tread softly! all the earth is holy ground.
It may be, could we look with seeing eyes,
This spot we stand on is a Paradise
Where dead have come to life and lost been found,
Where faith has triumphed, Martyrdom been crowned,
Where fools have foiled the wisdom of the wise;
From this same spot the dust of saints may rise,
And the King's prisoners come to light unbound.
O earth, earth, earth, hear thy Maker's Word:
"Thy dead thou shalt give up, nor hide thy slain."
Some who went weeping forth shall come again
Rejoicing from the east or from the west,
As doves fly to their windows, love's own bird
Contented and desirous to the nest.

[2] From *The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti.* Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

1) Particular spots are often held sacred because they have been the scenes of human suffering, heroism, or fortitude. Does the poet succeed for you in investing all the earth with the same sort of sacredness?

2) Note how the image of the resurrected dead is introduced in the last two lines of the octave, and then developed at higher emotional tension in the sestet. Some people consider Miss Rossetti a minor poet, attractive but not very important. See how this sonnet bears comparison with "At the round earth's imagin'd corners" by John Donne, who is considered by our generation one of the greatest English poets.

HAP[3]

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928)

If but some vengeful god would call to me
From up the sky, and laugh: "Thou suffering thing,
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting!"
Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.
But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan . . .
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

1) What does the title mean? Interpret lines 11–12. Hardy here expresses a central assumption in his philosophy of life; perhaps you recognize it as one illustrated by *The Return of the*

[3] Reprinted from *Wessex Poems* by Thomas Hardy, by permission of Harper & Brothers. Copyright 1898 by Harper & Brothers. And from *The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy*, by permission of the Trustees of the Hardy Estate and Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London.

Native, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, or another Hardy novel you have read. State the central assumption of this sonnet in literal terms.

2) Describe the manner in which Hardy has here combined the English and Italian forms of the sonnet.

Suggestions for Papers: (a) Write an extended definition of the English (or the Italian) sonnet, making clear what the form is and illustrating its uses. (b) Have your instructor suggest a number of Milton's sonnets for you to discuss together. You may wish to focus your paper on Milton's political sonnets, or upon those sonnets which have their impetus in Milton's personal experience. (c) Considering Wordsworth's "Scorn not the Sonnet" and "London, 1802," and in addition such sonnets as Longfellow's "Milton" and "Shakespeare," Arnold's "Shakespeare," and Keats's "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," write a paper on the way in which poets have used the sonnet to pay tribute to their great forebears in poetry.

XXV

Satire

The *American College Dictionary* will tell you that *a satire* is "a literary composition, in verse or prose, in which vices, abuses, follies, etc. are held up to scorn, derision, or ridicule"; and that satire, the general term, means "the use of irony, sarcasm, ridicule, etc., in exposing, denouncing, or deriding vice, folly, etc."[1] These are good working definitions, and they make clear that we distinguish satire both by intention and by the means used to fulfill the intention. But what we call satire is not always violent, or even obvious, attack. When the satirist's means include irony or subtle ridicule, the work may not seem to the superficial reader attack at all. The satirist examines human conduct or motives critically, and intends to communicate to the reader his own attitude toward his subject, using the means appropriate to his subject and within his power.

We have read several poems that are at least partly satirical in intent. Perhaps, in order to see how far they fulfill the definitions above, you will wish to go back to the following: Samuel Yellen's "Wanted" (Section II), Morris Bishop's "E = MC^2" and Whittier's "Ichabod" (VIII), and Wilmot's "A Satyr Against Mankind" (XV). And it would be a good exercise to look over the Epigrams in Section IV to see how many of them are satirical. Since irony is frequently used by the satirist, you may wish also to review Section XII.

In the present section we shall take three poems from the eighteenth century, the great age of English satire, and one of our own time.

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[1] From *The American College Dictionary*, copyright, 1947, by Random House; Text Edition, copyright, 1948, by Harper & Brothers.

I

From AN EPISTLE FROM MR. POPE, TO DR. ARBUTHNOT

Alexander Pope (1688–1744)

Peace to all such! but were there One whose fires
True Genius kindles, and fair Fame inspires;
Blest with each talent and each art to please,
And born to write, converse, and live with ease:
Shou'd such a man, too fond to rule alone,
Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne,
View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,
And hate for arts that caus'd himself to rise;
Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,
Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike;
Alike reserv'd to blame, or to commend,
A tim'rous foe, and a suspicious friend:
Dreading ev'n fools, by Flatterers besieg'd,
And so obliging, that he ne'er oblig'd;
Like *Cato,* gave his little Senate laws,
And sit attentive to his own applause;
While Wits and Templers ev'ry sentence raise,
And wonder with a foolish face of praise—
Who but must laugh, if such a man there be?
Who would not weep, if *Atticus* were he!

1) This poem is an example of personal satire; Atticus is Pope's great contemporary, Joseph Addison. Pope has been speaking of certain minor writers and the expression "Peace to all such" is transitional. Note that there is no full stop in the passage and that it is made up of two conditional clauses and the questions of the last two lines. Now Addison was a poet, too. What is there about Pope's approach that would make this passage very difficult to answer?

2) Pope's contemporaries must have recognized the intention of the passage at once, for, quite apart from the justice or injustice of the characterization, Addison's position in the literary world is accurately described. A consideration of the accuracy of Pope's estimate of Addison's temperament is outside of our scope, but consider whether the passage is humanly convincing. Do you recognize some of the characteristics attributed to Atticus as belonging to persons of your acquaintance? As they are combined here, is Atticus a believable person?

3) With the exception of the grammatical structure of the passage, the means used here are direct, and the effect of the passage depends largely on Pope's great facility for concentrated and memorable expression. How often is there an antithesis within single lines? Where is the concentration especially effective? What does "hesitate dislike" mean?

4) There are at least three expressions here which have become generally known and which are frequently used by people who have never read Pope. How many do you recognize as familiar?

II

A DESCRIPTION OF THE MORNING

Jonathan Swift (1667–1745)

Now hardly here and there a hackney-coach
Appearing, show'd the ruddy morn's approach.
Now Betty from her master's bed had flown,
And softly stole to discompose her own;
The slip-shod 'prentice from his master's door
Had par'd the dirt, and sprinkled round the floor.
Now Moll had whirl'd her mop with dext'rous airs,
Prepar'd to scrub the entry and the stairs.
The youth with broomy stumps began to trace
The kennel's edge, where wheels had worn the place.
The small-coal man was heard with cadence deep,
Till drown'd in shriller notes of chimney-sweep:

Duns at his lordship's gate began to meet;
And brickdust Moll had scream'd through half the street.
The turnkey now his flock returning sees,
Duly let out a-nights to steal for fees:
The watchful bailiffs take their silent stands,
And schoolboys lag with satchels in their hands.

A DESCRIPTION OF A CITY SHOWER

(In Imitation of Virgil's *Georgics*)

Jonathan Swift

Careful observers may foretell the hour,
(By sure prognostics) when to dread a shower.
While rain depends, the pensive cat gives o'er
Her frolics, and pursues her tail no more.
Returning home at night, you'll find the sink
Strike your offended sense with double stink.
If you be wise, then go not far to dine:
You'll spend in coach-hire more than save in wine.
A coming shower your shooting corns presage,
Old a-ches throb, your hollow tooth will rage;
Saunt'ring in coffeehouse is Dulman seen;
He damns the climate, and complains of spleen.
Meanwhile the South, rising with dabbled wings,
A sable cloud athwart the welkin flings,
That swill'd more liquor than it could contain,
And like a drunkard, gives it up again.
Brisk Susan whips her linen from the rope,
While the first drizzling shower is borne aslope;
Such is that sprinkling which some careless quean
Flirts on you from her mop, but not so clean:
You fly, invoke the gods; then, turning, stop
To rail; she singing, still whirls on her mop.
Not yet the dust had shunn'd the unequal strife,
But, aided by the wind, fought still for life,
And wafted with its foe by vi'lent gust,
'Twas doubtful which was rain, and which was dust.

Ah! where must needy poet seek for aid,
When dust and rain at once his coat invade?
Sole coat! where dust, cemented by the rain,
Erects the nap, and leaves a cloudy stain!
Now in contiguous drops the flood comes down,
Threatening with deluge this *devoted* town.
To shops in crowds the draggled females fly,
Pretend to cheapen goods, but nothing buy.
The Templer spruce, while ev'ry spout's abroach,
Stays till 'tis fair, yet seems to call a coach.
The tuck'd-up sempstress walks with hasty strides,
While streams run down her oil'd umbrella's sides.
Here various kinds, by various fortunes led,
Commence acquaintance underneath a shed.
Triumphant Tories, and desponding Whigs,
Forget their feuds, and join to save their wigs.
Box'd in a chair the beau impatient sits,
While spouts run clatt'ring o'er the roof by fits,
And ever and anon with frightful din
The leather sounds; he trembles from within.
So when Troy chairmen bore the wooden steed,
Pregnant with Greeks impatient to be freed,
(Those bully Greeks, who, as the moderns do,
Instead of paying chairman, ran them through)
Laocoon struck the outside with his spear,
And each imprison'd hero quak'd for fear.
Now from all parts the swelling kennels flow,
And bear their trophies with them as they go:
Filths of all hues and odours, seem to tell
What streets they sail'd from, by their sight and smell.
They, as each torrent drives with rapid force,
From Smithfield, or St. Pulchre's shape their course,
And in huge confluent join at Snowhill Ridge,
Fall from the conduit prone to Holborn bridge.
Sweepings from butchers' stalls, dung, guts, and blood,
Drown'd puppies, stinking sprats, all drench'd in mud,
Dead cats, and turnip-tops, come tumbling down the flood.

1) These poems are in a mock-classical manner; that is, they use some of the conventions of classical poetry for subjects inappropriate to an exalted style. Swift could be sure that his readers would be aware of his use of these conventions. The opening lines of "Morning" might recall the beginning of the fifth book of the *Odyssey*: "Now the Dawn arose from her couch, from the side of the lordly Tithonus, to bear light to the immortals and to mortal men. And lo, the gods were gathered to session, and among them Zeus, that thunders on high, whose might is above all."[2] And the long simile in "City Shower" not only reminds the reader of the story of Laocoön and the Trojan horse in the second book of the *Aeneid* but is also a typical epic simile. This sort of allusion has a complex effect—there is some discussion of it in Section X. Why will Swift's use of the conventions of exalted poetry give an element of irony to these poems?

2) Note in "A Description of the Morning" how various are the city types that Swift includes. The "duns at his lordship's gate" are bill collectors; the turnkey has released his prisoners in order that they may steal money to pay him fees. Street vendors who cry their wares are represented; perhaps you know a famous series of prints called "Cries of London." And you should look at some of the pictures by William Hogarth (1697–1764) of London scenes. If one were writing a description of a city morning today, what comparable types would he pick out?

3) Is Swift here describing a particular street or section? Support your answer.

4) Note the condensation the poet achieves through careful choice of words. The apprentice "had pared the dirt"; the turnkey "duly" let out his charges (implying an act so customary as to seem proper). What are other examples?

5) In answering question 3 you realized that the scene described is not static. Is any particular "point of view" established? The reader, of course, takes the point of view of the writer. Do they observe from a fixed point? About how much time elapses? How is time indicated?

[2] Translated by Butcher and Lang (Modern Readers Series). Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

6) "A Description of a City Shower" may need a note or two, although there is little in the diction that should trouble you. In line 32 "devoted" seems to have an archaic meaning: cursed, doomed, perhaps damned. Line 41 alludes to a Tory political triumph at the time of the poem. The "chair" (line 43) is a sedan chair.

7) Virgil's *Georgics* concern the dignity of a simple, rural life and its moral and spiritual advantages. If Swift reminds his reader of the tone and temper of the *Georgics*, that recollection will serve as ironic contrast to the matter of the poem. A considerable portion of *Georgic* I has to do with weather portents—for example:

> *The sun, too, will give sure tokens, both when he rises and when he sinks beneath the ocean-floor. . . . If either at dawn the rays break scattered through dense clouds, or Aurora rises pale from Tithonus' couch of saffron—alas, the vine leaf will but feebly champion its ripened clusters: so thick on the roof dance the rattling shafts of hail! . . . but let specks begin to mingle with his [the setting sun's] ruddy flames, and shortly thou will see all nature turmoiled with wind and cloud alike. On such night let none urge me to tempt the wave or pluck my cable from the land!*[3]

Compare this passage in detail with the first twelve lines of Swift's poem.

8) This poem, like "Morning," has brief satiric hits at typical individuals. For instance, the "Templer" (who may live at the Inner Temple, one of the Inns of Court) only seems to call a coach; actually he will wait until the storm is over and save his money. Point out other such passages.

9) What details in the poem might go into a description of a modern city shower? Can you find modern parallels for some of the others?

10) Does the unpleasant imagery of the last eleven lines

[3] Translated by John Jackson. By permission of The Clarendon Press, Oxford.

make an effective conclusion for the poem? Support your answer.

11) Compare "Morning" and "City Shower" as to structure and tone.

12) Of what vices, follies, or weaknesses in his fellows is the poet most conscious in these poems? What judgments of eighteenth-century London life arise? What seems to you the intention of these poems? How serious an intention is it? Do the mock-classical elements indicate that the intention is not serious?

13) Do the poems imply either a NORM or an ideal? Must not good satire imply some norm or some ideal tacitly understood by writer and reader? If there is no understood norm can persons be made to seem ridiculous? Consider and support your answer.

14) The selection from Pope and both the Swift poems are in the heroic or closed couplet, which was in the eighteenth century used for poems with various intentions. Does the closed couplet seem to you a particularly good vehicle for satire? What advantages does it offer? Does one of the poets seem to you to use it with greater skill than the other? Do you think that any one of these poems could have been done as well in blank verse?

III

A LADY SELECTS HER CHRISTMAS CARDS[4]

Phyllis McGinley

Fastidiously, with gloved and careful fingers,
Through the marked samples she pursues her search.
Which shall it be: the snowscape's wintry languors,
Complete with church?

An urban skyline; children sweetly pretty
Sledding downhill; the chaste, ubiquitous wreath?

[4] From *Stones from a Glass House* by Phyllis McGinley. Copyright 1943, 1945, 1946 by Phyllis McGinley. Reprinted by permission of The Viking Press, Inc., New York.

Schooner or candle or the simple Scottie
With verses underneath?

Perhaps it might be better to emblazon
With words alone the stiff, punctilious square.
(Oh, not Victorian, certainly. This season
One meets it everywhere.)

She has a duty proper to the weather—
A Birth she must announce, a rumor to spread,
Wherefore the very spheres once sang together
And a star shone overhead.

Here are the Tidings which the shepherds panted
One to another, kneeling by their flocks.
And they will bear her name (engraved, not printed)—
Ten-fifty for the box.

1) You have realized by this time that a title is often an integral part of a poem. Is the noncommittal title of this poem appropriate to its intention?

2) Just what is said in "A Lady Selects Her Christmas Cards"? Does the poem say, for instance, that the fastidious lady ought to choose another design for her Christmas cards? Can you make a sentence statement that will express in general terms (not in terms of Christmas cards) the essential idea of the poem?

3) Do you think the poem ought to be considered a satire? Is there irony in it? Have you noted that there is not the slightest exaggeration in the description of the Christmas cards? Note also the precision of description: "chaste, ubiquitous wreath" or "stiff, punctilious square." ("Ubiquitous" and "punctilious" are most effective when one knows their derivations—if you do not, look them up.)

4) Why are four lines in "A Lady Selects Her Christmas Cards" put into italics? What difference does it make to the reader? Might it have been as well not to italicize them?

5) Why are the two details of the last two lines of the poem

—"engraved, not printed" and "ten-fifty for the box"—particularly effective at the close?

6) One of the things a poem may do for us, it was pointed out early in this book, is to make us see clearly quite familiar things. Does this poem do that for us?

Suggestions for Papers: (a) Read Edwin Arlington Robinson's "Karma" and Edna St. Vincent Millay's "To Jesus on His Birthday" (both poems are sonnets on our celebration of Christmas). Consider them with "A Lady Selects Her Christmas Cards" and write a comparative discussion. (b) Read some of Swift's satire in prose—say, "A Modest Proposal" or Part IV of *Gulliver's Travels*—and write an interpretative discussion, considering, among other things, what Swift's prose satire has in common with his satire in verse. (c) Read Robert Burns's "Address to the Unco Guid" and his "Holy Willie's Prayer" and discuss them together as satires. (d) Write an extended definition of the term "satire." Illustrate your discussion generously from poems in this book and others your instructor may suggest.

XXVI

Comparable Poems

A Transition

In the last nine sections the poems have been grouped in certain recognized and named classes. We turn now to another sort of grouping: In each of the following sections the poems are grouped according to some common interest, so that they provide a context for one another. You have found thus far that, as you read a poem new to you, it is enriched by your experience with poems you have previously read. But you have not read a great number of poems; the purpose of our grouping now is to place together poems that are particularly likely to enrich and illuminate one another.

We are not primarily concerned to say that one poem is better than another—to be sure, you will and should have your preferences. The grouping may give you some sense of tradition in literature, although of course one cannot expect a complete comprehension of the importance of tradition in literature until he has a knowledge of some considerable portion of literature. As your literary experience increases, you will more and more be able to realize a poem in its background of tradition. This realization is by no means only a recognition of likeness or unlikeness; it is more particularly an understanding of what the poem adds to the tradition and how it fits—and "its fitting in," as Mr. T. S. Eliot says, "is a test of its value." The poem's fitting into tradition is not the only test of value; but it is one which, as your literary knowledge grows, will be increasingly important to you.

In this and the next four sections the poems are arranged in pairs, two pairs to each section; in subsequent sections they are grouped in other ways. In this section the poems in each pair

have comparable themes, and, as it happens, in all four poems we are concerned with a bird or birds. But we are not comparing birds. In each pair of poems we are considering experiences fundamentally related. Yet it may be that the resemblance of the means of representation is not entirely fortuitous.

I

The first two poems depend upon an old myth—the story of Philomela and her sister Procne who, after horrible experiences, became the nightingale and the swallow. Their story turns up often in poetry, and it may be that there are a few too many nightingales in English verse, although the nightingales in our poems are not among the excess. Your dictionary will give you a very brief account of the myth under "Philomela"; *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* has a longer one. You may wish to read Ovid's retelling of the story in *Metamorphoses* VI, ll. 424–674. Note that Arnold, following a particular version of the myth, interchanges the sisters' names as they are given in all three of the accounts mentioned above.

PHILOMELA[1]

Matthew Arnold (1822–1888)

Hark! ah, the nightingale!
The tawny-throated!
Hark! from that moonlit cedar what a burst!
What triumph! hark!—what pain!

O wanderer from a Grecian shore,
Still, after many years, in distant lands,
Still nourishing in thy bewilder'd brain
That wild, unquench'd, deep-sunken, old-world pain—
Say, will it never heal?
And can this fragrant lawn

[1] From *The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold.* Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

With its cool trees, and night,
And the sweet, tranquil Thames,
And moonshine, and the dew,
To thy rack'd heart and brain
Afford no balm?

Dost thou to-night behold
Here, through the moonlight on this English grass,
The unfriendly palace in the Thracian wild?
Dost thou again peruse
With hot cheeks and sear'd eyes
The too clear web, and thy dumb sister's shame?
Dost thou once more assay
Thy flight, and feel come over thee,
Poor fugitive, the feathery change
Once more, and once more seem to make resound
With love and hate, triumph and agony,
Lone Daulis, and the high Cephissian vale?
Listen, Eugenia—
How thick the bursts come crowding through the leaves!
Again—thou hearest?
Eternal passion!
Eternal pain!

NIGHTINGALES[2]

Robert Bridges (1844–1930)

Beautiful must be the mountains whence ye come,
And bright in the fruitful valleys the streams, wherefrom
Ye learn your song:
Where are those starry woods? O might I wander there,
Among the flowers, which in that heavenly air
Bloom the year long!

[2] From *The Shorter Poems of Robert Bridges*: by permission of the Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Nay, barren are those mountains and spent the streams:
Our song is the voice of desire, that haunts our dreams,
A throe of the heart,
Whose pining visions dim, forbidden hopes profound,
No dying cadence nor long sigh can sound,
For all our art.

Alone, aloud in the raptured ear of men
We pour our dark nocturnal secret; and then,
As night is withdrawn
From these sweet-springing meads and bursting boughs of May,
Dream, while the innumerable choir of day
Welcome the dawn.

1) In the version of the myth Arnold has in mind, what role does the sister called Procne play? Philomela?

2) One might consider Arnold's poem a complex literary allusion; indeed, Arnold recalls to his reader much of the detail of the myth. Is that the whole intention? The main intention?

3) The verse form is unusual. Is it in any way representational?

4) Is the poet speaking directly to us? What is the function of lines 1–4 and 28–30?

5) Discuss the use of the nightingale as a symbol.

6) How does the reader's knowledge of the myth help him in interpreting the symbol? Go back to Section X and read the stanza from Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" there quoted. Do you see that a nightingale may serve as a symbol without reference to the myth? Yet the reader may associate "Philomela" and "Ode to a Nightingale" and find the experience of one enriched by the experience of the other. There has been much discussion about the meaning of "immortal Bird" and the sense Keats intended "immortal" to have. Do you see that association of the two poems may suggest a meaning?

7) Is there any direct reference to the Philomela myth in "Nightingales"?

8) Who is speaking in the first stanza? In stanzas 2 and 3? Write a brief prose account of the poem, avoiding for the moment any interpretation.

9) Do you find any suggestion that the poet has in mind the story of Philomela? Does any line in particular recall the myth?

10) Beautiful song does not, for the nightingales, arise from beautiful surroundings and carefree, pleasant existence. Is this the full meaning of the poem? State the theme of the poem in abstract terms. What is gained by giving this theme a concrete embodiment?

11) A reader quite unacquainted with the story of Philomela might be an adequate, though not a good, reader for this poem. Try to state as precisely as you can the value of the allusion. You may think of it this way: Bridges might have chosen another songbird as his symbol. What part of the experience of this poem would then have been lacking?

12) What have "Philomela" and "Nightingales" in common beside the allusion each makes to the myth?

II

TO A WATERFOWL

William Cullen Bryant (1794–1878)

Whither, midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way?

Vainly the fowler's eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As, darkly seen against the crimson sky,
Thy figure floats along.

Seek'st thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
On the chafed ocean-side?

There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast—
The desert and illimitable air—
Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,
At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere,
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end;
Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,
And scream among thy fellows; reeds shall bend,
Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet, on my heart
Deeply has sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

THE DARKLING THRUSH[3]

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928)

I leaned upon a coppice gate
When Frost was specter-gray,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres,

[3] Reprinted from *Poems of the Past and Present* by Thomas Hardy, by permission of Harper & Brothers. And from *The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy*, by permission of the Trustees of the Hardy Estate and Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London.

And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be
The Century's corpse outleant;
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervorless as I.

At once a voice burst forth among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carollings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

1) Consider first the stanza form of Bryant's poem. What is unusual about it? Did you notice, too, how gracefully stanza form and sentence structure coincide? Only once, in the fourth stanza, is the sentence structure broken, and then to make a remarkably condensed and effective line stand out.

2) Bryant originally wrote the third line in the second stanza

As, darkly painted on the crimson sky,

a reading he restored in a late printing of the poem. Which version is for you the more vivid image?

3) The poem was written in 1815 and it has, in the third stanza, some eighteenth-century poetic diction, that is, expressions which have been too frequently employed and have become substitutes for vision. Poetry is constantly developing such diction, which has to be cleared away from time to time. But it may well be that you are encountering "plashy brink," "marge of river wide," and "rocking billows" for the first time. How do they strike you? Do you see a difference in intensity between stanzas 3 and 4?

4) Has it occurred to you to wonder what sort of waterfowl this is? Is there any reason for particularizing the bird? Would it have been as well had Hardy left his thrush singing at evening unnamed?

5) Probably most poets in our century would avoid such lines as:

> *Deeply has sunk the lesson thou hast given,*
> *And shall not soon depart.*

And some readers find fault with the last two stanzas of the poem in which the analogy between the waterfowl and the "I" of the poem becomes explicit. It may be argued that Bryant has done for the reader what the reader might better do for himself. Yet the connection between the providential guidance of the waterfowl and providential care in human affairs is part of the experience of the poem. Is it wrong to state it explicitly?

6) But another question arises. The explicit "moral" was not uncommon in the literature of the time. It was indeed so common as to be sometimes merely conventional. But perhaps the dislike of the readers mentioned above merely indicates that they are following another and more recent convention: the notion that poetry is somehow a thing apart from man's moral or spiritual life. The critical question really is whether what is said in the last two stanzas arises from the experience of the poem or is tacked on at the end. We can put the question in other

ways: Is the idea of providential care stated in the last two stanzas represented concretely and convincingly in the six stanzas above? Is the guided flight of the waterfowl imaginatively successful as a symbol of God's care for men?

7) Consider now "The Darkling Thrush." We shall encounter the word "darkling" again in Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" and perhaps you know it in Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale": "Darkling I listen . . ." Look the word up and learn the force of the old suffix "ling." Note "illimited" in line 20, and compare Bryant's use of a form of the same word. You may need your dictionaries in order to realize the image in lines 5–6. "Evensong" (line 19) may suggest both song at evening and a religious service; a late afternoon service of the Anglican Church is called evensong.

8) Consider the sentence structure of this poem in relation to its stanza form.

9) The imagery in a poem by Hardy is likely to be both compressed and vivid. Discuss the imagery of the first two stanzas. What emotion or emotions does it evoke?

10) Discuss the relationship of the last stanza to the rest of the poem. Is this stanza comparable to the last two stanzas of "To a Waterfowl"? How?

11) In "To a Waterfowl" the sure flight of the bird becomes the symbol of divine guidance and the splendid line "Lone wandering but not lost" becomes a representation of the human situation. In "The Darkling Thrush," it is as if we desire a symbol we cannot attain, or can attain no longer than the moments of the thrush's song. Review Hardy's "Hap" (Section XXIV). Is there a connection in attitude between the two poems?

12) Bryant's poem was written in 1815, Hardy's in 1900. (Is there any reference to the date within Hardy's poem itself?) Can we take these poems, apart from the personalities and beliefs of their poets, as records in the spiritual history of the nineteenth century?

Suggestion for a Paper: Take the pair of poems in this section which interests you the more and write a discussion of the two

poems together, making sure your paper has its own focus and purpose. Some question within the section will give you a starting point. (This suggestion for a paper will serve for a paper in connection with any one of the next four sections.)

XXVII

Herrick and Marvell

I

TO THE VIRGINS, TO MAKE MUCH OF TIME

Robert Herrick (1591–1674)

Gather ye Rose-buds while ye may,
Old Time is still a flying:
And this same flower that smiles to-day,
To-morrow will be dying.

The glorious Lamp of Heaven, the Sun,
The higher he's a getting;
The sooner will his Race be run,
And nearer he's to Setting.

That Age is best, which is the first,
When Youth and Blood are warmer;
But being spent, the worse, and worst
Times, still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time;
And while ye may, go marry:
For having lost but once your prime,
You may for ever tarry.

TO HIS COY MISTRESS

Andrew Marvell (1621–1678)

Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime.

We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Should'st rubies find; I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews;
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires, and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.
But at my back I always hear
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near:
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found,
Nor, in thy marble vault shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long-preserv'd virginity,
And your quaint honor turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust:
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.
Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like am'rous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour
Than languish in his slow-chapt pow'r.

Let us roll all our strength, and all
Our sweetness, up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Thorough the iron gates of life;
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

1) Herrick's poem is printed with "To His Coy Mistress" so that you may compare them. Such comparison often helps to define the individual quality of the poems. You will be asked to return to the comparison after you have considered a number of questions about "To His Coy Mistress." But now, on the basis of your first impressions of the poems, answer these questions: What have the poems in common? If they have the same theme, how do the poets' attitudes toward the theme differ? Which poem represents the more complex experience?

2) Only a few of the words need special discussion. The word "mistress" is more specialized in its meaning now than it was in Marvell's time (see your dictionary). Here it does not necessarily indicate anything about the lady's virtue. What flood is Marvell thinking of in line 8? "Chapt" in "his slow-chapt pow'r" (line 40) seems to be connected with our word "chops," the jaws. What is the antecedent of "his"? Interpret the line. Notice that the first word in line 44 is "thorough," not "through," and find a definition that fits the context here.

3) On the literal level, what the poet is saying is certainly clear. Notice the severely logical structure of the poem and the way in which the verse paragraphs mark off the structure. Restate, as concisely as you can, the central thought of the poem in three sentences, beginning the first "Had we," the second "But," and the third "Now therefore," just as Marvell begins his sections.

4) Both of these poems are dramatic. We can call the Herrick poem a dramatic lyric, and "To His Coy Mistress" is in its dramatic structure not unlike the dramatic monologues by Browning in Section XX. But is our interest here in the personality of the speaker or in his representative character?

5) How literally ought we to read this poem? Is it only an

amorous poem? Is it primarily an amorous poem? Is it an amorous poem at all?

6) Had Marvell's primary intention been to represent a lover pleading with his loved one no longer to delay their happiness, would he have been likely to make the lover speak in the sort of imagery here used?

7) Is the appeal of the imagery primarily to the intellect or to the emotions? Consider the effect of such juxtapositions as "ten years before the flood" with "till the conversion of the Jews." Point out more of the same sort. Consider the metaphors: "my vegetable love," for instance.

8) How frequently do these juxtapositions have an ironic effect? How important is irony in the poem? Discuss this matter fully. There are some remarks on the irony in this poem in Section XII, but much remains to be said.

9) Note how the mood of the speaker and with it the intensity of the poem change at the second division. For what qualities are the first four lines in the second division remarkable? Note that they could stand out of context and still have great force. How do these lines extend the implications of the poem?

10) Now go back to question 1. Has further consideration led you to revise your answers?

11) Compare "To the Virgins" with Herrick's "To Blossoms" (Section III). What have the poems in common?

12) Compare "To His Coy Mistress" and "Bermudas" (Section XXII), considering particularly Marvell's use of four-stress verse and the difference in its effect in the two poems.

II

THE BAD SEASON MAKES THE POET SAD

Robert Herrick

Dull to my self, and almost dead to these
My many fresh and fragrant mistresses:
Lost to all music now; since every thing

Puts on the semblance here of sorrowing.
Sick is the land to'th'heart; and doth endure
More dangerous faintings by her desp'rate cure.
But if that golden Age would come again,
And *Charles* here rule, as he before did reign;
If smooth and unperplext the seasons were,
As when the *Sweet Maria* livèd here:
I should delight to have my curls half drown'd
In *Tyrian dews,* and head with roses crown'd.
And once more yet (ere I am laid out dead)
Knock at a Star with my exalted Head.

From UPON APPLETON HOUSE

Andrew Marvell

See how the flowers, as at parade,
Under their colours stand display'd;
Each regiment in order grows,
That of the tulip, pink, and rose.
But when the vigilant patrol
Of stars walks round about the pole,
Their leaves that to the stalks are curl'd
Seem to their staves the ensigns furl'd.
Then in some flower's belovèd hut
Each bee, as sentinel, is shut,
And sleeps so too; but if once stirr'd,
She runs you through, nor asks the word.
O thou, that dear and happy Isle,
The garden of the world erewhile,
Thou Paradise of the four seas
Which Heaven planted us to please,
But, to exclude the world, did guard
With wat'ry if not flaming sword,—
What luckless apple did we taste
To make us mortal, and thee waste!
Unhappy! shall we never more
That sweet militia restore,

When gardens only had their towers,
And all the garrisons were flowers;
When roses only arms might bear,
And men did rosy garlands wear?

1) The "bad season" in Herrick's poem is the time of the civil wars between the forces of Charles I and the forces of Parliament. Maria is Charles's queen.

2) The poem has fourteen lines. Is it a sonnet?

3) Explain line 6. "More dangerous" than what? See if your dictionary will furnish you with an explanation of "Tyrian dews."

4) The title suggests that this is a highly personal poem, and we can indeed infer something of Herrick's character from it. Yet it expresses the feeling of thousands of Herrick's fellow Royalists. Quoted below is a song by Martin Parker which was very popular about the time Herrick wrote this poem and which, doubtless, Herrick knew. (The proper names in roman type are those of contemporary astrologers or almanac makers.)

WHEN THE KING ENJOYS HIS OWN AGAIN

What Booker *can prognosticate*
Concerning kings' or kingdoms' fate?
I think myself to be as wise
As he that gazeth on the skies,
My skill goes beyond the depth of a Pond,
Or Rivers *in the greatest rain;*
Whereby I can tell all things will be well,
When the king enjoys his own again.

There's neither Swallow, Dove *nor* Dade,
Can soar more high, or deeper wade,
Nor show a reason from the stars
What causeth peace or civil wars.
The man in the moon may wear out his shoon,
By running after Charles his wain;
But all's to no end, for the times will not mend
Till the king enjoys his own again.

The song inspirited the supporters of Charles I and was sung in celebration of the restoration of his son, Charles II, to the throne. Parker's song and Herrick's poem have much the same attitude toward King Charles. Why does "The Bad Season Makes the Poet Sad" remain interesting to us as an experience while Parker's song has not much more than historical interest?

5) Comment on the last line. Is the bold metaphor appropriate? What sense do you give to the word "exalted"? Consider the relation of the last line to the whole poem. Have you noted the structure of the poem: the high contrast between lines 1–6 and lines 11–14, and the transition between them?

6) Andrew Marvell for a time assisted Milton in his Latin secretaryship to Cromwell's government, and he wrote a number of political satires in behalf of the Parliamentary party. Yet in his "An Horatian Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland," his generous spirit led him to recognize the dignity of Charles I on the scaffold:

He nothing common did, or mean,
Upon that memorable scene,
But with his keener eye
The axe's edge did try;

Nor called the gods with vulgar spite
To vindicate his helpless right;
But bowed his comely head
Down, as upon a bed.

What is the general attitude toward the revolution in our selection from "Upon Appleton House"?

7) If you are not familiar with the third chapter of Genesis, you must read it in order to understand lines 13–20. Marvell may be remembering a famous passage spoken by John of Gaunt in Shakespeare's *Richard II*:

This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,

This other Eden, demi-paradise,
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war,
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands,
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England . . .

But whether or not Marvell remembered the passage, Shakespeare is making articulate an English attitude and emotion. Interpret lines 13–20 in the light of this passage and of the third chapter of Genesis.

8) John Dryden, a great contemporary of Marvell, makes a character in a dialogue about literature say: "We have been so long together bad Englishmen that we have not had the leisure to be good poets." Marvell, too, is saying that his countrymen have been bad Englishmen, but he is not saying it so directly. How is his description of flowers ironical? How does this irony contribute to the effect of the poem?

9) The imagery is sometimes fanciful and even playful; note, for instance, the play with words in the last two lines, or the line about the sting of a bee, "She runs you through, nor asks the word" (i.e., the password). Does such imagery make the poem trivial? Does it have its ironical effect?

10) Discuss the way in which Marvell is able to make the couplet structure coincide with his syntax. Do you see that although the second lines of the couplets are never run-on lines, the couplets fit gracefully into sentences several lines long?

11) Suppose you had read this poem and "To His Coy Mistress" but did not know that they were by the same poet. Are there characteristics common to both that would lead you to suppose one poet wrote both poems?

12) Most of you approach this pair of poems by Herrick and Marvell concerning a civil war three centuries ago in England

with no very deep feeling for either party. Would you, do you think, be as good readers for a pair of poems written by poets on opposite sides in our own War between the States?

13) Consider these poems as records. Do they complement your knowledge of English history and help you to realize imaginatively the struggle between King and Parliament? Is it, for instance, as important to feel with the supporters of Charles I, which we may do in Herrick's poem, as it is to know the date upon which he was beheaded?

XXVIII

Man and Nature

I

SONG

Edmund Waller (1606–1687)

Go, lovely rose,
Tell her that wastes her time and me,
That now she knows,
When I resemble her to thee,
How sweet and fair she seems to be.

Tell her that's young,
And shuns to have her graces spy'd,
That hadst thou sprung
In deserts, where no men abide,
Thou must have uncommended dy'd.

Small is the worth
Of beauty from the light retir'd;
Bid her come forth,
Suffer herself to be desir'd,
And not blush so to be admir'd.

Then die, that she,
The common fate of all things rare,
May read in thee;
How small a part of time they share,
That are so wondrous sweet and fair.

A CONTEMPLATION UPON FLOWERS

Henry King, Bishop of Chichester (1592–1669)

Brave flowers, that I could gallant it like you
And be as little vain,
You come abroad, and make a harmless shew,
And to your beds of earth again;
You are not proud, you know your birth
For your embroider'd garments are from earth:

You do obey your months, and times, but I
Would have it ever spring;
My fate would know no winter, never die
Nor think of such a thing;
Oh that I could my bed of earth but view
And smile, and look as cheerfully as you:

Oh teach me to see death, and not to fear
But rather to take truce;
How often have I seen you at a bier,
And there look fresh and spruce;
You fragrant flowers then teach me that my breath
Like yours may sweeten, and perfume my death.

1) Waller's "Song" belongs to the tradition in which poets have found the fading blossom the most poignant representation of transience. You will be reminded of Herrick's "To Blossoms." What dramatic element does Waller's song have that "To Blossoms" does not?

2) King's poem is more complex than either Herrick's or Waller's. Perhaps we can say that it includes the experience they represent, and more. Does the title assist the reader in taking the right attitude toward the poem, and therefore in its interpretation? You are aware that in both "To Blossoms" and Waller's "Song" there is an implied analogy between man's life and the life of the flowers. "A Contemplation upon Flowers" has

the same sort of analogy, carried out further and to another purpose.

3) Write out the plain sense of the second stanza. Consider the antithesis of "spring" and "winter." Interpret the metaphor in line 14. With whom or what is the "truce"?

4) Does the "I" of the poem say that men should be like the flowers, or that they should live as the flowers do? Or does he say that man is or should be merely a part of nature? What does he say?

5) Does the poet mean us to take the last two lines of his poem literally? What does breath mean—or stand for? Is the implied comparison—what is it exactly?—"far-fetched"? Certainly the wish expressed, if taken literally, is grotesque. Does that spoil for you the comparison implied?

6) You are not asked to write a prose account of the poem, but put into one or two good sentences what seems to you the attitude toward man's life and death that arises from the poem. Do not use the terms of the poem itself.

II

THE SHRUBBERY

Written in a Time of Affliction

William Cowper (1731–1800)

Oh, happy shades—to me unblest!
  Friendly to peace, but not to me!
How ill the scene that offers rest,
  And heart that cannot rest, agree!

This glassy stream, that spreading pine,
  Those alders quiv'ring to the breeze,
Might soothe a soul less hurt than mine,
  And please, if anything could please.

But fix'd unalterable care
  Foregoes not what she feels within,

Shows the same sadness ev'ry where,
And slights the season and the scene.

For all that pleas'd in wood or lawn,
While peace possess'd these silent bow'rs,
Her animating smile withdrawn,
Has lost its beauties and its pow'rs.

The saint or moralist should tread
This moss-grown alley, musing, slow;
They seek, like me, the secret shade,
But not, like me, to nourish woe!

Me fruitful scenes and prospects waste
Alike admonish not to roam;
These tell me of enjoyments past,
And those of sorrows yet to come.

1) Although we shall consider "The Shrubbery" with Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," it will be convenient this time to have the discussion follow the poem at once. Little detailed comment is necessary. Pronounce the poet's name as if it were spelled "Cooper." The title refers to a grove, probably part of a landscaped estate. The first two lines of the last stanza are an example of the sort of inversion poets once allowed themselves for metrical convenience, a liberty which the poets of our generation have for the most part given up. Does the inversion seem awkward to you?

2) Our poems have included a number of attitudes toward nature and ideas about man's relationship to the natural world—a constant concern of man. We have seen, for instance, the tendency to think of natural objects and events in human terms, or, in the pair of poems by Waller and King above, analogies between the life of flowers and the life of men. In the oldest poetry of the Western tradition men have gone to nature for peace and repose: In the *Iliad,* the grief-stricken Achilles walks by the shore of the sounding sea; the Psalmist lifts his eyes unto the

hills, and is led by the still waters. Is Cowper's poem denying what has so long been affirmed?

3) You may be reminded of the stanzas from Tennyson's *In Memoriam* we have read, or of Arnold's sonnet, "To an Independent Preacher." But in these poems the thinking of philosophy and science is apparent. In Cowper's poem, the "I" is himself estranged from the beauty about him—a beauty that he has known and does not undervalue. We are interested in the experience in and for itself—no philosophical generalization about it is made or suggested.

4) What, according to the poem, is the source of the estrangement? We are not told in what sorrow the "I" is wrapped; the important thing is that he is isolated from nature by his very humanity. Do you see the basis in the poem for that statement? His grief is his own; it is a human affair for which there is no parallel and no analogy in nature. Is it not because he must feel, and *can* feel, such grief that now nature is unrelated to him? It is man's paradoxical identity with and estrangement from nature that we are led to consider in the next poem.

ODE TO THE WEST WIND

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822)

i

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!

ii

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aery surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh, hear!

iii

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystàlline streams,

Beside a pumice isle on Baiæ's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear!

iv

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

v

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

1) The effect of this poem depends so much upon its technical excellence that its pattern may well be our first consideration. Mark the rhyme scheme of the first stanza. Shelley has taken the *terza rima,* a pattern of continuous rhyming in TERCETS, *aba bcb cdc* etc., which in Dante's *Divine Comedy* is continued for CANTOS of more than a hundred lines. By rounding off a set of four tercets with a couplet, Shelley has made *terza rima* into a stanzaic form. These stanzas are of fourteen lines. How do they differ in structure and effect from either form of the sonnet? Discuss the appropriateness of the movement of the verse to the subject matter and tone of the poem. Is the rhythm representational?

2) Shelley has this note to the poem: "This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when the tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains. They began, as I foresaw, at sunset, with a violent tempest of hail and rain, attended by that magnificent thunder and lightning peculiar to the Cisalpine regions." Apparently, then, the poem had its inception in observation at a particular time. There is a children's poem by Christina Rossetti:

Who has seen the wind?
Neither I nor you:
But when the leaves hang trembling
The wind is passing thro'.

Who has seen the wind?
Neither you nor I:
But when the trees bow down their heads
The wind is passing by.[1]

Neither Miss Rossetti nor Shelley could describe the wind but by its effects. But is Shelley describing the effects of the west wind as he sees them from a particular vantage point? Why is it to his purpose in this poem to describe, rather, the career of the west wind? Shelley's note to stanza 3 may make that stanza clearer to you: "The phenomenon alluded to at the conclusion of the third stanza is well known to naturalists. The vegetation at the bottom of the seas, of rivers, and of lakes, sympathizes with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it."

3) The poem has three stanzas of INVOCATION (note that each of the first three stanzas ends "oh, hear!") and two stanzas in which certain petitions are made to the west wind. The invocation is a convenient way of organizing a statement of the powers and attributes of the wind, and lends itself to intensity of expression. Discuss particularly the second stanza, with its complex combination of similes and metaphors. You must know something of a Maenad to understand the second and third tercets.

4) At the outset in this book you were warned against the unconsidered identification of the "I" of a poem and its poet. Usually in our discussions we have not found it well to make that identification, for the poet is, as Keats said, "continually in for and filling some other body." But Shelley's genius was not dramatic and his poems generally imply his own attitudes

[1] From *The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti.* Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

and the events of his life. What do you infer about the poet from his poem?

5) You may find the last two stanzas more eloquent than clear. What are the petitions in what the poet calls "prayer in my sore need"—what exactly are the things asked or desired?

6) If you will list the petitions, they will probably not seem logically consistent. For example, the wind is asked to make the "I" its lyre, to be the "I" and completely identified with him, and to disseminate his poems. But we do not require logical consistency. Our question as readers ought to be: Can we find an imaginative consistency in these petitions—is the emotion and the desire clear to us?

7) As you understand the poem, what spiritual need does the "I" feel? Is he recognizing spiritual limitations or deficiencies in himself?

8) The striking thing about the poem is the intensity of its emotion. The "I" speaks of striving in prayer at his sore need. The metaphor "to strive in prayer" is an established one and has often been used to represent an intensity of Christian religious experience. The eloquence of the invocation and the insistence of the petitions support the metaphor. A crucial matter, then, in the interpretation of the poem is our understanding of the "sore need" of the "I." The "I" says "Be thou me, impetuous one!" Is the converse—May I be thee!—also his desire? Remember that the "I" also asks that his words shall influence the thinking of mankind.

9) It is just here that "Ode to the West Wind" and "The Shrubbery" suggest the same question. The "I" in Cowper's poem found himself on a sudden poignantly conscious of the separateness of the human sphere from the world of nature. The intensity of Shelley's poem is the intensity of its effort to deny that separateness. But are we not, as readers, as keenly aware of the dualism of man and nature in the "Ode to the West Wind" as we are in "The Shrubbery"?

10) There remains another point: Consider this poem as an effort to find in nature an object of worship other than that of traditional religion. Compare Psalm 19, in which the wonder of the created universe "declares the glory of God."

XXIX

Contrasting Techniques

In each of the following pairs we are considering together poems in which the subject matter, attitude, and even intention are comparable, but in which the means the poets use are in decided contrast. These pairs of poems offer an unusual opportunity to see how important the choice of one or another resource of communication may be in the end effect of a poem.

I

I LIKE TO SEE IT LAP THE MILES[1]

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)

I like to see it lap the miles,
And lick the valleys up,
And stop to feed itself at tanks;
And then, prodigious, step

Around a pile of mountains,
And, supercilious, peer
In shanties by the sides of roads;
And then a quarry pare

To fit its sides, and crawl between,
Complaining all the while
In horrid, hooting stanza;
Then chase itself down hill

[1] From *Poems by Emily Dickinson* edited by Martha Dickinson Bianchi and Alfred Leete Hampson. Reprinted by permission of Little, Brown and Company.

And neigh like Boanerges;
Then, punctual as a star,
Stop—docile and omnipotent—
At its own stable door.

TO A LOCOMOTIVE IN WINTER[2]

Walt Whitman (1819–1892)

Thee for my recitative,
Thee in the driving storm even as now, the snow, the winter-day declining,
Thee in thy panoply, thy measur'd dual throbbing and thy beat convulsive,
Thy black cylindric body, golden brass and silvery steel,
Thy ponderous side-bars, parallel and connecting rods, gyrating, shuttling at thy sides,
Thy metrical, now swelling pant and roar, now tapering in the distance,
Thy great protruding head-light fix'd in front,
Thy long, pale, floating vapor-pennants, tinged with delicate purple,
The dense and murky clouds out-belching from thy smoke-stack,
Thy knitted frame, thy springs and valves, the tremulous twinkle of thy wheels,
Thy train of cars behind, obedient, merrily following,
Through gale or calm, now swift, now slack, yet steadily careering;
Type of the modern—emblem of motion and power—pulse of the continent,
For once come serve the Muse and merge in verse, even as here I see thee,
With storm and buffeting gusts of wind and falling snow,
By day thy warning ringing bell to sound its notes,
By night thy silent signal lamps to swing.

[2] From *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman. Copyright 1924 by Doubleday & Company Inc.

Fierce-throated beauty!
Roll through my chant with all thy lawless music, thy swinging lamps at night,
Thy madly-whistled laughter, echoing, rumbling like an earthquake, rousing all,
Law of thyself complete, thine own track firmly holding,
(No sweetness debonair of tearful harp or glib piano thine,)
Thy trills of shrieks by rocks and hills return'd,
Launch'd o'er the prairies wide, across the lakes,
To the free skies unpent and glad and strong.

1) Our first concern may be the "physical points of view" taken by the poets, which are, of course, also the points of view the reader is expected to take. From what vantage point are we viewing the train in "I like to see it lap the miles"? In Whitman's poem we are seeing the locomotive as observers not far from the tracks—so much is obvious. But do we view the locomotive from one vantage and on one occasion? You will conclude, perhaps, that here detail about the locomotive is combined and organized in such fashion that experience is more complete than it can be in one's ordinary observation.

2) Discuss the pattern of "I like to see it lap the miles" and particularly the unusual run-on lines at the ends of stanzas. Do they have a purpose in the poem? Observe the rhymes—they are of a sort sometimes called "slant rhymes." And notice especially the relationship between metrical form and syntax.

3) "Boanerges" is a name Christ used in reference to the disciples James and John—it means "sons of thunder." But it is sometimes used as a singular term to describe a vehement person, and perhaps the poet knew of some famous horse called Boanerges. "Iron horse" was once a common figurative expression for a locomotive, and the last line of the poem suggests that we are to think of the locomotive (or the train—which is it?) as a horse. The metaphors throughout the poem suggest a beast of some sort. What is the image that arises for you? Consider "supercilious." (What is its derivation?)

4) Note the last stanza. Why is the comparison "punctual as a star" appropriate? Note the combination of the adjectives "docile and omnipotent" for the train in the station; they have the force of an "as if" expression—the train seems docile and omnipotent. Do you think the decided break in the sentence after "stop"' is a planned effect in the poem?

5) Turn now to "To a Locomotive in Winter." What is a "recitative"? Does the term suggest Whitman's intention in the poem? The forms "thee" and "thy" are archaic except in prayers —and perhaps in verse, but poets have pretty well abandoned them. Why do you suppose Whitman, who somewhat self-consciously thought of himself as the voice of his time, used these forms in a poem addressed to a locomotive?

6) Can you tell why Whitman preferred to have his readers view a locomotive in winter instead of some other season?

7) You have observed that poets commonly represent an experience by combining a few—presumably the right—details; "I like to see it lap the miles" is an example ready to hand. Whitman here gives us an extensive catalogue of the parts, the sounds, and the appearances of a locomotive—a technique characteristic of him. How effective do you find it? If Whitman's intention is to make his readers feel the great power and complexity of the locomotive, may this piling up of detail help?

8) Do you find in Whitman's verse in this poem any influence from Old Testament poetry as it is presented in the King James Version of the Bible? Whitman says: "Roll through my chant with all thy lawless music." *Is* the rhythm representational?

9) Consider particularly these two lines:

Type of the modern—emblem of motion and power—pulse of the continent
For once come serve the Muse and merge in verse, even as here I see thee.

Do they not suggest that Whitman, aware that mechanical things had been considered out of the scope of poetry, is quite

consciously concerned to demonstrate the possibilities of a locomotive for poetry? The matter is interesting because our contemporary poets still find it difficult to treat mechanical things in and for themselves.

10) We have noted that it is natural for man to represent certain aspects of nature in the person of human beings; apparently it is as natural for man to represent a machine as a living thing or in terms of a living being. When we attempt to comprehend imaginatively our relatively new experience we do it in terms of our old. Discuss this tendency as it is illustrated by "I like to see it lap the miles" and by "To a Locomotive in Winter." In Whitman's poem the metaphors which lead us to think of the locomotive as a living being are not consistently maintained, but do not overlook their presence. What animal is suggested by these expressions: "thee in thy panoply" and "yet steadily careering"? Point out other metaphors which make an imaginative connection between the locomotive and living things.

11) Whitman's style was in his time most individual, although it may seem less so now than once it did because it has been both followed and imitated. Yet compare our two poems in this regard: In which is there the greatest intrusion of the poet's personality? See whether you can accept these statements: Miss Dickinson is primarily interested in the way in which *she* sees the train; Whitman is primarily interested in the locomotive as a thing in itself.

12) Which poem do you prefer? Are your reasons largely personal, or are they reasons which you believe ought to affect the judgment of any good reader of the poems?

II

From FEARS IN SOLITUDE

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834)

Thankless too for peace,
(Peace long preserved by fleets and perilous seas)

Secure from actual warfare, we have loved
To swell the war-whoop, passionate for war!
Alas! for ages ignorant of all
Its ghastlier workings, (famine or blue plague,
Battle, or seige, or flight through wintry snows,)
We, this whole people, have been clamorous
For war and bloodshed; animating sports,
The which we pay for as a thing to talk of,
Spectators and not combatants! No guess
Anticipative of a wrong unfelt,
No speculation on contingency,
However dim and vague, too vague and dim
To yield a justifying cause; and forth,
(Stuffed out with big preamble, holy names,
And adjurations of the God in Heaven,)
We send our mandates for the certain death
Of thousands and ten thousands! Boys and girls,
And women, that would groan to see a child
Pull off an insect's leg, all read of war,
The best amusement for our morning meal!
The poor wretch, who has learnt his only prayers
From curses, who knows scarcely words enough
To ask a blessing from his Heavenly Father,
Becomes a fluent phraseman, absolute
And technical in victories and defeats,
And all our dainty terms for fratricide;
Terms which we trundle smoothly o'er our tongues
Like mere abstractions, empty sounds to which
We join no feeling and attach no form!
As if the soldier died without a wound;
As if the fibres of this godlike frame
Were gored without a pang; as if the wretch,
Who fell in battle, doing bloody deeds,
Passed off to Heaven, translated and not killed;
As though he had no wife to pine for him,
No God to judge him!

ELEVEN-O'CLOCK NEWS SUMMARY[3]

Phyllis McGinley

Fold up the papers now. It is hushed, it is late;
Now the quick day unwinds.
Yawning, empty the ashtrays into the grate.
Close the Venetian blinds.
Then turn, by custom, the dial a wave length lower.
This is the hour (directly upon the hour)
Briefly to hear
With half-attentive and habitual ear
Important news bulletins.

Our armies are valiant.
They have taken another ridge,
Another town, a fort, a strip, a salient.
They have held a bridge
(With heavy casualties). Our planes today,
According to a recent communiqué,
Struck (though the loss was high) at a vital border.
Remember to leave a note for the dairy order
And to set the thermostat at sixty-two.
We have captured an island at merely a moderate cost.
One of our submarines is overdue
And must be presumed lost.

In forests, in frozen fields, while winter fades,
Our troops are smashing through the Barricades,
They Push, they Storm, they Forge Ahead, they die
And lie on litters or unburied lie.

Static is bad tonight.
There—twiddle the knob a little to the right.

[3] From *Stones from a Glass House* by Phyllis McGinley. Copyright 1943, 1945, 1946 by Phyllis McGinley. Reprinted by permission of The Viking Press, Inc., New York. Originally published in *The New Yorker.*

Here in the nation
Obedient curfews sound their midnight wails.
This is America's leading independent station.
Read the paper tomorrow for further details—
Details of death on the beaches, in the heat, in the cold,
Of death in gliders, in tanks, at a city's gate,
Death of young men who fancied they might grow old
But could not wait
(Being given, of course, no choice).

Well, snap the switch, turn off the announcer's voice,
Plump up the pillows on the green divan,
For day unwinds like a thread
And it is time now for a punctual man,
Drowsy, a little absent, warmed and fed,
To dim the light, turn down the blanketed bed,
And sleep, if he can.

1) The selection from Coleridge is part of a long poem which has for a sort of subtitle "Written in April 1798, during the alarm of an invasion." (Why did Englishmen fear an invasion in 1798?) "Eleven-O'clock News Summary" was written during World War II. Discuss in detail the coincidence of idea in the two poems.

2) Most of you will probably find Coleridge's blank verse rather prosaic. Its movement is, however, very different from that of prose. Copy a portion of it without the line arrangement —as if it were prose—and read what you have copied. But is the rhythm in itself more interesting than that of good prose?

3) Write a summary statement of what Coleridge is saying in the selection.

4) The comment on the attitude of civilians toward war is interesting and important. Can you say just why Coleridge failed to make it moving?

5) Coleridge points out that civilians prefer to think of war in abstract terms: "Terms which we trundle smoothly o'er our

tongues." Does he succeed in translating the abstractions to which he objects into concrete terms?

6) Coleridge is thinking about newspaper readers. (Where in the poem are they mentioned?) Do you think that the radio, which can bring us news minutes after it has happened, has made or is likely to make war more immediate to civilians? Does Phyllis McGinley's poem imply a censure of broadcasters as well as of listeners?

7) Discuss the typography of "Eleven O'clock News Summary." What do the portions of the poem printed in italics have in common? How do the italics help the reader?

8) Discuss the way in which the poet uses the jargon of the news broadcaster. And point out when she is *not* using it. What is the effect of the juxtaposition of the two sorts of diction?

9) Single out particular lines for comment—there are several very interesting ones. For example, you might point out the significance of the capitalization in

> They Push, they Storm, they Forge Ahead, they die.

10) Why is the domestic detail included? Comment on the choice of detail.

11) Part of the poem is in the imperative mood. Who is being addressed? How much can be inferred about him? Can you see the poet's motive in not individualizing him more completely than she does?

12) How is the rhyme a part of the communication? Perhaps if two lines are quoted apart from the rest of the poem, they will give you a suggestion toward your answer:

> Struck (though the loss was high) at a vital border.
> *Remember to leave a note for the dairy order.*

But the effect of the rhyme is sometimes more subtle than this.

13) Would you class this poem as a satire?

14) Assuming a perceptive but uninstructed reader, write a complete discussion of irony in "Eleven O'clock News Summary," pointing out to him in considerable detail just wherein the irony is to be perceived.

XXX

Lovers and Traveling Companions

I

STRANGE FITS OF PASSION

William Wordsworth (1770–1850)

Strange fits of passion have I known:
And I will dare to tell,
But in the Lover's ear alone,
What once to me befell.

When she I loved looked every day
Fresh as a rose in June,
I to her cottage bent my way,
Beneath an evening-moon.

Upon the moon I fixed my eye,
All over the wide lea;
With quickening pace my horse drew nigh
Those paths so dear to me.

And now we reached the orchard-plot;
And, as we climbed the hill,
The sinking moon to Lucy's cot
Came near, and nearer still.

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,
Kind Nature's gentlest boon!
And all the while my eyes I kept
On the descending moon.

My horse moved on; hoof after hoof
He raised, and never stopped:
When down behind the cottage roof,
At once, the bright moon dropped.

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
Into a Lover's head!
"O mercy!" to myself I cried,
"If Lucy should be dead!"

WHEN MY LOVE WAS AWAY[1]

Robert Bridges (1844–1930)

When my love was away,
Full three days were not sped,
I caught my fancy astray
Thinking if she were dead,

And I alone, alone:
It seemed in my misery
In all the world was none
Ever so lone as I.

I wept; but it did not shame
Nor comfort my heart: away
I rode as I might, and came
To my love at close of day.

The sight of her stilled my fears,
My fairest-hearted love
And yet in her eyes were tears:
Which when I questioned of,

O now thou art come, she cried,
'Tis fled: but I thought to-day
I never could here abide,
If thou were longer away.

[1] From *The Shorter Poems of Robert Bridges*: by permission of the Clarendon Press, Oxford.

1) These two poems deal with somewhat the same kind of emotion, although we must remember, even while we remark their likeness, that two experiences are never quite the same. Both poets describe a baseless but poignant premonition, a premonition of the sort to which lovers are prone. The poems, then, are not "original" in the sense that they embody out-of-the-common experience. How frequently does poetry you enjoy do so? How much of the pleasure in poems, do you think, is in recognition—in the reader's sudden awareness that the poet has something just right, and that another has had an experience much like one's own?

2) Wordsworth's poem ends with the lover's premonition, but Bridges' poem begins with it. Do you think one of the poets made the better choice?

3) If Wordsworth writes a poem and it is printed, everyone may read it. How, then, shall we take the first stanza? Neither "fits" nor "passion" had so great a suggestion of violence in Wordsworth's time as they do for us. Do not let these words affect your interpretation of the poem until you are able to relate them to the context. Are you sure you know what "fond" in the first line of the last stanza means? Your dictionary will give you a meaning that fits this context. Do you think Wordsworth chose "slide" merely because it rhymes with "cried"? Is it a good metaphor?

4) Read both poems aloud again. You notice that the rhythm of Wordsworth's poem is more regular and more marked than that of Bridges'. How does the strong rhythm of "Strange fits of passion" contribute in the communication of the experience?

5) Does the fifth stanza of "Strange fits of passion" mean that the "I" of the poem is asleep in the ordinary sense of the word? Just what is his condition?

6) Comment on the effect of the next stanza. Read it aloud several times, exaggerating the stresses. Is the rhythm representational?

7) Note the recurrence of the word "moon" in every stanza save the first and last. Is Wordsworth merely making sure the reader realizes the moon is out? What is he doing? Note that the

premonition comes just after the moon drops out of sight. Do you think it may be that our fixed attention on the moon and our awareness of the heavily stressed rhythm combine to contribute to the end effect of the poem?

8) What is there in this poem to interest a psychologist? Can you describe the experience of the "I" of the poem in psychological terms? If you were interpreting the poem for another reader, what would you suggest as a modern equivalent for "fits of passion"?

9) Write a prose account of both poems. Which poem loses the more in such restatement?

10) Which of the two poems is, for you, the richer experience? Can you say why? A short time is represented in "Strange fits of passion," an hour or so. The time represented in Bridges' poem is longer; the lover is reassured by a meeting with his love, who has had somewhat the same feeling as his own. Shall we say therefore that the experience in "When my love was away" is more complex?

II

BECAUSE I COULD NOT STOP FOR DEATH[2]

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)

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.

[2] From *Poems of Emily Dickinson* edited by Martha Dickinson Bianchi and Alfred Leete Hampson. Reprinted by permission of Little, Brown and Company.

We passed the school where children played
At wrestling in a ring;
We passed the fields of gazing grain,
We passed the setting sun.

We paused before a house that seemed
A swelling of the ground;
The roof was scarcely visible,
The cornice but a mound.

Since then 'tis centuries; but each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses' heads
Were toward eternity.

THE MERRY GUIDE[8]

A. E. Housman (1859–1936)

Once in the wind of morning
I ranged the thymy wold;
The world-wide air was azure
And all the brooks ran gold.

There through the dews beside me
Behold a youth that trod,
With feathered cap on forehead,
And poised a golden rod.

With mien to match the morning
And gay delightful guise
And friendly brows and laughter
He looked me in the eyes.

[8] From *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman. Reproduced by permission of Henry Holt and Company, Inc.; and of the Society of Authors as the Literary Representative of the Trustees of the Estate of the late A. E. Housman, and Messrs. Jonathan Cape, Ltd. publishers of A. E. Housman's *Collected Poems*.

Oh whence, I asked, and whither?
He smiled and would not say,
And looked at me and beckoned
And laughed and led the way.

And with kind looks and laughter
And nought to say beside
We two went on together,
I and my happy guide.

Across the glittering pastures
And empty upland still
And solitude of shepherds
High in the folded hill,

By hanging woods and hamlets
That gaze through orchards down
On many a windmill turning
And far-discovered town,

With gay regards of promise
And sure unslackened stride
And smiles and nothing spoken
Led on my merry guide.

By blowing realms of woodland
With sunstruck vanes afield
And cloud-led shadows sailing
About the windy weald,

By valley-guarded granges
And silver waters wide,
Content at heart I followed
With my delightful guide.

And like the cloudy shadows
Across the country blown
We two fare on for ever,
But not we two alone.

With the great gale we journey
That breathes from gardens thinned,
Borne in the drift of blossoms
Whose petals throng the wind;

Buoyed on the heaven-heard whisper
Of dancing leaflets whirled
From all the woods that autumn
Bereaves in all the world.

And midst the fluttering legion
Of all that ever died
I follow, and before us
Goes the delightful guide,

With lips that brim with laughter
But never once respond,
And feet that fly on feathers,
And serpent-circled wand.

1) Miss Dickinson's poem sometimes puzzles students a bit. But if you will keep in mind that a journey is described and remember what is passed in the journey, you ought not to be troubled greatly. What idea about the relationship of life and death arises for you from the representation of the "I" of the poem and Death riding together? Does the second line indicate —in the ordinary sense of "death"—the death of the "I" of the poem? One might take it so if he stopped reading at the end of the first stanza. How do you understand the line in the context of the poem?

2) Consider the third stanza. How much of a life's experience is there represented? The carriage passes children at play, the ripening grain, the setting sun.

3) What is represented by the "house that seemed a swelling of the ground"? Note carefully what is said: The carriage pauses; the journey does not stop.

4) A journey is one of the most common allegorical representations of man's life. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is an example. In it Christian's journey is over when he reaches the Celestial City. We have seen that the journey in "Because I could not stop for Death" does not stop at the grave. What is the implication of the last stanza?

5) "The Merry Guide" depends upon a central allusion, which is suggested by the title. You probably realize at once that the feathered cap, the feet that fly on feathers, the serpent-circled wand are all attributes of Mercury, or, as the Greeks called him, Hermes. Hermes is probably most familiar to Americans through allusion to him as a fleet messenger and through advertisements. Yet this knowledge may be misleading here. In Homer, Hermes, "the helper" or "the hastener," is an attractive individual who, in one of his functions, conducts the dead to the House of Hades. (It would be well to review what was said in question 4 following "To an Athlete Dying Young" in Section XVI.) Housman seems to allude particularly to the opening of the last book of the *Odyssey*. That is not to say that the Merry Guide is identical with Homer's Hermes. Yet perhaps Homer's young and beautiful messenger of the gods in his function of conductor of the dead suggested the central irony of the poem. Consider in this regard the first two lines of the last stanza.

6) But the poem is not only a literary allusion; the literary allusion is used and evokes the reader's previous experience to reinforce the present experience. Is the Merry Guide conducting the "I" of the poem only at the time of his death? Obviously not. When does the "I" come under his guidance? Is there not, then, a close parallel to the Dickinson poem?

7) Interpret the eleventh stanza.

8) Consider the rhythm of the poem. What is the effect intended? Is the light and gay movement appropriate?

9) Have you noticed the imagery of the wind, and wind-blown blossoms? What does it represent?

10) Each line in a Housman poem is finished in the perfection that a lapidary gives to the facets of a precious stone. Have

you observed the unobtrusive use of alliteration and of other correspondences in the sound of letters? Such a line as

With mien to match the morning

is an obvious example; but you will find others, less obvious and more effective. You might consider particularly the ninth stanza. Of what sounds are you conscious when you fix your attention on the first line? Are any carried through the stanza?

11) In what ways are "Because I could not stop for Death" and "The Merry Guide" alike? Consider both idea and means of representation.

12) But the poems are not alike, are they, in their central conceptions of the relationship of life and death. In a careful sentence for each poem, make your own statement of the idea about the relationship of life and death implicit in the poem.

Suggestions for Papers: (a) Housman's "To an Athlete Dying Young" and "The Merry Guide," and Tennyson's "Ulysses" and "The Lotos-Eaters" all make use of Homer's *Odyssey*. Write an essay on the ways in which poets may draw on the work of their predecessors, using the relationship of these poems to the *Odyssey* as illustrative material. (b) We have now had four poems by Housman and five by Emily Dickinson. Write a paper in which you consider the work of either one of these poets—if you feel that you need more poems, your instructor can suggest them. You will perhaps wish to go back to the questions and discussion about the poems of the writer you choose. And here are some general questions, pertinent to the work of either poet, which you may find helpful.

1. How are the poems alike in form and rhythm? Can you discover characteristic metrical practices?

2. Does the poet use some one of the resources of communication in a way that seems peculiarly his own—so that you might identify his work by it?

3. How far do the poems form a context for one another? Is one of the poems enriched by being read with another, or with the others?

4. Can you generalize about the poet's attitude toward life on the basis of these poems?

But the problem of giving your paper its focus and direction must be your own. Carefully consider your reader and what you can best do for him.

XXXI

Various Poets to Various Women

I

UPON JULIA'S CLOTHES

Robert Herrick (1591–1674)

When as in silks my *Julia* goes,
Then, then (me thinks) how sweetly flows
That liquefaction of her clothes.

Next, when I cast mine eyes and see
That brave vibration each way free,
O how that glittering taketh me!

ON A GIRDLE

Edmund Waller (1606–1687)

That which her slender waist confin'd,
Shall now my joyful temples bind;
No monarch but would give his crown,
His arms might do what this has done.

It was my Heaven's extremest sphere,
The pale which held that lovely dear;
My joy, my grief, my hope, my love,
Did all within this circle move.

A narrow compass, and yet there
Dwelt all that's good, and all that's fair:
Give me but what this riband bound,
Take all the rest the sun goes round.

MADRIGAL

c. 1600

My Love in her attire doth show her wit,
It doth so well become her;
For every season she hath dressings fit,
For Winter, Spring, and Summer.
No beauty she doth miss
When all her robes are on:
But Beauty's self she is
When all her robes are gone.

1) Many poets have addressed poems to women; our selection is not intended to be particularly representative. The poems are arranged throughout the section in an order of increasing complexity. The three we now consider are, you will have noticed, seventeenth-century poems; the modern reader will recognize in them masculine attitudes that have persisted despite changes in fashion and custom. Can you recognize the charm of a Julia clothed in the voluminous silks of the seventeenth century? It should be an easy exercise of the historical imagination.

2) Consider the first two lines in the second stanza of "On a Girdle." Waller is thinking of the old idea of a heaven of ten spheres of increasing glory. Note the pun in the second line There are many poems about the privileges enjoyed by some article of apparel worn by the loved one. The quality of the poem will be apparent in comparison with this stanza of a song from Tennyson's "The Miller's Daughter":

And I would be the girdle
About her dainty dainty waist,
And her heart would beat against me,
In sorrow and in rest:
And I should know if it beat right,
I'd clasp it round so close and tight.[1]

[1] From *The Works of Tennyson.* Used by permission of the Macmillan Company.

3) The word "madrigal" means a lyric suitable for musical setting. What has preserved this little "Madrigal" from oblivion? Not, certainly, originality of idea or attitude. You might consider its structure and the way in which it builds up to the last line. What are the implications of the contrast between "No beauty doth she miss" and "But Beauty's self she is"?

II

TO HELEN

Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849)

Helen, thy beauty is to me
  Like those Nicéan barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
  The weary, way-worn wanderer bore
  To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
  Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
  To the glory that was Greece
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo! in yon brilliant window-niche
  How statue-like I see thee stand,
  The agate lamp within thy hand!
Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
  Are Holy Land!

MY STAR

Robert Browning (1812–1889)

All that I know
  Of a certain star
Is, it can throw
  (Like the angled spar)

Now a dart of red,
Now a dart of blue;
Till my friends have said
They would fain see, too,
My star that dartles the red and the blue!
Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled:
They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
What matter to me if their star is a world?
Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.

1) In "To Helen" and "My Star" we come to poems of larger intention than that in any of the three poems preceding them. We may say that "To Helen" is a "greater" poem than "Upon Julia's Clothes." But if we are thinking clearly, we will mean only that the experience in "To Helen" is of larger significance than the experience in "Upon Julia's Clothes," and we will intend no dispraise of Herrick's poem, which seems to do supremely well what it set out to do. If we wish to compare poems, we must take into account the poets' intentions so far as we can judge them, or we shall only confuse the issue.

2) In "To Helen," the allusion in "Nicéan barks" is disputed. W. P. Trent's suggestion that Poe meant the Phaeacian ship that brought Odysseus home to Ithaca seems probable. Does a positive identification matter much to the understanding of the poem? In what way is Helen's beauty like ships? Is she beautiful as ships are beautiful, or is some other comparison intended? Perhaps it is the effect of her beauty that is suggested? What effect?

3) Homer speaks of "hyacinthine" hair. What does the word mean? Why is an adjective associated with Greek literature and sometimes used to describe the hair of a sculptured head appropriate here? What sort of airs are Naiad airs? Why are the associations effective?

4) Lines 9–10 are famous. Does Poe use "glory" in 9 and grandeur" in 10 for the sake of "elegant variation"? Is the choice of the word dictated by metrical considerations? Is the word

"glory" more "right" for Greece than the word "grandeur" would be? In an earlier version of the poem Poe wrote:

To the beauty of fair Greece
And the grandeur of old Rome.

What is the superiority of the lines of the final version?

5) In line 14 is Poe thinking particularly of the story of Cupid and Psyche? What does the word "psyche" mean?

6) This poem is said to have been inspired by Poe's affection for a woman considerably older than he. It probably was written after her death. However, Poe has given the woman to whom the poem is addressed a classical name and has associated her throughout the poem with classical culture. Perhaps that suggests what she may have meant to him and her influence upon him. Does it also suggest that in the poem she comes to stand for an attitude toward life? What, then, might "desperate seas" stand for?

7) You probably have read several other poems by Poe. Has "To Helen" qualities wholly lacking in them? What are they?

8) "My Star" is generally taken to refer to Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the poet's wife and a poet in her own right. But it has been taken to refer to Browning's own special gift of insight. Which reading do you prefer? Consider particularly the last four lines.

9) "Like the angled spar" means like a prism of crystalline mineral. What is the implication of the simile?

10) If you believe the poem a tribute to Mrs. Browning, try to say in explicit terms what qualities are attributed to her. Does the identification of the "star" with Mrs. Browning matter very much to the poem?

11) Is it perhaps better not to consider Mrs. Browning at all, and to comprehend the poem as it involves the reader's own experience?

12) "My Star" is not a particularly difficult poem, but it has the kind of difficulty typical of Browning. What is the nature of the difficulty?

III

A VALEDICTION: FORBIDDING MOURNING

John Donne (1572–1631)

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls to go,
While some of their sad friends do say,
The breath goes now, and some say, no:

So let us melt, and make no noise,
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move,
T'were profanation of our joys
To tell the laity our love.

Moving of th'earth brings harms and fears,
Men reckon what it did and meant,
But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers' love
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love, so much refin'd,
That ourselves know not what it is,
Inter-assurèd of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two,

Thy soul the fixt foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if th'other do.

And though it in the center sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must
Like th'other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end, where I begun.

1) We know that the impetus for this poem was Donne's absence from his wife, but our interest in the poem transcends its occasion. Although the tenor of the poem is clear, some passages will require special attention. Try for a general comprehension before you worry overmuch about the difficult passages.

2) Notice that the first stanzas compare the parting to the death of virtuous men. What are the implications? In what sense are the persons among whom these married lovers live "the laity"? ("Laity" is an important word in this poem: if you understand its sense here fully, you will have an indication of the nature of the experience Donne intends to convey.)

3) It would be worth your while to compare this poem to Wilmot's "Absent from thee I languish still" (Section XXI). The experiences in the two poems are only partly alike, but comparison will help you to define the complexity of Donne's poem.

4) In the third stanza the poet is saying that a movement in the earth (for instance, an earthquake) alarms people, but that the movement of the earth's axis goes unnoticed. If you will look up the term "precession of the equinoxes" you will see what Donne has in mind. Consider the force of "trepidation." But what is the connection between this stanza and what has gone before?

5) Literally "sublunary," in stanza 4, means beneath the

moon; it is used here, as frequently, in the sense of ordinary, commonplace, or having to do with this earth. In this stanza the development of the special nature of the love of the parting lovers begins; we are to understand how their love differs from the loves of the "laity." The poet is saying, in this stanza and the next, that for most lovers absence from one another is complete separation (because their union is only physical and sĕnsual), but that these lovers, whose love has another quality, cannot be wholly parted. The quality of their love is represented in the last three stanzas.

6) The last three stanzas have sometimes been used as an example of the kind of "conceit" typical of Donne and his school of poets. (A "conceit" means an involved, fanciful, and perhaps strained figure of speech. Because the term itself implies a judgment, it is not a very useful one.) If one merely said that any pair of separated lovers was like a pair of extended draftsman's compasses, the comparison might well be dismissed as only fanciful. But this comparison becomes an analogy carefully developed. Is the analogy, in your opinion, an effective means of communication? Can you understand what Coleridge meant when he said: "Nothing was ever more admirably made out than the figure of the compass"?

7) Is the difficulty of the poem (making due allowance for changes in the use of language since Donne's time) the result of a willful effort on Donne's part to be cryptic? Or is it to be accounted for by the complexity of the attitude to be communicated?

8) Write a prose account of the poem. Follow the structure of the poem and do not add interpretation, except as an expanded statement of the comparisons Donne uses may interpret them. Your prose account should be longer than the poem.

9) Our three poems by Browning, Poe, and Donne are probably all in their original impetus highly personal. In each, a special relationship between the "I" of the poem and the woman addressed, with its attendant emotion, is represented. Do you find the experience of one of these poems of more significance for you than that of either of the two others? Can you say why?

Are the reasons for your preference personal, or do you believe they ought to be effective for all good readers of the poem?

Suggestion for a Paper: We have now had five poems by Robert Herrick. Write a paper considering the five together, using the suggestions at the end of Section XXX.

XXXII

Poems on Social Justice

I

LONDON[1]

William Blake (1757–1827)

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

How the chimney-sweeper's cry
Every black'ning church appals;
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

[1] Text of *Poetical Works of William Blake*, edited by John Sampson. By permission of the Clarendon Press, Oxford.

THE LEADEN-EYED[2]

Vachel Lindsay (1879–1931)

Let not young souls be smothered out before
They do quaint deeds and fully flaunt their pride.
It is the world's one crime its babes grow dull,
Its poor are ox-like, limp and leaden-eyed.

Not that they starve, but starve so dreamlessly,
Not that they sow, but that they seldom reap,
Not that they serve, but have no gods to serve,
Not that they die, but that they die like sheep.

From THE PEOPLE, YES[3]

Carl Sandburg

Have you seen men handed refusals
till they began to laugh
at the notion of ever landing a job again—
Muttering with the laugh,
"It's driving me nuts and the family too,"
Mumbling of hoodoos and jinx,
fear of defeat creeping in their vitals—
Have you never seen this?
or do you kid yourself
with the fond soothing syrup of four words
"Some folks won't work"??
Of course some folks won't work—
they are sick or wornout or lazy
or misled with the big idea
the idle poor should imitate the idle rich.

Have you seen women and kids
step out and hustle for the family

---

[2] From Vachel Lindsay, *The Congo and Other Poems*, copyright, 1914. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

[3] From *The People, Yes* by Carl Sandburg, copyright, 1936, by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

some in night life on the streets
some fighting other women and kids
for the leavings of fruit and vegetable markets
or searching alleys and garbage dumps for scraps?

Have you seen them with savings gone
furniture and keepsakes pawned
and the pawntickets blown away in cold winds?
by one letdown and another ending
in what you might call slums—
To be named perhaps in case reports
and tabulated and classified
among those who have crossed over
from the employables into the *un*employables?

What is the saga of the employables?
what are the breaks they get?
What are the dramas of personal fate
spilled over from industrial transitions?
what punishments handed bottom people
who have wronged no man's house
or things or person?

Stocks are property, yes.
Bonds are property, yes.
Machines, land, buildings, are property, yes.
A job is property,
no, nix, nah nah.

The rights of property are guarded
by ten thousand laws and fortresses.
The right of a man to live by his work—
what is this right?
and why does it clamor?
and who can hush it
so it will stay hushed?
and why does it speak

and though put down speak again
with strengths out of the earth?

1) Blake's poem needs little explanation. A "ban" is a curse. Young boys, small enough to get into chimneys, were used as chimney sweeps and frequently abused. The insistence upon the word "charter'd" in the first two lines is for the sake of ironic contrast. London City had a royal charter and the independence and dignity of a great municipality.

2) "London" is a concentrated poem. Interpret "mind-forg'd manacles" in line 8. How do you understand the hearing of manacles? In the third stanza, why does, or should, the chimney-sweep's cry appall the church? Notice how the first two lines in the stanza are balanced against the last two. What does "palace" stand for?

3) Notice how the metaphor "marriage hearse" enforces the idea in the last stanza. Make your own statement of what Blake is saying in this stanza.

4) "The Leaden-Eyed" is more generalized than "London." In "London" the imagery—note that it is often sound imagery—is vivid and the metaphor arresting. But consider Lindsay's purpose in "The Leaden-Eyed." Is it not well that single, vivid images do not arise for us?

5) Make your own sentence statement of the central idea in "The Leaden-Eyed."

6) Sandburg's technique is certainly not traditional. There is in *The People, Yes* an obvious attempt to use the diction of common American speech: "kid yourself" or "hustle for the family." But there is always a difficulty in the representation of actual speech. You have probably noticed in fiction that often what is intended to be an accurate transcription of an individual's speech seems artificial. Verisimilitude in speech is a matter of suggestion. Does the speech here have an authentic ring? Does it seem dated? Does it, as the title implies is the intention, seem representatively American?

7) Why should this material be set up in lines of verse? Do the lines mark off the cadence? As an experiment you might type

a part of this selection as prose and compare what you have typed with Sandburg's lines.

8) If you are at all aware of the world you live in, this is not the first time you have had occasion to consider the proposition that a job is property. The proposition can be discussed in the abstractions of the economist or in the rhetoric of the editorial writer. Note how, in general, the poet avoids abstraction. Consider especially the terms "the employables" and "the unemployables." How does the poet go about it to make us realize these abstractions really mean men and women like ourselves? What is the effect of the constant questioning? To what sort of person does this poem seem to be addressed?

9) Some of you may remember an effective speech in John Galsworthy's play *Strife* when, after one Scantlebury has protested that the members of the board of a firm fighting a bitter strike are all humane men, Edgar answers: "There's nothing wrong with our *humanity*. It's our imaginations, Mr. Scantlebury." One of the things a poem may do is to give us an imaginative sympathy with others—not pity, which is part condescension, but sympathy, a feeling *with*. Whether or not a poem evokes this sympathy is an important critical question. Ask yourselves this question about each of three poems above.

II

From MILTON[4]

William Blake (1757–1827)

And did those feet in ancient time
  Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
  On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine
  Shine forth upon our clouded hills?

[4] Text of *Poetical Works of William Blake*, edited by John Sampson. By permission of the Clarendon Press, Oxford.

And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!

I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

NOT PALACES, AN ERA'S CROWN[5]

Stephen Spender

Not palaces, an era's crown
Where the mind dwells, intrigues, rests;
The architectural gold-leaved flower
From people ordered like a single mind,
I build. This only what I tell:
It is too late for rare accumulation
For family pride, for beauty's filtered dusts;
I say, stamping the words with emphasis,
Drink from here energy and only energy,
As from the electric charge of a battery,
To will this Time's change.
Eye, gazelle, delicate wanderer,
Drinker of horizon's fluid line;
Ear that suspends on a chord
The spirit drinking timelessness;
Touch, love, all senses;
Leave your gardens, your singing feasts,

[5] From *Poems* by Stephen Spender. Copyright, 1934, by the Modern Library. Reprinted by permission of Random House and of Faber and Faber Limited.

Your dreams of suns circling before our sun,
Of heaven after our world.
Instead, watch images of flashing brass
That strike the outward sense, the polished will
Flag of our purpose which the wind engraves.
No spirit seek here rest. But this: No man
Shall hunger: Man shall spend equally.
Our goal which we compel: Man shall be man.
—That programme of the antique Satan
Bristling with guns on the indented page
With battleship towering from hilly waves:
For what? Drive of a ruined purpose
Destroying all but its age-long exploiters.
Our programme like this, yet opposite,
Death to the killers, bringing light to life.

1) Blake's poem needs some comment. The first two lines are, as we noted in Section X, an allusion to Isaiah 52:7. In the Old Testament, Jerusalem was the holy city of the Jews, the place of the great temple. With the expulsion of the Jews its symbolic significance increased. And in Christian symbolism Jerusalem has come to represent the manifestation of God's will (see Revelation 21:1–3). "These dark Satanic Mills" is commonly taken to mean factories, and perhaps there is no injury to the poem in such a reading—certainly the phrase is likely to come to mind in connection with some industrial towns in our own country and day. But it seems certain from other passages in *Milton* that Blake meant "logic mills": the intellectual habit of his England, and perhaps specifically the great English universities.

2) Spender's poem offers us the difficulty, not of allusion, but of elliptical expression. You must first make sure of the persons addressed. Is the poem addressed to the underprivileged? To whom?

3) Note the direct address to the eye, ear, and all the senses. What sacrifice does the poem require of those who would follow "our programme"?

4) What, put into general terms, is "our programme"?

5) Many lines are highly concentrated; take, for example,

Eye, gazelle, delicate wanderer,
Drinker of horizon's fluid line.

Yet with attention the poem will yield its meaning. If you need to, make an expanded prose statement of what is said in it.

6) Each of these poems is revolutionary, yet the signal difference in them must be apparent. Blake's appeal is to a tradition, an ideal present in men's minds for centuries. The allusions are carefully chosen to recall that ideal, and the poem depends upon it. It is because the ideal is still present to us that the poem may speak to us. Mr. Spender, like many of our contemporaries, here seems to feel the necessity, not only of a new political and economic system, but of the rejection—or perhaps the suspension?—of traditional values:

Instead, watch images of flashing brass
That strike the outward sense.

The difference between Spender's "this Time's change" and Blake's "Jerusalem" is more than rhetorical. Consider the close relationship between the manner of Spender's verse and the subject matter and attitude of the poem.

7) More than a century ago Shelley, in his *Defence of Poetry,* brilliantly stated an idea that hundreds of speakers and writers of our time have repeated: the idea that our social and moral development lags dangerously behind our scientific or material accomplishment. Indeed, Shelley went further; he said that our scientific and material development had inhibited our spiritual development, and that "We want [i.e., we lack and need] the creative faculty to imagine that which we know; we want the generous impulse to act that which we imagine. . . ." Poems on social justice are not primarily pieces of discussion; if they are effective, they make us imagine that which we know. Do our poems have that value for you? Does any one of them particularly?

Suggestions for Papers: (a) Take any one of the five poems in this section and use it as point of departure in a discussion of social justice in your town or state. (b) Read Carl Sandburg's *The People, Yes* and write a review of the book. (c) Write a complete discussion of the idea in "The Leaden-Eyed," bringing in a good deal of material from your own observation of the spiritually and intellectually underprivileged.

XXXIII

Religious Attitudes

I

LORD, WITH WHAT CARE
George Herbert (1593–1633)

Lord, with what care hast Thou begirt us round!
Parents first season us; then schoolmasters
Deliver us to laws; they send us, bound
To rules of reason, holy messengers,
Pulpits and Sundays, sorrow dogging sin,
Afflictions sorted, anguish of all sizes,
Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in,
Bibles laid open, millions of surprises;
Blessings beforehand, ties of gratefulness,
The sound of glory ringing in our ears,
Without, our shame; within, our consciences;
Angels and grace, eternal hopes and fears.
Yet all these fences and their whole array
One cunning bosom-sin blows quite away.

GRACE
Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882)

How much, preventing God! how much I owe
To the defences thou hast round me set:
Example, custom, fear, occasion slow,—
These scornèd bondmen were my parapet.
I dare not peep over this parapet
To gauge with glance the roaring gulf below,

The depths of sin to which I had descended,
Had not these me against myself defended.

THOUGHT

Ralph Waldo Emerson

I am not poor, but I am proud,
  Of one inalienable right,
Above the envy of the crowd,—
  Thought's holy light.

Better it is than gems or gold,
  And oh! it cannot die,
But thought will glow when the sun grows cold,
  And mix with Deity.

1) The sonnet by Herbert, though not difficult, is packed and requires careful reading. What is the sense of "season" in line 2? Look up the word "grace" in line 12, paying attention to the definitions marked "theological." What does line 11 mean —how is our shame "without"?

2) The metaphor in "sorrow dogging sin" is particularly interesting. Comment on it. Consider line 6; "sorted" and "of all sizes" remind us of descriptions of merchandise. Comment on the expressions as metaphors.

3) Consider how much depends upon the final couplet. Do you see that it must balance the three quatrains if the sonnet is to succeed?

4) What is a "cunning bosom-sin"? (Compare the expression "bosom friend.") What might be an example of a bosom-sin? The verb "blows" is metaphorically consistent with "fences" but not with "cunning bosom-sin." Does the mixed metaphor bother you any? Is a mixed metaphor necessarily a bad metaphor?

5) A good dictionary will give you the sense of "occasion" in line 3 of Emerson's "Grace." But what does "occasion slow" mean? Explain "scorned" in the next line. Does the "I" of the

poem scorn "example, custom, fear, occasion slow"? Who does?

6) Discuss the coincidence of idea in Herbert's sonnet and "Grace."

7) Herbert says that one cunning bosom-sin will destroy all man's safeguards. But Emerson says that he, by the same sort of safeguards, has been defended against himself. Are the two statements reconcilable?

8) Emerson was poor enough when he wrote "Thought," in the sense that he had little money. What is the implication of "I am not poor" in its context in the poem? What is the implication of the term "inalienable right" in this context?

9) What, according to the poem, is the nature of thought? Reread the selection from Wilmot's "A Satyr Against Mankind" (Section XV). Can you consider Wilmot's poem a commentary on Emerson's?

10) Just what does the last line of "Thought" mean?

11) Neither "Grace" nor "Thought" was included in Emerson's own final collection of his poems, and we may assume that he felt neither consistent with the attitudes he wished to represent in it. "Thought" was written when he was about twenty; "Grace" considerably later. Does "Thought" seem to you a young man's poem? Why? Would you have expected the two poems to have been written at about the same time? Would a man be likely to have the attitudes expressed in these poems at the same period of his life?

12) Let us push question 11 a bit further. If you decided that the attitudes of the two poems are not consistent one with the other, you may wonder whether a reader can accept both poems as experiences, particularly when he reads them together. Can you find in yourself an emotional and imaginative sympathy for the spiritual humility of "Grace" *and* for the spiritual arrogance of "Thought"? What ought to be expected of a reader when matters of belief arise? Should he suspend completely his own beliefs? Students are often told that their own religious beliefs ought not to affect their reading of a religious poem at all. But, it is to be feared, hidden in that advice is the assumption that a poem is an aesthetic experience and insulated

from the rest of man's experience. In the matter of these poems of Emerson's, ought we to expect more of a reader than the recognition of the reality of both experiences?

13) George Herbert was a clergyman of the Anglican Church and a man of deep religious experience; Emerson was for a time a clergyman, and though he broke with his church he remained a spiritual leader outside of institutional Christianity and at variance with it. Can the religious poems of these men be read adequately by persons without religious convictions or interests? Can such persons for the time being adopt the poet's attitude? Or may they have an experience with the poem modified by their own attitudes and therefore somewhat apart from the poet's intention? These are all difficult questions; and they are usually answered too glibly. It is important that you be aware of them, and perhaps answer them tentatively. Your answers at this point in your literary experience certainly need not be final.

14) Note, however, that the question of poetry and belief does not for these three poems make any insurmountable difficulty. Although they are written from a background of religious experience and use terms which belong to religion or are associated with it, they are not very specialized but touch in some manner the experience of everyone.

II

DOVER BEACH[1]

Matthew Arnold (1822–1888)

The sea is calm to-night.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits;—on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray

[1] From *The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold.* Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

1) Notice first the dramatic structure of the poem and compare Arnold's "Philomela" (Section XXVI). Be sure to read "Dover Beach" aloud before *and* after you consider it in detail. Note the rhyme pattern, the pattern of lines of varying length,

and the syntax. How are these patterns together representational? Perhaps you will do best to focus your attention upon the first fourteen lines until you hear what is there to hear.

2) Suppose a reader who has never heard or seen the sea. Will the poem be somewhat different for him than for one familiar with the ebb and flow of tides and the sound of surf?

3) What do the words "shingles," "darkling," and "alarms" mean in the context of this poem?

4) Do the four sections of the poem mark the progress of the thought? May they be considered paragraphs? Discuss the transition in the second division. Sophocles (B.C. 496–406) was a Greek tragic poet, the author of *Oedipus the King* and *Antigone* —a poet who was conscious always of the great burden laid upon the human spirit, and of human dignity. He, Arnold says in "To a Friend," "saw life steadily, and saw it whole." The allusion to Sophocles will evoke remembered emotion of considerable intensity for readers of the poem who know his plays.

5) This poem has an importance as record. You know, at least in a general way, that in the Victorian period men were distressed because both science and Biblical criticism seemed to make faith difficult. Whatever you know about Victorian thought will affect your comprehension of "Dover Beach," and the poems by Tennyson and the other poems by Arnold in this book are preparation for it. ("Dover Beach" may have been written as early as 1850; it was first printed in 1867.) Yet do you think that the poem speaks to us any less immediately than it did to readers of Arnold's day?

6) The first section of the poem, you will have noted, might quite well stand alone as a description of full tide on a moonlit night. Is there a comparison or an analogy between the sea and the "Sea of Faith"? Pause a moment to get your answer clear, and be precise—perhaps there is neither comparison nor analogy.

7) In the last section of the poem, are we to feel that the love of two persons is a sufficient compensation for a world in which faith is receding? Is the world described in this part of the poem the result of a lack of faith? Exactly what is being said?

8) Write a short discussion of this poem. Consider particularly the poem and the reader today, and the significance it may have for him.[2]

THE KINGDOM OF GOD[3]

"In no Strange Land"

Francis Thompson (1859–1907)

O World invisible, we view thee,
O World intangible, we touch thee,
O World unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!

Does the fish soar to find the ocean,
The eagle plunge to find the air—
That we ask of the stars in motion
If they have rumour of thee there?

Not where the wheeling systems darken,
And our benumbed conceiving soars!—
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

The angels keep their ancient places;—
Turn but a stone, and start a wing!
'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces,
That miss the many-splendoured thing.

But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)
Cry;—and upon thy so sore loss
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross.

[2] There are two interesting recent comments on this poem. One is another poem, Archibald MacLeish's "Dover Beach—A Note to That Poem," in *Public Speech*, 1936. The other is Theodore Morrison's "Dover Beach Revisited," in *Harper's Magazine*, February, 1940—a good piece of satire on college teachers of English, and something more.

[3] Reprinted by permission of Mr. Wilfred Meynell, Francis Thompson's literary executor.

Yea, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,
Cry,—clinging Heaven by the hems;
And lo, Christ walking on the water
Not of Gennesareth, but Thames!

1) The title is part of a clause in Luke 17:21: "the kingdom of God is within you." In stanza 5 the allusion is to Jacob's dream: "And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it" (see Genesis 28:10–22). Gennesareth is the Sea of Galilee; the allusion is to Matthew 14:22–33. Where is Charing Cross?

2) How do the title and subtitle aid in our understanding of the poem? Should they be considered part of the poem?

3) What is the implication of the verbs used with "fish" and "eagle" in the second stanza? What sort of philosophical or religious speculation does the poet have in mind in the stanza? What is the plain sense of the stanza?

4) Stanza 3 is elliptical. If you can see the force of the contrast between "wheeling systems" and "our own clay-shuttered doors" you will see the intention. If we try to put the stanza in abstract language, we get something like this: "We do not understand (or we misunderstand) the universe; we do not see its purpose and pattern. But in ourselves we have, or can have, intuitive and immediate apprehension of the divine." But such restatement is inadequate and disappointing, for abstract language will fail to convey the immediacy of the experience.

5) How does the expression "drift of pinions" prepare for the imagery of the next two stanzas? Consider the cumulative effect of this imagery.

6) This poem is distinguished for its compression and intensity; we must make an effort to realize the full force of the words the poet has chosen. For example, "angels" in the first line of the fourth stanza means messengers or manifestations of divine power; "their ancient places" are their places in relation to this world and to human destiny. Milton writes in his sonnet on his blindness:

Thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er Land and Ocean without rest.

The metaphors are bold, compressed, and allusive; for instance, "clinging Heaven by the hems," a striking expression in itself, becomes the more significant if we see in it an allusion to an incident in the New Testament (see Matthew 9:20–22 and 14:36).

7) Consider the effect of the juxtaposition "Heaven and Charing Cross." And consider the effect of the word "traffic" in this context. Where in the poem is there a similar juxtaposition?

8) Finally, there is an effective parallelism, a parallelism which is not only a matter of stanzas in the same metrical pattern and rhyme scheme. Point out examples of parallelism within stanzas and between stanzas.

9) Your thinking about "Dover Beach" and "The Kingdom of God" has probably brought you to problems like those with which we were concerned in questions 12 and 13 following the poems by Herbert and Emerson. At this point in your study of poetry you will not, at any rate, make the mistake of considering one of these two poems a denial of the other. Each is an experience; together they indicate something of the range of spiritual experience. But it may well be that they illustrate for you the difficult and pressing problem of poetry and belief. Perhaps it will clarify the question for you if you will consider what you would say to a reader who professed dislike for a poem you admire, and whose dislike was a matter of his disagreement with the beliefs of the poet.

Suggestion for a Paper: Write a discussion of the problem of poetry and belief as it has arisen in your own literary experience, quoting generously for illustration.

XXXIV

Poems in Process

We have been concerned primarily with our own activity as readers, and have considered what the poet does only insofar as it helps us to understand what we do in reading his poem. Indeed, generalization about the process of poetry, fascinating as it may be, must be tentative, for, when we compare the testimony of the poets themselves, it is clear that one poem does not come into being in exactly the same way as another—even though we occasionally find that some poet assumes his process to be the standard one. In this section we shall consider two poems from which we may gain a little insight into what happens in the writing of a poem—insight which has a direct bearing on our activity as readers.

I

It is fortunate that a draft version of William Blake's "The Tiger" is preserved in his notebook (now called the Rossetti Manuscript). From this draft version we can infer something of what went on in Blake's mind as the poem took its form. A transcript of the notebook version is here placed immediately after the final version of "The Tiger" for your convenience in a later comparison, but we shall not examine the notebook version until we have considered the final version of the poem.

THE TIGER[1]

William Blake (1757–1827)

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,

[1] Text of *Poetical Works of William Blake,* edited by John Sampson. By permission of the Clarendon Press, Oxford.

What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

The transcript below of the notebook version of the poem is from the Oxford edition of *The Poetical Works of William Blake,* edited by John Sampson. It is there introduced by these sentences: "The following is a faithful transcript of the original draft of 'The Tiger' in the *MS.*, Blake's variant readings being indicated typographically by placing them in consecutive order, one below another, deleted words or lines being printed in italics. The manuscript is unpunctuated throughout."

THE TYGER[2]

1 Tyger Tyger burning bright
In the forests of the night
What immortal hand & eye
or
Could frame thy fearful symmetry
Dare

2 *In what* distant deeps or skies
Burnt in
Burnt the fire of thine eyes
The cruel
On what wings dare he aspire
What the hand dare sieze the fire

3 And what shoulder & what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart
And when thy heart began to beat
What dread hand & what dread feet

Could fetch it from the furnace deep
And in thy horrid ribs dare steep
In the well of sanguine woe
In what clay & in what mould
Were thy eyes of fury rolld

4 *What* the hammer *what* the chain
Where *where*
In what furnace was thy brain
What the anvil What *the arm*
arm
grasp
clasp
dread grasp

[2] By permission of the Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Could its deadly terrors *clasp*
Dare *grasp*
clasp

6 Tyger Tyger burning bright
In the forests of the night
What immortal hand & eye
Dare *form* thy fearful symmetry
frame

[*On the opposite page*]

Burnt in distant deeps or skies
The cruel fire of thine eyes
Could heart descend or wings aspire
What the hand dare sieze the fire

5 3 And *did he laugh* his work to see
dare he *smile*
laugh
What the shoulder what the knee
ankle
4 *Did* he who made the lamb make thee
Dare
1 When the stars threw down their spears
2 And waterd heaven with their tears

1) This poem is best understood in the context of Blake's work. It belongs to a collection Blake called *Songs of Experience*. Another, and earlier, collection Blake called *Songs of Innocence*. He believed that intuitive perception in innocence and the reflection on life which comes by way of experience are both valid, but not identical and difficult to reconcile. Blake's poem "The Lamb" in *Songs of Innocence* asks "Little Lamb, who made thee?" and answers

Little Lamb, I'll tell thee:
He is callèd by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb.

The Lamb in New Testament symbolism represents Christ, but a lamb is also an obvious symbol for gentleness and innocence. The question in "The Tiger": "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" is a question about the most persistent problem of man, the problem of evil. Why is it appropriate therefore that the last stanza of the poem is almost identical with the first?

2) If you think it well to make the symbolism in "The Tiger" very definite, you may say that the tiger represents the wrath of God (there are passages in Blake's work to support that interpretation). But the symbolism is not arbitrary; the tiger is fierce, predatory, beautiful, and his creation shows potentialities in the Creator quite different from those shown in the creation of the lamb. Part of the experience of the poem is awe at the range of the Creator's power. We ask: What Creator is this capable of imagining and bringing into being both tiger and lamb? But the tiger himself is paradoxical; he is beautiful, why must he also be evil, strong, the enemy of man? Do you see that experience of the poem is remarkably complex? Say as precisely as you can what the implications of the poem are.

3) Discuss the effect of the persistent use of questions. You would do well to compare "The Tiger" with another great poem on the Creator's power, the thirty-eighth chapter of Job, and to consider whether "The Tiger" was influenced by it.

4) Why is the tiger described as "burning"? What image arises for you?

5) Why do you think Blake fixed upon the smith instead of some other artisan to represent the Creator? Critics have objected to "eye" in line 3. What seems to you the meaning intended?

6) We turn now to a comparison of the published poem and the notebook version. It is obvious that what Blake wrote in his notebook represents a late stage in the process of the poem. At this stage, what was giving him the most difficulty? Do you see evidence of mental processes in this draft version not different in kind from those which attend your own writing when you are writing prose with care?

7) You probably know someone who has the illusion that poets always work from immediate inspiration and that great poems come effortlessly from their minds. How could this transcript from Blake's notebook be used to dispel that notion?

8) Is there any considerable difference between such trial lines as "And did he laugh his work to see" or "And dare he smile his work to see" and the line in the form Blake finally gave it: "Did he smile his work to see?" Can you define the difference? Consider the unnumbered line in the stanza numbered 5. Why do you think the poet discarded it altogether? Consider all the changes Blake made and discuss those you think warrant discussion.

9) The unnumbered group of lines beginning "Could fetch it from the furnace deep" Blake discarded. Can you say why? Do you see why he might have decided that the lines

In what clay & in what mould
Were thy eyes of fury roll'd?

were unfortunate for his poem?

10) Had you noticed that the elimination of this unnumbered group of lines explains how the unfinished question in lines 11–12 of the published version got there? Do you consider this unfinished question a blemish in the poem? In a copy of "The Tiger" Blake gave to a friend—a copy which may represent Blake's final intention—the last line in stanza 3 is:

What dread hand forged thy dread feet?

Do you think this line should be accepted as an amended reading?

11) Can you infer from the evidence of the draft copy how much Blake was considering his reader at this point in the process of the poem? How much of his problem was the finding of the word or image which would evoke the response in the reader he intended? Yet Blake was a mystic and an "inspired"

poet. (You might find a review of Section III helpful in considering this question.)[3]

II

Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" is interesting as a poem and as evidence of the way in which the mind does its work. "Unique" is a word we do well to avoid in literary discussion; but perhaps we have a use for it here, for we have no other such record in English of what has happened in a poet's mind. Coleridge says in a note to the poem that he published it "rather as a psychological curiosity, than on the ground of any supposed *poetic* merits." He had, during a period of ill health, taken "an anodyne" (doubtless an opium derivative), and he fell asleep as he was reading a sentence from *Purchas his Pilgrimage* (an Elizabethan account of travels in the East). He quotes the sentence from memory as: "Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were inclosed with a wall." When Coleridge awakened, he wrote down at once what is now our poem, and he says he felt sure there was much more in his mind. But he was interrupted in the writing, and when he returned to his manuscript he could remember no more.

KUBLA KHAN

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834)

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:

[3] If you find this sort of study interesting, you would enjoy the discussion in M. R. Ridley's *Keats' Craftsmanship* of the extensive changes Keats made in the writing of "The Eve of St. Agnes." And you would enjoy, too, *Poets at Work* (New York, 1948), a volume of essays by poets and scholars on the manuscripts of some contemporary poems. Housman's brief essay, "The Name and Nature of Poetry," is interesting in itself, and interesting to compare with the remarks on writing poetry scattered through Oliver Wendell Holmes's *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table* and its sequels, for some of Holmes's opinions are surprisingly like Housman's. Wordsworth's Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1800 contains famous and influential descriptions of the poetic process.

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

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place; as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

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

1) If your instructor wishes you to make an extended study of this poem, he will doubtless assign you reading in John Livingston Lowes' *The Road to Xanadu,* a fascinating book. *The Road to Xanadu* is a study of "The Ancient Mariner" and "Kubla Khan," particularly of the way in which Coleridge's wide reading became the material of "The Ancient Mariner" and, apparently without the direction of the conscious will, of "Kubla Khan." This reading is not the source of either poem (at least in the ordinary sense of "source"); it is, rather, part of the stuff of experience with which the poet must work. For us, then, "Kubla Khan" is an insight into a poet's mind, for in that poem images long stored in what Professor Lowes calls "the Well" appear in free association. In "The Ancient Mariner" much the same sort of images from much the same reading are used to a conscious purpose. The questions below may be taken as an exercise preliminary to your reading in *The Road to Xanadu* or by themselves.

2) The sentence Coleridge quotes from memory in his note

stands thus in *Purchas his Pilgrimage*: "In Xamdu did Cublai Can build a stately Palace, encompassing sixteene miles of plaine ground with a wall, wherein are fertile Meddowes, pleasant springs, delightful Streames, and all sorts of beasts of chase and game, and in the middest thereof a sumptuous house of pleasure, which may be removed from place to place." Compare the sentence with the first section of the poem. Do these lines of the poem reflect more of the sentence than Coleridge remembered when he wrote the note? The likeness between the first section of the poem and the sentence suggests something of the relationship of the poem to Coleridge's reading. The relationship between some lines of the poem and passages in William Bartram's *Travels* is of the same kind, even though Coleridge had read the *Travels* some time before the day "Kubla Khan" came into being.

3) We might consider the poem on Coleridge's part a series of unconscious and coalesced literary allusions. Does it have for the reader the effect of literary allusion, even though he may not recognize anything in it as an allusion? Point out lines which for you are particularly evocative. How much of their effect depends upon connections you make between them and your previous literary experience?

4) This poem has allusion, imagery, rhythm (a most interesting rhythm). What, among the things you have come to expect in a poem, is not in it?

5) Several writers, Edgar Allan Poe among them, have maintained that a poem is most nearly perfect as it approaches the conditions and effect of music—not song, but music in itself. How much is this poem like music in effect? What sort of music?

6) What seemed to be your own activity as you read the poem? Did you supply, or attempt to supply, a meaning or a coherent narrative?

7) Coleridge said, you remember, that he published the poem as a psychological curiosity. Is it more than that? What do you consider the value of the poem in its own right—without reference to the unusual way it came into being?

8) Professor Lowes accepts Coleridge's account of the way

in which "Kubla Khan" came into being as substantially truthful and accurate. Does it seem to you that there may be a difference between the last section of the poem and the rest? Might it be that, as Coleridge set the poem down on paper, faculties which had had no part in the free association of its images came into effect in the poem?

Suggestions for Papers: (a) The books listed in footnote 3 will suggest a number of interesting paper topics, upon which your instructor can direct you. A consideration of Housman's poems in the light of his essay "The Name and Nature of Poetry" might be especially interesting. (b) Read Chapters XVIII–XXII of John Livingston Lowes' *The Road to Xanadu* and write a review of them. Assume a reader who has read "Kubla Khan," but do not neglect appropriate quotation from the poem.

XXXV

Parodies

I

A parody is an imitation of the style and the preoccupations of a writer. The imitation may be of a particular work or of the parodied writer's manner in general. The parodist has, ordinarily, one of three intentions: He may wish to write a satire of a work; he may wish to be amusing; he may wish to display the special characteristics of his subject. But a good parodist often has more than one of these intentions in one work. Parody may descend to burlesque and merely ridicule a poet by the use of his manner and materials in an extravagant or vulgar way. And, on its highest level, parody may become a subtle and analytical criticism in which the parodist displays the essential characteristics of the work or writer parodied and, by implication, comments upon them.[1]

In the simplest sort of parody, the parodist imitates a particular poem and leaves enough of it in his imitation so that the original is immediately recognized. Here, for example, is the first stanza of a poem by Wordsworth:

> *She dwelt among the untrodden ways*
> *Beside the springs of Dove,*
> *A Maid whom there were none to praise*
> *And very few to love.*

And here is the first stanza of a parody by Hartley Coleridge:

> *There lived among the untrodden ways*
> *To Rydal Lake doth lead,*

[1] The way in which a poet may use a passage of parody as a literary allusion for ironic effect has been noted in Section X.

A bard whom there were none to praise,
And very few to read.

In the most interesting sort of parody, the parodist has learned to write in the style of the writer parodied and displays that writer's characteristics without taking-off a particular poem. Such a parody is the remarkable critical achievement in which the parodist rewrites "Old King Cole was a merry old soul" in Tennyson's blank verse. Before you read it, reread, aloud and carefully, Tennyson's "Ulysses" (Section XIX).

From VARIATIONS ON AN AIR[2]
Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874–1936)

Cole, that unwearied prince of Colchester,
Growing more gay with age and with long days
Deeper in laughter and desire of life,
As that Virginian climber on our walls
Flames scarlet with the fading of the year;
Called for his wassail and that other weed
Virginian also, from the western woods
Where English Raleigh checked the boast of Spain,
And lighting joy with joy, and piling up
Pleasure as crown for pleasure, bade men bring
Those three, the minstrels whose emblazoned coats
Shone with the oyster-shells of Colchester;
And these three played, and playing grew more fain
Of mirth and music; till the heathen came,
And the King slept beside the northern sea.

1) What characteristics of Tennyson's blank verse as you know it from "Ulysses" does this poem have? Consider sentence structure and word order as well as metrics. Your instructor may

[2] From *The Collected Poems of G. K. Chesterton.* Reprinted by permission of Dodd, Mead & Company. Copyright, 1932, by Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc. And by permission of the author's executrix and Methuen & Co. Ltd.

wish you to mark the stresses in this poem and in a passage from "Ulysses" for purposes of comparison.

2) In what respects can it be said that the diction of this poem is Tennysonian?

3) Chesterton doubtless knew much of Tennyson's work. Is there evidence that he had "Ulysses" particularly in mind as he wrote this poem? Are any of the expressions here reminiscent of expressions in "Ulysses"?

4) Do you find any element of burlesque in this poem? You might take the question this way: Is there any line which, if you encountered it alone, you would be unwilling to believe Tennyson wrote? What do you infer Chesterton's attitude toward Tennyson's poems to have been?

5) Is this poem good criticism of Tennyson? Does it help you understand his work and value it?

HERRICK'S JULIA*

Helen Bevington

Whenas in perfume Julia went,
Then, then, how sweet was the intent
Of that inexorable scent.

Her very shadow walked in myrrh
And smelled (itself) of pomander,
And Herrick could but covet her.

•

The sight of Julia's dainty limb
Recalled a smooth white egg to him.
And when he saw a smooth white egg,
I guess he thought of Julia's leg.

•

All that was fair, all that was neat
Did Herrick love: her silvery feet,

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Her golden head, her double chin.
(Conceive the dither he was in.)

•

There were the riband on her throat,
Her silken air, her petticoat,
The soft pretension of her dress
To kindle in him lovingness.

They took his homage and his heart.
So, too, did every other part:
Her breasts, her eager lips, her hair.
I think she pleased him everywhere.

•

Then for his subjugation, ah,
There was the total Julia.

1) Herrick wrote a number of single couplets and quatrains to and about Julia. Most of them celebrate her separate charms: her lips, sweet and clean; her leg, "white and hairless as an egg"; her blush, "like to Roses, when they blow"; her voice; and many more. Some of these are indicated in the poem above, but two of the Herrick poems in this book are also used. What are those two poems, and in what portions of the parody above are they used?

2) Is this parody burlesque? What is its intention? Is the notion one gets from it of Herrick's manner and attitude consonant with your knowledge of Herrick gained from the several Herrick poems in this book?

3) What special characteristics of Herrick's poems are displayed in this poem? Discuss carefully the ways in which the verse resembles Herrick's.

AND AFTER MANY A SEASON*

Morris Bishop

And after many a season
The stoic bards arrive;

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Against the world's unreason
They are too proud to strive.

They pace the old quadrangle
In academic gown
To see the lads a-dangle,
To watch the lasses drown.

Though they be canker-hearted,
They hide the inward smart;
Their hair is neartly parted
If they have hair to part.

1) You should be able to recognize the poet parodied in the stanzas above by Mr. Bishop's imitation of his verse. But there are also a number of other clear indications. What does "stoic" mean and who, among our poets, might be described as a stoic bard, too proud to strive against the world's unreason?

2) The first lines of the second stanza suggest that the poet in question was an academic person and, because academic garb is seldom daily wear in the United States, English. What poem a few sections back might have been written by a scholar in the classics?

3) Our selections from the poet in question do not illustrate his preoccupation with hanging and other forms of violent death, which, in his poems, are described in a habitual understatement which becomes almost a mannerism. Mr. Bishop's parody indicates this characteristic neatly.

II

The next poem is a satire which uses the means of parody. Robert Southey (1774–1843) wrote a poem called "The Widow" in "sapphics," an adaptation of a Greek meter. Here are some stanzas:

Cold was the night wind, drifting fast the snow fell,
Wide were the downs and shelterless and naked,
When a poor wanderer struggled on her journey,
Weary and way-sore.

Fast o'er the heath a chariot rattled by her.
"Pity me!" feebly cried the lonely wanderer,
"Pity me strangers! lest with cold and hunger
Here I should perish.

"I had a home once—I had once a husband—
I am a widow poor and broken hearted."
Loud blew the wind, unheard was her complaining,
On drove the chariot.

Southey's poem has an admirable humanitarian purpose. Such poems have lately been called "poems of social significance." The poem was parodied in *The Anti-Jacobin,* a Tory publication opposed to Southey's political and social views. The satire has a double aim: It would ridicule Southey's sentimentality, and it would ridicule his choice of sapphics as a verse form for the particular material of "The Widow." Read the stanzas quoted from Southey's poem aloud so that you hear the rhythm.

THE FRIEND OF HUMANITY AND THE KNIFE-GRINDER

George Canning (1770–1827)
and John Hookham Frere (1769–1846)

Friend of Humanity

"Needy Knife-grinder! whither are you going?
Rough is the road, your wheel is out of order—
Bleak blows the blast;—your hat has got a hole in't,
So have your breeches!

"Weary Knife-grinder! little think the proud ones,
Who in their coaches roll along the turnpike-
-road, what hard work 'tis crying all day 'Knives and
Scissors to grind O!'

"Tell me Knife-grinder, how you came to grind knives?
Did some rich man tyrannically use you?
Was it the squire? or parson of the parish?
Or the attorney?

"Was it the squire, for killing of his game? or
Covetous parson, for his tithes distraining?
Or roguish lawyer, made you lose your little
All in a lawsuit?

"(Have you not read the Rights of Man, by Tom Paine?)
Drops of compassion tremble on my eyelids,
Ready to fall, as soon as you have told your
Pitiful story."

Knife-Grinder

"Story! God bless you! I have none to tell, sir,
Only last night a-drinking at the Chequers,
This poor old hat and breeches, as you see, were
Torn in a scuffle.

"Constables came up for to take me into
Custody; they took me before the justice;
Justice Oldmixon put me in the parish-
-Stocks for a vagrant.

"I should be glad to drink your Honour's health in
A pot of beer, if you will give me sixpence;
But for my part, I never love to meddle
With politics, sir."

Friend of Humanity

"*I* give thee sixpence! I will see thee damn'd first—
Wretch! whom no sense of wrongs can rouse to vengeance—
Sordid, unfeeling, reprobate, degraded,
Spiritless outcast!"

[*Kicks the Knife-grinder, overturns his wheel, and exit in a transport of Republican enthusiasm and universal philanthropy.*]

1) We have seen that, for effective satire, a norm of conduct and opinion is necessary—not usually explicit in the poem, but implicitly accepted by poet *and* reader—so that deviations from the norm will at once appear ridiculous or vicious, according to their seriousness and the poet's intention. Can you see the norm—or norms—implicit in this poem and how Southey deviates?

2) Can you see why satire is, for the most part, a more effective weapon in the hands of conservatives than it is in the hands of radicals?

3) Make a general statement of the opinions attributed by implication to Southey. Can you think of persons who might be considered Southey's modern counterparts? Who might be considered modern counterparts of the authors of the poem?

4) Compare stanzas from this poem with the stanzas quoted from "The Widow." Do Canning and Frere burlesque Southey's verse? Do they much exaggerate the inversions inevitable in sapphics? Are sapphics written in a rising or a falling meter?

5) Had Southey in "The Widow" used another meter for his material, would parody have been so easy? What might have been an appropriate meter for the sort of material in our quotation from "The Widow"? Blank verse? The ballad stanza?

6) It may well be that Southey's political and social thinking was in itself admirable. But what dishonesty or self-deception frequently observable in radicals is represented in the Friend of Humanity and by implication attributed to Southey?

7) John Hookham Frere was a remarkably clever metrist; his verse translations of the Greek comedies of Aristophanes are of a technical brilliance hardly to be surpassed. Can you see evidence of great skill in these sapphics? The awkwardness of the inversions of normal English word order to which Southey has had to resort is obvious. And the awkwardness of the inversions in what is said by the Friend of Humanity is equally obvious. But

consider what is said by the Knife-grinder. Are there any deviations from normal, even COLLOQUIAL, word order? Do you think that difference was planned? Why?

8) If we knew nothing of the occasion for this poem, would it be interesting in itself for the modern reader? Can you fit it into the context of your own experience—do you know a Friend of Humanity and a needy Knife-grinder? In other words, could "The Friend of Humanity and the Knife-Grinder" stand alone as a humorous poem?

XXXVI

Myth in Poems

The five poems in this section have this much in common: each of them is a record of its poet's insight into human nature, and each represents that insight and its attendant emotion by a myth made by the poet himself. A myth is a story told to account for men's beliefs, and the word is used primarily of stories so ancient that they cannot be attributed to particular persons. Yet the myths in these poems are of the same kind as the ancient myths.

You will see that in each of these poems the myth functions both as a vehicle for ideas and as a way of evoking emotion. One may put the idea developed in each poem into abstract language in a single sentence; the poets have chosen to represent their ideas concretely. The distinction Sir Philip Sidney makes in "An Apologie for Poetry" (1595) is real: the poet, Sidney says "yieldeth to the powers of the mind, an image of that whereof the Philosopher bestoweth but a wordish description: which doth neither strike, pierce, nor possess the sight of the soul, so much as the other doth." It is a mistaken notion that we go to the poet primarily for aphoristic wisdom. It is true that frequently poets put APHORISMS into unforgettable language, and rightly we value them. Certainly there are "thoughts" in poetry; certainly there are "lessons" in it. But if our concern is only to derive them, and then to contemplate them as abstractions, we might better go at once to those writers whose chief business it is to deal in abstractions, not to the poets. Browning says:

Art may tell a truth
Obliquely, do the thing shall breed the thought.

The degree of obliquity in these poems is not the same, but in each poem the thought is represented by the poet's myth, and in each the moral idea has the impact of experience.

I

A POISON TREE[1]

William Blake (1757–1827)

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I water'd it in fears,
Night and morning with my tears;
And I sunnèd it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright;
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine,

And into my garden stole
When the night had veil'd the pole:
In the morning, glad, I see
My foe outstretch'd beneath the tree.

THE WASTE PLACES[2]

James Stephens

As a naked man I go
Through the desert sore afraid,

[1] Text of *Poetical Works of William Blake,* edited by John Sampson. By permission of the Clarendon Press, Oxford.

[2] From *Songs from the Clay* by James Stephens. Copyright, 1915, by The Macmillan Company and used with their permission; and with the permission of Mr. James Stephens.

Holding up my head, although
I am as frightened as a maid.

The couching lion there I saw
From barren rocks lift up his eye,
He parts the cactus with his paw,
He stares at me as I go by.

He would follow on my trace
If he knew I was afraid,
If he knew my hardy face
Hides the terrors of a maid.

In the night he rises, and
He stretches forth, he snuffs the air,
He roars and leaps along the sand,
He creeps and watches everywhere.

His burning eyes, his eyes of bale,
Through the darkness I can see;
He lashes fiercely with his tail,
He would love to spring at me.

I am the lion in his lair,
I am the fear that frightens me,
I am the desert of despair,
And the nights of agony.

Night or day, whate'er befall,
I must walk that desert land,
Until I can dare to call
The lion out to lick my hand.

1) There is evidence in Blake's notebooks that he once intended the first stanza of "The Poison Tree" to stand alone. Do you see that it will? Notice that in this first stanza "wrath" is

used in quite an ordinary way: "my wrath did grow." When you come to the second stanza, you come to another level of language: "And I water'd it in fears." If you find the adjustment difficult, that is not surprising. If you find you make such adjustments with increasing ease, that is a sign you are gaining reading skill.

2) There is no difficulty about the myth itself, and the literal first stanza interprets the rest of the poem for us. Put into abstract language what Blake is saying about human nature. Is it confirmed by your experience? Is it confirmed by your knowledge of psychology?

3) Blake's idea about the repression of anger might have been handled in various ways—in an essay, for instance, or in a detailed and realistic narrative. (Is there plot enough here for a novel?) Admitting that other methods have their virtues, what are the particular virtues of Blake's method?

4) Did you find, even as you read the poem for the first time, that you filled in the allegorical outline and perhaps translated the symbols into other and more realistic terms? If your instructor cares to take class time for an investigation, you may find that individuals vary widely in their experiences with this poem as each fills it in from his own background.

5) What sort of person does the "I" of "The Waste Places" represent? Is he a person much like most of us, with quite ordinary human weaknesses? Or is he a person with special psychological difficulties? Defend your answer with specific reference to the poem.

6) Interpret with special care the third and sixth stanzas, relating them, of course, to the rest of the poem. Could you have understood the poem without the sixth stanza? Given an adequate reader, is the sixth stanza necessary to the poem?

7) Did you notice that the lion is active at night, and "couching" in the daytime? (Did you bother to distinguish "couching" from "crouching"?) Is the lion's activity at night merely a detail?

8) What is the essential idea of the poem? Put it into ab-

stract language. Is the idea confirmed by your experience and observation? Is it confirmed by your knowledge of psychology?

9) How far alike are "The Poison Tree" and "The Waste Places"?

II

DAYS

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882)

Daughters of Time, the hypocritic Days,
Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,
And marching single in an endless file,
Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.
To each they offer gifts after his will,
Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds them all.
I, in my pleachèd garden, watched the pomp,
Forgot my morning wishes, hastily
Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day
Turned and departed silent. I, too late,
Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn.

THE PULLEY

George Herbert (1593–1633)

When God at first made man,
Having a glass of blessings standing by,
"Let us," said He, "pour on him all we can;
Let the world's riches, which dispersèd lie,
Contract into a span."

So strength first made a way,
Then beauty flow'd, then wisdom, honour, pleasure;
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that, alone of all His treasure,
Rest in the bottom lay.

"For if I should," said He,
"Bestow this jewel also on My creature,
He would adore My gifts instead of Me,
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature:
So both should losers be.

Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness;
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to My breast."

1) In an address, "Works and Days," Emerson wrote: "They [the days] come and go like muffled and veiled figures, sent from a distant friendly party; but they say nothing, and if we do not use the gifts they bring, they carry them as silently away." This sentence might serve as a summary of "Days." Note that "like muffled and veiled figures" has the grammatical form of a simile, but that in the second clause the simile has become a metaphor. Restate the idea in the sentence without using any metaphor.

2) In what ways is the metaphor elaborated in the poem? How are we made to feel man's potential range of experience?

3) Consider particularly the change in effect when the "like muffled and veiled figures" of the sentence becomes the second line of the poem. (Students sometimes think of "dervishes" as "whirling dervishes"—an irrelevant response here.)

4) What do "diadems," "fagots," "bread," and "kingdoms" stand for? It might be possible to take the four words just listed literally, but a literal reading of "stars, and the sky that holds them all" is impossible. What sort of attainment is being represented?

5) Why are the Days "hypocritic"? What is the intention of the change from the plural "Days" (line 1) to the singular "Day" (line 9)?

6) Is the "I" of the poem intended to represent a particular

sort of person—such as a lazy man? Is the "I" intended to represent a class of persons?

7) "Make the most of your opportunities." "Strike while the iron is hot." "Opportunity knocks but once." Would any one of these aphorisms be an adequate statement of the central idea in the poem? Is Emerson talking about success as success is understood by most Americans?

8) If you have read "Self-Reliance," "The American Scholar," or another of Emerson's essays, do you find attitudes and ideas consonant with those of the poem?

9) Herbert's myth in "The Pulley" may remind you of the myth of Pandora. Compare also this passage which Homer puts into the mouth of Achilles in Book XXIV of the *Iliad*:

> *Two urns stand upon the floor of Zeus filled with his evil gifts, and one with blessings. To whomsoever Zeus whose joy is in the lightning dealeth a mingled lot, that man chanceth now upon ill and now again on good, but to whom he giveth but of the bad kind him he bringeth to scorn, and evil famine chaseth him over the goodly earth, and he is wanderer honored of neither gods nor men.*[3]

A comparison of this passage and the poem points up strikingly the contrast between the ancient Greek and Christian conceptions of deity.

10) Herbert may have had in mind Hebrews 4:9—"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." Do you think his reflection upon this verse might have given rise to the myth?

11) In how many senses is the word "rest" used in the poem?

12) What, according to the poem, would man lose had he in himself the gift of rest? What would God lose?

13) State in a sentence the essential idea of the poem. What is the significance of the title—how does it connect with the poem? Do you think it effective to use a metaphor in the title different from any used in the poem?

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[3] Translated by Lang, Leaf and Myers. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

III

TO MARGUERITE[4]

Matthew Arnold (1822–1888)

Yes! in the sea of life enisled,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live *alone.*
The islands feel the enclasping flow,
And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights,
And they are swept by balms of spring,
And in their glens, on starry nights,
The nightingales divinely sing;
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,
Across the sounds and channels pour—

Oh! then a longing like despair
Is to their farthest caverns sent;
For surely once, they feel, we were
Parts of a single continent!
Now round us spreads the watery plain—
Oh might our marges meet again!

Who order'd, that their longing's fire
Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd?
Who renders vain their deep desire?—
A God, a God their severance rul'd!
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

1) You may remember that the first four lines of this poem were quoted in Section IV. Perhaps it would be well to turn

[4] From *The Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold.* Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

back to the discussion in which they were used. State in a sentence the essential idea of the poem.

2) In the first four lines language is used in a familiar metaphorical fashion. A short statement of these lines might be "Mortals are enisled in the sea of life." The rest of the poem is in terms of islands which, we are to imagine, were once part of a single continent. What state of mind and emotion is represented by the second and third stanzas?

3) Other poems by Arnold are addressed to Marguerite. Has the title "To Marguerite" any specific importance in the interpretation of the poem? Suppose we used no title. Would the poem be slightly different in effect?

4) Does the line "A God, a God their severance rul'd" mean that human isolation is a part of the divine ordinance of man's life? What does the indefinite article imply?

5) Do you think Arnold's myth is a fortunate one? Is, for instance, the sea—"The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea"—an effective symbol for that which isolates man from man?

6) In another treatment of the theme of "To Marguerite," a poem called "The Buried Life," Arnold writes:

> *Ah! well for us, if even we,*
> *Even for a moment, can get free*
> *Our heart, and have our lips unchained.*

What is the significance of "To Marguerite" for our ideas about the use of literature?

7) Consider the five poems in this section together. They all have important subject matter; they are all short. Discuss, with specific reference to the poems themselves, the advantages of myth for the brief treatment of complex matters of human experience.

Suggestion for a Paper: We have now had six poems by William Blake and four by Matthew Arnold. Choose either of the poets, and write a paper considering his poems together, using the suggestions at the end of Section XXX. Perhaps you will wish to supplement your knowledge of the poet by reading more of his poems at your instructor's suggestion.

XXXVII

A Poem by T. S. Eliot

T. S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men" (1925) has a transitional position in his work, coming as it does after "The Waste Land" (1922), a long poem which represents the sterility and despair of twentieth-century life without faith, and before "Ash Wednesday" (1930), a profession of attained faith. The poem is interesting because its interpretation is curiously difficult. Mr. Eliot has his own term, "objective correlative," for the things and the events in a poem which evoke a particular emotion. Now recognition of the objective correlative in his poetry frequently depends upon the reader's knowledge of the work of writers to whom he alludes; allusion is for him a much used resource of communication, and one that has troubled his readers. Our questions, therefore, must include comment on the literary allusion in the poem and some help with other difficulties. You will see at once, however, that the poem has its myth: a story of hollow men who live in a desert.

There is a danger in interpretative comment on a difficult poem. Improperly used, it will make the poem seem a piece of intellection, ambiguously and obscurely expressed. But if Mr. Eliot had wished to write merely some observations on spiritual impotence, doubtless he would have done so clearly, whether in prose or verse. The poem is a way of evoking emotion. The comment on the poem here is intended to suggest what the background of thought may be, and to identify symbols and allusions. The comment is comment on the objective correlative; the emotion which the objective correlative evokes you must have for yourselves. In other words, the solving of certain difficulties in a poem is not the experience; it may be the necessary preliminary for the experience. Of course you understand this;

but you need to be reminded now, for in a difficult poem there may seem a separation between interpretation and experience.

The EPIGRAPH, *Mistah Kurtz—he dead,* is printed in the *Collected Poems* on a separate title page.

THE HOLLOW MEN[1]

Mistah Kurtz—he dead.

A penny for the Old Guy

i

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rats' feet over broken glass
In our dry cellar

Shape without form, shade without colour,
Paralysed force, gesture without motion;

Those who have crossed
With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom
Remember us—if at all—not as lost
Violent souls, but only
As the hollow men
The stuffed men.

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[1] From *Collected Poems 1909–1935* by T. S. Eliot, copyright, 1946, by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., and of Faber and Faber Limited.

ii

Eyes I dare not meet in dreams
In death's dream kingdom
These do not appear:
There, the eyes are
Sunlight on a broken column
There, is a tree swinging
And voices are
In the wind's singing
More distant and more solemn
Than a fading star.

Let me be no nearer
In death's dream kingdom
Let me also wear
Such deliberate disguises
Rat's coat, crowskin, crossed staves
In a field
Behaving as the wind behaves
No nearer—

Not that final meeting
In the twilight kingdom

iii

This is the dead land
This is cactus land
Here the stone images
Are raised, here they receive
The supplication of a dead man's hand
Under the twinkle of a fading star.

Is it like this
In death's other kingdom
Waking alone
At the hour when we are

Trembling with tenderness
Lips that would kiss
Form prayers to broken stone.

iv

The eyes are not here
There are no eyes here
In this valley of dying stars
In this hollow valley
This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms

In this last of meeting places
We grope together
And avoid speech
Gathered on this beach of the tumid river

Sightless, unless
The eyes reappear
As the perpetual star
Multifoliate rose
Of death's twilight kingdom
The hope only
Of empty men.

v

Here we go round the prickly pear
Prickly pear prickly pear
Here we go round the prickly pear
At five o'clock in the morning.

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow

For Thine is the Kingdom

Between the conception
And the creation
Between the emotion
And the response
Falls the Shadow

Life is very long

Between the desire
And the spasm
Between the potency
And the existence
Between the essence
And the descent
Falls the Shadow

For Thine is the Kingdom

For Thine is
Life is
For Thine is the

This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.

1) "Mistah Kurtz—he dead" is a quotation from Joseph Conrad's "The Heart of Darkness." For the reader familiar with Conrad's story, it will suggest something of the attitude of the poem. Kurtz, idealistic and ambitious, has, in his desire for power and wealth, exploited the natives of the Belgian Congo—his apparently great potentialities have come to a sordid result. Perhaps the epigraph in recalling him suggests the confused values of our time. Or perhaps Mr. Eliot is thinking of Marlow's (Marlow is narrator in "The Heart of Darkness") description of the death of Kurtz and his comments on it. Here are some selected sentences:

"The wastes of his weary brain were haunted by shadowy images now—images of wealth and fame revolving obsequiously

round his unextinguishable gift of noble and lofty expression. . . . One evening coming in with a candle I was startled to hear him say a little tremulously, 'I am lying here in the dark waiting for death.' . . . It was as though a veil had been rent. I saw on that ivory face the expression of sombre pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror—of an intense and hopeless despair. Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision—he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath—'The horror! The horror!' . . . Suddenly the manager's boy put his insolent black head in the doorway, and said in a tone of scathing contempt—'Mistah Kurtz—he dead.' . . . He [Kurtz] had summed up—he had judged. 'The horror!' He was a remarkable man. After all, this was the expression of some sort of belief; it had candour, it had conviction, it had a vibrating note of revolt in its whisper, it had the appalling face of a glimpsed truth—the strange commingling of desire and hate. . . . Perhaps all the wisdom, and all truth, and all sincerity, are just compressed into that inappreciable moment of time in which we step over the threshold of the invisible. Perhaps!"[2]

2) The ideal reader for "The Hollow Men" will recognize the quotation from "The Heart of Darkness" and remember enough of what was said about the death of Kurtz to have a clue to the poem. The epigraph, moreover, will evoke a remembered emotion in him, which will come in to reinforce the present experience. We have done the next best thing, and identified the quotation after we have read the poem. We may make a provisional statement about the relationship of epigraph and poem: In Kurtz's death the values by which he had lived were brought to test; so our values are tested in our comprehension of death.

3) "A penny for the Old Guy" is the traditional demand by

[2] From "The Heart of Darkness" in *Youth* by Joseph Conrad. Copyright 1903, 1925 by Doubleday & Company Inc. By permission of Doubleday & Company Inc., and of Messrs. Wm. Blackwood and Sons, Ltd., and of the Trustees of the Conrad Estate.

small boys in England on Guy Fawkes Day, when they make a "guy," an effigy of Guy Fawkes, and burn it. What is its connection with the poem?

4) Who are the hollow men? What judgment is the poet making in the lines

> *Shape without form, shade without colour,*
> *Paralysed force, gesture without motion.*

5) Consider the expression "death's other Kingdom." Apparently death has two kingdoms. What are they? But in ii we hear of "death's dream kingdom," represented by the lyrical cadence of the first group of lines in the section. What is the difference between "death's other kingdom" and "death's dream kingdom"?

6) ii. The word "eyes" is difficult. Until or unless you find a better interpretation, you may take it as standing for truth or reality. Part ii would then describe the hollow men's preference in their thinking about death for avoiding reality. The deliberate disguises are the scarecrow's garb—fur and feathers.

7) The imagery in the first portion of iii recalls Eliot's "The Waste Land" and reinforces the spiritual impotence of the hollow men. How has spiritual impotence been represented in i and ii? The second portion of iii asks: Shall we be as far from a knowledge of reality after death as we are now? We have seen how men prefer to imagine another state of existence ("death's dream kingdom"); the suggestion is now that never can the hollow men consummate their spiritual desires.

8) By the end of iii the reader familiar with Dante may suspect allusion to *The Divine Comedy*. Lines 13–18 in i suggest an ironic contrast to the spirits in Dante's *Inferno* who have the dignity of their perpetual rebellion. These hollow men are not like them; they are, rather, like the impotent spirits—neither good nor bad—whom hell will not receive and who remain forever just outside. Moreover, the image of the fading star in both ii and iii suggests the kind of significance Dante gives to stars. There are no stars in Dante's hell, no stars for "the woeful people, who have lost the good of their understand-

ing." But each of the three large divisions of *The Divine Comedy* ends with the word "stars"; the stars are, for Dante, symbols of increasing spiritual knowledge. Does not this fact help us to interpret our poet's "fading star"? Yet the identification of such allusion is not vitally necessary to our reading of the poem; we can understand lines 13–18 in i and see the significance of "fading star" without any knowledge of Dante.

9) But in iv there is an allusion to Dante of a different sort. We are sightless, spiritually blind, unless

> *The eyes reappear*
> *As the perpetual star*
> *Multifoliate rose*
> *Of death's twilight kingdom.*

Here we need to know that Dante, in Canto xxxi of the *Paradiso,* describes all the redeemed souls gathered together: "In form, then, of a white rose displayed itself to me that sacred soldiery which in his blood Christ made his spouse." It is in this vision of the mutifoliate rose that Dante comes to his final understanding. We are sightless, our poem says, without the vision. But what does the expression "of death's twilight kingdom" suggest? Is there, at this point in the poem, assurance of final knowledge?

10) Consider, moreover, the ambiguity in the word order of the last two lines in iv. Is it intentional? Had they been "The only hope of empty men," there would have been no doubt of their meaning. How about "Only the hope of empty men"? Is that expression equivalent to the lines in the poem? What might the ambiguity of these lines represent?

11) At the beginning of v we go round the prickly pear, but children ordinarily go round the mulberry bush. What does this version of the nursery rhyme suggest?

12) Note that the portion of v between the initial and the concluding quatrains expands lines 11 and 12 of i. The discussion, which is in abstract language, is interrupted, apparently, by attempts to pray, attempts which fail; and the poem ends on

a note of complete despair. Can you suggest a significance in the alternation of "For Thine is the Kingdom" with the platitude "Life is very long"? What do you take the "Shadow" to be, or to suggest?

13) Now go back and read again the sentences from "The Heart of Darkness" in question 1. What relationships do you find between them and the poem? Consider particularly the last sentence quoted.

14) It was pointed out at the beginning of this section that "The Hollow Men" has a transitional position in Eliot's work. Can you see the poem in itself as transitional, an experience of both despair and desire?

15) Do you feel that the difficulty of the poem is justified by the complexity of the emotion it communicates?

16) The reading of this poem illustrates one of the chief problems in contemporary poetry, for the work of contemporary poets is likely to be allusive in a fashion for which our literary backgrounds are insufficient. The poets of our time cannot assume, as their forebears could, a uniformity of literary education in their readers. As his critical essays make clear, Eliot is himself quite aware of the problem.

17) Presumably you have now done what you could by way of interpreting the poem part by part. Put it aside for a time, and when you return to it, read it as a whole, making no reference to the questions and discussion above. Then, as a way of seeing what the poem is to you, write a paragraph in which you describe as accurately as you can the spiritual condition of the hollow men.

XXXVIII

Two American Contemporaries

This section comprises a half-section on Robert Frost and a half-section on Robinson Jeffers. These poets belong to the same generation (Mr. Frost was born in 1875 and Mr. Jeffers in 1887), but their essential attitudes are very different; the juxtaposition of their work will suggest something of the great range of American poetry in the twentieth century.

I

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN[1]

Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

[1] From *Collected Poems of Robert Frost*. Copyright, 1930, 1939, by Henry Holt and Company, Inc. Copyright, 1936, by Robert Frost.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

1) This poem, one of the best known of our time, is used here in the hope that you are already familiar with it. Is rereading it a pleasure? Is your experience with it precisely the same as your first experience with it?

2) How far is the poem dramatic? Is the "I" of the poem speaking directly to the reader? Is there an implied auditor? Is the reader overhearing the "I" as he muses to himself?

3) Frost's poems often have the tone of reflective conversation within a metrical pattern and regularly recurring rhymes. How is this effect achieved in "The Road Not Taken"? Note the rhyme pattern and mark the stresses as you read the poem. Consider the diction and the word order. Would it be easy to find a poem by another poet which keeps so completely the word order of colloquial speech within a metrical pattern? Study the relationship of syntax and metrical pattern.

4) Although the "I" of the poem took the road "less traveled by," "the passing there/Had worn them really about the same." What difference to the total effect of the poem does this detail make?

5) Does the "I" of the poem feel that he has made the wrong choice?

6) Does this poem require interpretation? Some people would say, indeed do say, that we must take Frost's poems on a quite literal level, that this one, for instance, is a description of a walk in a wood in autumn which the poet, for his own reasons, wishes us to know about. But our problem as readers is not primarily to say just what was the poet's intention; we must try to be clear about what the experience of the poem is for us. If the poem implies for us something other, and something more, than the incident described, that implication is an important part of our experience. In your reading of "The Road Not Taken" does the

incident of the choice of a road stand for more than itself?

7) Read the poem without the last stanza. Do you see that the first three stanzas might stand as a poem? Often in Frost's short poems the last stanza has an effect comparable to that of the last stanza here. Frost has somewhere said that he likes the SYNECDOCHE, that figure of speech which uses the part for the whole. You might remember the remark as you read the next poem.

AFTER APPLE-PICKING[2]

Robert Frost

My long two-pointed ladder's sticking through a tree
Toward heaven still,
And there's a barrel that I didn't fill
Beside it, and there may be two or three
Apples I didn't pick upon some bough.
But I am done with apple-picking now.
Essence of winter sleep is on the night,
The scent of apples: I am drowsing off.
I cannot rub the strangeness from my sight
I got from looking through a pane of glass
I skimmed this morning from the drinking trough
And held against the world of hoary grass.
It melted, and I let it fall and break.
But I was well
Upon my way to sleep before it fell,
And I could tell
What form my dreaming was about to take.
Magnified apples appear and disappear,
Stem end and blossom end,
And every fleck of russet showing clear.
My instep arch not only keeps the ache,
It keeps the pressure of a ladder-round.
I feel the ladder sway as the boughs bend.

[2] From *Collected Poems of Robert Frost.* Copyright, 1930, 1939, by Henry Holt and Company, Inc. Copyright, 1936, by Robert Frost.

And I keep hearing from the cellar bin
The rumbling sound
Of load on load of apples coming in.
For I have had too much
Of apple-picking: I am overtired
Of the great harvest I myself desired.
There were ten thousand thousand fruit to touch,
Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall.
For all
That struck the earth,
No matter if not bruised or spiked with stubble,
Went surely to the cider-apple heap
As of no worth.
One can see what will trouble
This sleep of mine, whatever sleep it is.
Were he not gone,
The woodchuck could say whether it's like his
Long sleep as I describe its coming on,
Or just some human sleep.

1) In what way or ways is this poem like "The Road Not Taken" or other poems by Frost which you have read? (This is a good question to start; but you should, too, return to it after you have answered the questions below.)

2) What is the effect of the irregular rhyme scheme, the short lines and the large proportion of run-on lines?

3) What seems to be the purpose of lines 9–13? Do they contribute anything more to the poem than an indication of the weather?

4) Consider very carefully the word "sleep" wherever it appears. Is there a shift in the sense of the word in line 15? Compare line 38.

5) The kind of experience described in lines 17–26 will be familiar to most of you. A psychologist might think of these lines as an illustration of the "perseverative tendency": the tendency of an activity to continue in the mind after physical action has ceased. Some members of the class will recall parallel ex-

periences they have had while going to sleep, and it will be well to describe two or three for the benefit of the class. What use is made of the experience described, and what is the speculation that arises from it? (You may not be ready to answer this question fully—the questions following are pertinent to it.)

6) Why, in lines 3–5 and 32–36, is the "I" of the poem careful to mention that the harvest is not complete or perfect?

7) In lines 37–38, what will trouble the sleep of the "I" of the poem?

8) If the "sleep" of the "I" of the poem turns out to be like that of the woodchuck, what sort of sleep will it be? What is implied by associating a sleep possible to a man with the hibernation of an animal?

9) Assume an intelligent person who has read very few poems. Assume, too, that he has read "After Apple-Picking" and now has the poem before him. Write, *for him*, a discussion of the poem, making what suggestions for understanding and interpreting you think appropriate.

II

SIGNPOST[3]

Robinson Jeffers

Civilized, crying how to be human again: this will tell you how.
Turn outward, love things, not men, turn right away from humanity,
Let that doll lie. Consider if you like how the lilies grow,
Lean on the silent rock until you feel its divinity
Make your veins cold, look at the silent stars, let your eyes
Climb the great ladder out of the pit of yourself and man.
Things are so beautiful, your love will follow your eyes;
Things are the God, you will love God, and not in vain,
For what we love, we grow to it, we share its nature. At length

[3] From *Solstice* by Robinson Jeffers. Copyright, 1935, by Modern Library. Reprinted by permission of Random House.

You will look back along the stars' rays and see that even
The poor doll humanity has a place under heaven.
Its qualities repair their mosaic around you, the chips of strength
And sickness; but now you are free, even to become human,
But born of the rock and the air, not of a woman.

1) Among contemporary poets Mr. Jeffers is distinguished for his clarity, and the detail of our poems will need little explanation. His work is centered around certain convictions, which he has embodied in a number of ways, sometimes in long narrative poems. Our two poems by no means represent all his thought, but they are closely related and represent ideas which keep recurring in his work. You may take "Signpost" as a brief and general statement of his central attitude, and our second poem, "The Purse-Seine," as a development of one facet of it. "Signpost" points to the remedy of the ills of man, who, Jeffers believes, has become self-regarding, turned inward upon himself.

2) If "Signpost" were set up as prose you would find it a carefully organized paragraph and a vigorous piece of writing. It would indeed remain a poem if we destroyed the line division. But what would it lose by being set up as a prose paragraph?

3) Glancing at the printed pages of Jeffers' poems, one notes that they have a resemblance to the pages of Whitman's work. But is the verse of "Signpost" really like Whitman's? Go back to "To a Locomotive in Winter" and see. Did you notice the slant rhymes in "Signpost"?

4) Comment on the advice in lines 3–6, noting particularly the sequence of the things man is told to regard. Interpret lines 8 and 9.

THE PURSE-SEINE[4]

Robinson Jeffers

Our sardine fishermen work at night in the dark of the moon; daylight or moonlight

[4] From *Such Counsels You Gave to Me* by Robinson Jeffers. Copyright, 1937, by Random House, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Random House.

They could not tell where to spread the net, unable to see
the phosphorescence of the shoals of fish.
They work northward from Monterey, coasting Santa Cruz;
off New Year's Point or off Pigeon Point
The look-out man will see some lakes of milk-color light
on the sea's night-purple; he points, and the helmsman
Turns the dark prow, the motorboat circles the gleaming
shoal and drifts out her seine-net. They close the circle
And purse the bottom of the net, then with great labor
haul it in.

I cannot tell you
How beautiful the scene is, and a little terrible, then, when
the crowded fish
Know they are caught, and wildly beat from one wall to
the other of their closing destiny the phosphorescent
Water to a pool of flame, each beautiful slender body
sheeted with flame, like a live rocket
A comet's tail wake of clear yellow flame; while outside
the narrowing
Floats and cordage of the net great sea-lions come up to
watch, sighing in the dark; the vast walls of night
Stand erect to the stars.

Lately I was looking from a night mountain-top
On a wide city, the colored splendor, galaxies of light: how
could I help but recall the seine-net
Gathering the luminous fish? I cannot tell you how beauti-
ful the city appeared, and a little terrible.
I thought, We have geared the machines and locked all
together into interdependence; we have built the great
cities; now
There is no escape. We have gathered vast populations in-
capable of free survival, insulated
From the strong earth, each person in himself helpless, on
all dependent. The circle is closed, and the net
Is being hauled in. They hardly feel the cords drawing,
yet they shine already. The inevitable mass-disasters

Will not come in our time nor in our children's, but we and our children
Must watch the net draw narrower, government take all powers—or revolution, and the new government
Take more than all, add to kept bodies kept souls—or anarchy, the mass-disasters.

These things are Progress;
Do you marvel our verse is troubled or frowning, while it keeps its reason? Or it lets go, lets the mood flow
In the manner of the recent young men into mere hysteria, splintered gleams, cracked laughter. But they are quite wrong.
There is no reason for amazement: surely one always knew that cultures decay, and life's end is death.

1) A little less than half the poem is a vivid account of seining sardines at night; if the first two sections of the poem stood alone, they would certainly have their own interest. What is their function in relation to the whole poem? Consider very carefully the way in which detail and expressions from the first two sections are used in the third.

2) Discuss the way in which phosphorescence becomes a symbol. Jeffers has a poem called "Shine, Republic" and another called "Shine, Perishing Republic." Do you see why, given the attitude in this poem, phosphorescence is a comprehensive symbol?

3) What are the implications of the line "These things are Progress"? Why is "Progress" capitalized? Do you know the term "Idea of Progress" and the interpretation of history that it designates?

4) We have spoken of the problem of poetry and belief in regard to religious poems; but the problem does not arise solely in the reading of religious poems. Some of you have attitudes influenced by the "Idea of Progress"—even though the term may be quite new to you—and preconceptions which may very possibly interfere with your reading of the poem. You are under

no obligation to agree with the ideas in any poem; but you must realize this: readers often allow their attention to become so fixed upon a conflict between their own beliefs and what the poem seems to say that they never adequately read the poem. Literary criticism is full of examples of judgments of poems which the critics have never really read. But the failings of critics and scholars do not excuse our own.

5) The last part of the poem refers to the tortured syntax and difficult imagery of some contemporary poetry; the implication is that the style of certain poets is a symptom of our kind of civilization. Consider Jeffers' own style as these poems illustrate it. Is it appropriate to the attitudes in the poems? Do you see in it particular virtues?

XXXIX

Innovation

From time to time in this book you have read poems by poets of our own day, and you are aware that there is no reason to assume that what is sometimes called "modern" poetry is separate from the tradition and somehow stands by itself. Indeed, the poetry of our day is remarkable for the variety of influences that have been effective upon it. Nor do the poems of our time fall into a pattern which we can label. Our poems by Stephen Spender, Morris Bishop, T. S. Eliot, and James Stephens illustrate something of the variety of the poetry in our century. Any small selection of contemporary poetry which purports to represent the whole period is bound to be misleading, although it would be easy enough to select a group of poems which would represent what one happened to think contemporary poetry ought to be—or ought not to be. We cannot see contemporary poetry in perspective.

The poets of our time have made a number of innovations in the form of poems and in the use of the resources of communication. When we look at the verse of the past we can sometimes see that an age was distinguished for its use of a particular form; we realize, for instance, that the closed couplet served poets well from, say, 1660 to 1800. And even for an age so fertile in invention as the Elizabethan, we count relatively few forms that had distinguished use. But it seems unlikely that literary historians of the future will be able to say that any small number of poetic forms and styles was characteristic of our day. Consider the three poets we have read in the last two sections, Robert Frost, Robinson Jeffers, and T. S. Eliot. Each has his

own form and idiom, although each has his clear debt to the past.

Most of the poetic forms illustrated by poems in this book continue to be used. But the poets of our time, like their forebears, bend language to new uses. Sometimes readers have a sort of resentment of innovation; we have remarked the natural tendency for one to expect the new literary experience to be much like his previous literary experience. Yet we know, as a matter of literary history, that when a style or form becomes a convention, innovation must come. The innovation itself may become conventional, as certain writers have made Whitman's idiom conventional. But the alternation of convention and new forms in poetry is not merely a matter of fashion. A particular form may become so thoroughly associated with certain uses and attitudes that it is unavailable for new uses. For instance, unless a poet were willing that his poem recall a particular period—which might, of course, be part of his purpose—he would hardly use the heroic couplet. Or, to take another instance, a poet may find the sonnet form so freighted with association that he cannot use it. If you find yourselves offended by a new sort of poem, you might remember that Wordsworth, whose work seems to some persons a norm for English verse, made innovations which were in his time considered absurd and bewildering.

Each of the poems in this section makes an interesting use of language and is quite worth considering in and for itself. In each the poet endeavors to make language serve *his* purpose. And that far, at least, these poems are representative, for the poets of our time are most conscious of the manifold potentialities of language.

I

We take first two poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins. Although Hopkins died before the end of the nineteenth century, his poems were not printed until 1918. We are likely, therefore, to think of him almost as a contemporary, particularly as his experiments in rhythm and elliptical expression have influenced

poets of our own day. In the poems below you will notice ac cent marks on certain syllables, a means Hopkins uses to indicate his intention to place stresses on syllables which the reader, used to conventional verse, might not stress. Hopkins called his metrical system "Sprung Rhythm."[1] But the rhythm in these poems will not trouble you; Hopkins tells us to read his poems not with the eyes, but "with the ears, as I always wish to be read, and my verse becomes all right."

PIED BEAUTY[2]

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889)

Glory be to God for dappled things—
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough;
And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

---

[1] You may take the term "Sprung Rhythm" as a metaphor suggesting Hopkins' departure from traditional versification. He considered it essentially the rhythm of common speech, although the intensity of "Pied Beauty" may obscure for you the likeness between its rhythm and the rhythm of speech. A part of his metrical system is the continuing of a cadence over several lines; "it is natural in Sprung Rhythm," he says, "for the lines to be *rove over*." You can note this tendency in "Spring and Fall."

[2] From *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, edited by Robert Bridges, 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, London, 1930. Reprinted by permission of the Oxford University Press, London, and of the poet's family.

1) The affirmation of changelessness in change, of unity in variety, of the One in the many, has countless times been made. Emerson says: "The mind is urged to ask for one cause of many effects . . .—a one that shall be all. . . . Urged by an opposite necessity, the mind returns from the one, to that which is not one, but the other or many; from cause to effect; and affirms the necessary existence of variety, the self-existence of both, as each is involved in the other. These strictly blended elements it is the problem of thought to separate, and to reconcile." But our poem does not ask philosophical distinctions; we are to realize in it the unity of beauty in many manifestations, a changeless God in a constant flux of experience. Consider first how rapidly the images succeed one another in the first stanza. What exactly is the image in "Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls"? Do you see the simile pressed into a briefer grammatical form? What is the image in "Landscape plotted and pieced"? What do "fold, fallow, and plough" mean? How many images of dappled things are there in line 2?

2) In the first three lines of the second stanza—do you notice?—there is no word for concrete object or being—there is, rather, a list of qualities. But does the stanza have the effect of abstraction? Do you find in your reading that your activity in imaging carries over from the first stanza, so that, as you read the second, you supply images of things counter or freckled or dim?

3) The special effect of this poem is its concentration of a variety of sense experiences into a few lines. How much of that concentration is accomplished by careful syntax? Consider each stanza as a sentence, and discuss the structure of that sentence. Point out, too, how punctuation is used as a resource of communication.

4) Were you, as you read, conscious of the persistent alliteration? Did it seem only decoration? Did you recognize the effect of alliteration in making words coalesce in a single image? The alliteration which is found in the poem is worth some attention and discussion.

SPRING AND FALL:[3]

to a young child

Gerard Manley Hopkins

Márgarét, are you gríeving
Over Goldengrove unleaving?
Leáves, líke the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?
Áh! ás the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By and by, nor spare a sigh
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
And yet you wíll weep and know why.
Now no matter, child, the name:
Sórrow's springs áre the same.
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
What heart heard of, ghost guessed:
It ís the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for.

1) Consider first some matters of style. Comment on "Goldengrove," "world of wanwood," "leafmeal" (compare "piecemeal"). Notice the double rhymes. What is it that gives line 9 its special emphasis? Do you find alliteration used to the same effect that it was used in "Pied Beauty"?

2) Account for the word "Spring" in the title. Is the title an integral part of the poem? How far is the poem dramatic? Is the speaker represented as intending that the child understand him?

3) Had you noticed the effect of the parallelism of the last two lines, and the way in which they interpret each other—and the poem?

---

[3] From *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, edited by Robert Bridges, 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, London, 1930. Reprinted by permission of the Oxford University Press, London, and of the poet's family.

4) Is Margaret's present grief unrelated to the sorrow she will feel when the source of her sorrow is the "things of man"?

5) Do lines 10 and 12 mean that we have *no* terms for the sorrow Margaret will come to know?

6) What is the full sense of "Margaret" in the last line?

7) Compare this poem with Herrick's "To Blossoms" (Section III). How much coincidence of idea and of attitude is there in the two? Which seems to you the more important experience?

II

HERE'S A LITTLE MOUSE)AND[4]

E. E. Cummings

here's a little mouse)and
what does he think about, i
wonder as over this
floor(quietly with

bright eyes)drifts(nobody
can tell because
Nobody knows, or why
jerks Here &, here,
gr(oo)ving the room's Silence)this like
a littlest
poem a
(with wee ears and see?

tail frisks)
(gonE)
"mouse",
We are not the same you and

i, since here's a little he
or is
it It
? (or was something we saw in the mirror)?

[4] By permission of Liveright Publishing Corp. the poem "here's a little mouse)and" from *Is V* by E. E. Cummings.

therefore we'll kiss;for maybe
what was Disappeared
into ourselves
who (look). ,startled

1) If you feel that in this poem you have a puzzle, remember that good poets have always, in one way or another, demanded that the reader contribute his effort to the experience of a poem. Mr. Cummings uses typography as a resource of communication, a practice in which, usually to a lesser degree, a number of poets have followed him. You must be careful, therefore, to hear and to see the poem at the same time—you would not ordinarily read our poem aloud to another, for the sound and the appearance on the page are to be realized at once. That is not to say that the sound is the less important; it is merely to say that Mr. Cummings makes full use of resources not ordinarily much used.

2) It is clear that the poem is dramatic. Whom do you take the speaker to be? His auditor?

3) The intention of some of the devices is plain: You can see that capital letters are reserved for emphasis, and that punctuation indicates timing. Often you see that parentheses bind together groups of words that are to be realized together. If you are hearing and seeing together, "gonE" will not puzzle you long, and you will find that the single word and a typographical trick accomplish a good deal. Members of the class will interpret "gr(oo)ving" differently, depending upon whether they are most conscious of its sound or its appearance.

4) Now, keeping in mind what we have so far determined—that the poem is dramatic, that its appearance on the page is representational, and that some of the typographical devices have a fairly obvious intention—read the poem over again.

5) Can you now discuss the way in which the form of the poem is representational?

6) This is not a poem, obviously, for which we want to write a prose account. That is not to say that the reader's experience with the poem is without meaning. Consider—reject if you

like—the following suggestions about the implications of the poem: There arises for the reader a speculation about the mystery of personal identity—the question, why am I, I and not you?—a matter which preoccupies children and philosophers. Moreover, the two persons in the poem exist, as do we all, in a set of constantly changing relationships, altered by the sudden addition of a mouse as well as by anything else. And there yet remains a mystery. We can know the mouse only through our senses. Here we see his bright eyes and we hear him squeak. What is the reality? Is it merely the concept in us?—"maybe what was Disappeared into ourselves."

7) If you, too, feel that some of these speculations arise from the poem, do you see a further significance in the form and appearance of the poem—a representation of the very way the mind of the "I" at once apprehends sense impressions and considers them?

III

LOOK, STRANGER, ON THIS ISLAND NOW[5]

W. H. Auden

Look, stranger, on this island now
The leaping light for your delight discovers,
Stand stable here
And silent be,
That through the channels of the ear
May wander like a river
The swaying sound of the sea.

Here at the small field's ending pause
When the chalk wall falls to the foam and its tall ledges
Oppose the pluck
And knock of the tide,

[5] From *Collected Poems of W. H. Auden.* Copyright, 1945, by W. H. Auden. Reprinted by permission of Random House and of Faber and Faber Limited.

And the shingle scrambles after the suck-
-ing surf,
And the gull lodges
A moment on its sheer side.

Far off like floating seeds the ships
Diverge on urgent voluntary errands,
And the full view
Indeed may enter
And move in memory as now these clouds do,
That pass the harbour mirror
And all the summer through the water saunter.

1) Mr. Auden is a particularly versatile poet, who has a number of styles. This poem illustrates one of his distinctions: his amazing ability to make the sound of words an important resource of communication. What is done here is not, in one sense, new. We recognize combinations of sounds for which we have names: alliteration, assonance, internal rhyme. Even the division of a word to make a rhyme is not new. But these resources of sound, persistently used, are likely to seem devices, and in such poets as Poe and Swinburne often are merely devices. Here they are integral.

2) Consider first the rhyming—both the end rhymes and the internal rhymes. Note that the flexible pattern of the poem makes possible interesting long-continued cadences, that the rhymes do not affect the cadence as rhymes in an ordinary regular pattern do. It may take a little practice before you can read this poem aloud to your satisfaction. Pay careful attention to the syntax.

3) Compare the alliteration in this poem to the alliteration in Hopkins' "Pied Beauty," and point out how it is different in effect.

4) The imagery merits special consideration. For instance, if you are familiar with a shingle beach, lines 12–13 will seem to you particularly vivid. Or consider the compression attained in the simile beginning "as now these clouds do," which describes

a part of the scene as we view it *and* the quality it will have in memory. And notice that the imagery, though highly sensuous, must be realized intellectually:

That through the channels of the ear
May wander like a river
The swaying sound of the sea.

5) Single out particular lines for consideration—for instance:

When the chalk wall falls to the foam and its tall ledges.

6) "This island" is England. But we are viewing, not a panorama of the country, but a chalk cliff and the sea from it. Does the scene have a representative quality?

7) Consider finally the structure of the poem. The scene will, the poem tells us, "move in memory"; and description in the poem is never static. Discuss the way in which the point of view is established and our attention directed outward from "the small field's ending."

XL

On Going On

You have now read a number of poems and developed varying degrees of skill. The poems you have read are your possession—perhaps more fully your possession than you can now realize. Much of the skill you have gained is skill useful in all your reading; the good reader of poems is certainly a good reader of prose. But the fine edge of your skill will dull if you do not use it in reading poems. You have enough college experience to know that college courses for many students are terminal. This condition is by no means entirely the students' fault but, in the present state of education, the only good remedy is in your hands.

Some of you will become special students of literature; these paragraphs are not directed particularly to you. Most of you will have opportunity to take further courses in literature. Still, for the greater part of your lives, your reading in poems will be what you make it. There will be insistent demands upon your time. You must be sure that you get something in return for it. Now, unless you are a particularly insensitive person, or unless you really care little about your kind, the reading of poems will be, not only more important, but more interesting than most of the activities to which people give their time. The unhappy thing is that many intelligent people, knowing this full well, allow the pressures of their environment to divert them from doing what they really want to do. And yet, of all intellectual activities, the reading of poems is most easily fitted into a busy life.

Perhaps you have found the poets who will be most meaningful for you; it is just as likely that you will discover poets of

greatest significance for you not represented in this small collection. There is much in poetry that one discovers for himself. And surely you will pay some attention to what the poets of your own day are saying. But you will have to do the reading; poems will not seek you out. You ought, therefore, to have a few books of your own—perhaps, to start with, anthologies (your instructor can guide you to the ones you need). You will find—it may be you have found—that a poem you greatly enjoy will bear rereading once, twice, and any number of times, and that past experience with a good poem enhances the present reading.

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