

# INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE

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Vydala Masarykova univerzita v Brně  
pro Filozofickou fakultu roku 1998  
Vydání 2., upravené, 1998  
ISBN 80-210-1776-7

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## WINTER SEMESTER

### SESSION 1

#### WHAT IS LITERATURE?

**A.** Working in groups, try to find as many answers as possible to the following questions (you may want to jot down a few points):

What is “literature”?

Why do we read it?

How does it differ from “non-literary” texts?

Why is literature often thought more “valuable” than non-literary texts?

**B.** Read the three following texts and consider some of the following questions:

Where do you think the texts might be found? Why?

What features do the texts share? What features are different in each?

How does the language of the texts differ?

Which text(s) do you think might be valued most? Why?

Would you call all the texts “literary” texts? If not, why not?

#### *Passage A*

All the face-to-face positions where one partner has both thighs between those of the other – he astride both hers or between them – are *Frontal*. Includes all the varieties of the *Matrimonial* plus most of the more complicated, deep facing positions. Gives more depth (usually), but less clitoral pressure than the *Flanquettes*. To unscramble a complicated posture for purposes of classification, turn the partners round mentally and see if they can finish up face-to-face in a matrimonial without crossing legs. If so, it’s frontal. If not, and they finish face-to-face astride one leg – it’s a *flanquette*; square from behind – *croupade*; or from behind, astride a leg – *cuissade*. It’s as simple as that.

#### *Passage B*

Before she knew what had happened, Sabrina found herself lying on the satin sheets with Brad pressed close to her. It was heavenly having him so close. There wasn’t one inch of her that wasn’t in contact with him. She felt his every move. He was so warm, and solid. She had an awesome craving to touch him. She could feel the throbbing of his heart beneath her palm as she stroked the rippling smoothness of his bare chest. And she could feel the strength of his arousal as he shifted against her.

She closed around him in a rippling welcome that was as elemental as time itself. Her gasps of joy matched his heated groan. Sabrina looked into Brad's eyes, but the sliding rush of his thrusts created such a powerful storm within her that her lids fluttered closed as the first flutters of delight struck her. Her universe expanded and contracted, the tiny ripples growing into surging waves as she absorbed him into her very soul.

### *Passage C*

Since our arrival at the house had not been signaled by the noise of the truck, we were able to go around to the side and crush up against the wall, kissing and loving. I had always thought that our eventual union would have some sort of special pause before it, a ceremonial beginning, like a curtain going up on the last act of a play. But there was nothing of the kind. By the time I realized he was really going ahead with it I wanted to lie down on the ground, I wanted to get rid of my panties which were around my feet, I wanted to take off the belt of my dress because he was pressing the buckle painfully into my stomach. However there was no time. I pushed my legs apart as far as I could with those pants tangling my feet and heaved myself up against the house wall trying to keep my balance. Unlike our previous intimacies, this required effort and attention. It also hurt me, though his fingers had stretched me before. With everything else, I had to hold his pants up, afraid that the white gleam of his buttocks might give us away, to anybody passing on the street. I developed an unbearable pain in the arches of my feet. Just when I thought I would have to ask him to stop, wait, at least till I put my heels to the ground for a second, he groaned and pushed violently and collapsed against me, his heart pounding. I was not balanced to receive his weight and we both crashed down, becoming unstuck somehow, into the peony border. I put my hand to my wet leg and it came away dark. Blood. When I saw the blood the glory of the whole episode became clear to me.

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## SESSION 2

### APPROACHING TEXTS

1. Read the following two stories, and then in each case write down a summary of 25-30 words which reproduces what actually happens in the narratives.

#### *Story A*

A massive hunt was under way on Monday for a machete-wielding attacker who forced his way into a Wolverhampton infant school and lashed out at staff, parents and children as young as three in the playground. Four adults and three children were injured.

Police named a man they were looking for as 32-year-old Horrett Irving Campbell, also known as Izzie, who lives in Villiers House, a block of flats near the scene of the attack at St Luke's Church of England School in Blakenhall, Wolverhampton.

Up to 50 police officers, some in riot gear, raided the block of flats in their search for Mr Campbell, whom police described as a dangerous man, not to be approached. Police also raided his father's home elsewhere in Wolverhampton. However, they stressed he was only a suspect.

All three children underwent surgery on what were described as "disfiguring head injuries". The children were named as Ahmed Malik, aged 3, Francesca Quintyne, 4, and Rhenia Chopra, 4. Rhenia's mother, Surinder Kaur, 29, was also injured, and underwent an operation. The other adults hurt were Azar Rafiq, 29, Wendy Willington, 29, and nursery nurse Lisa Potts, 19.

The attack came towards the end of the school day when a man in his mid-30s appeared to become involved in an argument with a woman outside the school.

Many of the children were at school for the first time, enjoying a teddy bears picnic party designed to make them feel at home when they began school next term. The attacker jumped over the fence and struck out at a teacher before moving on to the party. He slashed at the children as they tried to run inside.

### Story B

In the darkened, uneven cobbled square, in the old quarter of Barcelona, the Barrio Gótico, the middle-aged American couple who walk by appear to be just that: American, middle-aged. The man is tall and bald; his head shines dimly as he and his wife cross the shaft of light from an open doorway. She is smaller, with pale hair; she walks fast to keep up with her husband. She is wearing gold chains, and they, too, shine in the light. She carries a small bag in which there could be – more gold? money? some interesting pills? They pass a young Spaniard lounging in a corner whose face the man for no reason takes note of.

Persis Fox, the woman, is a fairly successful illustrator, beginning to be sought after by New York publishers, but she sees herself as being in most ways a coward, a very fearful person; she is afraid of planes, of high bridges, she is overly worried by the illnesses of children – a rather boring list, as she thinks of it. Some years ago she was afraid that Thad, her husband, who teaches at Harvard, would take off with some student, some dark, sexily athletic type from Texas, possibly. More recently she has been frightened by accounts everywhere of muggings, robberies, rapes. She entirely believes in the likelihood of nuclear war. She can and does lie awake at night with such thoughts, for frozen hours.

However, walking across these darkened cobbles, in the old quarter of Barcelona, toward a restaurant that Cambridge friends have recommended, she is not afraid at all, only interested in what she is seeing: just before the square, an arched and windowed walk up above the alley, now crenellated silhouettes, everywhere blackened old stones. Also, she is hungry, looking forward to the seafood for which this restaurant is famous. And she wishes that Thad would not walk so fast; by now he is about five feet ahead of her, in an alley.

In the next instant, though, before she has seen or heard any person approaching, someone is running past her in the dark – but not past; he is beside her, a tall dark boy, grabbing at her purse, pulling its short strap. Persis' first instinct is to let him have it, not because she is afraid – she is not, still not, afraid – but from a conditioned reflex, instructing her to give people what they want: children, her husband.

In the following second a more primitive response sets in, and she cries out, “No!” as she thinks, Kindergarten, some little boy pulling something away. And next thinks, Not kindergarten. Spain. A thief.

He is stronger, and with a sudden sharp tug he wins; he has pulled the bag from her and run off, as Persis still yells, “No!” – and as (amazingly!) she remembers the word for thief. “LADRÓN!” she cries out. “*Ladrón!*”

Then suddenly Thad is back (Persis has not exactly thought of him in those seconds), and almost before she has finished saying “He took my bag!” Thad is running toward the square, where the thief went. Thad is running, running – so tall and fast, such a sprint, as though this were a marathon, or Memorial Drive, where he usually runs. He is off into the night, as Persis yells again, “*Ladrón!*” and she starts out after him.

Persis is wearing low boots (thank God), not heels, and she can hear Thad's whistle, something he does with two fingers in his mouth, intensely shrill, useful for summoning children from ski slopes or beaches as night comes on. Persis, also running, follows the sound. She comes at last to a fairly wide, dimly lit street where Thad is standing, breathing hard.

She touches his arm. “Thad –”

Still intent on the chase, he hardly looks at her. He is not doing this for her; it is something between men. He says, “I think he went that way.”

“But Thad –”

The street down which he is pointing, and into which he now begins to stride, with Persis just following – this street's darkness is broken at intervals by the steamy yellow windows of shabby restaurants, the narrow open door of a bar. Here and there a few people stand in doorways, watching the progress of the Americans. Thad sticks his head into the restaurants, the bar. “I don't see him,” he reports back each time.

Well, of course not. And of course each time Persis is glad – glad that the boy is hidden somewhere. Gone. Safe, as she and Thad are safe.

They reach the end of the block, when from behind them a voice calls out, in English, not loudly, “Lady, this your bag?”

Thad and Persis turn to see a dark, contemptuous young face, a tall boy standing in a doorway. Not, Thad later assures Persis, and later still their friends – not the thief, whom he saw as they first crossed the square, and would recognize. But a friend of his?

The boy kicks his foot at something on the cobbles, which Thad walks over to pick up, and which is Persis' bag.

"I can't believe it!" she cries out, aware of triteness, as Thad hands over the bag to her. But by now, now that everything is over, she is seriously frightened; inwardly she trembles.

"Well, we got it." Thad speaks calmly, but Persis can hear the pride in his voice, along with some nervousness. He is still breathing hard, but he has begun to walk with his purposeful stride again. "The restaurant must be down here," he tells her.

Astoundingly, it is; after a couple of turns they see the name on a red neon sign, the name of the place they have been told about, where they have made a reservation.

The kitchen seems to be in the front room, next to the bar: all steam and steel, noisy clanging. Smoke and people, glasses rattling, crashing. "I really need a drink," Persis tells Thad, as instead they are led back to a room full of tables, people – many Americans, tourists, all loud and chattering.

At their small table, waiting for wine, with his tight New England smile Thad asks, "Aren't you going to check it? See what's still there?"

Curiously, this has not yet occurred to Persis as something to be done; she has simply clutched the bag. Now, as she looks down at the bag on her lap, it seems shabbier, a battered survivor. Obediently she unsnaps the flap. "Oh good, my passport's here," she tells Thad.

"That's great." He is genuinely pleased with himself and why should he not be, having behaved with such courage? Then he frowns. "He got all your money?"

"Well no, actually there wasn't any money. I keep it in my pocket. Always, when I go to New York, that's what I do."

Why does Thad look so confused just then? A confusion of emotions is spread across his fair, lined face. He is disappointed, somehow? Upset that he ran after a thief who had stolen a bag containing so little? Upset that Persis, who now goes down to New York on publishing business by herself, has tricks for self-preservation?

Sipping wine, and almost instantly dizzy, light in her head, Persis tries to explain herself. "Men are such dopes," she heedlessly starts. "They always think that women carry everything they own in their bags. Thieves think that, I mean. So I just shove money and credit cards into some pocket. There's only makeup in my bags."

"And your passport." Stern, judicious Thad.

"Oh yes, of course," Persis babbles. "That would have been terrible. We could have spent days in offices."

Gratified, sipping at his wine, Thad says, "I wonder why he didn't take it, actually."

Persis does not say, "Because it's hidden inside my address book" – although quite possibly that was the case. Instead, she says what is also surely true: "Because you scared him. The last thing he expected was someone running after him, and that whistle."

Thad smiles, and his face settles into a familiar expression: that of a generally secure, intelligent man, a lucky person, for whom things happen more or less as he would expect them to.

Persis is thinking, and not for the first time, how terrible it must be to be a man, how terrifying. Men are always running, chasing something. And if you are rich and successful, like Thad, you have to hunt down anyone who wants to take away your possessions. Or if you're poor, down on your luck, you might be tempted to chase after a shabby bag that holds nothing of any real value, to snatch such a bag from a foreign woman who is wearing false gold chains that shine and glimmer in the dark.

2. Did you find any differences in making the summaries of the stories? Were there problems with one of the summaries that did not seem to be there in the case of the other? Did anything have to be left out, and why?

3. Now write down two lists of 10 words that occur in the stories that you feel are crucial to the meaning of each story, what it is about.

4. Again, consider what differences and difficulties there were in each case.

5. Bring both the summaries and the lists to class. Think about what you believe can be learned about a text by reducing it to a shorter version. Be prepared to explain why you chose the particular words you did.
6. Suggest titles for the two stories. How important do you feel a title is in relation to a story (or poem)?

### SESSION 3

## NARRATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTER

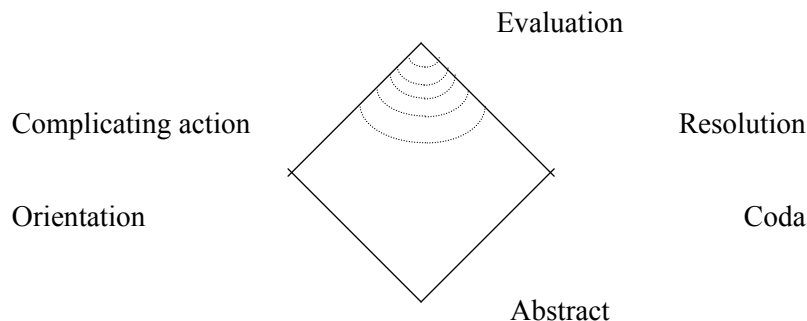
Preparation – Unit 18 in *Ways of Reading*.

For another view of how narrative works, study the following description of the findings of the American sociolinguist William Labov, who based his work on oral narratives.

According to Labov, a fully-formed oral narrative has the following structure:

1. Abstract: What, in a nutshell is this story about?
2. Orientation: Who, when, where, what?
3. Complicating action: Then what happened?
4. Evaluation: So what, how is this interesting?
5. Result or resolution: What finally happened?
6. Coda: That's it, I've finished and am "bridging" back to the present situation.

These are related to Labov's famous "diamond" picture of the progression of an oral narrative, reproduced below. Notice how evaluation, while associable with a "most expected" place in the progression of a narrative, is shown – by the spreading waves – to be something that can permeate throughout the telling, occurring anywhere.



**A.** In class you will look at some simple narratives and be asked to show how they work in terms of the theories of Propp and Labov.

**B.** Start reading the following story, by the American writer Kate Chopin (1851-1904).

### **The Story of an Hour**

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences, veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will – as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been.

2. Pause at this point, and think of at least two different ways of continuing the story at this point. Try to find evidence in the story so far that might indicate these possible continuations. What kinds of different meaning(s) are opened up by your alternative versions?

3. Now continue reading.

When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: “Free, free, free!” The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulse beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She did not stop to ask if it were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial.

She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending her in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him – sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in face of this possession of self assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

“Free! Body and soul free!” she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. “Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door – you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven’s sake open the door.”

“Go away. I am not making myself ill.” No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister's importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister's waist; and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

4. Pause again, before reading the conclusion, and consider what you might "reasonably" expect to happen next.

5. Now read the final part of the story.

Some one was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine's piercing cry; at Richards' quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

But Richards was too late.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease – of joy that kills.

1894

6. In what ways does the actual ending of the story challenge your expectations? How does the story in general deal with or challenge conventional social expectations, including the representation of women in nineteenth century society?

7. Consider the narrative structure of the story from the perspective of Propp's and Labov's schemata of narrative construction. What help do they provide in analysing the structure and meaning of the story?

C. Read "Travelling in the Dark", by the American poet William Stafford (b. 1914).

### **Travelling Through the Dark**

Travelling through the dark I found a deer  
dead on the edge of the Wilson River road.  
It is usually best to roll them into the canyon:  
that road is narrow; to swerve might make more dead.

By glow of the tail-light I stumbled back of the car  
and stood by the heap, a doe, a recent killing;  
she had stiffened already, almost cold.  
I dragged her off; she was large in the belly.  
My fingers touching her side brought me the reason –  
her side was warm; her fawn lay there waiting,  
alive, still, never to be born. 5  
Beside that mountain road I hesitated. 10

The car aimed ahead its lowered parking lights;  
under the hood purred the steady engine.  
I stood in the glare of the warm exhaust turning red;  
around our group I could hear the wilderness listen. 15

I thought hard for us all – my only swerving –,  
then pushed her over the edge into the river.

1962

1. How is the narrative of the poem developed (can the approaches of Labov or Propp help you in any ways)?

2. Note the various elements of "character-functions" in the poem (not only the people!). What role do they play in the "story" of the poem?

3. Decide (a) what the poem is saying; (b) what is of particular interest about the ways in which it speaks.

D. "The Chrysanthemums" is by John Steinbeck (1902-1968).

### The Chrysanthemums

The high grey-flannel fog of winter closed off the Salinas Valley from the sky and from all the rest of the world. On every side it sat like a lid on the mountains and made of the great valley a closed pot. On the broad, level land floor the gang plows bit deep and left the black earth shining like metal where the shares had cut. On the foothill ranches across the Salinas River, the yellow stubble fields seemed to be bathed in pale cold sunshine, but there was no sunshine in the valley now in December. The thick willow scrub along the river flamed with sharp and positive yellow leaves.

It was a time of quiet and of waiting. The air was cold and tender. A light wind blew up from the southwest so that the farmers were mildly hopeful of a good rain before long; but fog and rain do not go together.

Across the river, on Henry Allen's foothill ranch there was little work to be done, for the hay was cut and stored and the orchards were plowed up to receive the rain deeply when it should come. The cattle on the higher slopes were becoming shaggy and rough-coated.

Elisa Allen, working in her flower garden, looked down across the yard and saw Henry, her husband, talking to two men in business suits. The three of them stood by the tractor shed, each man with one foot on the side of the little Fordson. They smoked cigarettes and studied the machine as they talked.

Elisa watched them for a moment and then went back to her work. She was thirty-five. Her face was lean and strong and her eyes were as clear as water. Her figure looked blocked and heavy in her gardening costume, a man's black hat pulled low down over her eyes, clodhopper shoes, a figured print dress almost completely covered by a big corduroy apron with four big pockets to hold the snips, the trowel and scratcher, the seeds and the knife she worked with. She wore heavy leather gloves to protect her hands while she worked.

She was cutting down the old year's chrysanthemum stalks with a pair of short and powerful scissors. She looked down toward the men by the tractor shed now and then. Her face was eager and mature and handsome; even her work with the scissors was over-eager, over-powerful. The chrysanthemum stems seemed too small and easy for her energy.

She brushed a cloud of hair out of her eyes with the back of her glove, and left a smudge of earth on her cheek in doing it. Behind her stood the neat white farm house with red geraniums close-banked around it as high as the windows. It was a hard-swept looking little house, with hard-polished windows, and a clean mud-mat on the front steps.

Elisa cast another glance toward the tractor shed. The strangers were getting into their Ford coupe. She took off a glove and put her strong fingers down into the forest of new green chrysanthemum sprouts that were growing around the old roots. She spread the leaves and looked down among the close-growing stems. No aphids were there, no sowbugs or snails or cutworms. Her terrier fingers destroyed such pests before they could get started.

Elisa started at the sound of her husband's voice. He had come near quietly, and he leaned over the wire fence that protected her flower garden from cattle and dogs and chickens.

"At it again," he said. "You've got a strong new crop coming."

Elisa straightened her back and pulled on the gardening glove again. "Yes. They'll be strong this coming year." In her tone and on her face there was a little smugness.

"You've got a gift with things," Henry observed. "Some of those yellow chrysanthemums you had this year were ten inches across. I wish you'd work out in the orchard and raise some apples that big."

Her eyes sharpened. "Maybe I could do it, too. I've a gift with things, all right. My mother had it. She could stick anything in the ground and make it grow. She said it was having planters' hands that knew how to do it."

"Well, it sure works with flowers," he said.

"Henry, who were those men you were talking to?"

"Why, sure, that's what I came to tell you. They were from the Western Meat Company. I sold those thirty head of three-year-old steers. Got nearly my own price, too."

"Good," she said. "Good for you."



“And I thought,” he continued, “I thought how it’s Saturday afternoon, and we might go into Salinas for dinner at a restaurant, and then to a picture show – to celebrate, you see.”

“Good,” she repeated. “Oh, yes. That will be good.”

Henry put on his joking tone. “There’s fights tonight. How’d you like to go to the fights?”

“Oh, no,” she said breathlessly. “No, I wouldn’t like fights.”

“Just fooling, Elisa. We’ll go to a movie. Let’s see. It’s two now. I’m going to take Scotty and bring down those steers from the hill. It’ll take us maybe two hours. We’ll go in town about five and have dinner at the Cominos Hotel. Like that?”

“Of course I’ll like it. It’s good to eat away from home.”

“All right, then. I’ll go get up a couple of horses.”

She said, “I’ll have plenty of time to transplant some of these sets, I guess.”

She heard her husband calling Scotty down by the barn. And a little later she saw the two men ride up the pale yellow hillside in search of the steers.

There was a little square sandy bed kept for rooting the chrysanthemums. With her trowel she turned the soil over and over, and smoothed it and patted it firm. Then she dug ten parallel trenches to receive the sets. Back at the chrysanthemum bed she pulled out the little crisp shoots, trimmed off the leaves of each one with her scissors and laid it on a small orderly pile.

A squeak of wheels and plod of hoofs came from the road. Elisa looked up. The country road ran along the dense bank of willows and cottonwoods that bordered the river, and up this road came a curious vehicle, curiously drawn. It was an old spring-wagon, with a round canvas top on it like the cover of a prairie schooner. It was drawn by an old bay horse and a little grey-and-white burro. A big stubble-bearded man sat between the cover flaps and drove the crawling team. Underneath the wagon, between the hind wheels, a lean and rangy mongrel dog walked sedately. Words were painted on the canvas, in clumsy, crooked letters. “Pots, pans, knives, sisors, lawn mores, Fixed.” Two rows of articles, and the triumphantly definitive “Fixed” below. The black paint had run down in little sharp points beneath each letter.

Elisa, squatting on the ground, watched to see the crazy, loose-jointed wagon pass by. But it didn’t pass. It turned into the farm road in front of her house, crooked old wheels skirling and squeaking. The rangy dog darted from between the wheels and ran ahead. Instantly the two ranch shepherds flew out at him. Then all three stopped, and with stiff and quivering tails, with taut straight legs, with ambassadorial dignity, they slowly circled, sniffing daintily. The caravan pulled up to Elisa’s wire fence and stopped. Now the newcomer dog, feeling out-numbered, lowered his tail and retired under the wagon with raised hackles and bared teeth.

The man on the wagon seat called out, “That’s a bad dog in a fight when he gets started.”

Elisa laughed. “I see he is. How soon does he generally get started?”

The man caught up her laughter and echoed it heartily. “Sometimes not for weeks and weeks,” he said. He climbed stiffly down, over the wheel. The horse and the donkey drooped like unwatered flowers.

Elisa saw that he was a very big man. Although his hair and beard were greying, he did not look old. His worn black suit was wrinkled and spotted with grease. The laughter had disappeared from his face and eyes the moment his laughing voice ceased. His eyes were dark, and they were full of the brooding that gets in the eyes of teamsters and of sailors. The calloused hands he rested on the wire fence were cracked, and every crack was a black line. He took off his battered hat.

“I’m off my general road, ma’am,” he said. “Does this dirt road cut over across the river to the Los Angeles highway?”

Elisa stood up and shoved the thick scissors in her apron pocket. “Well, yes, it does, but it winds around and then fords the river. I don’t think your team could pull through the sand.”

He replied with some asperity, “It might surprise you what them beasts can pull through.”

“When they get started?” she asked.

He smiled for a second. “Yes. When they get started.”

“Well,” said Elisa, “I think you’ll save time if you go back to the Salinas road and pick up the highway there.”

He drew a big finger down the chicken wire and made it sing. “I ain’t in any hurry, ma’am. I go from Seattle to San Diego and back every year. Takes all my time. About six months each way. I aim to follow nice weather.”

Elisa took off her gloves and stuffed them in the apron pocket with the scissors. She touched the under edge of her man's hat, searching for fugitive hairs. "That sounds like a nice kind of a way to live," she said.

He leaned confidentially over the fence. "Maybe you noticed the writing on my wagon. I mend pots and sharpen knives and scissors. You got any of them things to do?"

"Oh, no," she said quickly. "Nothing like that." Her eyes hardened with resistance.

"Scissors is the worst thing," he explained. "Most people just ruin scissors trying to sharpen 'em but I know how. I got a special tool. It's a little bobbit kind of thing, and patented. But it sure does the trick."

"No. My scissors are all sharp."

"All right, then. Take a pot," he continued earnestly, "a bent pot, or a pot with a hole. I can make it like new so you don't have to buy no new ones. That's a saving for you."

"No," she said shortly. "I tell you I have nothing like that for you to do."

His face fell to an exaggerated sadness. His voice took on a whining undertone. "I ain't had a thing to do today. Maybe I won't have no supper tonight. You see I'm off my regular road. I know folks on the highway clear from Seattle to San Diego. They save their things for me to sharpen up because they know I do it so good and save them money."

"I'm sorry," Elisa said irritably. "I haven't anything for you to do." His eyes left her face and fell to searching the ground. They roamed about until they came to the chrysanthemum bed where she had been working. "What's them plants, ma'am?"

The irritation and resistance melted from Elisa's face. "Oh, those are chrysanthemums, giant whites and yellows. I raise them every year, bigger than anybody around here."

"Kind of a long-stemmed flower? Looks like a quick puff of colored smoke?" he asked.

"That's it. What a nice way to describe them."

"They smell kind of nasty till you get used to them," he said.

"It's a good bitter smell," she retorted, "not nasty at all."

He changed his tone quickly. "I like the smell myself."

"I had ten-inch blooms this year," she said.

The man leaned farther over the fence. "Look. I know a lady down the road a piece has got the nicest garden you ever seen. Got nearly every kind of flower but no chrysanthemums. Last time I was mending a copper-bottom washtub for her (that's a hard job but I do it good), she said to me, 'If you ever run across some nice chrysanthemums I wish you'd try to get me a few seeds.' That's what she told me."

Elisa's eyes grew alert and eager. "She couldn't have known much about chrysanthemums. You can raise them from seed, but it's much easier to root the little sprouts you see there."

"Oh," he said. "I s'pose I can't take none to her, then."

"Why yes you can," Elisa cried. "I can put some in damp sand, and you can carry them right along with you. They'll take root in the pot if you keep them damp. And then she can transplant them."

"She'd sure like to have some, ma'am. You say they're nice ones?"

"Beautiful," she said. "Oh, beautiful." Her eyes shone. She tore off the battered hat and shook out her dark pretty hair. "I'll put them in a flower pot, and you can take them right with you. Come into the yard."

While the man came through the picket gate Elisa ran excitedly along the geranium-bordered path to the back of the house. And she returned carrying a big red flower pot. The gloves were forgotten now. She kneeled on the ground by the starting bed and dug up the sandy soil with her fingers and scooped it into the bright new flower pot. Then she picked up the little pile of shoots she had prepared. With her strong fingers she pressed them into the sand and tamped around them with her knuckles. The man stood over her. "I'll tell you what to do," she said. "You remember so you can tell the lady."

"Yes, I'll try to remember."

"Well, look. These will take root in about a month. Then she must set them out, about a foot apart in good rich earth like this, see?" She lifted a handful of dark soil for him to look at. "They'll grow fast and tall. Now remember this: In July tell her to cut them down, about eight inches from the ground."

“Before they bloom?” he asked.

“Yes, before they bloom.” Her face was tight with eagerness. “They’ll grow right up again. About the last of September the buds will start.”

She stopped and seemed perplexed. “It’s the budding that takes the most care,” she said hesitantly. “I don’t know how to tell you.” She looked deep into his eyes, searchingly. Her mouth opened a little, and she seemed to be listening. “I’ll try to tell you,” she said. “Did you ever hear of planting hands?”

“Can’t say I have, ma’am.”

“Well, I can only tell you what it feels like. It’s when you’re picking off the buds you don’t want. Everything goes right down into your fingertips. You watch your fingers work. They do it themselves. You can feel how it is. They pick and pick the buds. They never make a mistake. They’re with the plant. Do you see? Your fingers and the plant. You can feel that, right up your arm. They know. They never make a mistake. You can feel it. When you’re like that you can’t do anything wrong. Do you see that? Can you understand that?”

She was kneeling on the ground looking up at him. Her breast swelled passionately.

The man’s eyes narrowed. He looked away self-consciously. “Maybe I know,” he said. “Sometimes in the night in the wagon there –”

Elisa’s voice grew husky. She broke in on him, “I’ve never lived as you do, but I know what you mean. When the night is dark – why, the stars are sharp-pointed, and there’s quiet. Why, you rise up and up! Every pointed star gets driven into your body. It’s like that. Hot and sharp and – lovely.”

Kneeling there, her hand went out toward his legs in the greasy black trousers. Her hesitant fingers almost touched the cloth. Then her hand dropped to the ground. She crouched low like a fawning dog.

He said, “It’s nice, just like you say. Only when you don’t have no dinner, it ain’t.”

She stood up then, very straight, and her face was ashamed. She held the flower pot out to him and placed it gently in his arms. “Here. Put it in your wagon, on the seat, where you can watch it. Maybe I can find something for you to do.”

At the back of the house she dug in the can pile and found two old and battered aluminum saucepans. She carried them back and gave them to him. “Here, maybe you can fix these.”

His manner changed. He became professional. “Good as new I can fix them.” At the back of his wagon he set a little anvil, and out of an oily tool box dug a small machine hammer. Elisa came through the gate to watch him while he pounded out the dents in the kettles. His mouth grew sure and knowing. At a difficult part of the work he sucked his under-lip.

“You sleep right in the wagon?” Elisa asked.

“Right in the wagon, ma’am. Ran or shine I’m dry as a cow in there.”

“It must be nice,” she said. “It must be very nice. I wish women could do such things.”

“It ain’t the right kind of a life for a woman.”

Her upper lip raised a little, showing her teeth. “How do you know? How can you tell?” she said.

“I don’t know, ma’am,” he protested. “Of course I don’t know. Now here’s your kettles, done. You don’t have to buy no new ones.”

“How much?”

“Oh, fifty cents’ll do. I keep my prices down and my work good. That’s why I have all them satisfied customers up and down the highway.”

Elisa brought him a fifty-cent piece from the house and dropped it in his hand. “You might be surprised to have a rival some time. I can sharpen scissors, too. And I can beat the dents out of little pots. I could show you what a woman might do.”

He put his hammer back in the oily box and shoved the little anvil out of sight. “It would be a lonely life for a woman, ma’am, and a scarey life, too, with animals creeping under the wagon all night.” He climbed over the singletree, steadying himself with a hand on the burrow’s white rump. He settled himself in the seat, picked up the lines. “Thank you kindly, ma’am,” he said. “I’ll do like you told me; I’ll go back and catch the Salinas road.”

“Mind,” she called, “if you’re long in getting there, keep the sand damp.”

“Sand, ma’am?... Sand? Oh, sure. You mean around the chrysanthemums. Sure I will.” He clucked his tongue. The beasts leaned luxuriously into their collars. The mongrel dog took his place

between the back wheels. The wagon turned and crawled out the entrance road and back the way it had come, along the river.

Elisa stood in front of her wire fence watching the slow progress of the caravan. Her shoulders were straight, her head thrown back, her eyes half-closed, so that the scene came vaguely into them. Her lips moved silently, forming the words "Good – bye – good-bye." Then she whispered, "That's a bright direction. There's a glowing there." The sound of her whisper startled her. She shook herself free and looked about to see whether anyone had been listening. Only the dogs had heard. They lifted their heads toward her from their sleeping in the dust, and then stretched out their chins and settled asleep again. Elisa turned and ran hurriedly into the house.

In the kitchen she reached behind the stove and felt the water tank. It was full of hot water from the noonday cooking. In the bathroom she tore off her soiled clothes and flung them into the corner. And then she scrubbed herself with a little block of pumice, legs and thighs, loins and chest and arms, until her skin was scratched and red. When she had dried herself she stood in front of a mirror in her bedroom and looked at her body. She tightened her stomach and threw out her chest. She turned and looked over her shoulder at her back.

After a while she began to dress, slowly. She put on her newest underclothing and her nicest stockings and the dress which was the symbol of her prettiness. She worked carefully on her hair, penciled her eyebrows and rouged her lips.

Before she was finished she heard the little thunder of hoofs and the shouts of Henry and his helper as they drove the red steers into the corral. She heard the gate bang shut and set herself for Henry's arrival.

His step sounded on the porch. He entered the house calling, "Elisa, where are you?"

"In my room, dressing. I'm not ready. There's hot water for your bath. Hurry up. It's getting late."

When she heard him splashing in the tub, Elisa laid his dark suit on the bed, and shirt and socks and tie beside it. She stood his polished shoes on the floor beside the bed. Then she went to the porch and sat primly and stiffly down. She looked toward the river road where the willow-line was still yellow with frosted leaves so that under the high grey fog they seemed a thin band of sunshine. This was the only color in the grey afternoon. She sat unmoving for a long time. Her eyes blinked rarely.

Henry came banging out of the door, shoving his tie inside his vest as he came. Elisa stiffened and her face grew tight. Henry stopped short and looked at her. "Why – why, Elisa. You look so nice!"

"Nice? You think I look nice? What do you mean by 'nice'?"

Henry blundered on. "I don't know. I mean you look different, strong and happy."

"I am strong? Yes, strong. What do you mean 'strong'?"

He looked bewildered. "You're playing some kind of a game," he said helplessly. "It's a kind of a play. You look strong enough to break a calf over your knee, happy enough to eat it like a watermelon."

For a second she lost her rigidity. "Henry! Don't talk like that. You didn't know what you said." She grew complete again. "I'm strong," she boasted. "I never knew before how strong."

Henry looked down toward the tractor shed, and when he brought his eyes back to her, they were his own again. "I'll get out the car. You can put on your coat while I'm starting."

Elisa went into the house. She heard him drive to the gate and idle down his motor, and then she took a long time to put on her hat. She pulled it here and pressed it there. When Henry turned the motor off she slipped into her coat and went out.

The little roadster bounced along on the dirt road by the river, raising the birds and driving the rabbits into the brush. Two cranes flapped heavily over the willow-line and dropped into the river-bed.

Far ahead on the road Elisa saw a dark speck. She knew.

She tried not to look as they passed it, but her eyes would not obey. She whispered to herself sadly, "He might have thrown them off the road. That wouldn't have been much trouble, not very much. But he kept the pot," she explained. "He had to keep the pot. That's why he couldn't get them off the road."

The roadster turned a bend and she saw the caravan ahead. She swung full around toward her husband so she could not see the little covered wagon and the mismatched team as the car passed them.

In a moment it was over. The thing was done. She did not look back. She said loudly, to be heard above the motor, "It will be good, tonight, a good dinner." "Now you're changed again," Henry complained. He took one hand from the wheel and patted her knee. "I ought to take you in to dinner oftener. It would be good for both of us. We get so heavy out on the ranch." "Henry," she asked, "could we have wine at dinner?" "Sure we could. Say! That will be fine." She was silent for a while; then she said, "Henry, at those prize fights, do the men hurt each other very much?" "Sometimes a little, not often. Why?" "Well, I've read how they break noses, and blood runs down their chests. I've read how the fighting gloves get heavy and soggy with blood." He looked around at her. "What's the matter, Elisa? I didn't know you read things like that." He brought the car to a stop, then turned to the right over the Salinas River bridge. "Do any women ever go to the fights?" she asked. "Oh, sure, some. What's the matter, Elisa? Do you want to go? I don't think you'd like it, but I'll take you if you really want to go." She relaxed limply in the seat. "Oh, no. No. I don't want to go. I'm sure I don't." Her face was turned away from him. "It will be enough if we can have wine. It will be plenty." She turned up her coat collar so he could not see that she was crying weakly – like an old woman.

1938

1. Elisa is clearly the major character in the story. What do you feel are her major traits? What methods does Steinbeck use to build up our understanding of her? You may want to consider such things as description of appearance, authorial comment, dialogue, behaviour, setting, and the relationship to the story's other characters.
2. How do the story's minor characters function in the narrative? What do we learn about them?
3. What role do the chrysanthemums play in the story?

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## SESSION 4

### CONVENTION AND GENRE: THE SONNET

Preparation – Units 9 and 10 in *Ways of Reading*

Sonnets have continued to be popular for more than six hundred years. Though they originally dealt solely with the theme of love, poets have come to employ them for many other purposes, and have enjoyed the challenge of experimenting with both the formal and the thematic conventions of the genre.

The sonnets that you will be looking at this week were all written in the twentieth century.

**A.** Read "The Lynching", by the African American poet Claude McKay (1890-1948).

#### **The Lynching**

His Spirit in smoke ascended to high heaven.  
 His father, by the cruelest way of pain,  
 Had bidden him to his bosom once again;  
 The awful sin remained still unforgiven.  
 All night a bright and solitary star  
 (Perchance the very one that guided him,  
 Yet gave him up at last to Fate's wild whim)

5

Hung pitifully o'er the swinging char.  
 Day dawned, and soon the mixed crowds came to view  
 The ghastly body swaying in the sun. 10  
 The women thronged to look, but never a one  
 Showed sorrow in her eyes of steely blue.

And little lads, lynchers that were to be,  
 Danced round the dreadful thing in fiendish glee.

1920

1. To what extent is this a conventional sonnet in terms of its handling of formal means and subject matter?
2. One strong tradition in the early sonnet was the mixture of discourses on sensual and spiritual love and enlightenment. How is this paralleled in McKay's treatment of his subject matter?

**B.** The American poet Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950) was particularly fond of the sonnet. Read the following example of hers in this form.

**I, Being Born a Woman and Distressed**

I, being born a woman and distressed  
 By all the needs and notions of my kind,  
 Am urged by your propinquity to find  
 Your person fair, and feel a certain zest  
 To bear your body's weight upon my breast: 5  
 So subtly is the fume of life designed,  
 To clarify the pulse and cloud the mind,  
 And leave me once again undone, possessed.  
 Think not for this, however – the poor treason  
 Of my stout blood against my staggering brain – 10  
 – I shall remember you with love, or season  
 My scorn with pity, – let me make it plain:  
 I find this frenzy insufficient reason  
 For conversation when we meet again.

1923

1. How does Millay both stay close to and challenge the earlier conventions of the sonnet, particularly in the treatment of her theme?
2. Consider how her use of language and form contribute to the effectiveness of the poem.

**C.** To understand fully the following sonnet by W.H. Auden (1907-1973), you should consider it in the context of the time and place at which it was written.

**Sonnets from China: XII**

Here war is harmless like a monument:  
 A telephone is talking to a man;  
 Flags on a map declare that troops were sent;  
 A boy brings milk in bowls. There is a plan  
 For living men in terror of their lives, 5  
 Who thirst at nine who were to thirst at noon,  
 Who can be lost and are, who miss their wives  
 And, unlike an idea, can die too soon.  
 Yet ideas can be true, although men die:  
 For we have seen a myriad faces 10

Ecstatic from one lie,  
And maps can really point to places  
Where life is evil now.  
Nanking. Dachau.

1938

1. In its use of form and language, this poem is radically different from the conventional sonnet. In what ways? In what ways does it remain in contact with those conventions?
2. What is the argument or story of the poem?

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## SESSION 5

### CONVENTION AND GENRE; GENRE ANALYSIS

Preparation – Unit 17 in *Ways of Reading*

A. Below you will find the opening passages of five different books. Go through them carefully, keeping in mind the whole question of genre as you read.

*Extract A*

I would never have gone to Greece had it not been for a girl named Betty Ryan who lived in the same house with me in Paris. One evening, over a glass of white wine, she began to talk of her experiences in roaming about the world. I always listened to her with great attention, not only because her experiences were strange but because when she talked about her wanderings she seemed to paint them: everything she described remained in my head like finished canvases by a master. It was a peculiar conversation that evening: we began by talking about China and the Chinese language which she had begun to study. Soon we were in North Africa, in the desert, among peoples I had never heard of before. And then suddenly she was all alone, walking beside a river, and the light was intense and I was following her as best I could in the blinding sun, but she got lost and I found myself wandering about in a strange land listening to a language I had never heard before. She is not exactly a story teller, this girl, but she is an artist of some sort, because nobody has ever given me the ambience of a place so thoroughly as she did that of Greece. Long afterwards I discovered that it was near Olympia that she had gone astray and I with her, but at the time it was just Greece to me, a world of light such as I had never dreamed of and never hoped to see.

*Extract B*

Mr. Sniggs, the Junior Dean, and Mr. Postlethwaite, the Domestic Bursar, sat alone in Mr. Sniggs's room overlooking the garden quad at Scone College. From the rooms of Sir Alastair Digby-Vaine-Trumpington, two staircases away, came a confused roaring and breaking of glass. They alone of the senior members of Scone were at home that evening, for it was the night of the annual dinner of the Bollinger Club. The others were all scattered over Boar's Hill and North Oxford at gay, contentious little parties, or at other senior common-rooms, or at the meetings of learned societies, for the annual Bollinger dinner is a difficult time for those in authority.

It is not accurate to call this an annual event, because quite often the club is suspended for some years after each meeting. There is tradition behind the Bollinger; it numbers reigning kings among its past members. At the last dinner, three years ago, a fox had been brought in in a cage and stoned to death with champagne bottles. What an evening that had been! This was the first meeting since then, and from all over Europe old members had rallied for the occasion. For two days they had been pouring into Oxford: epileptic royalty from their villas of exile; uncouth peers from crumbling country seats; smooth young men of uncertain tastes from embassies and legations; illiterate lairds from wet granite hovels in the Highlands; ambitious young barristers and Conservative candidates torn

from the London season and the indelicate advances of debutantes; all that was most sonorous of name and title was there for the beano.

“The fines!” said Mr. Sniggs, gently rubbing his pipe along the side of his nose. “Oh, my! the fines there’ll be after this evening!”

There is some highly prized port in the senior common-room cellars that is only brought up when the College fines have reached £50.

“We shall have a week of it at least,” said Mr. Postlethwaite, “a week of Founder’s port.”

A shriller note could now be heard rising from Sir Alastair’s rooms; any who have heard that sound will shrink at the recollection of it; it is the sound of the English county families baying for broken glass. Soon they would all be tumbling out into the quad, crimson and roaring in their bottle-green evening coats, for the real romp of the evening.

“Don’t you think it might be wiser if we turned out the light?” said Mr. Sniggs.

In darkness the two dons crept to the window. The quad below was a kaleidoscope of dimly discernible faces.

“There must be fifty of them at least,” said Mr. Postlethwaite. “If only they were all members of the College! Fifty of them at ten pounds each. Oh my!”

“It’ll be more if they attack the Chapel,” said Mr. Sniggs. “Oh, please God, make them attack the Chapel.”

#### *Extract C*

Yesterday morning as I was about to enter the lecture hall, I was stopped by a Christian student who asked me in a voice eager with malice, “Have you heard about the Emperor Theodosius?”

I cleared my throat ready to investigate the nature of this question, but he was too quick for me. “He has been baptized a Christian.”

I was noncommittal. Nowadays, one never knows who is a secret agent. Also, I was not particularly surprised at the news. When Theodosius fell ill last winter and the bishops arrived like vultures to pray over him, I knew that should he recover they would take full credit for having saved him. He survived. Now we have a Christian emperor in the East, to match Gratian, our Christian emperor in the West. It was inevitable.

I turned to go inside but the young man was hardly finished with his pleasant task. “Theodosius has also issued an edict. It was just read in front of the senate house. I heard it. Did you?”

“No. But I always enjoy imperial prose,” I said politely.

“You may not enjoy this. The Emperor has declared heretic all those who do not follow the Nicene Creed.”

“I’m afraid Christian theology is not really my subject. The edict hardly applies to those of us who are still faithful to philosophy.”

“It applies to everyone in the East.” He said this slowly, watching me all the while. “The Emperor has even appointed an Inquisitor to determine one’s faith. The days of toleration are over.”

I was speechless; the sun flared in my eyes; all things grew confused and I wondered if I was about to faint, or even die. But the voices of two colleagues recalled me. I could tell by the way they greeted me that they, too, had heard about the edict and were curious to know my reaction. I gave them no pleasure.

“Of course I expected it,” I said. “The Empress Postuma wrote me only this week to say that...” I invented freely. I have not of course heard from the Empress in some months, but I thought that the enemy should be reminded to what extent I enjoy the favour of Gratian and Postuma. It is humiliating to be forced to protect oneself in this way, but these are dangerous times.

#### *Extract D*

The American handed Leamas another cup of coffee and said, “Why don’t you go back and sleep? We can ring you if he shows up.”

Leamas said nothing, just stared through the window of the checkpoint, along the empty street.

“You can’t wait forever, sir. Maybe he’ll come some other time. We can have the Polizei contact the Agency: you can be back here in twenty minutes.”

“No,” said Leamas, “it’s nearly dark now.”

“But you can’t wait forever; he’s nine hours over schedule.”



“If you want to go, go. You’ve been very good,” Leamas added. “I’ll tell Kramer you’ve been damn good.”

“But how long will you wait?”

“Until he comes.” Leamas walked to the observation window and stood between the two motionless policemen. Their binoculars were trained on the Eastern checkpoint.

“He’s waiting for the dark,” Leamas muttered, “I know he is.”

“This morning you said he’d come across with the workmen.”

Leamas turned on him.

“Agents aren’t airplanes. They don’t have schedules. He’s blown, he’s on the run, he’s frightened. Mundt’s after him, now, at this moment. He’s got only one chance. Let him choose his time.”

### *Extract E*

“I see,” said the vampire thoughtfully, and slowly he walked across the room towards the window. For a long time he stood there against the dim light from Divisadero Street and the passing beams of traffic. The boy could see the furnishings of the room more clearly now, the round oak table, the chairs. A wash basin hung on one wall with a mirror. He set his briefcase on the table and waited.

“But how much tape do you have with you?” asked the vampire, turning now so the boy could see his profile. “Enough for the story of a life?”

“Sure, if it’s a good life. Sometimes I interview as many as three or four people a night if I’m lucky. But it has to be a good story. That’s only fair, isn’t it?”

“Admirably fair,” the vampire answered. “I would like to tell you the story of my life, then. I would like to do that very much.”

“Great,” said the boy. And quickly he removed the small tape recorder from his briefcase, making a check of the batteries. “I’m really anxious to hear why you believe this, why you...”

“No,” said the vampire abruptly. “We can’t begin that way. Is your equipment ready?”

“Yes,” said the boy.

“Then sit down. I’m going to turn on the overhead light.”

“But I thought vampires didn’t like light,” said the boy. “If you think the dark adds to the atmosphere...” But then he stopped. The vampire was watching him with his back to the window. The boy could make out nothing of his face now, and something about the still figure there distracted him. He started to say something again but he said nothing. And then he sighed with relief when the vampire moved towards the table and reached for the overhead cord.

At once the room was flooded with a harsh yellow light. And the boy, staring up at the vampire, could not repress a gasp. His fingers danced backwards on the table to grasp the edge. “Dear God!” he whispered, and then he gazed, speechless, at the vampire.

The vampire was utterly white and smooth, as if he were sculpted from bleached bone, and his face was as seemingly inanimate as a statue, except for two brilliant green eyes that looked down at the boy intently like flames in a skull. But then the vampire smiled almost wistfully, and the smooth white substance of his face moved with the infinitely flexible but minimal lines of a cartoon. “Do you see?” he asked softly.

The boy shuddered, lifting his hand as if to shield himself from a powerful light. His eyes moved slowly over the finely tailored black coat he’d only glimpsed in the bar, the long folds of the cape, the black silk tie knotted at the throat, and the gleam of the white collar that was as white as the vampire’s flesh. He stared at the vampire’s full black hair, the waves that were combed back over the tips of the ears, the curls that barely touched the edge of the white collar.

“Now, do you still want the interview?” the vampire asked.

The boy’s mouth was open before the sound came out. He was nodding. Then he said, “Yes.”

The vampire sat down slowly opposite him and, leaning forward, said gently, confidentially, “Don’t be afraid. Just start the tape.”

1. Decide which genre of fiction/writing each of the extracts might belong to. In each case, make a note of what features of the writing led you to this decision. Can you note any further features which would support or weaken your original choice?

2. Consider how approximately you would expect each text to continue. What might this tell you about the “rules”/conventions/characteristics of each genre?
3. Why, if at all, is it helpful to know what kind of genre(s) a piece of writing belongs to? How might this be helpful to the writer and the reader respectively?

**B.** We will be showing *Bladerunner* in the department this week more than once (see the notice board for the times). This film is an interesting mixture of pure entertainment, violence, sardonic humour and thoughtful speculation. It is also a sophisticated treatment of a number of traditional themes, and draws on several popular film genres.

Go to one of the sessions and watch the film. Although it is difficult to follow at times, one thing that helps the viewer to feel “familiar” inside it is the way it employs traditional film genres. After watching the film, think about what possible genres the film may draw on. For each, make a list of the various elements (characters, themes, situations, etc.) and aims that are typical of the genre. In the light of this, consider how *Bladerunner* both employs and changes the conventions of the genres, and how this relates to what you think the film may be about. We will discuss all this in class, as well as such things as the myths reflected in the film, the symbols and clichés it presents, the references to both “high” culture and “popular” culture, and so on.

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## SESSION 6

### NARRATIVE AND POINT OF VIEW

Preparation – Units 19 and 20 in *Ways of Reading*

**A.** Read the following two complete versions of the story of the coming of the Wise Men to the infant Christ, the first from the Authorized (or King James) version of the Bible (1611) and the second by T. S. Eliot (1888–1965).

#### **The Gospel according to St Matthew, Chapter 2**

1. Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,
2. Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.
3. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.
4. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.
5. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,
6. And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.
7. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.
8. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.
9. When they had heard the king, they departed; and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.
10. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.
11. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.
12. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

## Journey of the Magi

“A cold coming we had of it,  
Just the worst time of the year  
For a journey, and such a long journey:  
The ways deep and the weather sharp,  
The very dead of winter.”<sup>1</sup> 5  
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,  
Lying down in the melting snow.  
There were times we regretted  
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,  
And the silken girls bringing sherbet. 10  
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling  
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,  
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,  
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly  
And the villages dirty and charging high prices: 15  
A hard time we had of it.  
At the end we preferred to travel all night,  
Sleeping in snatches,  
With the voices singing in our ears, saying  
That this was all folly. 20

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley.  
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;  
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,  
And three trees on the low sky,  
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow. 25  
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,  
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,  
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.  
But there was no information, and so we continued  
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon 30  
Finding the place; it was (you might say) satisfactory.  
All this was a long time ago, I remember,  
And I would do it again, but set down  
This set down  
This: were we led all that way for 35  
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly.  
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,  
But had thought they were different: this Birth was  
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.  
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms, 40  
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,  
With an alien people clutching their gods.  
I should be glad of another death.

1935

1. In what ways are the points of view (narrative voices) of the two texts different? How does this affect our picture of the various actors in the story? How does it affect our view of the significance of the action?
2. What kinds of details does the first text include that the second one does not? What difference does this make to the two accounts?
3. How do the “story” and the “narration” function in the two texts?

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1 This quotation is slightly adapted from a Christmas sermon (1622) by the Anglican bishop Lancelot Andrewes.

4. What can you say about the unity and coherence of the two texts?
5. Are there any ways in which you think the narrative(s) of one text are clearer or simpler than the other? Why is this?
6. In what ways are the meanings of the two texts affected by the narrative methods employed?

**B.** Read the following story by Penelope Lively (b. 1933), paying attention to the development of the narrative and the general points it appears to make.

### **Next Term, We'll Mash You**

Inside the car it was quiet, the noise of the engine even and subdued, the air just the right temperature, the windows tight-fitting. The boy sat on the back seat, a box of chocolates, unopened, beside him, and a comic, folded. The trim Sussex landscape flowed past the windows: cows, white-fenced fields, highly-priced period houses. The sunlight was glassy, remote as a coloured photograph. The backs of the two heads in front of him swayed with the motion of the car.

His mother half-turned to speak to him. "Nearly there now, darling."

The father glanced downwards at his wife's wrist. "Are we all right for time?"

"Just right. Nearly twelve."

"I could do with a drink. Hope they lay something on."

"I'm sure they will. The Wilcoxes say they're awfully nice people. Not really the schoolmaster-type at all, Sally says."

The man said, "He's an Oxford chap."

"Is he? You didn't say."

"Mmm."

"Of course, the fees are that much higher than the Seaford place."

"Fifty quid or so. We'll have to see."

The car turned right, between white gates and high, dark, tight-clipped hedges. The whisper of the road under the tyres changed to the crunch of gravel. The child, staring sideways, read black lettering on a white board: "St Edward's Preparatory School. Please Drive Slowly". He shifted on the seat, and the leather sucked at the bare skin under his knees, stinging.

The mother said, "It's a lovely place. Those must be the playing-fields. Look, darling, there are some of the boys." She clicked open her handbag, and the sun caught her mirror and flashed in the child's eyes; the comb went through her hair and he saw the grooves it left, neat as distant ploughing.

"Come on, then, Charles, out you get."

The building was red brick, early nineteenth century, spreading out long arms in which windows glittered blackly. Flowers, trapped in neat beds, were alternate red and white. They went up the steps, the man, the woman, and the child two paces behind.

The woman, the mother, smoothing down a skirt that would be ridged from sitting, thought: I like the way they've got the maid all done up properly. The little white apron and all that. She's foreign, I suppose. Au pair. Very nice. If he comes here there'll be Speech Days and that kind of thing. Sally Wilcox says it's quite dressy – she got that cream linen coat for coming down here. You can see why it costs a bomb. Great big grounds and only an hour and a half from London.

They went into a room looking out into a terrace. Beyond dappled lawns, gently shifting trees, black and white cows grazing behind iron railings. Books, leather chairs, a table with magazines – *Country Life*, *The Field*, *The Economist*. "Please, if you would wait here. The Headmaster won't be long."

Alone, they sat, inspected. "I like the atmosphere, don't you, John?"

"Very pleasant, yes." Four hundred a term, near enough. You can tell it's a cut above the Seaford place, though, or the one at St Albans. Bob Wilcox says quite a few City people send their boys here. One or two of the merchant bankers, those kind of people. It's the sort of contact that would do no harm at all. You meet someone, get talking at a cricket match or what have you.... Not at all a bad thing.

"All right, Charles? You didn't get sick in the car, did you?"

The child had black hair, slicked down smooth to his head. His ears, too large, jutted out, transparent in the light from the window, laced with tiny, delicate veins. His clothes had the shine and crease of newness. He looked at the books, the dark brown pictures, his parents, said nothing.

“Come here, let me tidy your hair.”

The door opened. The child hesitated, stood up, sat, then rose again with his father.

“Mr and Mrs Manders? How very nice to meet you – I’m Margaret Spokes, and will you please forgive my husband who is tied up with some wretch who broke the cricket pavilion window and will be just a few more minutes. We try to be organised but a schoolmaster’s day is always just that bit unpredictable. Do please sit down and what will you have to revive you after that beastly drive? You live in Finchley, is that right?”

“Hampstead, really,” said the mother. “Sherry would be lovely.” She worked over the headmaster’s wife from shoes to hairstyle, pricing and assessing. Shoes old but expensive – Russell and Bromley. Good skirt. Blouse could be Marks and Sparks – not sure. Real pearls. Super Victorian ring. She’s not gone to any particular trouble – that’s just what she’d wear anyway. You can be confident, with a voice like that, of course. Sally Wilcox says she knows all sorts of people.

The headmaster’s wife said, “I don’t know how much you know about us. Prospectuses don’t tell you a thing, do they? We’ll look round everything in a minute, when you’ve had a chat with my husband. I gather you’re friends of the Wilcoxes, by the way. I’m awfully fond of Simon – he’s down for Winchester, of course, but I expect you know that.”

The mother smiled over her sherry. Oh, I know that all right. Sally Wilcox doesn’t let you forget that.

“And this is Charles? My dear, we’ve been forgetting all about you! In a minute I’m going to borrow Charles and take him off to meet some of the boys because after all you’re choosing a school for him, aren’t you, and not for you, so he ought to know what he might be letting himself in for and it shows we’ve got nothing to hide.”

The parents laughed. The father, sherry warming his guts, thought that this was an amusing woman. Not attractive, of course, a bit homespun, but impressive all the same. Partly the voice, of course; it takes a bloody expensive education to produce a voice like that. And other things, of course. Background and all that stuff.

“I think I can hear the thud of the Fourth Form coming in from games, which means my husband is on the way, and then I shall leave you with him while I take Charles off to the common-room.”

For a moment the three adults centred on the child, looking, judging. The mother said, “He looks so hideously pale, compared to those boys we saw outside.”

“My dear, that’s London, isn’t it? You just have to get them out, to get some colour into them. Ah, here’s James. James – Mr and Mrs Manders. You remember, Bob Wilcox was mentioning at Sports Day. . .”

The headmaster reflected his wife’s style, like paired cards in Happy Families. His clothes were mature rather than old, his skin well-scrubbed, his shoes clean, his geniality untainted by the least condescension. He was genuinely sorry to have kept them waiting, but in this business one lurches from one minor crisis to the next. . . . And this is Charles? Hello, there, Charles. His large hand rested for a moment on the child’s head, quite extinguishing the thin, dark hair. It was as though he had but to clench his fingers to crush the skull. But he took his hand away and moved the parents to the window, to observe the mutilated cricket pavilion, with indulgent laughter.

And the child is borne away by the headmaster’s wife. She never touches him or tells him to come, but simply bears him away like some relentless tide, down corridors and through swinging glass doors, towing him like a frail craft, not bothering to look back to see if he is following, confident in the strength of magnetism, or obedience.

And delivers him to a room where boys are scattered among inky tables and rungless chairs and sprawled on a mangy carpet. There is a scampering, and a rising, and a silence falling, as she opens the door.

“Now this is the Lower Third, Charles, who you’d be with if you come to us in September. Boys, this is Charles Manders, and I want you to tell him all about things and answer any questions he wants to ask. You can believe about half of what they say, Charles, and they will tell you the most fearful lies about the food, which is excellent.”

The boys laugh and groan; amiable, exaggerated groans. They must like the headmaster’s wife: there is licensed repartee. They look at her with bright eyes in open, eager faces. Someone leaps to hold the door for her, and close it behind her. She is gone.

The child stands in the centre of the room, and it draws in around him. The circle of children contracts, faces are only a yard or so from him; strange faces, looking, assessing.

Asking questions. They help themselves to his name, his age, his school. Over their heads he sees beyond the window an inaccessible world of shivering trees and high racing clouds and his voice which has floated like a feather in the dusty schoolroom air dies altogether and he becomes mute, and he stands in the middle of them with shoulders humped, staring down at feet: grubby plimsolls and kicked brown sandals. There is a noise in his ears like rushing water, a torrential din out of which voices boom, blotting each other out so that he cannot always hear the words. Do you? they say, and Have you? and What's your? and the faces, if he looks up, swing into one another in kaleidoscopic patterns and the floor under his feet is unsteady, lifting and falling.

And out of the noises comes one voice that is complete, that he can hear. "Next term, we'll mash you," it says. "We always mash new boys."

And a bell goes, somewhere beyond doors and down corridors, and suddenly the children are all gone, clattering away and leaving him there with the heaving floor and the walls that shift and swing, and the headmaster's wife comes back and tows him away, and he is with his parents again, and they are getting into the car, and the high hedges skim past the car windows once more, in the other direction, and the gravel under the tyres changes to black tarmac.

"Well?"

"I liked it, didn't you?" The mother adjusted the car around her, closing windows, shrugging into her seat.

"Very pleasant, really. Nice chap."

"I liked him. Not quite so sure about her."

"It's pricey, of course."

"All the same..."

"Money well spent, though. One way and another."

"Shall we settle it, then?"

"I think so. I'll drop him a line."

The mother pitched her voice a notch higher to speak to the child in the back of the car. "Would you like to go there, Charles? Like Simon Wilcox. Did you see that lovely gym, and the swimming-pool? And did the other boys tell you all about it?"

The child does not answer. He looks straight ahead of him, at the road coiling beneath the bonnet of the car. His face is haggard with anticipation.

1978

1. The story includes a wide range of perspectives on the event(s) which it covers, relating to both the characters and the narrator. Using the information on focalization in *Ways of Reading* (Unit 19), consider a) how the perspectives of the characters in the story differ; b) how the focalization of the story shifts from one perspective to another at different stages in the narrative.

2. The story is a piece of sharp social observation rendered in a primarily comic mode. Can you point to moments in the text where these two aspects combine?

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## SESSION 7

### PERSONA AND TONE

A. Read the following poem by Stevie Smith (1902-1971). (You may have to do this a number of times before it begins to make sense!)

#### **Not Waving But Drowning**

Nobody heard him, the dead man,  
But still he lay moaning:

I was much further out than you thought  
And not waving but drowning.

Poor chap, he always loved larking 5  
And now he's dead  
It must have been too cold for him his heart gave way,  
They said,

Oh, no no no, it was too cold always  
(Still the dead one lay moaning) 10  
I was much too far out all my life  
And not waving but drowning.

1957

1. How many voices or speakers can you discover in the poem? Label each voice 1, 2, 3, etc. and mark where each voice begins and ends.
2. What features of the language lead you to think that there is more than one speaker in the poem?
3. Try to define each speaker more exactly. (For example, is the speaker first or third person?) Try to say who you think each speaker might be, using textual evidence to justify your conclusions.
4. Try to define the tone of each speaker, his or her attitude to the drowning man.
5. What are some of the meanings that "drowning" might have in the poem?
6. Try to sum up what you think the poem is saying. What contribution does the use of different voices make to this?

**B.** Read the following story by the Irish writer James Joyce (1882-1941), which describes the situation of a particular person at a particular time.

### Eveline

She sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue. Her head was leaned against the window curtains and in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne. She was tired.

Few people passed. The man out of the last house passed on his way home; she heard his footsteps clacking along the concrete pavement and afterwards crunching on the cinder path before the new red houses. One time there used to be a field there in which they used to play every evening with other people's children. Then a man from Belfast bought the field and built houses in it – not like their little brown houses but bright brick houses with shining roofs. The children of the avenue used to play together in that field – the Devines, the Waters, the Dunns, little Keogh the cripple, she and her brothers and sisters. Ernest, however, never played: he was too grown up. Her father used often to hunt them in out of the field with his blackthorn stick; but usually little Keogh used to keep *nix* and call out when he saw her father coming. Still they seemed to have been rather happy then. Her father was not so bad then; and besides, her mother was alive. That was a long time ago; she and her brothers and sisters were all grown up; her mother was dead. Tizzie Dunn was dead, too, and the Waters had gone back to England. Everything changes. Now she was going to go away like the others, to leave her home.

Home! She looked round the room, reviewing all its familiar objects which she had dusted once a week for so many years, wondering where on earth all the dust came from. Perhaps she would never see again those familiar objects from which she had never dreamed of being divided. And yet during all those years she had never found out the name of the priest whose yellowing photograph hung on the wall above the broken harmonium beside the coloured print of the promises made to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque. He had been a school friend of her father. Whenever he showed the photograph to a visitor her father used to pass it with a casual word:

– He is in Melbourne now.

She had consented to go away, to leave her home. Was that wise? She tried to weigh each side of the question. In her home anyway she had shelter and food; she had those whom she had known all her life about her. Of course she had to work hard, both in the house and at business. What would they say of her in the Stores when they found out that she had run away with a fellow? Say she was a fool,

perhaps; and her place would be filled up by advertisement. Miss Gavan would be glad. She had always had an edge on her, especially whenever there were people listening.

– Miss Hill, don't you see these ladies are waiting?

– Look lively, Miss Hill, please.

She would not cry many tears at leaving the Stores.

But in her new home, in a distant unknown country, it would not be like that. Then she would be married – she, Eveline. People would treat her with respect then. She would not be treated as her mother had been. Even now, though she was over nineteen, she sometimes felt herself in danger of her father's violence. She knew it was that that had given her the palpitations. When they were growing up he had never gone for her, like he used to go for Harry and Ernest, because she was a girl; but latterly he had begun to threaten her and say what he would do to her only for her dead mother's sake. And now she had nobody to protect her. Ernest was dead and Harry, who was in the church decorating business, was nearly always down somewhere in the country. Besides, the invariable squabble for money on Saturday nights had begun to weary her unspeakably. She always gave her entire wages – seven shillings – and Harry always sent up what he could but the trouble was to get any money from her father. He said she used to squander the money, that she had no head, that he wasn't going to give her his hard-earned money to throw about the streets, and much more, for he was usually fairly bad of a Saturday night. In the end he would give her the money and ask her had she any intention of buying Sunday's dinner. Then she had to rush out as quickly as she could and do her marketing, holding her black leather purse tightly in her hand as she elbowed her way through the crowds and returning home late under her load of provisions. She had hard work to keep the house together and to see that the two young children who had been left to her charge went to school regularly and got their meals regularly. It was hard work – a hard life – but now that she was about to leave it she did not find it a wholly undesirable life.

She was about to explore another life with Frank. Frank was very kind, manly, open-hearted. She was to go away with him by the night-boat to be his wife and to live with him in Buenos Ayres where he had a home waiting for her. How well she remembered the first time she had seen him; he was lodging in a house on the main road where she used to visit. It seemed a few weeks ago. He was standing at the gate, his peaked cap pushed back on his head and his hair tumbled forward over a face of bronze. Then they had come to know each other. He used to meet her outside the Stores every evening and see her home. He took her to see *The Bohemian Girl* and she felt elated as she sat in an unaccustomed part of the theatre with him. He was awfully fond of music and sang a little. People knew that they were courting and, when he sang about the lass that loves a sailor, she always felt pleasantly confused. He used to call her Poppens out of fun. First of all it had been an excitement for her to have a fellow and then she had begun to like him. He had tales of distant countries. He had started as a deck boy at a pound a month on a ship of the Allan Line going out to Canada. He told her the names of the ships he had been on and the names of the different services. He had sailed through the Straits of Magellan and he told her stories of the terrible Patagonians. He had fallen on his feet in Buenos Ayres, he said, and had come over to the old country just for a holiday. Of course, her father had found out the affair and had forbidden her to have anything to say to him.

– I know these sailor chaps, he said.

One day he had quarrelled with Frank and after that she had to meet her lover secretly.

The evening deepened in the avenue. The white of two letters in her lap grew indistinct. One was to Harry; the other was to her father. Ernest had been her favourite but she liked Harry too. Her father was becoming old lately, she noticed; he would miss her. Sometimes he could be very nice. Not long before, when she had been laid up for a day, he had read her out a ghost story and made toast for her at the fire. Another day, when their mother was alive, they had all gone for a picnic to the Hill of Howth. She remembered her father putting on her mother's bonnet to make the children laugh.

Her time was running out but she continued to sit by the window, leaning her head against the window curtain, inhaling the odour of dusty cretonne. Down far in the avenue she could hear a street organ playing. She knew the air. Strange that it should come that very night to remind her of the promise to her mother, her promise to keep the home together as long as she could. She remembered the last night of her mother's illness; she was again in the close dark room at the other side of the hall and outside she heard a melancholy air of Italy. The organ-player had been ordered to go away and given sixpence. She remembered her father strutting back into the sickroom saying:



– Damned Italians! coming over here!

As she mused the pitiful vision of her mother’s life laid its spell on the very quick of her being – that life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness. She trembled as she heard again her mother’s voice saying constantly with foolish insistence:

– Derevaun Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!

She stood up in a sudden impulse of terror. Escape! She must escape! Frank would save her. He would give her life, perhaps love, too. But she wanted to live. Why should she be unhappy? She had a right to happiness. Frank would take her in his arms, fold her in his arms. He would save her.

.....

She stood among the swaying crowd in the station at the North Wall. He held her hand and she knew that he was speaking to her, saying something about the passage over and over again. The station was full of soldiers with brown baggages. Through the wide doors of the sheds she caught a glimpse of the black mass of the boat, lying in beside the quay wall, with illumined portholes. She answered nothing. She felt her cheek pale and cold and, out of a maze of distress, she prayed to God to direct her, to show her what was her duty. The boat blew a long mournful whistle into the mist. If she went, to-morrow she would be on the sea with Frank, steaming towards Buenos Ayres. Their passage had been booked. Could she still draw back after all he had done for her? Her distress awoke a nausea in her body and she kept moving her lips in silent fervent prayer.

A bell clanged upon her heart. She felt him seize her hand:

– Come!

All the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. He was drawing her into them: he would drown her. She gripped with both hands at the iron railing.

– Come!

No! No! No! It was impossible. Her hands clutched the iron in frenzy. Amid the seas she sent a cry of anguish!

– Eveline! Evvy!

He rushed beyond the barrier and called to her to follow. He was shouted at to go on but he still called to her. She set her white face to him, passive, like a helpless animal. Her eyes gave him no sign of love or farewell or recognition.

1914

1. How many different voices appear in the story? (Be careful, since these different voices are not always presented in terms of representation in direct speech.) Mark what they say and who says them. What significance can you ascribe to what is said and who says it?
2. Recall what you read in *Ways of Reading* concerning focalization. One of the subtleties of this story is that it is not always easy to distinguish sharply between the voices of the narrator, Eveline, and other characters in the text. Try to find examples of where this delicate problematization of who is speaking occurs, and decide what effect(s) it might have on the reader of the story.
3. Another aspect of focalization is not how the narration represents events and thoughts, but precisely what information it chooses to include and not include. How does this consideration have a bearing on reading the text in terms of, first, the kinds of detail included, and second, what might have been included but isn’t? Pay particular attention to the “break” in the story towards the end. What is the effect of this?
4. What is “Eveline” “about”? To what extent does Eveline represent more than herself?

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## SESSION 8

### PARALLELISM AND DEVIATION

Preparation – Units 11 and 12 in *Ways of Reading*

A. Read (and reread!) the following poem by the American poet e.e. cummings (1894-1962).

**[anyone lived in a pretty how town]**

anyone lived in a pretty how town  
(with up so floating many bells down)  
spring summer autumn winter  
he sang his didn't he danced his did.

Women and men(both little and small) 5  
cared for anyone not at all  
they sowed their isn't they reaped their same  
sun moon stars rain

children guessed(but only a few 10  
and down they forgot as up they grew  
autumn winter spring summer)  
that noone loved him more by more

when by now and tree by leaf  
she laughed his joy she cried his grief 15  
bird by snow and stir by still  
anyone's any was all to her

someones married their everyones  
laughed their cryings and did their dance  
(sleep wake hope and then)they  
said their nevers they slept their dream 20

stars rain sun moon  
(and only the snow can begin to explain  
how children are apt to forget to remember  
with up so floating many bells down)  
one day anyone died i guess 25  
(and noone stooped to kiss his face)  
busy folk buried them side by side  
little by little and was by was

all by all and deep by deep  
and more by more they dream their sleep 30  
noone and anyone earth by april  
wish by spirit and if by yes.

Women and men(both dong and ding)  
summer autumn winter spring  
reaped their sowing and went their came 35  
sun moon stars rain

1940

1. Pick out the “deviant” collocations (combinations of words) in the poem.
2. What linguistic conventions/rules do they seem to be deviating from?
3. Are all features of the poem deviant? What kinds of regular patterns can you find (e.g. rhythm, rhyme, syntax, etc.)?
4. How does the poet's handling of deviation and regularity relate to the meaning of the poem?

**B.** “The Cool Web” is by the English poet Robert Graves (1895-1985).

**The Cool Web**

Children are dumb to say how hot the day is,

How hot the scent is of the summer rose,  
How dreadful the black wastes of evening sky,  
How dreadful the tall soldiers drumming by.

But we have speech, to chill the angry day, 5  
And speech, to dull the rose's cruel scent.  
We spell away the overhanging night,  
We spell away the soldiers and the fright.

There's a cool web of language winds us in,  
Retreat from too much joy or too much fear: 10  
We grow sea-green at last and coldly die  
In brininess and volubility.

But if we let our tongues lose self-possession,  
Throwing off language and its watery clasp  
Before our death, instead of when death comes, 15  
Facing the wide glare of the children's day,  
Facing the rose, the dark sky and the drums,  
We shall go mad no doubt and die that way.

1927

1. Identify any patterns of repetition and parallelism in the poem – for example individual words/collocations, syntactic patterns at sentence and discourse level, sound patterns, and so on.
2. Note any patterns of contrast in the poem (e.g. lexical-semantic, sound-syntax).
3. Look for deviant collocations at the lexical/syntactic level.
4. Consider what you feel the essential argument of the poem to be. How is this enhanced and complicated by the patterns you have identified?

C. The following passage is the opening section of *Bleak House*, by Charles Dickens (1812-1870).

LONDON. Michaelmas Term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall. Implacable November weather. As much mud in the streets, as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard up Holborn Hill. Smoke lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snowflakes – gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun. Dogs, undistinguishable in the mire. Horses, scarcely better; splashed to their very blinkers. Foot passengers, jostling one another's umbrellas, in a general infection of ill-temper, and losing their foot-hold at street-corners, where tens of thousands of other foot passengers have been slipping and sliding since the day broke (if this day ever broke), adding new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud, sticking at those points tenaciously to the pavement, and accumulating at compound interest.

Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping, and the waterside pollutions of a great (and, dirty) city. Fog on the Essex Marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards, and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon, and hanging in the misty clouds.

Gas looming through the fog in divers places in the streets, much as the sun may, from the spongy fields, be seen to loom by husbandman and ploughboy. Most of the shops lighted two hours before their time – as the gas seems to know, for it has a haggard and unwilling look.

The raw afternoon is rawest, and the dense fog is densest, and the muddy streets are muddiest, near that leaden-headed old obstruction, appropriate ornament for the threshold of a leaden-headed old

corporation: Temple Bar. And hard by Temple Bar, in Lincoln's Inn Hall, at the very heart of the fog, sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery.

1853

1. Do as in B above for this text. Consider particularly "deviant" collocations, syntactic irregularities at sentence level and their cumulative effect at supersentence level.
2. What kind of patterns are woven at syntactic and semantic levels? How are these augmented by sound-patterning?

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## SESSION 9

### FIGURES OF SPEECH

Preparation – Units 13 and 14 in *Ways of Reading*

**A.** The following pieces of text have been taken at random from a variety of literary and non-literary sources.

- a) Open cast mining rapes countryside.
- b) An aged man is but a paltry thing,  
A tattered coat upon a stick.  
(Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium")
- c) I was left for dead by the fastest wheels on the road.
- d) The grass was soft as a child's breath.
- e) His great love is the turf.
- f) After a somewhat leaden opening, the play's fluid plot captivated the audience.

1. Pick out as many kinds of figurative language as you can in the above examples. Try to identify how they function, and their connotations – in other words, how they influence our perception of the thing being presented.

**B.** Read the following poem by the Black American writer Langston Hughes (1902-1967).

#### Harlem

What happens to a dream deferred?  
Does it dry up  
Like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore –  
And then run? 5  
Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over –  
Like a syrupy sweet?  
Maybe it just sags  
Like a heavy load. 10

Or does it explode?

1951

1. Identify as many uses of figurative language in the poem as you can.
2. Is there a pattern in the way the poem uses metaphors and similes?
3. What sorts of different reactions to the "dream deferred" do the various metaphors and similes suggest might occur?
4. How does the figurative language function in relation to the poem's meaning?

C. The two poems that follow, by Christina Rossetti (1830-1894) and George Herbert (1593-1633), use figures of speech in very different ways.

### Up-Hill

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?  
 Yes, to the very end.  
 Will the day's journey take the whole long day?  
 From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place? 5  
 A roof for when the slow dark hours begin.  
 May not the darkness hide it from my face?  
 You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night? 10  
 Those who have gone before.  
 Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?  
 They will not keep you standing at that door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?  
 Of labour you shall find the sum.  
 Will there be beds for me and all who seek? 15  
 Yea, beds for all who come.

1862

### Virtue

Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,  
 The bridal of the earth and sky:  
 The dew shall weep thy fall tonight;  
 For thou must die.

Sweet rose, whose hue, angry and brave,<sup>2</sup> 5  
 Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye:  
 Thy root is ever in its grave,  
 And thou must die.

Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,  
 A box where sweets<sup>3</sup> compacted lie; 10  
 My music shows ye have your closes,<sup>4</sup>  
 And all must die.

Only a sweet and virtuous soul,  
 Like seasoned timber, never gives;  
 But though the whole world turn to coal, 15  
 Then chiefly<sup>5</sup> lives.

1. "Up-Hill" is presented in the form of a dialogue between two speakers, but their identity is not made clear. Who could they be and how does this relate to the ambiguity of the poem in terms of its ability to function at both a literal and a metaphorical level?

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2 Splendid.  
 3 Perfumes.  
 4 Musical cadences.  
 5 Most, at its most intense.

2. In “Virtue”, the phenomena described in the first three stanzas are related to other concepts. What is the significance of these, and what differences are there between them? What do they have in common? Similarly, in the last stanza, how is the phenomenon described there contrasted with the others, but also what characteristics is it represented as sharing with them?

3. Consider the two poems together. What concerns do they share at a metaphorical or symbolic level? What are the essential differences in the use of form and language in expressing this concern?

**D.** “The Black Cat” is one of the best known stories by Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849). After reading it, answer the questions asked at the end.

### **The Black Cat**

For the most wild yet most homely narrative which I am about to pen, I neither expect nor solicit belief. Mad indeed would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence. Yet, mad am I not – and very surely do I not dream. But to-morrow I die, and to-day I would unburden my soul. My immediate purpose is to place before the world, plainly, succinctly, and without comment, a series of mere household events. In their consequences, these events have terrified – have tortured – have destroyed me. Yet I will not attempt to expound them. To me, they have presented little but horror – to many they will seem less terrible than baroques. Hereafter, perhaps, some intellect may be found which will reduce my phantasm to the commonplace – some intellect more calm; more logical, and far less excitable than my own, which will perceive, in the circumstances I detail with awe, nothing more than an ordinary succession of very natural causes and effects.

From my infancy I was noted for the docility and humanity of my disposition. My tenderness of heart was even so conspicuous as to make me the jest of my companions. I was especially fond of animals, and was indulged by my parents with a great variety of pets. With these I spent most of my time, and never was so happy as when feeding and caressing them. This peculiarity of character grew with my growth, and, in my manhood, I derived from it one of my principal sources of pleasure. To those who have cherished an affection for a faithful and sagacious dog, I need hardly be at the trouble of explaining the nature or the intensity of the gratification thus derivable. There is something in the unselfish and self-sacrificing love of a brute, which goes directly to the heart of him who has had frequent occasion to test the paltry friendship and gossamer fidelity of mere Man.

I married early, and was happy to find in my wife a disposition not uncongenial with my own. Observing my partiality for domestic pets, she lost no opportunity of procuring those of the most agreeable kind. We had birds, gold-fish, a fine dog, rabbits, a small monkey, and a cat.

This latter was a remarkably large and beautiful animal, entirely black, and sagacious to an astonishing degree. In speaking of his intelligence, my wife, who at heart was not a little tinctured with superstition, made frequent allusion to the ancient popular notion, which regarded all black cats as witches in disguise. Not that she was ever serious upon this point – and I mention the matter at all for no better reason than that it happens, just now, to be remembered.

Pluto – this was the cat’s name – was my favorite pet and playmate. I alone fed him and he attended me wherever I went about the house. It was even with difficulty that I could prevent him from following me through the streets.

Our friendship lasted, in this manner, for several years, during which my general temperament and character – through the instrumentality of the Fiend Intemperance – had (I blush to confess it) experienced a radical alteration for the worse. I grew, day by day, more moody, more irritable, more regardless of the feelings of others. I suffered myself to use intemperate language to my wife. At length, I even offered her personal violence. My pets, of course, were made to feel the change in my disposition. I not only neglected but ill-used them. For Pluto, however, I still retained sufficient regard to restrain me from maltreating him, as I made no scruple of maltreating the rabbits, the monkey, or even the dog, when, by accident, or through affection, they came in my way. But my disease grew upon me – for what disease is like Alcohol! – and at length even Pluto, who was now becoming old, and consequently somewhat peevish – even Pluto began to experience the effects of my ill temper.

One night, returning home much intoxicated, from one of my haunts about town, I fancied that the cat avoided my presence. I seized him; when, in his fright at my violence, he inflicted a slight wound upon my hand with his teeth. The fury of a demon instantly possessed me. I knew myself no longer. My original soul seemed, at once, to take its flight from my body; and a more than fiendish

malevolence, gin-nurtured, thrilled every fibre of my frame. I took from my waistcoat-pocket a penknife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket! I blush, I burn, I shudder, while I pen the damnable atrocity.

When reason returned with the morning – when I had slept off the fumes of the night’s debauch – I experienced a sentiment half of horror, half of remorse, for the crime of which I had been guilty; but it was, at best, a feeble and equivocal feeling, and the soul remained untouched. I again plunged into excess, and soon drowned in wine all memory of the deed.

In the meantime the cat slowly recovered. The socket of the lost eye presented, it is true, a frightful appearance, but he no longer appeared to suffer any pain. He went about the house as usual, but, as might be expected, fled in extreme terror at my approach. I had so much of my old heart left, as to be at first grieved by this evident dislike on the part of a creature which had once so loved me. But this feeling soon gave place to irritation. And then came, as if to my final and irrevocable overthrow, the spirit of PERVERSENESS. Of this spirit philosophy takes no account. Yet I am not more sure that my soul lives than I am that perverseness is one of the primitive impulses of the human heart – one of the indivisible primary faculties, or sentiments, which give direction to the character of Man. Who has not, a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or stupid action for no other reason than because he knows he should not? Have we not a perpetual inclination in the teeth of our best judgment, to violate that which is Law, merely because we understand it to be such? This spirit of perverseness, I say, came to my final overthrow. It was this unfathomable longing of the soul to vex itself – to offer violence to its own nature – to do wrong for the wrong’s sake only – that urged me to continue and finally to consummate the injury I had inflicted upon the unoffending brute. One morning, in cold blood, I slipped a noose about its neck and hung it to the limb of a tree; hung it with the tears streaming from my eyes, and with the bitterest remorse at my heart; hung it because I knew that it had loved me, and because I felt it had given me no reason of offence; hung it because I knew that in so doing I was committing a sin – a deadly sin that would so jeopardize my immortal soul as to place it – if such a thing were possible – even beyond the reach of the infinite mercy of the Most Merciful and Most Terrible God.

On the night of the day on which this most cruel deed was done, I was aroused from sleep by the cry of fire. The curtains of my bed were in flames. The whole house was blazing. It was with great difficulty that my wife, a servant, and myself, made our escape from the conflagration. The destruction was complete. My entire worldly wealth was swallowed up, and I resigned myself thenceforward to despair.

I am above the weakness of seeking to establish a sequence of cause and effect, between the disaster and the atrocity. But I am detailing a chain of facts – and wish not to leave even a possible link imperfect. On the day succeeding the fire, I visited the ruins. The walls, with one exception, had fallen in. This exception was found in a compartment wall, not very thick, which stood about the middle of the house, and against which had rested the head of my bed. The plastering had here, in great measure, resisted the action of the fire – a fact which I attributed to its having been recently spread. About this wall a dense crowd were collected, and many persons seemed to be examining a particular portion of it with very minute and eager attention. The words “strange!” “singular!” and other similar expressions, excited my curiosity. I approached and saw, as if graven in bas-relief, upon the white surface, the figure of a gigantic cat. The impression was given with an accuracy truly marvelous. There was a rope about the animal’s neck.

When I first beheld this apparition – for I could scarcely regard it as less – my wonder and my terror were extreme. But at length reflection came to my aid. The cat, I remembered, had been hung in a garden adjacent to the house. Upon the alarm of fire, this garden had been immediately filled by the crowd – by some one of whom the animal must have been cut from the tree and thrown, through an open window, into my chamber. This had probably been done with the view of arousing me from sleep. The falling of other walls had compressed the victim of my cruelty into the substance of the freshly-spread plaster, the lime of which, with the flames, and the ammonia from the carcass, had then accomplished the portraiture as I saw it.

Although I thus readily accounted to my reason, if not altogether to my conscience, for the startling fact just detailed, it did not the less fail to make a deep impression upon my fancy. For months I could not rid myself of the phantasm of the cat; and, during this period, there came back into my spirit a half sentiment that seemed, but was not, remorse. I went so far as to regret the loss of the

animal, and to look about me, among the vile haunts which I now habitually frequented, for another pet of the same species, and of somewhat similar appearance, with which to supply its place.

One night as I sat, half stupefied, in a den of more than infamy, my attention was suddenly drawn to some black object, reposing upon the head of one of the immense hogsheads of gin, or of rum, which constituted the chief furniture of the apartment. I had been looking steadily at the top of this hogshead for some minutes, and what now caused me surprise was the fact that I had not sooner perceived the object thereupon. I approached it, and touched it with my hand. It was a black cat – a very large one – fully as large as Pluto, and closely resembling him in every respect but one. Pluto had not a white hair upon any portion of his body; but this cat had a large, although indefinite splotch of white, covering nearly the whole region of the breast.

Upon my touching him, he immediately arose, purred loudly, rubbed against my hand, and appeared delighted with my notice. This, then, was the very creature of which I was in search. I at once offered to purchase it of the landlord; but this person made no claim to it – knew nothing of it – had never seen it before.

I continued my caresses, and when I prepared to go home, the animal evinced a disposition to accompany me. I permitted it to do so; occasionally stooping and patting it as I proceeded. When it reached the house it domesticated itself at once, and became immediately a great favorite with my wife.

For my own part, I soon found a dislike to it arising within me. This was just the reverse of what I had anticipated; but – I know not how or why it was – its evident fondness for myself rather disgusted and annoyed me. By slow degrees these feelings of disgust and annoyance rose into the bitterness of hatred. I avoided the creature; a certain sense of shame, and the remembrance of my former deed of cruelty, preventing me from physically abusing it. I did not, for some weeks, strike, or otherwise violently ill use it; but gradually – very gradually – I came to look upon it with unutterable loathing, and to flee silently from its odious presence, as from the breath of a pestilence.

What added, no doubt, to my hatred of the beast, was the discovery on the morning after I brought it home, that like Pluto, it also had been deprived of one of its eyes. This circumstance, however, only endeared it to my wife, who, as I have already said, possessed, in a high degree, that humanity of feeling which had once been my distinguishing trait, and the source of many of my simplest and purest pleasures.

With my aversion to this cat, however, its partiality for myself seemed to increase. It followed my footsteps with a pertinacity which it would be difficult to make the reader comprehend. Whenever I sat, it would crouch beneath my chair, or spring upon my knees, covering me with its loathsome caresses. If I arose to walk it would get between my feet and thus nearly throw me down, or, fastening its long and sharp claws in my dress, clamber, in this manner, to my breast. At such times, although I longed to destroy it with a blow, I was yet withheld from so doing, partly by a memory of my former crime, but chiefly – let me confess it at once – by absolute dread of the beast.

This dread was not exactly a dread of physical evil – and yet I should be at a loss how otherwise to define it. I am almost ashamed to own – yes, even in this felon's cell, I am almost ashamed to own – that the terror and horror with which the animal inspired me, had been heightened by one of the merest chimeras it would be possible to conceive. My wife had called my attention, more than once, to the character of the mark of white hair, of which I have spoken, and which constituted the sole visible difference between the strange beast and the one I had destroyed. The reader will remember that this mark, although large, had been originally very indefinite; but, by slow degrees – degrees nearly imperceptible, and which for a long time my reason struggled to reject as fanciful – it had, at length, assumed a rigorous distinctness of outline. It was now the representation of an object that I shudder to name – and for this, above all, I loathed, and dreaded, and would have rid myself of the monster had I dared – it was now, I say, the image of a hideous – of a ghastly thing – of the GALLOWS! – oh, mournful and terrible engine of Horror and of Crime – of Agony and of Death!

And now was I indeed wretched beyond the wretchedness of mere Humanity. And a brute beast – whose fellow I had contemptuously destroyed – a brute beast to work out for me – for me, a man fashioned in the image of the High God – so much of insufferable woe! Alas! neither by day nor by night knew I the blessing of rest any more! During the former the creature left me no moment alone, and in the latter I started hourly from dreams of unutterable fear to find the hot breath of the



thing upon my face, and its vast weight – an incarnate nightmare that I had not power to shake off – incumbent eternally upon my heart!

Beneath the pressure of torments such as these the feeble remnant of the good within me succumbed. Evil thoughts became my sole intimates – the darkest and most evil of thoughts. The moodiness of my usual temper increased to hatred of all things and of all mankind; while from the sudden, frequent, and ungovernable outbursts of a fury to which I now blindly abandoned myself, my uncomplaining wife, alas, was the most usual and the most patient of sufferers.

One day she accompanied me, upon some household errand, into the cellar of the old building which our poverty compelled us to inhabit. The cat followed me down the steep stairs, and, nearly throwing me headlong, exasperated me to madness. Uplifting an axe, and forgetting in my wrath the childish dread which had hitherto stayed my hand, I aimed a blow at the animal, which, of course, would have proved instantly fatal had it descended as I wished. But this blow was arrested by the hand of my wife. Goaded by the interference into a rage more than demoniacal, I withdrew my arm from her grasp and buried the axe in her brain. She fell dead upon the spot without a groan.

This hideous murder accomplished, I set myself forthwith, and with entire deliberation, to the task of concealing the body. I knew that I could not remove it from the house, either by day or by night, without the risk of being observed by the neighbors. Many projects entered my mind. At one period I thought of cutting the corpse into minute fragments, and destroying them by fire. At another, I resolved to dig a grave for it in the floor of the cellar. Again, I deliberated about casting it in the well in the yard – about packing it in a box, as if merchandise, with the usual arrangements, and so getting a porter to take it from the house. Finally I hit upon what I considered a far better expedient than either of these. I determined to wall it up in the cellar, as the monks of the Middle Ages are recorded to have walled up their victims.

For a purpose such as this the cellar was well adapted. Its walls were loosely constructed, and had lately been plastered throughout with a rough plaster, which the dampness of the atmosphere had prevented from hardening. Moreover, in one of the walls was a projection, caused by a false chimney, or fireplace, that had been filled up and made to resemble the rest of the cellar. I made no doubt that I could readily displace the bricks at this point, insert the corpse, and wall the whole up as before, so that no eye could detect anything suspicious.

And in this calculation I was not deceived. By means of a crowbar I easily dislodged the bricks, and, having carefully deposited the body against the inner wall, I propped it in that position, while with little trouble I relaid the whole structure as it originally stood. Having procured mortar, sand, and hair, with every possible precaution, I prepared a plaster which could not be distinguished from the old, and with this, I very carefully went over the new brick-work. When I had finished, I felt satisfied that all was right. The wall did not present the slightest appearance of having been disturbed. The rubbish on the floor was picked up with the minutest care. I looked around triumphantly, and said to myself “Here at least, then, my labor has not been in vain.”

My next step was to look for the beast which had been the cause of so much wretchedness; for I had, at length, firmly resolved to put it to death. Had I been able to meet with it at the moment, there could have been no doubt of its fate; but it appeared that the crafty animal had been alarmed at the violence of my previous anger and forbore to present itself in my present mood. It is impossible to describe or to imagine the deep, blissful sense of relief which the absence of the detested creature occasioned in my bosom. It did not make its appearance during the night; and thus for one night, at least, since its introduction into the house, I soundly and tranquilly slept; aye, slept even with the burden of murder upon my soul.

The second and the third day passed, and still my tormentor came not. Once again I breathed as a freeman. The monster, in terror, had fled the premises for ever! I should behold it no more! My happiness was supreme! The guilt of my dark deed disturbed me but little. Some few inquiries had been made, but these had been readily answered. Even a search had been instituted – but of course nothing was to be discovered. I looked upon my future felicity as secured.

Upon the fourth day of the assassination, a party of the police came, very unexpectedly, into the house, and proceeded again to make a rigorous investigation of the premises. Secure, however, in the inscrutability of my place of concealment, I felt no embarrassment whatever. The officers bade me accompany them in their search. They left no nook or corner unexplored. At length, for the third or fourth time, they descended into the cellar. I quivered not in a muscle. My heart beat calmly as that of

one who slumbers in innocence. I walked the cellar from end to end. I folded my arms upon my bosom, and roamed easily to and fro. The police were thoroughly satisfied and prepared to depart. The glee at my heart was too strong to be restrained. I burned to say if but one word, by way of triumph, and to render doubly sure their assurance of my guiltlessness.

“Gentlemen,” I said at last, as the party ascended the steps, “I delight to have allayed your suspicions. I wish you all health and a little more courtesy. By the bye, gentlemen, this – this is a very well-constructed house,” (in the rabid desire to say something easily, I scarcely knew what I uttered at all); “I may say an excellently well-constructed house. These walls – are you going, gentlemen? – these walls are solidly put together”; and here, through the mere frenzy of bravado, I rapped heavily with a cane which I held in my hand, upon that very portion of the brick-work behind which stood the corpse of the wife of my bosom.

But may God shield and deliver me from the fangs of the Arch-Fiend! No sooner had the reverberation of my blows sunk into silence, than I was answered by a voice from within the tomb! – by a cry, at first muffled and broken, like the sobbing of a child, and then quickly swelling into one long, loud, and continuous scream, utterly anomalous and inhuman – a howl – a wailing shriek, half of horror and half of triumph, such as might have arisen only out of hell, conjointly from the throats of the damned in their agony and of the demons that exult in the damnation.

Of my own thoughts it is folly to speak. Swooning, I staggered to the opposite wall. For one instant the party on the stairs remained motionless, through extremity of terror and awe. In the next a dozen stout arms were toiling at the wall. It fell bodily. The corpse, already greatly decayed and clotted with gore, stood erect before the eyes of the spectators. Upon its head, with red extended mouth and solitary eye of fire, sat the hideous beast whose craft had seduced me into murder, and whose informing voice had consigned me to the hangman. I had walled the monster up within the tomb.

1843

1. Try to find as many instances of the use of irony in the story as you can, and show how they function.
2. How does Poe work with symbols in the story?

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## SESSION 10

### ALLUSION AND INTERTEXTUALITY

Preparation – Units 15 and 16 in *Ways of Reading*

A. The poems in this section are by Robert Greene (1558-1592) and William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), respectively. Read them, and then answer the questions that follow.

#### Samela

Like to Diana in her summer weed,<sup>6</sup>  
Girt<sup>7</sup> with a crimson robe of brightest dye,  
Goes fair Samela.  
Whiter than be the flocks that stragglings feed,  
When washed by Arethusa's fount they lie,  
Is fair Samela.  
As fair Aurora in her morning gray,  
Decked with the ruddy glister of her love,

5

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6 Clothing.  
7 Encircled.

Is fair Samela.  
 Like lovely Thetis on a calmed day, 10  
 When as her brightness Neptune's fancy move,  
 Shines fair Samela.  
 Her tresses gold, her eyes like glassy streams,  
 Her teeth are pearl, the breasts are ivory  
 Of fair Samela. 15  
 Her cheeks like rose and lily yield forth gleams,  
 Her brows bright arches framed of ebony:  
 Thus fair Samela.  
 Passeth<sup>8</sup> fair Venus in her bravest hue,  
 And Juno in the show of majesty, 20  
 For she's Samela.  
 Pallas in wit, all three, if you well view,  
 For beauty, wit, and matchless dignity,  
 Yield to Samela.

1589

### Leda and the Swan

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still  
 Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed  
 By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,  
 He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push  
 The feathered glory from her loosening thighs? 5  
 And how can body, laid in that white rush,  
 But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

A shudder in the loins engenders there  
 The broken wall, the burning roof and tower 10  
 And Agamemnon dead.  
 Being so caught up,  
 So mastered by the brute blood of the air,  
 Did she put on his knowledge with his power  
 Before the indifferent beak could let her drop? 15

1924

1. Find out the significance of each of the characters from classical mythology alluded to in "Samela". How does reference to these increase the effectiveness of the poem?
2. In "Leda and the Swan", what is the significance of the allusions to Leda, the swan, and Agammemnon? In what ways is allusion to elements of classical mythology used very differently than in the first poem?

**B.** Read the following poem by Henry Reed (b. 1914)

### Naming of Parts

To-day we have naming of parts. Yesterday,  
 We had daily cleaning. And to-morrow morning,  
 We shall have what to do after firing. But to-day,  
 To-day we have naming of parts. Japonica  
 Glistens like coral in all of the neighbouring gardens, 5  
 And to-day we have naming of parts.

8 Surpasses.

This is the lower sling swivel. And this  
 Is the upper sling swivel, whose use you will see,  
 When you are given your slings. And this is the piling swivel,  
 Which in your case you have not got. The branches 10  
 Hold in the gardens their silent, eloquent gestures,  
 Which in our case we have not got.

This is the safety-catch, which is always released  
 With an easy flick of the thumb. And please do not let me  
 See anyone using his finger. You can do it quite easy 15  
 If you have any strength in your thumb. The blossoms  
 Are fragile and motionless, never letting anyone see  
 Any of them using their finger.

And this you can see is the bolt. The purpose of this  
 Is to open the breech, as you see. We can slide it 20  
 Rapidly backwards and forwards: we call this  
 Easing the spring. And rapidly backwards and forwards  
 The early bees are assaulting and fumbling the flowers:  
 They call it easing the Spring.

They call it easing the Spring: it is perfectly easy 25  
 If you have any strength in your thumb: like the bolt,  
 And the breech, and the cocking-piece, and the point of balance,  
 Which in our case we have not got; and the almond-blossom  
 Silent in all of the gardens and the bees going backwards and forwards,  
 For to-day we have naming of parts. 30

1946

1. "Naming of Parts" juxtaposes two different kinds of language, describing two different processes. Try to characterize the nature of those differences, particularly as far as the use of language is concerned.
2. As the poem progresses, the two different languages in the poem overlap or even coincide. At which points in the poem does this happen? What is the effect and how does it contribute to the overall significance of the poem?

C. "Unpopular Gals" is by the Canadian writer Margaret Atwood (b. 1939).

### Unpopular Gals

1.

Everyone gets a turn and now it's mine. Or so they used to tell us in kindergarten. It's not really true. Some get more turns than others, and I've never had a turn, not one! I hardly know how to say I, or mine; I've been she, her, that one, for so long.

I haven't even been given a name; I was always just the ugly sister; put the stress on ugly. The one that other mothers looked at, then looked away from and shook their heads gently. Their voices lowered or ceased altogether when I came into the room, in my pretty dresses, my face leaden and scowling. They tried to think of something to say that would redeem the situation – Well, she's certainly strong – but they knew it was useless. So did I.

You think I didn't hate their pity, their forced kindness? And knowing that no matter what I did, how virtuous I was, or hardworking, I would never be beautiful. Not like her, the one who merely had to sit there to be adored. You wonder why I stabbed the blue eyes of my dolls with pins and pulled their hair out until they were bald? Life isn't fair. Why should I be?

As for the prince, you think I didn't love him? I loved him more than she did; I loved him more than anything. Enough to cut off my foot. Enough to murder. Of course I disguised myself in

heavy veils, to take her place at the altar. Of course I threw her out the window and pulled the sheets up over my head and pretended to be her. Who wouldn't, in my position?

But all my love ever came to was a bad end. Red-hot shoes, barrels studded with nails. That's what it feels like, unrequited love.

She had a baby, too. I was never allowed.

Everything you've ever wanted, I wanted also.

2.

A libel action, that's what I'm thinking. Put an end to this nonsense. Just because I'm old and live alone and can't see very well, they accuse me of all sorts of things. Cooking and eating children, well, can you imagine? What a fantasy, and even if I did eat just a few, whose fault was it? Those children were left in the forest by their parents, who fully intended them to die. Waste not, want not, has always been my motto.

Anyway, the way I see it, they were an offering: I used to be given grown-ups, men and women both, stuffed full of seasonal goodies and handed over to me at seed-time and harvest. The symbolism was a little crude, perhaps, and the events themselves were – some might say – lacking in taste, but folks' hearts were in the right place. In return, I made things germinate and grow and swell and ripen.

Then I got hidden away, and stuck into the attic, shrunken and parched and covered up in fusty draperies. Hell, I used to have breasts! Not just two of them. Lots. Ever wonder why a third tit was the crucial test, once, for women like me?

Or why I'm so often shown with a garden? A wonderful garden, in which mouth-watering things grow. Mulberries. Magic cabbages. Rapunzel, whatever that is. And all those pregnant women trying to clamber over the wall, by the light of the moon, to munch up my fecundity, without giving anything in return. Theft, you'd call it, if you were at all open-minded.

That was never the rule in the old days. Life was a gift then, not something to be stolen. It was my gift. By earth and sea I bestowed it, and the people gave me thanks.

3.

It's true, there are never any evil stepfathers. Only a bunch of lily-livered widowers, who let me get away with murder vis-à-vis their daughters. Where are they when I'm making those girls drudge in the kitchen, or sending them out into the blizzard in their paper dresses? Working late at the office. Passing the buck. Men! But if you think they knew nothing about it, you're crazy.

The thing about those good daughters is, they're so good. Obedient and passive. Snivelling, I might add. No get-up-and-go. What would become of them if it weren't for me? Nothing, that's what. All they'd ever do is the housework, which seems to feature largely in these stories. They'd marry some peasant, have seventeen kids, and get "A dutiful wife" engraved on their tombstones, if any. Big deal.

I stir things up, I get things moving. "Go play in the traffic," I say to them. "Put on this paper dress and look for strawberries in the snow." It's perverse, but it works. All they have to do is smile and say hello and do a little more housework, for some gnomes or nice ladies or whatever, and bingo, they get the king's son and the palace, and no more dishpan hands. Whereas all I get is the blame.

God knows all about it. No Devil, no Fall, no Redemption. Grade Two arithmetic.

You can wipe your feet on me, twist my motives around all you like, you can dump millstones on my head and drown me in the river, but you can't get me out of the story. I'm the plot, babe, and don't ever forget it.

1992

1. These brief pieces depend on a knowledge of traditional fairy tales, though they are never actually narrated. How does Atwood draw on the present and on present knowledge to create a rich intertextual relationship with her original material?

2. Consider the role of language in heightening the effectiveness of the text.

3. How does Atwood develop a relationship between the speaker and the reader in these "monologues", and how does this relate to the original material she is working from?

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## SESSION 11

### REGISTER AND REPRESENTATION

Preparation – Units 6, 7 and 8 of *Ways of Reading*

A. Read “Parallel Text”, by Peter Reading (b. 1946), in which two texts describing the same event are juxtaposed.

#### Parallel Text

(A bucolic employee of South Shropshire Farmers Ltd)	(The Craven Arms, Stretton & Tenbury Advertiser)
You remember that old Boy Marsh? – im as lived at Stokesay? – forever pickin is nose? Well, this mornin ees takin some cattle over the line (course they got underpass, like, but also the level crossing as mostly they uses), an 7.17 from Stretton runs over the fucker – course kills im, like never you seen such a mess, cows an all Still it dunna matter a lot – ee were daft as a coot	A Stokesay farmer was killed when he was struck by a train on a stretch of track near Craven Arms. He was Mr John Jeremiah Marsh, a 60-year-old bachelor of Stokesay Castle Farm, and the accident occurred just yards from his home, at Stokeswood – an unmanned level crossing. Mr Marsh is thought to have been opening the gate. The train which struck him was pulling 39 goods wagons on its way to Carlisle

1979

1. Try to systematically note as many differences as possible in the use of language in the two texts. How would you describe the registers of each of these uses of language?
2. Consider what the poem is attempting to say by juxtaposing these different registers. Why can it justifiably be described as a poem, as opposed to two pieces of prose?

B. Read the personal ads below, noting the terms and phrases which different people use to describe themselves or their preferred partner.

MAD COW (too much roast beef) 32, seeks interesting man, similar age, for intelligent conversation, outings or just correspondence.

GLASGOW MALE 48 5’8”, 12 stone, divorced, seeks adventurous female for fun, frolics and companionship. My interests include eating out, cinema, socialising and good conversation. I dislike Do-it-yourself, gardening and football.

POLITICALLY AWARE female academic, late 40s, slim, optimistic, no ties, varied interests, seeks intelligent, tolerant and emotionally mature male.

BISEXUAL MARRIED EAST INDIAN MALE – 30 yr. old professional, well-educated, handsome, athletic, seeks professional married male friend 40-65.

THIS SLENDER gentle and elegant academic/professional woman in her mid-years looks forward to the company of a secure, unattached, Caucasian man with similar attributes. He appreciates the pleasures inherent in a physically active cultured lifestyle and is under 56, over 5’8” and a non-smoker.

I AM A 35-YEAR-OLD BLACK MAN seeking a partner between the age of 24 to 32. Honest and faithful.

DIVORCED WHITE BUSINESSWOMAN, 50 years old. General interests, theatre, travel. Wishes to meet intelligent man, non-smoker, slim, with adventure in his soul.

ATTRACTIVE, ROOTS CONSCIOUS “UK Black” woman of Jamaican parentage, 30, one child, dark complexion, 5’6”, fit not fat, Capricorn (ASHA). Interests: Black history, cinema, theatre, reggae, travelling. Seeks similar Black male, 30 plus, 5’8” plus, emotionally stable and mature, ambitious, caring, into monogamous relationships.

TALL, HANDSOME, HUMOROUS honest, smart, stylish, Black, professional guy, 26, 6 ft. Likes films, theatre, reading, socialising, “soft” music. Seeks similar pretty lady, non-smoker, 20-30 for companionship.

CAMBRIDGE GRADUATE: vaguely academic; likes films, opera, Europe, old things. Lithe, fit, 6’, sporty. Still attractive despite thinning hair.

INCURABLE ROMANTIC, charming, uncomplicated, attractive woman, not slim, not young, feminine, wide interests seeks personable caring, retired male, sixty plus, middle brow for commitment.

LADY, ATTRACTIVE, intelligent, independent mind and means, seeks similar man 40-50.

SENSITIVE HIPPIE, 24, seeks sincere and caring female for loving relationship.

1. What different types of features are described? Are they described in different ways? (Consider in particular the use of adjectives or adjectival phrases.)
2. How are people “self-represented” in these ads? Do there appear to be any differences between the sexes in this?
3. The advertisements are drawn from three different publications: a weekly magazine for readers with left-of-centre views, a main-stream Canadian daily newspaper, and a newspaper for Blacks. To what extent do you think it possible to determine which ads would appear in which journals?

C. Here are two texts on gypsies. The first is by Silvester Gordon Boswell (b. 1895), the second by D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930).

#### *Passage A*

My sons are good boys and settled in this business. But I’ve got one, Lewis, you see, one in the family who is a real Gypsy man.

He loves his stick fire, he loves his green grass exactly like me, he will never settle. I don’t think so. I can’t see him settling – he’s not that type; he doesn’t want to and his wife doesn’t. So I think that’s good.

He’s married a Romany girl. Yes, a Smith. They’ve got two children, but he wouldn’t, he wouldn’t swap his home away for a mansion or any different kind of life. He doesn’t want anything further. He gets his daily work and he’s not looking for a fortune you see. He lives from day to day – yesterday is gone – forget it, tomorrow never comes – don’t worry, today is here – use it!

And that’s been my motto and that’s his.

And whenever Lewis meets me with his trailer, or I go and see him if he’s up, say, in Yorkshire, I’ll perhaps go and have a weekend with him. I know he says within himself:

“Father’s coming – we’ll pull in here – Father’s coming to such and such a fair. . .”

Lewis is the typical Gypsy man. More of a Gypsy man than anyone left in the family, and I think he intends to lead the life as much as he can and as much as he dare. Although that’s difficult at times, even for him. But he’ll turn his hand to anything. He’ll turn his hand to a bit of scrap. He’ll do a bit of tarmac for a garden path, or forecourts or something like that. He’s a Jack-of-all-trades, if you understand me. He likes the Gypsy life. The roadside and the fairground. He likes a horse, he’s a good horseman. He’s got one or two for his kids, but he can’t make it a business – he can’t afford to. It’s a luxury – occasionally. It won’t keep you, will it?

He travels a lot. He’ll perhaps move off to Penrith or Carlisle, he may have a few weeks up there until June spraying farm buildings if the weather’s right. Or he may be at Morecambe, or the other side of Newcastle. If I feel I want a week or ten days – I’ll go up and meet him, but you can bet your life he’s somewhere where a bit of green grass is and he’s got his yog<sup>9</sup> beside his wagon whether it’s hot or cold. He’ll wait until the cool of the day and he’ll still have his fire.

He likes that and his children like it. They’re not ashamed. They don’t want to get away from the life. Yet they go to school. They wear these little badges, and they get monitors at school, and

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9 Stick fire.





And from her arched brows such a grace  
    Sheds itself through the face,  
As alone there triumphs to the life  
All the gain, all the good, of the elements' strife. 20

Have you seen but a bright lily grow  
    Before rude hands have touched it?  
Have you marked but the fall of the snow  
    Before the soil hath smutched it?  
Have you felt the wool of the beaver, 25  
    Or swan's down ever?  
Or have smelt of the bud of the brier,  
    Or the nard<sup>10</sup> in the fire?  
Or have tasted the bag of the bee?  
    O so white, O so soft, O so sweet is she! 30

### The Unknown

She is most fair  
And when they see her pass  
The poets' ladies  
Look no more in the glass.  
But after her. 5

On a bleak moor  
Running under the moon  
She lures a Poet,  
Once proud or happy, soon  
Far from his door. 10

Beside a train,  
Because they saw her go,  
Or failed to see her,  
Travellers and watchers know  
Another pain. 15

The simple lack  
Of her is more to me  
Than others' presence  
Whether life splendid be  
Or utter black. 20

I have not seen,  
I have no news of her;  
I can tell only  
She is not here, but there  
She might have been. 25

She is to be kissed  
Only perhaps by me;  
She may be seeking  
Me and no other; she  
May not exist. 30

1917

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10 An aromatic plant or substance.

1. Both the poems describe a woman, but each does so in a different way. Consider the precise nature of the differences in terms of:

- i) perspective and persona (including setting and the way in which the relationship between the speaker, the woman and anyone else is presented, and the argument and narrative development of each poem);
- ii) the use of form and language with regard to register, patterning, deviation, particular choice of words, sound-patterning, etc.

2. What, if anything, do the two poems have in common, other than the fact that they describe a woman?

3. How far can the differences between the two poems be ascribed to the social and historical conditions in which they were written? Think of social and political considerations, but also of developments in literary and esthetic taste. What differences or similarities between the two poems do you think can be ascribed to other considerations, such as the personal outlook of the poet or general characteristics of European thought and civilization?

**B.** In the text below, several words have been omitted. Read the poem several times, and then fill in the gaps with words that appear in the lists of alternatives that follow the poem. In making your choice, try to decide which word best fits with the surrounding words. To do this, you will have to pay attention to the grammar of the sentence, to the immediate context, and to the overall pattern created by the words. In two cases, the first letter of the word is given as a clue.

### Futility

Move him into the .....-  
Gently its touch awoke him once,  
At home, whispering of fields unsown.  
Always it woke him, even in France,  
Until this morning and this snow. 5  
If anything might r..... him now  
The .....sun will know.

Think how it wakes the seeds, –  
....., once, the clays of a cold star.  
Are limbs, so dear-achieved, are sides, 10  
Full-nerved – still warm – too hard to .....?  
Was it for this the .....grew tall?  
– O what made f..... sunbeams toil  
To break earth’s sleep at all?

Possible words for verse 1:

early shade revive old restore sun morning grave kind rouse bright hospital

Possible words for verse 2:

youth soldier warmed grass futile friendly woke move clay stir fatuous

2. In class we will be looking at your choices, the reasons you made them, their appropriateness, and so on. (We will also look at the original choices made by the poet.) We will then go on to a wider analysis of the style of the poem, looking at such things as the way words are used in the poem (register, semantic fields, associations, etc.), the formal patterns of sound and rhythm, the use of contrasts, and the way all of these are related to the meaning of the poem.

3. “Futility” and “The Unknown” were written within a couple of years of each other (1916-1918). Can you point to any features that they share?

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SESSION 13

INTERPRETATION AND CRITICISM

The following poem is by Ted Hughes (b. 1930).

**Hawk Roosting**

I sit in the top of the wood, my eyes closed.  
Inaction, no falsifying dream  
Between my hooked head and hooked feet:  
Or in sleep rehearse perfect kills and eat.

The convenience of the high trees! 5  
The air's buoyancy and the sun's ray  
Are of advantage to me;  
And the earth's face upward for my inspection.

My feet are locked upon the rough bark. 10  
It took the whole of Creation  
To produce my foot, my each feather:  
Now I hold Creation in my foot

Or fly up, and revolve it all slowly –  
I kill where I please because it is all mine. 15  
here is no sophistry in my body:  
My manners are tearing off heads –

The allotment of death.  
For the one path of my flight is direct  
Through the bones of the living.  
No arguments assert my right: 20

The sun is behind me.  
Nothing has changed since I began.  
My eye has permitted no change.  
I am going to keep things like this.

1960

1. Be prepared to discuss the poem in class. In order to do so, try to draw on as many of the approaches we have learned about this semester as possible. Remember, too, that formal analysis should always be linked with function; not just how certain formal features of the poem work, but how they contribute to the meaning. In the end, it is the interpretation of the poem that is most important – what you feel it is saying, and how this is achieved.

2. As part of this lesson, suggestions will be made as to how the analysis of a poem such as this might best be presented in the form of an essay.