UWS Idea Book

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1 About this Pamphlet

This is a miscellaneous and unordered collection of writing assignments, handouts, and other materials that might be of use to writing teachers. Some date from my own days teaching "Daily Themes" at Yale. (You can recognize these because they come in five parts, one for each day of the week.) Others came from composition programs at the University of Nevada, or from the Freshman Writing Seminar at Brandeis. (I'm always on the lookout for more things to add to this book. You will find in this book many assignments and handouts designed by your predecessors in this course. You can win immortality by sending me suggestions for later editions. I already have enough material for another volume.) You certainly can't do all of these. And you should feel free to modify any of them to suit you. (Sometimes I present several versions of the same assignment here, anyway.) But do cruise through this book to see the kinds of things your colleagues and predecessors have felt useful.

Stephen North describes the culture of "lore" which prevails among composition teachers, a culture which relies upon informal dissemination of information and accumulation of experiences, rather than, say, upon scientific testing. He notes how "lore" is perfectly happy borrowing pieces of incompatible theories, cobbling new material into old structures in messily pragmatic acts of *bricolage*. Lore may not be as reliable as his brother data, but there are many things that are available to lore in nuanced ways that will never be available to data, and among them is a rich folk culture, a culture of wisdom rather than knowledge, which is surprisingly right about as often as it is boneheadedly wrong. (Indeed, since North is on the whole pretty skeptical about what he calls "the making of knowledge in composition," lore is probably the only thing he treats with much respect. But theories have a way of becoming lore once they are used to found a practice; indeed, it is only by becoming lore that theories take on human faces.) You might consider this pamphlet a contribution to the folk culture of writing instruction at Brandeis.

2 Typical Directions for a Writing Intensive Course

The "Writing Intensive" aspect of this course will involve several tasks, all of which I hope you will find rewarding, and most of which I hope you will find to be fun as well. Here is a list of the assignments and due dates for the Writing Intensive Section.

1. *Commonplace Book Entries* A commonplace book is a sort of intellectual diary concerning your reading. Students in the Middle Ages and Renaissance kept them as a way of analyzing and committing to memory texts they were reading. They were, in fact, the earliest sorts of textbook, and were, as you might imagine, tremendously useful in the days when books were scarce. The basic procedure for keeping a commonplace book is very simple: you copy out a passage or a paragraph that interested you into the book (shoot for about 200 words–single sentences will not really do). Then beneath it you write a short commentary or response which captures either what you think the text means in itself or what it means to you. Obviously, the passages you choose themselves say a great deal about what you think are the important things about the books you are reading, and a careful analysis of a passage in a commonplace book can be very useful to you when you start writing a paper on that book. Your responses can vary considerably in style and content, ranging from "This is why this is the crucial passage of the book," to "This is a passage that runs counter to the drift of the book, and this is why the author included it," to "This passage is puzzling me, and this is what I think it means," to "This is a terrific passage which speaks to me personally in these ways." My experience with this assignment in the past is that students sometimes get "stuck" in only one kind of entry. So this time I am asking you to systematically vary the kind of entry you write. If you write a personal response one week, try writing a paraphrase the next week, an analysis the next, a comparison with some other passage the next, an imitation the next, and so on. I won't be grading these entries, of course, but I will be reading them with care and I will expect you to turn them in weekly. Most students in the past have found keeping a commonplace book a rewarding part of this course.

2. *Papers* There will be four papers. I won't be assigning topics, because half of the work of getting to know a work of literature is figuring out what sorts of question it keeps wanting you to ask about it. But I will throw out a few suggestions as we go on, and we will spend some class time talking about the topics of papers we are about to write, and discussing the topics of papers we have just written. (On the days when papers are due in draft everybody should be prepared to talk for a minute or so about what they wrote about.) I intend to divide the class up into four writing groups. On the days when drafts of your paper are due, you should make enough copies of your paper to give to all of the members of your group. You should read each other's papers and make what written comments you feel to be necessary. (I will give you a handout with some pointers about how to respond to papers. I do it for a living, so I have some ideas on that subject.) Then, some time before the final version is due, you should meet together with your group—over dinner, say, or in the evening—and discuss each other's work, comparing impressions (since not everyone will agree about what everybody's paper means), coming to consensus about what needs to be done, and so forth. The final paper will be due to me one week after the draft. I'd also like to see all of the versions your writing group

commented upon as well. I won't be grading the drafts or what you say about each other's papers, of course, but I would like to look them over anyway. Now not all of your discussions need be with your peers—my office hours are for you too. And it will always be possible to revise papers further, provided that you engage in genuine revision and rethinking, not merely in correction and editing.

3 Another Version of the Same

There will be short (two pages or so) writing assignments due every Thursday, beginning next week. You will pick a passage of about 250 words from the reading for that day or the next and type it out. Be sure to pick a passage which strikes you as rich and interesting and full of a significance that might not be already obvious to every reader of that text. In other words, I don't want you to pick a passage that will enable you to repeat some point I have already made in the lecture, but rather some passage which will enable you to bring a new reflection into our conversation, some passage that casts some new light upon the conversation we have already been having, some light that we might not have seen were it not for you. You will write a two page (or so) commentary on that passage, giving what you take its point to be, noting its context, and developing in cogent detail the claim it leads you to make about the text. Imagine that you are writing for someone who has some knowledge of the text but who does not know what precisely is your point of view about it—someone rather like the other members of this class, for instance. I will not give particular papers letter grades, but I will comment upon them and give them either a check, a check plus, or a check minus. You are to turn the whole lot of them in again at the end of the term, and they will be the basis for your final grade. *You may once or twice put off the paper for one session, but I will accept no papers later than that.* Attendance at the lectures and discussion sections is mandatory. If you miss one of either, I will expect you to explain to me why in writing at the next class.

4 Peer Group Sessions

On the day the drafts of your papers are due you should bring enough copies for everyone in your group to have one. Even these drafts should be typewritten if at all possible. You should arrange with your writing group for a convenient time to meet and discuss your papers among yourselves, and you should read and comment upon the papers of the other members of your group some time before you meet. (You should look over my handout describing how to do this.)

I will leave the format of your actual meetings up to you, but you will probably find them most useful if you keep them somewhat informal. You might want to begin by asking the author to tell you briefly his or her sense of what the paper is about, and what he or she has learned or proven by writing it. (There is much to be learned from those occasions where the author describes a different—and usually better—paper than the one you have read.) You will also find that time spent on examining what the author is trying to show will generally prove more useful than time spent editing and correcting small errors, although time spent on organization and style can be well spent also. If you do discuss style, be sure not to merely say that the style is vague, or worse, boring—specify instead some of the things the author must add to make the meaning clear, or specify some of the things the author need not say and should omit to avoid insulting the reader's intelligence.

When the final draft is due, please turn in the revised version—and make sure it is revised rather than merely corrected—along with all the copies of the first version. I won't be grading the draft, obviously, and I won't be grading the marginal comments you make in each others' work either (although I take these very seriously), but I would like to see just how different the drafts and final versions are and what you have learned from talking with each other. Because revision is much easier with a microcomputer, those of you who do not know how to use them now have a powerful motivation to learn how.

5 Instructions for Writing Peer Responses

As you read each other's papers bear in mind that the point is to help each other to write better papers. Bear in mind also that as readers you are not all *that* different from me. We both have some familiarity with the text, we both know the kinds of things we have talked about in class, and we both know a thing or two about literary interpretation. We also can recognize that some "tacks" give a new twist to the discussions we have already been having, and maybe suggest some discussions we ought to have in the future. It is this sense—of advancing a conversation already underway— which you should keep in mind as you read each other's papers. Do not hesistate, then, to write in the margins—you should, in fact, hold up your end of the conversation there. Note down where the major claim is made, and what you think it is. Note also where some point is tellingly made. Pay attention also to those moments where you don't quite get what the author is saying. Sometimes these moments happen when the author has left something out that seems obvious to him or her but not to anyone else. (If you find such a moment see if you can guess what's missing.) If you understand, say that in the margins too—put in the margin all the "uh huh's" and "wait a minute's" and "have you thought of's" that you would be bursting out with if your room-mate were telling you what his or her paper is about. At the end of the paper you should also write a comment. These comments are most useful if they're not *all* evaluation. It's very useful, for instance, to summarize what you think the paper's argument is, because sometimes the author hasn't made the argument he or she intended to make, and that is something it is important for the author to know. Here are a few more questions to ask yourself as you compose your responses.

1. What is the author's major claim? Has the author staked out an argument, or merely announced a subject matter? Is this a subject matter which will call for the author to read the text closely, or could someone who has read the text cursorily make the same argument? What might the author learn from making this argument?

2. What does the author need to do in order to substantiate his or her claim? Do these things get done? Are there counterarguments to be considered, say, or other ways of reading the passages the author chooses to examine? Has the author chosen the passages he or she cites merely as evidence of something the author already knows, or do the passages themselves provide rich sources of information?

3. How does the author's style strike you? Are there gaps in the presentation? Does the author talk "up" to you, or "down" to you? Does this author have an idea of what it's like to read this paper?

4. Is the author's conclusion merely a restatement of the original claim, or does the author close on a note which makes you wonder what turn he or she will take next? Are there questions you still want to ask at the end of the paper that should have been answered in the paper? Are there other questions which you might want to answer in another paper, your own, for example?

Obviously you can’t answer all of these questions in your responses, and some of these questions probably can’t be answered explicitly anyway (although you should keep them in mind). But do remember that the point of reading each other’s papers is not to grade them (that’s my job!) but to see how they are put together and to suggest ways they might better further our continuing conversation.

6 Library Instruction Worksheet

(I don't remember who wrote this delightful exercise. You will notice that it dates from sometime before the installation of LOUIS. I have let it stand, outdated technology, outdated library geography, and all, as a memorial to the days when one had to riffle through cards. You will have to update it before you use it.)

This handout is intended to familiarize you with the use of Goldfarb Library and its resources. The answer strategies are by no means intended to be exhaustive, but rather, are certain paths you may follow in doing research. Please feel free to consult a Reference Librarian when working on these questions or whenever you need assistance in using the Library's collections.

1. Find *Roget's Thesaurus.* What is the call number?
Answer strategy: Go to the card catalog. Authors, titles and subjects are filed in one alphabet. Roget's Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases as a title is behind all the authors named Roget.

2. What are some synonyms far "syzygy"?
Answer strategy: Use Roget or another dictionary of synonyms. Start by looking up syzygy in the index at the back of the volume.

3. Mary Dyer was hanged on Boston Common in 1660, but now there is a statue of her in front of the Massachusetts State House. What was her crime?
Answer strategy: Biographical dictionaries in Reference are shelved on the low, free standing counters in the middle of the Reference Room. They are in call number order on the counters. At least two biographical dictionaries shelved here have information about this person: Dictionary of American Biography (23 volumes Ref. E176 D56) which is the standard dictionary of historical American biography, and Notable American Women, 1607-1950 (Ref CT 3260 N572.)

4. Italo Calvino is a famous living Italian author. He wrote *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler.* Does the Library have this book in the original Italian?
Answer strategy: When you look up the English version in the card catalog, you will notice a note in the body of the card giving the Italian title. You may then look up the Italian title under Calvino. The catalog cards are always in the same language as the book they are describing.

5. Find a French language dictionary. Give the call number.
Answer strategy: For dictionaries, synonym books, grammars and the like, you should look up the language and then the type of book. For example: FRENCH

6. Who wrote the poem "Definition of Love" and where can you find the full text of the poem?
Answer strategy: Anthologies of poetry are analyzed in *Granger's Index to Poetry.* (Ref PN1021 G7) In each volume, there are indices for authors, titles, first lines, and subjects.

7. “maven” is a word, but you won’t find it in Webster’s Third, which was published in 1961. Briefly how is it defined?
Answer strategy: *6,000 Words: a Supplement to Webster’s Third New International Dictionary* defines words that have come into the English language since 1961. It is shelved with other English language dictionaries in the Reference PE’s, specifically PE1625 W32.

8. What did the word “antimacassar” mean when it first came into the English language? Has the definition changed? Are there related words in other languages?
Answer strategy: The Oxford English Dictionary (Ref. PE1625 M7 1933) is the standard etymological dictionary of the English language.

9. The volume of Conrad’s stories which includes “The Secret Sharer” has been checked out. Where else can you find a copy of the story in an anthology?
Answer strategy: Collections of short stories ore indexed in *Short Story Index* and *Chicorel Index to Short Stories in Anthologies and Collections.* Ref Z5917

10. Does the Library have copies of the New York Review of Books for 1978? If so, is it bound or on microfilm?
Answer strategy: Check the journals catalog which is on the Biography Counter labelled “A-D”, by the name of the journal. The pencilled information on the card will tell you what years we own and whether it is bound or on microfilm.

11. The New York Times printed an editorial on the death of John Lennon. On what date and page did it appear?
Answer strategy: Some major newspapers, including the Times, have indexes. Locate the Microtext Reference area and tile newspaper indexes shelved there.

12. How many articles of Shakespeare’s *Othello* were published in literary journals in 1980? List the authors.
Answer strategy: Indexes to periodicals are shelved on the Mezzanine (top) floor of the Library. The major index for literary periodicals is the Modern Language Association (MLA) International Bibliography. *The Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature* and *The Arts and Humanities Citation Index* also cover literature. All these indices are shelved in the Index and Abstract area on the Mezzanine level.

13. Was Anthony Sampson’s book *The Seven Sisters: the Great Oil Companies and the World They Made* reviewed by the New York Times when it was published in 1975? If so, what was the date of the review?
Answer strategy: The index to book reviews in periodicals and newspapers is *Book Review Digest.* There is a volume for each year going back to 1905. Check in the volume for the year the book was first published, under the name of the author of the book for a list of reviews.

14. What country has the highest military expenditures?
Answer strategy: Government publications are often a good source for statistical information. Government documents in Goldfarb are shelved in a special area on the Addison

Golde level. Every statistic that appears in a government document is indexed in *American Statistics Index* which is on the Documents Reference counter.

15. In testimony before a Congressional committee, Phyllis Schlafly said "Virtuous women are seldom accosted by unwelcome sexual propositions or familiarities, obscene talk or profane language." What else did she have to say to the committee?
Answer strategy: Again in the Government Documents area, you will find another index entitled Congressional Information Service Index (CIS) This index accesses all the Congressional hearings and reports. It is possible to look up any individual who gave testimony before a Congressional committee and find the location of the full text of the testimony.

16. In Jonathan Swift's novel, Gulliver happened on the fictitious tiny island of Lilliput. What is the capital of this country?
Answer strategy: Ask a Reference Librarian. We have many weird and wonderful Reference books in addition to the ones mentioned here, and we re eager to show you how to use them. Not the least of them is the *Dictionary of Imaginary Places* (Ref GR650 D54) which will not only answer this question, but also reveal the approximate location of Gort Na Cloca Mora, home of the Leprechauns.

7 Some Delicious Sentences to Dissect

Look carefully at how these sentences are orchestrated. The point is not merely that some are long and some are short, but that in each sentence the sentence form elaborates a complex drama that unfolds between the reader and the authorial persona, in which not only the characters and aims of those two imagined people are in play, but also detailed if implicit differing theories about what thinking is, what reality is, what language is, and what meaning is. Notice, for instance, that in some sentences as the length of the sentence goes up, the intensity of the expression goes up as well, as well as the sense that the ultimate subject of the sentence is ineffable. In some other sentences, as the length of the sentence goes up the as it were magnification of the author's examination does as well, so that the sentence expresses the claim that the deepest distinctions are also the most subtle and the most fine-grained. Short sentences sometimes embody, with ironic brutality, claims about what "the big words that make us so unhappy" really mean, or what, stripped of illusion, the political or natural world is really like. But sometimes they also, particularly after they follow a rhapsodically gigantic aria, pull the reader back to earth or puncture the reader's pretensions (a particularly startling thing if the reader has been lead into those pretensions by the author's own rhetoric!). Notice also what kinds of thing the author puts in main clauses, and what in subordinate clauses. (It's the syntax, for instance, as much as the content, which makes sentence 8 so chilling and cruel, and makes it clear that the point of view from which that sentence issues is not that of a human narrator but of something large an inhuman, something like Time or Nature.)

1. He opened the door at last and passed out and closed the door behind him, arguing again with his body which did not want to bother to close the door, having to be forced to close it upon the empty house where the two lights burned with their dead and unwavering glare, not knowing that the house was empty and not caring, not caring anymore for silence and desolation than they had cared for the cheap and brutal nights of stale oftused glasses and stale oftused beds. (Faulkner *Light in August*)

2. Though amid all the smoking horror and diabolism of a sea-fight, sharks will be seen longingly gazing up to the ship's decks, like hungry dogs round a table where red meat is being carved, ready to bolt down every killed man that is tossed to them; and though, while the valiant butchers over the deck-table are thus cannibally carving each other's live meat with carving-knives all gilded and tasselled, the sharks, also, with their jewel-hilted mouths, are quarrelsomely carving away under the table at the dead meat; and though, were you to turn the whole affair upside down, it would still be pretty much the same thing, that is to say, a shocking sharkish business enough for all parties; and though sharks also are the invariable outriders of all slave ships crossing the Atlantic, systematically trotting alongside, to be handy in case a parcel is to be carried anywhere, or a dead slave to be decently buried; and though one or two like instances might be set down, touching the set terms, places, and occasions, when sharks do most socially congregate, and most hilariously feast; yet there is no conceivable time or occasion when you will find them in such countless numbers, and in gayer or more jovial spirits, than around a dead sperm whale, moored by night to a whale-ship at sea. If you have never

seen that sight, then suspend your decision about the propriety of devil-worship, and the expediency of conciliating the devil. (Melville, *Moby Dick*)

3. It was to come to pass, by a pressure applied to the situation wholly from within, that before the first ten days of November had elapsed he found himself practically alone at Fawns with his young friend; Amerigo and Maggie having, with a certain abruptness, invited his assent to their going abroad for a month, since his amusement was now scarce less happily assured than his security. An impulse eminently natural had stirred within the Prince; his life, as for some time established, was deliciously dull, and thereby, on the whole, what he best liked; but a small gust of yearning had swept over him, and Maggie repeated to her father, with infinite admiration, the pretty terms in which, after it had lasted a little, he had described to her this experience. (James, *The Golden Bowl*)

4. The serpent was the most subtle of all the wild beasts that Y– G– had made. It asked the woman, "Did G-d really say you were not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?" The moan answered the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden. But of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden G-d said, 'You must not eat it, nor touch it, under pain of death."' Then the serpent said to the woman, "No! You will not die! G-d knows in fact that on the day you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil." The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and pleasing to the eye, and that it was desirable for the knowledge that it could give. So she took some of its fruit and ate it. She gave some also to her husband who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized that they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together to make themselves loincloths.

5. The grandeur of their works was an argument with them, not to stop short, but to proceed. They could have no higher excitement or satisfaction than in the exercise of their art and endless generations of truth and beauty. Success prompts to exertion; and habit facilitates success. ("Masculine" sentences from Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*—need you take her claim that these sentences are "masculine" seriously? In what does their masculinity consist?)

6.

A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London

Never until the mankind making
Bird beast and flower
Fathering and all humbling darkness
Tells with silence the last light breaking
And the still hour
Is come of the sea tumbling in harness

And I must enter again the round
Zion of the water bead
And the synagogue of the ear of corn

Shall I let pray the shadow of a sound
Or sow my salt seed
In the least valley of sackcloth to mourn

The majesty and burning of the child's death.
I shall not murder
The Mankind of her going with a grave truth
Nor blaspheme down the stations of the breath
With any further
Elegy of innocence and youth.

Deep with the first dead lies London's daughter,
Robed in the long friends,
The grains beyond age, the dark veins of her mother,
Secret by the unmourning water
Of the riding Thames.
After the first death, there is no other.

(Dylan Thomas)

7. They shot the six cabinet ministers at half-past six in the morning against the wall of a hospital. There were pools of water in the courtyard. It rained hard. All the shutters of the hospital were nailed shut. One of the ministers was sick with typhoid. Two soldiers carried him downstairs and out into the rain. They tried to hold him up against the wall but he sat down in a puddle of water. The other five stood very quietly against the wall. Finally the officer told the soldiers it was no good trying to make him stand up. When they fired the first volley he was sitting down in the water with his head on his knees. (Hemingway, *In Our Time*)

8. [Mr. Ramsay, stumbling along a passage one dark morning, stretched his arms out, but Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, his arms, though stretched out, remained empty.] (Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*)

9. Thus, then, on the night of the 10th of May, at the outset of this mighty battle, I acquired the chief power in the State, which henceforth I wielded in ever-growing measure for five years and three months of world war, at the end of which time, all our enemies having surrendered unconditionally or being about to do so, I was immediately dismissed by the British electorate from all further conduct of their affairs. (Churchill, *The Second World War*)

8 Hypotaxis, Parataxis, and Anaphora

Syntax is a way of registering particular kinds of relationship between the mind and the world. One of the large distinctions one might draw concerning syntax is that between a paratactic style, in which all of the assertions are on the same logical level (as separate sentences, or as coordinated parts of longer sentences), and a hypotactic style, in which assertions are deployed in a complex hierarchy of subordination and superordination.

A surprising large number of things are at stake in the choice of a paratactic or hypotactic style. Obviously, for instance, the choice of a hypotactic style leads the reader to believe (although the writer may modify or subvert that belief) that the writer describes a densely and complexly ordered world which repays diligent but detached inspection. A paratactic style supports the assumption (which the writer may undermine), that the world can be seen as a horizontally ordered set or series of things, "just one damn thing after another." You might notice that a hypotactic style is often "cool," and a paratactic style is often "hot." A hypotactic style is usually appropriate to detached observation, a paratactic style to a perspective in the midst of things, in the rush of the action. (One of the funniest paragraphs in Hardy describes, in superbly finished hypotactic syntax, a man hanging by his fingers from the edge of a cliff.) A hypotactic style lends itself naturally to an analytical point of view; a paratactic style lends itself naturally to the rush and chaos of "life as it is lived."

Many interesting effects can be achieved by playing one's tone against the grain of one's syntax. In the Hemingway passage about the execution of the cabinet ministers, for instance, the tension between the urgent parataxis of the syntax and the coolness of the style produces the effect of a powerful feeling held powerfully in check. Faulkner will often render moments of violent action with long, periodic sentences in which the main clause is almost endlessly postponed; the effect is to render the violence of the action somehow ineffable, as if its intensity or its depth is somehow beyond rendering even by the master himself. The effect is not limited, however, to fiction. Think for instance of how much the rhetorical power of Foucault (so fruitlessly imitated by his followers) derives from the tension between an abstract, detached, highly paratactic style, and the white-hot rage which motivates his investigations.

Try rendering the Hemingway passage in the "sentences" handout in an extremely hypotactic style. One might do this for a parodic purpose, or just for laughs. See whether you can produce a passage that has some serious literary merit, although its tone and point may be far different from Hemingway's.

The Melville passage in the "sentences" handout is written in as rhetorically showy a hypotactic style as Melville can manage. (Or maybe "manage" is not the right word for anything Melville does. So then say: "in as rhetorically showy a hypotactic style as Melville can work himself up to write.") What is the purpose of that style, of that choice of sentence? Try rendering the passage paratactically (translating it into Hemingway, for instance) and see what happens. Again, the result might be more interesting if you were to play it straight rather than for laughs. When the speaker of Swift's *A Tale of A Tub* (cited in the "Baconian Essays" handout below) argues that "And therefore, in order to save the charges of all such expensive anatomy for the time to come, I do here think fit to

inform the reader, that in such conclusions as these, reason is certainly in the right, and that in most corporeal beings which have fallen under under my cognizance the outside hath been infinitely preferable to the in; whereof I have been farther convinced from some late experiments," half of the comedy is the pompous gigantism of his syntax.

Paratactic syntax is not just for simple minds, but it is for minds who feel comfortable leaving many connections implicit. Notice, for instance, how little explanation the Biblical author feels called upon to do in the passage from Genesis in the "sentences" handout. One might compare the equivalent scene in *Paradise Lost* for a highly articulated, and also highly hypotactic, rendering of the same events. Try rewriting the biblical passage according to the conventions of ordinary psychological realism and see what difference the translation makes.

Paratactic styles are often underlined by anaphora (repeated words or phrases at the beginning of sentences or verses). Anaphora is particularly characteristic of folk or archaic styles of narration — the Bible, say, or the Child Ballads. Anaphora often places events in a flow of rhapsody where the *zusammenhang* of the passage is not provided by articulating the logical connections among the events but by tapping into the sense that this is a story that has been retold so often that its inevitabilities go without saying. Anaphora initiates a flow of eloquence that presumably can just keep on going — it may not articulate the relationships among the successive objects, but it places them in a context of unending rhetorical abundance. (Whitman's anaphoric catalogues are a good example.) For an exercise, take an anaphoric catalogue from *Song of Myself* and rewrite it, making the style as un-anaphoric and as un-paratactic as possible.

9 Parataxis and the Participant-Observer

In a letter to Sidney Cox in 1915, Robert Frost jeered at "Solway Ford," a poem by Wilfred Gibson, noting that if one were to "look at the way the sentences run on," one would discover that "they are not sentences at all in my sense of the word." Clearly Frost did not mean that the sentences were ungrammatical, but that they didn't have what he calls the "sentence sound," the unmistakable tang and tone of living utterance. Part of the problem seems to be the unintentionally comic disparity between the syntax of the passage and its intended tone. The poem turns on a moment of of violent action, in which the protagonist's horse rears and breaks free, overturning the wagon upon him and leaving him pinned beneath it, awaiting the incoming tide by which he will be drowned. Gibson is horrified by the scene, and wishes us to feel that horror. But the sentence in which this violent action is rendered is a stately and complexly hypotactic word-temple. Geoffrey and Judith Summerfield famously argued some years ago that parataxis is a "hot" syntax, the syntax of the participant in the thick of an urgent event, and that hypotaxis is a "cool" syntax, the syntax of an observer at a distance from the event. The effect of adopting a hypotactic rather than a paratactic syntax here is to distance the observer and the poet from the action. One might imagine wishing to do so for purposes of irony. But it is hard to see irony in the sentence that Gibson actually wrote:

> The empty wain made slowly over the sand;
> And he, with hands in pockets by the side
> Was trudging, deep in dream, the while he scanned
> With blue, unseeing eyes the far-off tide:
> When, stumbling in a hole, with startled neigh,
> His young horse reared; and, snatching, at the rein,
> He slipped: the wheels crushed on him as he lay;
> Then, tilting over him, the lumbering wain
> Turned turtle as the plunging beast broke free,
> And made for home: and pinioned and half-dead
> He lay, and listened to the far-off sea;
> And seemed to hear it surging overhead
> Already: though 'twas full an hour or more
> Until high-tide, when Solway's shining flood
> Should sweep the shallow firth from shore to shore.

Compare, for instance, how the syntax in the moment of violent action in this extract from Wilfred Owen's famous "Dulce et Decorum Est," in which a column of retreating British soldiers during World War I is suddenly caught up in a barrage of gas shells fired by their own side but falling short. Notice that the sentences here, too, are long, but the syntax is intensely paratactic:

> Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
> Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge
> Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs

And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind.

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime . . .
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

(Those of you who know this poem might not be familiar with the reading of the last line of the first stanza, which has recently been restored by Owen's editor. In the original edition, published by Siegfried Sassoon shortly after Owen's death in the closing days of the First World War, that line reads "Of gas shells dropping softly behind." Perhaps Sassoon substituted this line, which doesn't even scan, because the implication that the men are victims of friendly fire was too much. Most likely, however, is that he just didn't want to have to add a note explaining what a Five-Nine — a kind of artillery — was.) Later in the poem, reflecting on the action to Jessie Pope, the author of many children's books and of *Jessie Pope's War Poems* (1915), Owen adopts a very pointedly hypotactic syntax, meant to reflect bitterly not only upon the distance between the civilian's point of view and the soldier's, but also upon the meaning of the heritage of classical eloquence summed up in Horace's motto that it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country:

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.

Frost himself renders the moment of the chainsaw accident in "Out, Out–" in surprisingly hypotactic language, but here the tension between the syntax and the meaning is meant to register the speaker's inability to take the violence of the moment in. Unlike Cox, Frost is well aware of the strangeness of the syntax he uses, and he exploits it to give a nightmarish unreality to the moment of the accident. Notice here, incidentally, that the sentences are quite short, but there is an implied hypotactic structure linking them.

His sister stood beside them in her apron
To tell them ‘Supper.’ At the word, the saw,
As if to prove saws knew what supper meant,
Leaped out at the boy’s hand, or seemed to leap—
He must have given the hand. However it was,
Neither refused the meeting. But the hand!

For your exercise, begin by imagining a moment of violent action. Render it first in the obvious way, in an intensely paratactic syntax. Your sentences may be long if you wish, but they should be paratactically organized, not hypotactically organized. Now render it again in a hypotactic way. Give some care to the effect you wish to achieve in the second version. You might adopt a heaven’s-eye distance from the event, for instance, or you might play it for laughs, or for cold fury, or for whatever. Both passages should be approximately the same length (about 250 words). See what you can do with this!

10 Sentence Combining Games

Aluminum

The key to this assignment is that you can't hope to pack it all in to one sentence. You have to decide what goes with what.

Directions: Read the passage all the way through. You will notice that the sentences are short and choppy. Study the passage, and then rewrite it in a better way. You may combine sentences, change the order of words, and omit words that are repeated too many times. But try not to leave out any of the information.

Aluminum is a metal. It is abundant. It has many uses. It comes from bauxite. Bauxite is an ore. Bauxite looks like clay. Bauxite contains aluminum. It contains several other substances. Workmen extract these other substances from bauxite. They grind the bauxite. They put it in tanks. Pressure is in the tanks. The other substances form a mass. They remove the mass. They use filters. A liquid remains. They put it through several other processes. It finally yields a chemical. The chemical is powdery. It is white. The chemical is alumina. It is a mixture. It contains aluminum. It contains oxygen. Workmen separate the aluminum from the oxygen. They use electricity. They finally produce a metal. The metal is light. It has a luster. The luster is bright. The luster is silvery. This metal comes in many forms.

The Swimmer

In the following Faulkner sentence, diagrammed in Christensen's *A New Rhetoric*, the phrases read from top to bottom in the order they appear in in the original sentence, and they are tabbed in from the left margin according to the level of subordination, with the top level at the left margin. Try diagramming another very complex sentence the same way (you might try the Dylan Thomas sentence in the "sentences" handout). Another amusing exercise is to imitate the pattern of coordination and subordination in the Faulkner sentence by using the pattern for a completely different sentence about a different subject. Most interesting of all, I think, however, is to try to rearrange the sentence in different ways. You will notice that if you put the main clause early in the sentence (it need not be the one Faulkner chooses for his main clause) the sentence will seem detached and clinical. But if you put the main clause late in the sentence, the sentence will seem lurid, even pornographic.

The shift was slow.
The shift was deliberate.
She shifted her weight to the balls of her feet.
Her heels were raised an inch or two.
Her leg muscles were hardened.
She raised her arms.
Her arms were slim.
The raising was slow.
The raising was in front of her.
She rested one hand upon the other.
Her fingers were close together.
The soft, supple skin of her chest was squeezed.
The squeezing was gentle.
The squeezing was between the straps.
The straps were tight.
They were her swim suit straps.

11 Turning Sentences Around

The writer E. I. Lonoff, a character in Philip Roth's *The Ghost Writer,* describes his job as one of turning sentences around, and turning them around again. The beauty of this description is that it captures how, by slight changes to what is essentially the same sentence, different nuances can be brought out, and different possible stances can be distinguished. The art of writing sentences seems to require a patient working-through of many small variations in search of the fine distinctions which make for moral and artistic depth. The art of reading sentences is the art of seeing behind each sentence the ones that the author crossed out in his or her search for the one that came to life on the page. Seeing several of these sentences together, and distinguishing among their senses, is a good method of teaching one's self to pick out these undertones and nuances in a meaning-making way.

Let's start with two "kernel sentences," taken from a dramatic moment in a by now perhaps completely forgotten popular song of the early 1980's, "Smooth Operator," by Sade:

> His eyes are like angels'.
> His heart is cold.

Sade sings this line with a little syncopation at the end of the first line, and a little punch at the end of the second. The art of that moment is that the syntax of the two sentences is parallel, but their semantics seem at first glance to be opposed. (The melody is designed to heighten the syntactic parallelism, too.) But are we right to assume (as I think we usually do) that there is some tension between having the eyes of an angel and having a cold heart? Isn't, indeed, it our assumption that those two things don't go together which renders us vulnerable to the people like the "smooth operator" that the song is about? In being caught up in, and then caught out in, the assumption that there is some connection between beauty and kindness, we are supposed to trip over our own naivetè (a naivetè we blame ourselves all the more for, because we know we are supposed to have gotten past making that kind of mistake). In just a moment, we come to the kind of disillusionment that the singer depicts in her own voice, which is both disillusioned about the lover, and disappointed in discovering that she is, herself, vulnerable and foolish in ways she thought she had outgrown years ago. One always is, it seems, repeatedly fooled by precisely the person one should have been most able to see through.

The power of the line depends upon the cool, understated, almost deadpan parallelism of the statement. See how many ways you can combine the two sentences, and see if you can distinguish their nuances. For example:

> His eyes are like angels': his heart is cold.
> (a conclusion that gives it all away rather too bluntly)
>
> His eyes are like angels'; his heart is cold.
> (perfect but ostentatious deadpan, as if to say "no comment" in a loud voice)
>
> His eyes are like angels', his heart is cold.

(pretending that one doesn't really know what one knows clearly enough anyway)

His heart is cold: his eyes are like angels'.
(now I am too cynical to be vulnerable to the likes of you)

His heart is cold; his eyes are like angels.
(I'm not vulnerable to him, but am fascinated by him)

His heart, although his eyes are like angels', is cold
(I should know better, but I can't leave off loving him)

His eyes, although his heart is cold, are like angels'.
(I am just the sexual predator he is)

You might see what other pairs of sentences you can play a similar game with.

12 Semicolon Exercise

Consider the different shades of meaning of the two examples below:

1. When my mother was a young woman, she liked to have a lot of fun. I am the result.

2. When my mother was a young woman, she liked to have a lot of fun; I am the result.

Notice that in the first example the tone is judgmental and stiff; the speaker is bluntly hauling his or her mother before the bar and demanding that an account be rendered. The second example, by contrast, balances judgment and sympathy, pathos and amusement.

The point of all this is that punctuation provides not merely an occasion for the imposition of grammatical rules but a set of new possibilities for expression. The semicolon is not just there to look impressive, or to demonstrate to authority that you are aware of the rules which govern its use. It's there to make available a shade of meaning that is unavailable in other ways. For instance, you may wish to imply that two events are separate (and hence deserve separate clauses) but delicately connected in implicit ways (ways that are delicate enough that more explicit connections — such as with "and" or with an em-dash — would falsify the connection by reducing it to crudity).

Exercise: Take six pairs of sentences, in each case treating them separately, and then joining them with a semicolon. In each case write a brief account (such as the one above) of the difference made by linking the two clauses rather than separating them. For interest's sake, discriminate as well in each case the shade of meaning that would differ had you used some other connective — "and" or em-dash, or maybe something more subtle such as "And so," "Therefore," "Moreover" — in place of the semicolon.

13 Slotting Exercise

Heidi Mintz, John Burt, and others

(Note: This exercise grew out of a particularly uproarious hour during "comp camp." I was describing how "slotting" works, and was trying to think of a kernel sentence which we could expand in as gargantuan a way as possible, when Heidi Mintz coughed, so I suggested "She coughed." Heidi added "She coughed arterial blood." And we were off. This isn't a good way to write shapely sentences (especially by committee), but it is a good way to see how far one can go. It might be good to combine this exercise with one in which you take the big sentence apart and look for a more shapely way to put it back together. See if you can find which parts of this monster were mine. Hint: I had nothing to do with that blasted peanut butter sandwich.)

One way to build interesting sentences is to start with a kernel assertion and add modifiers. By adding descriptive details, you make your sentence increasingly specific and precise. Consider the following cumulative sentence built around the kernel assertion "she coughed."

> Aware, because of her desire to be a romantic poet, that this day, inevitably, would come, perhaps eager for it, although she scrupled to admit it, except perhaps in the recesses or her sensibility, she coughed arterial blood, laughing all the while, until she became bed-ridden, at which point she mourned, remembering the peanut butter sandwiches of yesteryear, their golden beauty, which she would never taste again in quite the same way.

Note how the writer projected both backward and forward from the kernel statement.

14 Paragraph Games

1. Take a paragraph from the reading. Take the sentence that strikes you as making the central claim of the paragraph (what we used to call the "topic sentence" back when we thought of writing as covering material rather than making arguments) and place it somewhere else in the paragraph. The point here is not to carry out the venerable and useful game of "discovering what is wrong about this paragraph," but to make a successful and artistic paragraph with a different shape, a different build, a different climax. You may remember our experiment with the Faulkner sentence about the diver: when the main clause comes early, the sentence feels clinical, when it comes late, the sentence feels lurid, even pornographic. This is a version of the same experiment, only with paragraphs.

2. Take a paragraph from the reading (choose an especially rich one). You will notice several layers of "orchestration" in it. The first is a shape traced by the layers of generality of each sentence. (Try, before doing this, the following exercise, familiar to students of Christensen's Generative Rhetoric of the Sentence: place the key sentence at the margin. Arrange the other sentences around it (in order from top to bottom) tabbing in as move down each level of generality, so that a sentence one step less central than the key sentence is indented by one tab, the next level down by two tabs, and so on. The result is a shape, a little intellectual dance performed among layers of generality.) Write a completely different paragraph, orchestrating the layers of generality the same way. (You'll notice something funny: a paragraph on some completely modern subject, orchestrated in Gibbon's way, will sound oddly like Gibbon.) Then go back to your original paragraph, and try orchestrating it totally differently.

3. Another layer of "orchestration" is made up of the different layers of sentence length and complexity. You will notice, for instance, how often advertising copy writers drive home a point by following a long sentence by a short one, usually a sentence fragment. Or consider how, in *Watt* Beckett ends a paragraph devoted to and extremely complexly rendered description of how Erskine gets into or out of his room by saying "And the same was true of Watt." It's hard to explain why that's so funny, but some of the humor has to do with the syntactic orchestration. Take a paragraph from the reading (again a rich one), and imitate its pattern of syntactic orchestration on some completely different subject. Then rewrite the original paragraph using a completely different orchestration. a short one.

4. One of the interesting problems one faces when constructing paragraphs is the problem of deciding what clumps together with what. I notice that I tend to launch out on very long sentences, and that once I have written them I tend to slice them up into paragraphs. Other writers might work in the opposite direction. It's always a nice question which connections deserve to be made within a sentence and which deserve to be made between sentences. Try starting with a paragraph broken into the smallest imaginable kernels (I suggest our old friend "aluminum") and see what dif-

ference it might make to put those kernels together in different ways, orchestrated syntactically and logically.

Paragraph Example

Consider the "orchestration" of these two paragraph's from Churchill's *The Second World War*, paying particular attention to the "setup" of that last sentence.

> Herr von Ribbentrop was at this time about to leave London to take up his duties as Foreign Secretary in Germany. Mr. Chamberlain gave a farewell luncheon in his honour at No.10 Downing Street. My wife and I accepted the Prime Minister s invitation to attend. There were perhaps sixteen people present. Mv wife sat next to Sir Alexander Cadogan, near one end of the table. About half-way through the meal a Foreign Office messenger brought him an envelope. He opened it and was absorbed in the contents. Then he got up, walked round to where the Prime Minister was sitting, and gave him the message. Although Cadogan's demeanour would not have indicated that anything had happened, I could not help noticing the Prime Minister's evident preoccupation. Presently Cadogan came back with the paper and resumed his seat. Later I was told its contents. it said that Hitler had invaded Austria and that the German mechanised forces were advancing fast upon Vienna. The meal proceeded without the slightest interruption, but quite soon Mrs. Chamberlain, who had received some signal from her husband, got up, saying, "Let us all have coffee in the drawing-room." We trooped in there, and it was evident to me and perhaps to some others that Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain wished to bring the proceedings to an end. A kind of general restlessness pervaded the company, and everyone stood about ready to say good-bye to the guests of honour.
>
> However, Herr von Ribbentrop and his wife did not seem at all conscious of this atmosphere. On the contrary, they tarried for nearly half an hour engaging their host and hostess in voluble conversation. At one moment I came in contact with Frau von Ribbentrop, and in a valedictory vein I said, "I hope England and Germany will preserve their friendship." "Be careful you don't spoil it," was her graceful rejoinder. I am sure they both knew perfectly well what had happened, but thought it was a good manoeuvre to keep the Prime Minister away from his work and the telephone. At length Mr. Chamberlain said to the Ambassador, "I am sorry I have to go now to attend to urgent business," and without more ado he left the room. The Ribbentrops lingered on, so that most of us made our excuses and our way home. Eventually I suppose they left. This was the last time I saw Herr von Ribbentrop before he was hanged.

15 Amusing ESL handout

REASONS WHY THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IS HARD TO LEARN

1. The bandage was wound around the wound.
2. The farm was used to produce produce.
3. The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
4. We must polish the Polish furniture.
5. He could lead if he would get the lead out.
6. The soldier decided to desert his dessert in the desert.
7. Since there is no time like the present, he thought it was time to present the present.
8. A bass was painted on the head of the bass drum.
9. When shot at, the dove dove into the bushes.
10. I did not object to the object.
11. The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
12. There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row.
13. They were too close to the door to close it.
14. The buck does funny things when the does are present.
15. A seamstress and a sewer fell down into a sewer line.
16. To help with planting, the farmer taught his sow to sow.
17. The wind was too strong to wind the sail.
18. After a number of injections my jaw got number.
19. Upon seeing the tear in the painting I shed a tear.
20. I had to subject the subject to a series of tests.
21. How can I intimate this to my most intimate friend?

16 Another Amusing ESL Handout

Once you've learned to correctly pronounce every word in the following poem, you will be speaking English better than 90 per cent of the native English speakers in the world. If you find it tough going, do not despair, you are not alone: Multi-national personnel at North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) headquarters near Paris found English to be an easy language. . . until they tried to pronounce it. To help them discard an array of accents, the verses below were devised. After trying them, a Frenchman said he'd prefer six months at hard labor to reading six lines aloud. Try them yourself.

Dearest creature in creation,
Study English pronunciation.
I will teach you in my verse
Sounds like corpse, corps, horse, and worse.
I will keep you, Suzy, busy,
Make your head with heat grow dizzy.
Tear in eye, your dress will tear.
So shall I! Oh hear my prayer.

Just compare heart, beard, and heard,
Dies and diet, lord and word,
Sword and sward, retain and Britain.
(Mind the latter, how it's written.)
Now I surely will not plague you
With such words as plaque and ague.
But be careful how you speak:
Say break and steak, but bleak and streak;
Cloven, oven, how and low,
Script, receipt, show, poem, and toe.

Hear me say, devoid of trickery,
Daughter, laughter, and Terpsichore,
Typhoid, measles, topsails, aisles,
Exiles, similes, and reviles;
Scholar, vicar, and cigar,
Solar, mica, war and far;
One, anemone, Balmoral,
Kitchen, lichen, laundry, laurel;
Gertrude, German, wind and mind,
Scene, Melpomene, mankind.

Billet does not rhyme with ballet,
Bouquet, wallet, mallet, chalet.
Blood and flood are not like food,
Nor is mould like should and would.
Viscous, viscount, load and broad,

Toward, to forward, to reward.
And your pronunciation's OK
When you correctly say croquet,
Rounded, wounded, grieve and sieve,
Friend and fiend, alive and live.

Ivy, privy, famous; clamour
And enamour rhyme with hammer.
River, rival, tomb, bomb, comb,
Doll and roll and some and home.
Stranger does not rhyme with anger,
Neither does devour with clangour.
Souls but foul, haunt but aunt,
Font, front, wont, want, grand, and grant,
Shoes, goes, does. Now first say finger,
And then singer, ginger, linger,
Real, zeal, mauve, gauze, gouge and gauge,
Marriage, foliage, mirage, and age.

Query does not rhyme with very,
Nor does fury sound like bury.
Dost, lost, post and doth, cloth, loth.
Job, nob, bosom, transom, oath.
Though the differences seem little,
We say actual but victual.
Refer does not rhyme with deafer.
Foeffer does, and zephyr, heifer.
Mint, pint, senate and sedate;
Dull, bull, and George ate late.

Scenic, Arabic, Pacific,
Science, conscience, scientific.
Liberty, library, heave and heaven,
Rachel, ache, moustache, eleven.
We say hallowed, but allowed,
People, leopard, towed, but vowed.
Mark the differences, moreover,
Between mover, cover, clover;
Leeches, breeches, wise, precise,
Chalice, but police and lice;
Camel, constable, unstable,
Principle, disciple, label.

Petal, panel, and canal,
Wait, surprise, plait, promise, pal.
Worm and storm, chaise, chaos, chair,
Senator, spectator, mayor.

Tour, but our and succour, four.
Gas, alas, and Arkansas.
Sea, idea, Korea, area,
Psalm, Maria, but malaria.
Youth, south, southern, cleanse and clean.
Doctrine, turpentine, marine.

Compare alien with Italian,
Dandelion and battalion.
Sally with ally, yea, ye,
Eye, I, ay, aye, whey, and key.
Say aver, but ever, fever,
Neither, leisure, skein, deceiver.
Heron, granary, canary.
Crevice and device and aerie.

Face, but preface, not efface.
Phlegm, phlegmatic, ass, glass, bass.
Large, but target, gin, give, verging,
Ought, out, joust and scour, scourging.
Ear, but earn and wear and tear
Do not rhyme with here but ere.
Seven is right, but so is even,
Hyphen, roughen, nephew Stephen,
Monkey, donkey, Turk and jerk,
Ask, grasp, wasp, and cork and work.

Pronunciation – think of Psyche!
Is a paling stout and spikey?
Won’t it make you lose your wits,
Writing groats and saying grits?
It’s a dark abyss or tunnel:
Strewn with stones, stowed, solace, gunwale,
Islington and Isle of Wight,
Housewife, verdict and indict.

Finally, which rhymes with enough —
Though, through, plough, or dough, or cough?
Hiccough has the sound of cup.
My advice is to give up!!!

– Author Unknown

17 For the Record

I recently got a letter from one of those companies that collects addresses and biographical information about graduates of public high schools in order to compile a directory to sell to alumni. I wound up buying the one for my high school (but not until I was certain that they would provide updated biographical information for the fictional person my best friend and I inserted into the yearbook). Some weeks after I received the directory (the company was actually above board, as I might not have been certain it was) I received a letter from the company which went roughly like this:

Dear Alumni:

In the recently published X Public Schools Alumni Directory, A B, Class of 19xx, was incorrectly listed as deceased. This letter is to inform you that A is alive and well. Her biographical information should appear as follows:

A, B . . .

Please note this correction in your copy of the directory. We regret any inconvenience this may cause.

Sincerely

L. M. Manager, Customer Service.

Naturally, I found this letter almost as amusing as the one the editors of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia sent to libraries all over the world asking them to carefully excise a certain article (the one on Trotsky), and replace it with another article they enclosed (on some other subject beginning with T) of exactly the same length. Your assignment is to write a more persuasive version of this letter. Remember that you are cc-ing it to poor Miss A B, who may have been alive and well when you published your directory, but perhaps nearly died of apoplexy (so her attorneys inform you) when she noticed that you thought she had died. Try to keep as straight a face as you can.

18 Inventory Exercise

Consider these extracts from an actual New York Times story:

Slain Mafia Leader's Porcelains are Auctioned
New York Times, 14 June, 1976

. . .

Mr. Gianacana had occupied the residence which is in nearby Oak Park, until the night nearly six years ago when six bullets were fired into his head and neck with a .22 caliber pistol while the 67 year old widower was making a snack of sausage, spinach, and beans.

. . .

The auctioning of Mr. Gianacana's porcelain collection of simpering nymphs, gamboling fairies and spirits, fawning courtiers, blowzy courtesans and bacchantic topers took place at Chicago Art Galleries, inc. It was interspersed with the sale of the possessions of the late Fay Gay, a woman about whom little is known, and of the religious paintings from the House of the Good Shepherd, a Roman Catholic home for wayward girls that used to be in back of Wrigley Field.

. . .

Picking up a hand-painted plate of Killarney Castle in Ireland, he said, "Now this is class, whereas the other is, uh, merely decorative." A photographer asked Mr. Gilmore to pose with something and he replied: "Why not the continent of America." He picked up a porcelain grouping consisting of a bare-breasted Indian woman sitting on top of a toothy alligator and clutching a parrot and a cornucopia. "This is America," Mr. Gilmore said. As Lot No. 24, America sold for $275.

Begin by making a list of everything in some space or other that an author with malicious intent might use in order to make you look ridiculous. (Don't just talk about all the dirty laundry on the floor or the unfinished slice of pizza on the desk.) Arrange them carefully in some order which has a shape — building up, perhaps, to some particularly telling and embarrassingly revealing piece, something which only you would own because only you might want it. Then construct an account of an auction of your worldly goods, written, as this one is, by an author whose chief desire is to hold you to light ridicule.

Now write another account, using the same or a similar list, in which the aim of the author is to produce the impression of pathos and tender sadness.

Now write a third account, using the same or a similar list, in which the aim of the author — a detective, say, or a historian, or an archeologist — seeks to develop some non-obvious theory about you. That theory need not be a correct one.

19 Catalogues and Analogues

Examples

1. shoes, ships, sealing-wax, cabbages, kings, why the sea is boiling-hot, whether pigs have wings
2. livers, opacities, positrons, cough-drops, unicorns, doubts, Liszts (lists)
3. darkness, damsels, deficiencies of Vitamin D, dimity, declarations, delights, diffractions, desire for doughnuts, denim, dread, demi-tasses
4. limes, dimes, times, chimes, crimes, mimes, rhymes
5. apple, bear, beach, thumb, shape, Helen, ferry
6. apple, pear, peach, plum, grape, melon, berry
7. winesap, macintosh, russet, delicious, granny smith, gravenstein
8. apple, pear, peach, plum, grape, felon, berry
9. apple, pear, peach, plum, grape, Helen, berry
10. . berry, grape, plum, apple, grapefruit, melon
11. lemon, orange, grapefruit; apple, quince, pear; peach, plum, cherry
12. apple: cherry, berry, pear, peach and plum
13. apple? pear, peach, plum; grape? cherry, berry
14. apple? pear; peach, but not plum; grape, however, and yet melon. Finally, alas, berry
15. Rocks, caves, bogs, fens, lakes, dens, and shades of death, A universe of death . . .

CONGERIES
DISTRIBUTION
INCREMENT

Assignments

GROUND RULES: This week we're going to generate paragraphs from lists or catalogues. The elements of a list will become parts of sentences, and the sentences parts of paragraphs. The structure, order and even the dramaturgy of the lists themselves will be your first concern; the transformation of a series of entities merely coordinated (a + b +c + d) into a sequence of sentences subordinated violently or subtly will follow.

1. Make up a number of lists of various sorts: congeries, incremental or classified in various ways. Take one of these-one with about 12 elements— and, by permutation alone, see what you can do to make it build to a climax, fall away, form subgroups, etc.

2. Take yesterday's 12-item list and, embodying each item in a sentence, build the sequence of sentences into a paragraph. The paragraph should describe a space—interior or exterior—or situation (if your elements are not objects). If your list is a congeries, the unified paragraph may be harder to construct; if it is a simple unfolding of one category, it may be duller to read. Your control and modulation of sentence structure, length and pace will be very important to the shape of your paragraph as the sinews of its subordination and its conceptual coherence.

3. Take the same list, and compose totally different sentences which will compose a paragraph of narrative. You will discover that the elements may have to play various—and sometimes far-fetched—roles in your story line.

4. Take the same list once again and subject it to random permutation of order (as by writing the elements on slips of paper and shuffling them). Then do a totally new paragraph in the same manner as either (2) or (3). You can try to bury or hide the elements if you wish, or bring them to the foreground in new ways.

5. Now, breathing room: take 2 sentences from (2),(3),or (4) containing your personally favorite elements. Start and conclude a new paragraph with them, unshackled now from the rest of the catalogue. The paragraph can be of any sort, and go anywhere. Its beauty should be a function of its augmented freedom.

20 Baconian Essays

Examples

OF SUSPICION

Suspicions amongst thoughts are like bats amongst birds, they ever fly by twilight. Certainly, they are to be repressed, or at the least, well guarded: For they cloud the mind; they leese friends, and they check with business, whereby business cannot go on, currently, and constantly. They dispose kings to tyranny, husbands to jealousy, wise men to irresolution and melancholy. They are defects, not in the heart, but in the brain; For they take place in the stoutest natures: As in the example of Henry the Seventh of England: there was not a more suspicious man, nor a more stout. And in such a composition, they do small hurt. For commonly they are not admitted, but with examination, whether they be likely or no? But in fearful natures they gain ground too fast. There is nothing makes a man suspect much, more than to know little: And therefore Men should remedy suspicion, by procuring to know more, and not to keep their suspicions in smother. What would men have? Do they think, those they employ and deal with, are saints? Do they not think, they will have their own ends, and be truer to themselves, than to them? Therefore, there is no better way to moderate suspicions, than to account upon such suspicions as true, and yet to bridle them, as false. For so far, a man ought to make use of suspicions, as to provide, as if that should be true, that he suspects, yet it may do him no hurt. Suspicions, that the mind, of itself, gathers, are but buzzes; But suspicions, that are artificially nourished, and put into men's heads, by the tales, and whisperings of others, have stings. Certainly, the best mean, to clear the way, in this same wood of suspicions, is frankly to communicate them, with the party, that he suspects: For thereby, he shall be sure, to know more of the truth of them, than he did before; And withall, shall make that party, more circumspect, not to give further cause of suspicion. But this would not be done to men of base natures: For they, if they find themselves once suspected, will never be true. The Italian says: *Sospetto licentia fede*: As if suspicion did give a passport to faith: But it ought rather to kindle it, to discharge itself.

leese: lose *check:* interfere *currently:* smoothly *account upon*: consider *mean:* means *would:* should

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Masks are arrested expressions and admirable echoes of feeling, at once faithful, discreet, and superlative. Living things in contact with the air must acquire a cuticle, and it is not urged against cuticles that they are not hearts; yet some philosophers seem to be angry with images for not being things, and with words for not being feelings. Words and images are like shells, not less integral parts of nature than are the substances they cover, but better addressed to the eye and more open to observation. I would not say that substance exists for the sake of appearance, or faces for the sake of masks, or the passions for the sake of poetry and virtue. Nothing arises in nature for the sake of anything else; all these phases and products are involved equally in the round of existence, and it would be sheer willfulness to praise the germinal phase on the ground that it is dead and sterile. We might as justly despise the seed for being merely instrumental, and glorify the full-blown

flower, or the conventions of art, as the highest achievement and fruition of life. Substance is fluid, and, since it cannot exist without some form, is always ready to exchange some form for another; but sometimes it falls into a settled rhythm or recognizable vortex, which we call a nature, and which sustains an interesting form for a season. These sustained forms are enshrined in memory and worshipped in moral philosophy, which often assigns to them a power to create and to reassert themselves which their precarious status is very far from justifying. But they are all in all to the mind: art and happiness lie in pouring and repouring the molten metal of existence through some such tenable mould.

Masks are accordingly glorious things; we are instinctively as proud designing and wearing them as we are of inventing and using words...

(George Santayana, “The Tragic Mask”)

SOME BACONIAN OPENINGS

OF TRUTH: What is Truth? said jesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer. Certainly there be that delight in giddiness, and count it a bondage to fix a belief, affecting free-will in thinking, as well as in acting...

OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN: The joys of parents are secret; and so are their griefs and fears. They cannot utter the one, nor they will not utter the other. Children sweeten labours, but they make misfortunes more bitter.

OF MARRIAGE AND THE SINGLE LIFE: He that hath wife and children have given hostages to fortune, for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief.

Of DEATH: Men fear Death, as children fear to go into the dark; and as the natural fear in children is increased with tales, so is the other. Certain the contemplation of death, as the wages of sin and passage to another world, is holy and religious, but the fear of it, as tribute due unto nature, is weak. Yet in religious meditations there is sometimes mixture of vanity and superstition... It is as natural to die as to be born, and to a little infant, perhaps the one is as painful as the other.

In the proportion that credulity is a more peaceful possession of the mind than curiosity, so far preferable is that wisdom which converses about the surface to that pretended philosophy which enters into the depth of things and then comes gravely back with information and discoveries, that in the inside they are good for nothing. The two senses to which all objects first address themselves are the sight and the touch; these never examine farther than the colour, the shape, the size, and whatever other qualities dwell or are drawn by art upon the outward of bodies; and then comes reason officiously with tools for cutting, and opening, and mangling, and piercing, offering to demonstrate that they are not of the same consistence quite through.

Now I take all this to be the last degree of perverting nature; one of whose eternal laws it is to put her best furniture forward. And therefore, in order to save the charges of all such expensive anatomy for the time to come, I do here think fit to inform the reader, that in such conclusions as these, reason is certainly in the right, and that in most corporeal beings which have fallen under under my cognizance the outside hath been infinitely preferable to the in; whereof I have been farther convinced from some late experiments.

Last week I saw a woman flayed, and you will hardly believe how much it altered her person for the worse. Yesterday I ordered the carcass of a beau to be stripped in my presence, when we were all amazed to find so many unsuspected faults under one suit of clothes. Then I laid open his brain, his heart, and his spleen; but I plainly perceived at every operation that the farther we proceeded, we found the defects increase upon us in number and bulk; from all which I justly formed this conclusion to myself: that whatever philosopher or projector can find out an art to sodder and patch up the flaws and imperfections of nature will deserve much better of mankind, and teach us a more useful science, than that so much in present esteem of widening and exposing them (like him who held anatomy to be the ultimate end of physic). And he whose fortunes and dispositions have placed him in a convenient station to enjoy the fruits of this noble art; he that can, with Epicurus content his ideas with the films and images that fly off upon his senses from the superficies of things; such a man, truly wise, creams off nature, leaving the sour and the dregs for Philosophy and reason to lap up. That is the sublime and refined point of felicity, called the possession of being well deceived; the serene peaceful state of being a fool among knaves.

(from Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub*)

For in general mortals have a great power of being astonished at the presence of an effect towards which they have done everything, and at the absence of an effect towards which they have done nothing but desire it. Parents are astonished at the ignorance of their sons, though they have used the most time-honoured and expensive means of securing it; husbands and wives are mutually astonished at the loss of affection which they have taken no pains to keep; and all of us in turn are apt to be astonished that our neighbors do not admire us. In this way it happens that the truth seems highly improbable. The truth is something different from the habitual lazy combinations begotten by our wishes.

(George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*)

Innocence so constantly finds itself in a false position that inwardly innocent people learn to be disingenuous. Finding no language in which to speak in their own terms, they resign themselves to being translated imperfectly. They exist alone—through anxiety, through desire to impart and to feel warmth. The system of our affections is too corrupt for them. They are bound to blunder, then to be told they cheat. In love, the sweetness and violence they have to offer involves a thousand betrayals for the less innocent. Incurable strangers to the world, they never cease to exact a heroic happiness. Their singleness, their ruthlessness, their one continuous wish makes them bound to be cruel, and to suffer cruelty. The innocent are so few that two of them seldom meet—when they do, their victims lie strewn all round.

(Elizabeth Bowen *The Death of the Heart*)

Assignments

1. Repunctuate (and re-paragraph if you think it useful) Francis Bacon's "Of Suspicion." Type up the essay, with your changes, and be prepared to discuss your revisions in conference.

2. Write "Of —." Your essay should be about the same length as the Bacon essay. For its subject, choose one of the following:

   - Departures
   - Ice
   - Facades
   - Red (or Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, or Violet)
   - Bicycles
   - Hats
   - Secrets
   - Noise
   - Beginnings

3. Discuss what you wrote yesterday as if it had been written by some author unknown to you: treat of its strategies in circumscribing the subject, in the ways it opens and concludes, and in what it leaves out.

4. Write either:

   a) Your own discussion of "Of Suspicion"

   or

   b) "Of —-," treating of anything you wish, but trying to imitate as closely s possible Bacon's style. Don't use archaism unless you know them thoroughly, but try to get at his syntax, his overall rhythms, and his elegant concentrations.

5. Write "Of Mondays"

21 Persons, Personae, Characters:

Examples

Tess Durbeyfield at this time of her life was a mere vessel of emotion untinctured by experience. The dialect was on her tongue to some extent, despite the village school: the characteristic intonation of that dialect for district being the voicing approximately rendered by the syllable UR, probably as rich an utterance as any to be found in human speech. The pouted-up deep red mouth to which this syllable was native had hardly as yet settled into its definite shape, and her lower lip had a way of thrusting the middle of her top one upward, when they closed together after a word.

Phases of her childhood lurked in her aspect still. As she walked along to-day, for all her bouncing handsome womanliness, you could sometimes see her twelfth year in her cheeks, or her ninth sparkling from her eye, and even her fifth would flit over the curves of her mouth now and then.

My father's family name being Pirrip, and my christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicitly than Pip. So, I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip.

I gave Pirrip as my father's family name, on the authority of his tombstone and my sister—Mrs. Joe Gargery, who married the blacksmith. As I never saw my father or my mother, and never saw any likeness of either of them (for their days were long before the days of photographs), my first fancies regarding what they were like, were unreasonably derived from their tombstones. The shape of the letters on my father's gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, "Also Georgiana Wife of the Above," I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly. To five little stone lozenges, each about a foot and a half long, which were arranged in a neat row beside their grave, and were sacred to the memory of five little brothers of mine—who gave up trying to get a living exceedingly early in that universal struggle—I am indebted for a belief I religiously entertained that they had all been born on their backs with their hands in their trousers-pockets, and had never taken them out in this state of existence.

Miss Brooke had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress. Her hand and wrist were so finely formed that she could wear sleeves not less bare of style than those in which the Blessed Virgin appeared to Italian painters; and her profile as well as her stature and bearing seemed to gain the more dignity from her plain garments, which by the side of provincial fashion gave her the impressiveness of a fine quotation from the Bible—or from one of our elder poets—in a paragraph of to-day's newspaper. She was usually spoken of as being remarkably clever, but with the addition that her sister Celia had more common sense. Nevertheless, Celia wore scarcely more trimmings; and it was only to close observers that her dress differed from her sister's, and had a shade of coquetry in its arrangements; for Miss Brooke's plain dressing was due to mixed conditions, in most of which her sister shared. . . . Dorothea knew many

passages of Pascal's Pensees and of Jeremy Taylor by heart; and to her the destinies of mankind, seen by the light of Christianity, made the solicitudes of feminine fashion appear an occupation for Bedlam. She could not reconcile the anxieties of a spiritual life involving eternal consequences, with a keen interest in guimp and artificial protrusions of drapery. Her mind was theoretic, and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there; she was enamoured of intensity and greatness, and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects; likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractions, and then to incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it.

He was an inch, perhaps two, under six feet, powerfully built, and he advanced straight at you with a slight stoop of the shoulders, head forward, and a fixed from-under stare which made you think of a charging bull. His voice was deep, loud, and his manner displayed a kind of dogged self-assertion which had nothing aggressive in it. It seemed a necessity, and it was directed apparently as much at himself as at anybody else. He was spotlessly neat, apparelled in immaculate white from shoes to hat, and in the various Eastern ports where he got his living as ship-chandler's water-clerk he was very popular.

Call me Ishmael. Some years ago—never mind how long precisely—having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen, and regulating the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street and methodically knocking people's hat's off—then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball. With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to my ship. There is nothing surprising in this. If they but knew it, almost all men in their degree, some time or other, cherish very nearly the same feelings towards the ocean with me.

Her son was of a fair, sun-tanned type, rather above middle height, well-made, and almost exaggeratedly well-dressed. But about him also was the strange, guarded look, the unconscious glisten, as if he did not belong to the same creation as the people about him. Gudrun lighted on him at once. There was something northern about him that magnetised her. In his clear northern flesh and his fair hair was a glisten like sunshine refracted through crystals of ice. And he looked so new, unbroached, pure as an arctic thing. Perhaps he was thirty years old, perhaps more. His gleaming beauty, maleness, like a young, good-humored, smiling wolf, did not blind her to the significant, sinister stillness in his bearing, the lurking danger of his unsubdued temper. "His totem is the wolf," she repeated to herself. "His mother is an old, unbroken wolf." And then she experienced a keen paroxysm, a transport, as if she had made some incredible discovery, known to nobody else on earth.

A CONTEMPLATIVE MAN Is a scholar in this great university the world; and the same his book and study. He cloisters not his meditations in the narrow darkness of a room, but sends them abroad with his eyes, and his brain travels with his feet. He looks upon man from a high tower, and sees him trulier at this distance in his infirmities and poorness . He scorns to mix himself in men's actions, as he would to act upon a stage, but sits aloft on the scaffold a censuring spectator. He will not lose his time by being busy, or make so poor a use of the world as to hug and embrace it. Nature admits him as a partaker of her sports, and asks his approbation as it were of her own works and variety. He comes not in company, because he would not be solitary, but finds discourse enough with himself, and his own thoughts are his excellent play fellows. He looks not upon a thing as a yawning stranger at novelties, but his search is more mysterious and inward, and he spells heaven out of earth. He knits his observations together and makes a ladder of them all to climb to God. He is free from vice, because he has no occasion to employ it, and is above those ends that make man wicked. He has learnt all can here be taught him, and now comes to heaven to see more.

A CHILD Is a man in a small letter, yet the best copy of Adam before he tasted of Eve or the apple; and he is happy whose small practice in the world can only write his character. He is nature's fresh picture newly drawn in oil, which time, and much handling, dims and defaces. His soul is yet a white paper unscribbled with observations of the world, wherewith, at length, it becomes a blurred note-book. He is purely happy, because he knows no evil, nor hath made means by sin to be acquainted with misery. He arrives not at the mischief of being wise, nor endures evils to come, by foreseeing them. He kisses and loves all, and when the smart of the rod is past, smiles on his beater. Nature and his parents alike dandle him, and tice him on with a bait of sugar to a draught of wormwood. He plays yet, like a young 'prentice the first day, and is not come to his task of melancholy. All the language he speaks yet is tears, and they serve him well enough to express his necessity. His hardest labour is his tongue, as if he were loath to use so deceitful an organ; and he is best company with it when he can but prattle. We laugh at his foolish sports, but his game is our earnest; and his drums, rattles and hobby-horses but the emblems and mocking of man's business. His father has writ him as his own little story, wherein he reads those days of his life that he cannot remember, and sighs to see what innocence he has out-lived. The older he grows, he is a stair lower from God; and, like his first father, much worse in his breaches. He is the Christian's example, and the old man's relapse; the one imitates his pureness, and the other falls into his simplicity. Could he put off his body with his little coat, he had got eternity without a burden, and exchanged but one heaven for another.

(John Earle, Microcosmography, 1628)

His method of life particularly qualified him for conversation, of which he knew how to practice all the graces. He was never vehement or loud, but at once modest and easy, open and respectful; his language was vivacious or elegant, and equally happy upon grave or humorous subjects. He was generally censured for not knowing when to retire; but that

was not the defect of his judgment, but of his fortune; when he left his company, he was frequently to spend the remaining part of the night in the street, or at least was abandoned to gloomy reflections, which it is not strange that he delayed as long as he could; and sometimes forgot that he gave others pain to avoid it himself.

(Samuel Johnson, Life of Savage)

He was a very good-looking young man indeed, shaped to be annoyed. His voice was intimate as the rustle of sheets, and he kissed easily. There was no tallying the gifts of Charvet handkerchiefs, art moderne ash-trays, monogrammed dressing-gowns, gold key-chains, and cigarette-cases of thin wood, inlaid with views of Parisian comfort-stations, that were sent him by ladies too quickly confident, and were paid for by the money of unwitting husbands, which is acceptably any place in the world. Every woman who visited his small, square apartment promptly flamed with the desire to assume charge of its redecoration. During his tenancy, three separate ladies had achieved this ambition. Each had left behind her, for her brief monument, much too much glazed chintz.

(Dorothy Parker, Dusk Before Fireworks)

A girl stood before him in midstream, alone and still, gazing out to sea. She seemed like one whom magic had changed into the likeness of a strange and beautiful sea-bird. Her long slender bare legs were delicate as a crane's and pure save where an emerald trail of sea weed had fashioned itself as a sign upon her flesh. Her thighs, fuller and softhued as ivory, were bared almost to the hips where the white fringes of her drawers were like feathering of soft white down. Her slateblue skirts were kilted boldly about her waist and dovetailed behind her. Her bosom was as a bird's, soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast of some darkplumaged dove. But her long fair hair was girlish: and girlish, and touched with the wonder of mortal beauty, her face.

(James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man)

Begin with an individual, and before you know it you find that you have created a type; begin with a type, and you find that you have created–nothing. That is because we are all queer fish, queerer behind our faces and voices than we want anyone to know or than we know ourselves. When I hear a man proclaiming himself an "average, honest, open fellow," I feel pretty sure that he has some definite and perhaps terrible abnormality which he has agreed to conceal—and his protestation of being average and honest and open is his way of reminding himself of his misprision.

There are no types, no plurals. There is a rich boy, and this is his and not his brothers' story. All my life I have lived among his brothers but this one has been my friend. Besides, if I wrote about his brothers I should have to begin by attacking all the lies that the poor have told about the rich and the rich have told about themselves— such a wild structure they have erected that when we pick up a book about the rich, some instinct prepares us for unreality. Even the intelligent and impassioned reporters of life have made the country of the rich as unreal as fairy-land.

Let me tell you about the very rich. They are different from you and me. They possess and enjoy early, and it does something to them, makes them soft where we are hard, and

cynical where we are trustful, in a way that, unless you were born rich, it is very difficult to understand. They think, deep in their hearts, that they are better than we are because we had to discover the compensations and refuges of life for ourselves. Even when they enter deep into our world or sink below us, they still think that they are better than we are. They are different. The only way I can describe young Anson Hunter is to approach him as if he were a foreigner and cling stubbornly to my point of view. If I accept his for a moment I am lost—I have nothing to show but a preposterous movie.

(F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Rich Boy")

Historical documents also sometimes turn on "character descriptions" as well. Consider this example, from Churchill's *The Second World War*:

The figure whom Stalin had now moved to the pulpit of Soviet foreign policy deserves some description, not available to the British or French Governments at the time. Vyacheslav Molotov was a man of outstanding ability and cold-blooded ruthlessness. He had survived the fearful hazards and ordeals to which all the Bolshevik leaders had been subjected in the years of triumphant revolution. He had lived and thrived in a society where ever-varying intrigue was accompanied by the constant menace of personal liquidation. His cannon-ball head, black moustache, and comprehending eyes, his slab face, his verbal adroitness and imperturbable demeanour, were appropriate manifestations of his qualities and skill. He was above all men fitted to be the agent and instrument of the policy of an incalculable machine. I have only met him on equal terms, in parleys where sometimes a strain of humour appeared, or at banquets where he genially proposed a long succession of conventional and meaningless toasts. I have never seen a human being who more perfectly represented the modern conception of a robot. And yet with all this there was an apparently reasonable and keenly-polished diplomatist. What he was to his inferiors I cannot tell. What he was to the Japanese Ambassador during the years when after the Teheran Conference Stalin had promised to attack Japan once the German Army was beaten can be deduced from his recorded conversations. One delicate, searching, awkward interview after another was conducted with perfect poise, impenetrable purpose, and bland, official correctitude. Never a chink was opened. Never a needless jar was made. His smile of Siberian winter, his carefully-measured and often wise words, his affable demeanour, combined to make him the perfect agent of Soviet policy in a deadly world.

Correspondence with him upon disputed matters was always useless, and, if pushed far, ended in lies and insults, of which this work will presently contain some examples. Only once did I seem to get a natural, human reaction. This was in the spring of 1942, when he alighted in Britain on his way back from the United States. We had signed the Anglo-Soviet Treaty, and he was about to make his dangerous flight home. At the garden gate of Downing Street, which we used for secrecy, I gripped his arm and we looked each other in the face. Suddenly he appeared deeply moved. Inside the image there appeared the man. He responded with an equal pressure. Silently we wrung each other's hands. But then we were all together, and it was life or death for the lot. Havoc and ruin had been around him all his days, either impending on himself or dealt by him to others. Certainly in Molotov the Soviet machine had found a capable and in many ways a characteristic

representative—always the faithful Party man and Communist disciple. How glad I am at the end of my life not to have had to endure the stresses which he has suffered; better never be born. In the conduct of foreign affairs Mazarin, Talleyrand, Metternich, would welcome him to their company, if there be another world to which Bolsheviks allow themselves to go.

Assignments

1. Develop a description of a character type beginning, “He (she) was the kind of person who...” Such a description (and such phrasing) is common to a sort of fiction with which you are no doubt familiar. (Examples: “He was the sort of person who lives in East. . . ;” or “who carefully hunts out all the cashews in a bowl of mixed nuts. . . ;” or “for whom any injustice, no matter how remote, was a deep personal affront. . . ;” or “who only felt at home at funerals.” “She was one of those people who fail to find daily life attractive or interesting, and who seek compensation in an ‘unseen world’...”)

2. Write a description based on careful observation of someone whom you don’t know. Take notes on what this person looks like when he or she is eating, talking with another, shopping, playing frisbee, approached by a dog, or whatever. This should not be merely a catalogue of details, but an ordered composition that amounts to a visual reading of someone’s personality.

3. Write a description of someone whom you do know that is based on this person’s nature, rather than on his or her appearance. Describe what he or she is like, not what he or she looks like. (How do you write about what you cannot see–i.e., about “soul,” “mind,” “spirit,” disposition to behave in different ways at different times, and so on? And how important are concrete words here?)

4. Invent a person and compose a description of the “outer” person which reveals (gets to the heart of) the “inner.”

5. Self portrait: Look at yourself in the mirror. Write a page on the person whom you see.

22 Journal, Diary, and Commonplace Book

Examples

It was reported by way of Scandal upon the Buriers, that if any Corpse was delivered to them, decently wound up as we call'd it then, in a Winding Sheet Ty'd over the Head and Feet, which some did, and which was generally of good Linen; I say, it was reported, that the Buriers were so wicked as to strip them in the Cart, and carry them quite naked to the Ground: But as I can not easily credit any thing so vile among Christians, and at a Time so fill'd with Terrors, as that was, I can only relate it and leave it undetermined.

–Defoe, *A Journal of the Plague Year*(1665) (Published 1722)

From Selected Journals of Thoreau

(1852) Feb. 18. . . . I have a commonplace-book for facts and another for poetry, but I find it difficult always to preserve the vague distinction which I had in my mind, for the most interesting and beautiful facts are so much the more poetry and that is their success. They are translated from earth to heaven. I see that if my facts were sufficiently vital and significant—perhaps transmuted more into the substance of the human mind—I should need but one book of poetry to contain them all.

(1851) June 7. . . . One of those gentle, straight-down rainy days, when the rain begins by spotting the cultivated fields as if shaken from a pepper-box; a fishing day, when I see one neighbor after another, having donned his oil-cloth suit, walking or riding past with a fish-pole, having struck work:—a day and an employment to make philosophers of them all.

(from the Diary of Virginia Woolf)

Juan les Pins, Tuesday, May 9th (1933)

yes, I thought, I will make a note of that face—the face of the woman stitching a very thin, lustrous green silk at a table in the restaurant where we lunched at Vienne. She was like fate—a consummate mistress of all the arts of self-preservation: hair rolled and lustrous; eyes so nonchalant; nothing could startle her; there she sat stitching her green silk with people going and coming all the time; she not looking, yet knowing, fearing nothing; expecting nothing—a perfectly equipped middle class Frenchwoman.

At Carpentras last night there was the little servant girl with honest eyes, hair brushed in a flop and one rather black tooth. I felt that life would crush her out inevitably. Perhaps 18, not more; yet on the wheel, without hope; poor, not weak but mastered—yet not enough mastered but to desire furiously to travel, for a moment, in a car. Ah but I am not rich, she said to me—which her cheap little stockings and shoes showed anyhow. Oh how I envy you, able to travel. You like Carpentras? But the wind blows ever so hard. You'll come again? That's the bell ringing. Never mind. Come over here and look at this. No. I've never seen anything like it. Ah yes, she always likes the English ("She" was the other maid, with hair like some cactus in erection.) Yes I always like the English she said. The odd little honest face. with the black tooth, will stay on at Carpentras I suppose: will marry will become one of those stout black women who sit in the door knitting? No: I foretell for her some tragedy: because she had enough mind to envy us the Lanchester.

from Emerson's Journals

Sunday April 18, 1824

"Nil fuit umquam sic dispar sibi" Hor.*

I am beginning my professional studies. In a month I shall be all a man. And I deliberately dedicate my time, my talents, + my opes to the Church. Man is an animal that looks before and after; and I should be loth to reflect at a remote period that I took so solemn a step in my existence without some careful examination of my past and present life. Since I cannot alter I would not repent the resolution I have made + this page must be witness to the latest year of my life whether I have good ground to warrant my determination. * 'Never was a creature so inconsistent.' Horace, Satires.

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from the Diary of Samuel Sewall

Nov. 4, 1692. Law passes for Justices and Ministers Marrying persons. By order of the Committee, I had drawn up a Bill for Justices and such others as the Assembly should appoint to marry; but came new-drawn and thus alter'd from the Deputies. It seems they count the respect of it too much to be left any longer with the Magistrate. And Salaries are not spoken of; as if one sort of Men might live on Aer. They are treated like a kind of useless, worthless folk.

Nov. 5. No disturbance at night by Bonfires.

Nov. 6. Joseph threw a knop of brass and hit his Sister Betty on the forehead so as to make it bleed and swell; upon which, and for his playing at Prayer-time, and eating when Return Thanks, I whip'd him pretty smartly. When I first went in (call'd by his Grandmother) he sought to shadow and hide himself from me behind the head of the Cradle: which gave me the sorrowful remembrance of Adam's carriage.

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from the Diary of William Byrd

December 3, 1709. I rose at 5 o'clock and read two chapters in Hebrew and some Greek in Cassius. I said my prayers and ate milk for breakfast. I danced my dance. Eugene pissed abed again for which I made him drink a pint of piss. I settled some accounts and read some news. About 12 o'clock I went to court where I found some good company. However, I persuaded Mr. Anderson and Colonel Eppes to come and dine with me. I ate a venison pasty for dinner. In the evening, Mr. Anderson and I walked to Mr. Harrison's where we found James Burwell and Isham Randolph. Here I ate custard and was merry. I stayed till 9 o'clock and when I came home my wife was in bed. I neglected to say my prayers and had good health, good thoughts, and good humor, thanks be to God Almighty.

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from the diary of Harold Nicolson

26th February, 1941. I walk back under the cold stars with some shells bursting about them. I am rather fussed about this diary. It is not intimate enough to give a personal picture. The really important things I know I cannot record. And this gives a picture of someone else on the edge of things who is so certain that he knows what is really happening that he does not dare say so. The day-to-day impressions of a greengrocer in

Streatham would really be more interesting. I must try henceforward to be more intimate and more illuminating. It is half that I feel that if I survive, this diary will for me be a record from which I can fill in remembered details. And half that I find some relief in putting down on paper the momentary spurts and gushes of this cataract of history.

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from Boswell's Diary

Sunday, 31 December (1776) (I am now writing on Tuesday 2 January 1776). My cold and sprained ankle were worse. I lay in bed but did not enjoy that tranquillity which I have formerly done in that state of indolence. I read in The Critical Review an account of Priestly's edition of Hartley's Observations on Man with some essays of his own relative to the subject of that book. While I was carried into metaphysical abstraction, and felt that perhaps all our thinking of every kind was only a variety of modification upon matter, I was in a sort of amaze; but I must observe that it did not affect me with that secret dread and inward horror which it has occasioned on other times. There is no accounting for our feelings, but certain it is that what strikes us strongly at one time will have little influence at another. Speculation of this kind relieved me from the vexation of family differences, by changing objects and making me consider, 'If all thought and all volition and all that we denominate spirit be only properties of matter, why should I distress myself at present, while in full consciousness, about eventual successions of machines?' I however thought that philosophical theories were transient, whereas feudal principles remained for ages. In truth the mortality or immortality of the soul can make no difference on the enthusiasm of supporting a family, for, in either case, the matter must be of no moment to those who have departed this life.., How strange is it, then, that a man will toil all his life and deny himself satisfaction in order to aggrandize his posterity after he is dead. It is, I fancy, from a kind of delusion in the imagination, which makes us figure ourselves contemplating for ages our on magnificence in a series of descendants.

Assignments

Your assignment is to write 5 journal entries of 200-250 words each. The entries need not be sequential. However, each one should be a detailed account in some form of thoughts you have and/or events you experience on a particular day. The "catch" is this: the narrative "I" of each journal entry should in each case be a different person. (For example, if your first entry is straightforwardly autobiographical, your second might be the commentary of someone who is over 50 years old. Your third might be written by someone of the opposite sex, your fourth by someone you dislike, and—possibly quite tricky—your fifth by someone with whom you think you are well-acquainted—a sibling, a cousin, your best friend, etc.)

While the material you work with should be consistent (i.e., each entry, no matter what its point of view, should be based on events in your own day-to-day life), the styles of your entries should vary markedly. Remember, though, that any change in diction level within a specific entry, or from one entry to the next, should be purposeful and controlled, should point to significant aspects of your observers' personalities. In addition, each diarist should have a particular audience in mind—a literary public; the diarist herself only; her sister, who is bound to peek at the diary; the previous day's diarist, etc.

Finally, one of your entries should be a commonplace-book entry, in which something you have read becomes as important as anything else that might be on your diarist's mind. Organize this entry around a quotation that you find interesting and worth pondering (e.g., an extract from a novel, a poem, a newspaper, someone else's journal or diary, a children's story, an advertisement, or whatever).

23 Sense and Nonsense

Assignments

(Note: For “morkle” and .“frannis” in the following exercises substitute two “nonsense” words of your own devising. Use a different pair for each part of the assignment, if you like.)

1. The following phrase in a letter to the New York Times has ruined your already sufficiently nasty breakfast: “. . . a frannis (or a morkle—the same thing, really). . . ” You have been studying morkles for years and are outraged. Write a letter (minus salutation, closing, and any introductory harrumphing or throat-clearing) to the Times maintaining the distinction between frannis and morkle, and its importance.

2. (a) Choose one of the following words: Word; Sense; Science; Silly; Clear; Meat; Art; Realism; Conscious; Modern; Figure; Subject; Object. Look it up in the Oxford English Dictionary and read carefully the whole entry. In addition, look the word up in the American Heritage Dictionary and trace its Indo-European base in the Appendix. Write a paragraph discussing the word’s etymology, and account for some of its different senses by considering an early meaning.

   (b) Take either “frannis” or “morkle” and write a brief discussion of its etymology—of its origins and evolving uses since 1600. Add to this short account of the word and even briefer, ingenious but palpably false folk-etymology.

3. There were no frannises in England (or in the U.S., or any country you may select) before 1650 (or 1850, or 1950, if you choose . Explain why. You may, of course, depend on learned authority.

4. Discuss briefly either (a)“Frannis as Morkle: a current ideological theme,” or (b) “Morkle as Frannis in the Writings of — .

5. Write a page about your own name, or about any other name you might choose. Find out as much as you can about its history, etc. , and also about its “meaning” defined by its use by the namers (parents, the person who chooses his or her name, or whoever.)

24 Joke and Earnest

Assignments

1. Choose one of the funniest jokes you've ever known, or recently heard. Tell that joke (a) in full and canonical form; then, (b) in a compressed, telegraphed form, but which still retains the structure and the punch line and will still be funny.

2. Analyze the joke synchronically. Why is it funny? How is it funny? (are these really the same questions?) How does the machinery of the narration make the punch-line work? Trace its build through expectations, defeats, etc. How does your telegraphed version map this out? What does it lose?

3. Diachronic reading. What jokes would you have to know in order to think this one funny? What about the mode, or form or type of joke? Would you need to have heard certain kinds of narration that were not jokes? What about the implicit meaning of elements, agents, situations (e.g. stereotypes of role, age, sex, race, occupation, place, etc.)?

4. Capping the climax: "So what did the other guy say?" Write a continuation of the joke, pushing past the punch-line which then becomes merely another structural element . Move on to a further joke, a brief essay, a meditation, or whatever you can make follow coherently upon the old punch-line.

5. Write a shaggy-dog story in joke format, or put the structure and framework—even conventions of the kind you wrote about in (3)—to an unfunny purpose.

25 Figurative Language

Examples

To these uses of speech there are also four correspondent abuses. First, when men register their thoughts wrong, by the inconstancy of the signification of their words; by which they register for their conception that which they never conceived, and so deceive themselves. Secondly, when they use words metaphorically; that is, in other sense than that they are ordained for, and thereby deceive others. . . . (Hobbes, *Leviathan* 1651)

Words are signs of natural facts. The use of natural history is to give us aid in supernatural history: the use of the outer creation, to give us language for the beings and changes of the inward creation. Every word which is used to express a moral or intellectual fact, if traced to its root, is found to be borrowed from some spiritual appearance. Right means straight; wrong means twisted. Spirit primarily means wind; transgression, the crossing of a line; supercilious, the raising of an eyebrow. We say the heart to express emotion, the head to denote thought; and thought and emotion are words borrowed from sensible things, and now appropriated to spiritual nature.. Most of the process by which this transformation is made is hidden from us in the remote time when language was framed. (Emerson, *Nature* 1836)

True wit is nature to advantage dressed,
What oft was thought but ne'er so well expressed.(Pope)

No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear.(Burke)

Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel. (Johnson)

Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. (Psalm 85)

Prudence is a rich, ugly old maid, courted by incapacity. (Blake)

Joys impregnate. Sorrows bring forth. (Blake)

I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. That virtue therefore which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evil, and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank virtue, not a pure . . . (Milton)

Personification is more ubiquitous a figure than is usually seen. Verbs not one's usual assistants, but visiting strangers—can build the image all by themselves. Personification

can reach out to you and guide you through an abstract concept's abode. She can be called up by a non-neuter pronoun, as here. Personification will always be more eloquent about an idea—even: indeed, about the idea of herself—than the dead body of the abstract word

. . . All mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language, and every chapter must be so translated; God employs several translators: some pieces are translated by age, some by sickness, some by war, some by justice, but God's hand is in every translation, and his band shall bind up all our scattered leaves again for that library where every book shall lie open to one another. (Donne *Devotions* 1624)

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows shall be darkened. And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail; because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. (Ecclesiastes 12)

Even as when some object familiar to us all—
Even as a spoon, a river, a shoe, a star, a toothache—
Is brought to our attention, called up from our memory
To light up the darkened surface of something we've barely known of
—So did the epic simile sing of a silent past.

SIMILES: (univocal) An apple is like an arrow. (Because the words naming both of them begin with an "a")

(equivocal) Breakfast is like a sunset. (Because (a) both happen once a day, and (b) Well, the setting sun does sometimes look like a fried egg-yolk)

IMPLICIT SIMILE:

She brushed it away from his skin as lightly as when a mother brushes a fly away from her child who is lying in sweet sleep (Iliad IV, tr. Lattimore)

She brushed it away from his skin as lightly as when a summer breeze blows a dried pine-needle across a terrace floor,

Assignments

1. Write two paragraphs, developing in each of them a figurative presentation of some "moral or intellectual fact". In the first one, personify the abstraction. In the second, instead of personifying, embody the abstraction in a place, a process, or a thing. For your abstract concepts, you may choose moral ones, such as Fraud, Elegance, Hypocrisy, Gentleness, Self-deceit, etc., states of consciousness, such as Terror, Elation, Despair, Despondency (not the same thing at all!), Boredom, etc., or more general concepts such as Triviality, Profundity, Latency, Illusion, Belief.

2. Write a page on any subject you wish, using in at least every other sentence some abstract term. Do not personify them formally but in each case, choose a verb which will momentarily, implicitly, and, one hopes, forcefully personify (or locate, or reify) the abstraction in question.

3. Take some abstract concept you have not worked with before. Set up an extended comparison between it and some object, process, place, person, etc., but in this case, extend the comparison through all the details of likeness. The form of your writing itself depends upon making explicit these details, which have remained implicit in your previous days' work. Thus: We shall (or, How may we) compare A to X? A has its b, followed by c; X its y, followed by z, etc. Like all these assignments, this one will require you to think a good deal about the abstract concept you choose, before beginning to write about it.

4. (a) Describe some object or place or process, as if to someone totally unfamiliar with it. Use at least three major similes, likening some part or aspect of the unfamiliar entity to something with which your listener/reader is familiar.
   (b) In a second paragraph, and in a more distance, neutral tone, analyze the similes you employed in the previous one. If one likened A to X, for example, show what unstated terms or qualities were at work (i.e., A is like X in that they share properties 1 and 2, or in that A's 1 is the same as X's 2, etc.)

5. - The legs of the lame are not equal:so is a parable in the mouth of a fool
   - It's a wise child that knows its father.
   - It's a long lane that has no turning.

   Interpret two of these proverbs. What does each "mean"? How is each one true? You must answer these, questions by discussing the figuration in each of them, by analyzing their similes as you did your own in the previous step of the assignment, and by going on to talk about other aspects of the formulation.

26 Warming-up Questions about Reading

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I (and the students) like this exercise for many reasons. First, it works with virtually any text that students need to respond to; you can change the focus of the questions to adapt to different disciplines, but it is a powerful tool to teach students to read and respond to texts critically. Also, students understand its easy and direct questions and are able to answer them quickly and coherently. Moreover, it takes students step-by-step in the process of writing a paper, starting with choosing a subject and going all the way to formulating a conclusion. I have used this exercise many times in the course of different semesters and classes, always successfully. What I usually do is tell the students to think about one specific text (usually the most recent one we have discussed in class). Its worked better when students all refer to the same text, because they can see firsthand how it is possible to develop completely different and still valid – arguments about the same reading. Then I take them through the questions one by one (I dont show them the list, but rather ask the questions aloud and give them time to write their answers to each of them. At the end of the exercise I give them copies of the list for future use). After we go over a few answers from volunteers, I ask them what they did in terms of the writing process. At first, it usually comes as a (pleasant) surprise to them to realize that by answering a simple question they have actually tackled the thesis statement or some other scary rhetorical term.But as the exercise progresses, they become excited at figuring out what they are doing as they do it; it is really fun and exciting to see them develop theoretical mindsets right then and there.

Questions:

1.What is the most important word (or phrase) in the text?

Forces them to define the subject they are interested in writing about; of course the word doesnt necessarily have to appear in the text, but it should summarize the main idea behind it.

2.Why is it the most important word?

Defines the thesis; answering why forces the student to make the thesis argumentative.

3.What do you mean when you use that word? Does the text use it in the same way?

Obliges the student to provide a definition for his/her own view of the subject, and to specify in clear terms if the context in which the word is used by the text matches that of the paper. If the contexts are different, the student needs to determine which one will be used by the paper. In any case, answering this question reminds students of the importance to define ones own terms, especially for an unknown audience.

4.Can you provide a specific, concrete example (hypothetical if necessary) of the situation described by the text?

Starts to create the link between the paper and the text; marks the moment in which students move from the introductory material to the body of the paper, and provides the transition for it.

5.Do the facts provided in the text ring true? Why or why not?

Although this may seem like a question more suitable to a paper on the social sciences or sciences, it does have its value for literary interpretations as well. The key is to direct students to the significance of specific events in the text in relation to the argument that the paper has started to develop; in this sense, the students will begin to categorize important moments in the narrative that they could use to validate their claims.

6.Do you have any evidence to support your response to the text? What kind of evidence?

Here is where the different disciplines will take the writing in different directions. While for social science papers one would come up with statistics and data and for science papers/reports one would generally present experiment results, in literature we direct students to the universe of the text and require textual examples as proof. Of course, if it is a research paper secondary materials are a must, but for the purposes of the exercise it is enough to have students use the original text.

7.What groups of people would respond differently than you do to the text? Why would their response be different?

Combines the issue of audience with the construction of a carefully thought-out argument. By now, students have been hearing their classmates responses to the same text, and, if that wasnt clear before, they start to notice that not all interpretations will agree with the direction their own paper is taking. The important thing here is to reassure them of the validity of different interpretations, as long as these interpretations are organized coherently, backed up with adequate evidence, and argued thoroughly. I try to encourage them to incorporate diverging perspectives into their papers, to better show their readers that they are capable of dealing with antitheses and syntheses in their own argument. (Take care that what your students mean by groups are argumentative communities, not ethnic stereotypes. You do not know that all people of type X think alike. But you do know that people who believe X have at least one thing in common with everybody else who believes X. —JB)

8.In a discussion with these people, how would you support your point of view regarding the text?

Takes the students from simply acknowledging the existence of conflicting perspectives to actually persuading the reader that the thesis of the paper makes more sense than the other ideas.

9.What might happen as a result of the situation described? What effect does the text have?

Again, the two different questions serve the purposes of different disciplines (the first for sciences/social sciences and the second for humanities). After the paper has made its case and argued it, these questions move the writing towards the conclusion; the students reassess their personal reactions to the text, what they have written so far, and incorporate their personal and academic responses into the beginnings of a conclusion.

10.What action should be taken about the situation? What does the text point at in terms of the future? Is the ending satisfactory?

These questions might not be necessary if the students have not made part of their theses to investigate the consequences of the text (in such cases, answering question 9 would provide the conclusion for the paper). But if the thesis encompasses the legacy of the text in any way (in literature, for example) or some kind of resolution of conflict that is still present (in history or political science, etc.), then these questions are appropriate.

27 Instructions and Analytic Narrative

Examples

- He extinguished the candle by a sharp expiration of breath upon its flame, drew two spoonseat chairs to the hearthstone, one for Stephen with its back to the area window, the other for himself when necessary, knelt on one knee, composed in the grate a pyre of crosslaid resintipped sticks and various coloured papers and irregular polygons of best Abram coal at twenty-one shillings a ton from the yard of Messrs Flower and M'Donald of 14 D Olier street, kindled it at three projecting points of paper with one ignited lucifer match, thereby releasing the potential energy contained in the fuel by allowing its carbon and hydrogen elements to enter into free union with the oxygen of the air. (*Ulysses*)

- Now Erskine's room was always locked, and the key in Erskine's pocket. Or rather, Erskine's room was never unlocked, nor the key out of Erskine's pocket, longer than two or three seconds at a stretch, which was the time that Erskine took to take the key from his pocket, unlock his door on the outside, glide into his room, lock the door again on the inside and slip the key back into his pocket, or take the key from his pocket, unlock his door on the inside, glide out of his room, lock the door again on the outside and slip the key back into his pocket. For if Erskine's room had been always locked, and the key always in Erskine's pocket, then Erskine himself, for all his agility, would have been hard set to glide in and out of his room, in the way he did, unless he had glided in and out by the window, or the chimney. But in and out by the window he could not have glided, without breaking his neck, nor in and out by the chimney, without being crushed to death. And this was true also of Watt. (*Watt*)

- Anyone wishing to walk from Sibert's Junction to Wimberby must proceed along the Pell's Hollow road for some distance as it follows the crest of a hill; but then, just as it descends again toward the town of Pell's Hollow itself, he,—or, rather, she, for this is the way taken by the local ladies on their visits— might do best to turn left at the fork there and continue on directly along the narrow lane that proceeds between two parallel, low stone walls. This path, leading eventually, and by a shorter route than the main road, to Wimberby, extends between the unbroken walls for its entire length. as if covering some old secret they had been keeping between them.

- If you want to go to Wimberby from here, go along route 147a, take a right at Pell's Hollow onto 304, and keep right on going for five miles. Oh—147a? Just keep on Main Street here in the direction you're facing, and turn left at the dirty movie house. You can't miss it.

- I set out for Wimberby as usual that morning, going through Pell's Hollow and on along that delicious mile through the woods and along the brook, with scarcely a glance at the few houses and fewer places of business that compose the village of Grumm, and no thought at all that I should be spending the next month there.
- When he got off the train at Sibert's Junction, having gone past his stop, he found that the last bus back to Thurber's Corners had just left. He ran after it and finally caught up with it, and boarded it, puffing, only to find after ten minutes that the bus wasn't going to Thurber's Corners at all, but in the opposite direction, through Pell's Hollow and Grumm to a place called Wimberby.

Assignments

This is a "Daily Themes" assignment from my youth. You should feel free to modify it as you wish.

1. Do both "a" and "b":

   (a) Every day we do many things that strike us as simple but which are in fact rather complex. Pay close attention to one of the following acts, and write a paragraph describing how it is done:

   - tying a shoe or putting on some article of clothing
   - balancing a checkbook
   - replacing a printer cartridge
   - making a bed
   - brewing a pot of coffee (lately a subject of great anxiety about one's expertise)
   - frying an egg

   Your paragraph should be a description, not a set of instructions, but it should be detailed enough so that any reader could exactly duplicate the process you describe. Also, you should describe only the process, not particular persons perform it.

   (b) Embed a description of the process you have just described in a paragraph describing some larger process. Your paragraph should be about the same length as your last one.

2. Take some process about which you have expert knowledge. Write a paragraph describing that process to those who share your expertise, then write a paragraph describing the process to those who do not. In neither paragraph should you have the personalities of particular readers in mind.

3. Consider any process which can be performed in more than one way. Describe both ways, giving the circumstances which would lead one to choose one method over the other.

4. Now, instruct a reader how to make, unmake, prepare, repair, dismantle, appropriately destroy, or whatever, something. Without ever directly declaring your feelings (and without resorting to crudely helpful adjectives of the sort that you might have wielded several weeks ago) reveal clearly (but, if possible, subtly) that you find the whole process, the result, or some of the parts or stages of either of these, disgusting. Variation: now do the "disgusting" exercise again, only this time making clear that the process is despite everything somehow important and worth the trouble.

5. Explain another process, a totally different one, this time for the benefit of a reader you consider fits one of the following labels:

(a) Intelligent, but naive

(b) Very sophisticated and well-informed

(c) Aggressively uninterested (variation 1: needing to be persuaded of the worth of the project. variation 2: needing to be bullied into it)

(d) not over-bright

(e) not over-bright but likely to be offended if he or she guesses that you think so

28 Stichomythia

A famous Daily Themes Assignment, long known in UWS in samizdat form.

Examples

(from bad Victorian public-domain translations, to avoid copyright problems!)

CREON: Attend me. Thou hast spoken, ‘tis my turn
To make reply. Then having heard me, judge.
OEDIPUS: Thou art glib of tongue, but I am slow to learn
Of thee; I know too well thy venomous hate.
CREON: First I would argue out this very point.
OEDIPUS: O argue not that thou art not a rogue.
CREON: If thou dost count a virtue stubbornness,
Unschooled by reason, thou art much astray.
OEDIPUS: If thou dost hold a kinsman may be wronged,
And no pains follow, thou art much to seek.
CREON: Therein thou judgest rightly, but this wrong
That thou allegest—tell me what it is.
OEDIPUS: Didst thou or didst thou not advise that I
Should call the priest?
CREON: Yes, and I stand to it.
OEDIPUS: Tell me how long is it since Laius . . .
CREON: Since Laius . . . ? I follow not thy drift.
OEDIPUS: By violent hands was spirited away.
CREON: In the dim past, a many years agone.
OEDIPUS: Did this same prophet then pursue his craft?
CREON: Yes, skilled as now and in no less repute.
OEDIPUS: Did he at that time ever glance at me?
CREON: Not to my knowledge, not when I was by.
OEDIPUS: But was no search and inquisition made?
CREON: Surely full quest was made, but nothing learnt.
OEDIPUS: Why failed the seer to tell his story *then*?
CREON: I know not, and not knowing hold my tongue.
OEDIPUS: This much thou knowest and canst surely tell.
CREON: What mean‘st thou? All I know I will declare,
OEDIPUS: But for thy prompting never had the seer
Ascribed to me the death of Laius
CREON: If so he says thou knowest best; but I
Would put thee to the question in my turn.
OEDIPUS: Question and prove me murderer if thou canst.
CREON: Then let me ask thee, didst thou wed my sister?
OEDIPUS: A fact so plain I cannot well deny.
CREON: And as thy consort queen she shares the throne?

OEDIPUS: I grant her freely all her heart desires.
CREON: And with you twain I share the triple rule?
OEDIPUS: Yea, this it is that proves thee a false friend
CREON: Not so, if thou wouldst reason with thyself,
As I with myself. First, I bid thee think,
Would any mortal choose a troubled reign
Of terrors rather than secure repose,
If the same power were given him? As for me,
I have no natural craving for the name
Of king, preferring to do kingly deeds,
And so thinks every sober-minded man.
Now all my needs are satisfied through thee,
And I have naught to fear; but were I king,
My acts would oft run counter to my will.
How could a title then have charms for me
Above the sweets of boundless influence?
I am not so infatuate as to grasp
The shadow when I hold the substance fast.
Now all men cry me Godspeed! wish me well,
And every suitor seeks to gain my ear,
If he would hope to win a grace from thee.
CREON: I see thou wilt not yield, nor credit me.
OEDIPUS: [None but a fool would credit such as thou.]
CREON: Thou art not wise.
OEDIPUS: Wise for myself at least.
CREON: Why not for me too?
OEDIPUS: Why for such a knave?
CREON: Suppose thou lackest sense.
OEDIPUS: Yet kings must rule.
CREON: Not if they rule ill.
OEDIPUS: O my Thebans, hear him!
CREON: Thy Thebans? am not I a Theban too?
CHORUS: Cease, princes; lo there comes, and none too soon,
Jocasta from the palace. Who so fit
As peacemaker to reconcile your feud?
Enter JOCASTA.

Oedipus the King tr. Storr

CREON: What, would you have us at our age be schooled,
Lessoned in prudence by a beardless boy?
HAEMON: I plead for justice, father, nothing more.
Weigh me upon my merit, not my years.
CREON: Strange merit this to sanction lawlessness!

HAEMON: For evil-doers I would urge no plea.
CREON: s not this maid an arrant law-breaker?
HAEMON: The Theban commons with one voice say, No.
CREON: What, shall the mob dictate my policy?
HAEMON: ‘Tis thou, methinks, who speakest like a boy.
CREON: Am I to rule for others, or myself?
HAEMON: A State for one man is no State at all.
CREON: The State is his who rules it, so ‘tis held.
HAEMON: As monarch of a desert thou wouldst shine.
CREON: This boy, methinks, maintains the woman’s cause.
HAEMON: If thou be’st woman, yes. My thought’s for thee.
CREON: O reprobate, would’st wrangle with thy sire?
HAEMON: Because I see thee wrongfully perverse.
CREON: And am I wrong, if I maintain my rights?
HAEMON: Talk not of rights; thou spurn’st the due of Heaven.
CREON: O heart corrupt, a woman’s minion thou!
HAEMON: Slave to dishonour thou wilt never find me.
CREON: Thy speech at least was all a plea for her.
HAEMON: And thee and me, and for the gods below.
CREON: Living the maid shall never be thy bride.
HAEMON: So she shall die, but one will die with her.
CREON: Hast come to such a pass as threaten me?
HAEMON: What threat is this, vain counsels to reprove?
CREON: Vain fool to instruct thy betters; thou shalt rue it.
HAEMON: Wert not my father, I had said thou err’st.
CREON: Play not the spaniel, thou a woman’s slave.
HAEMON: When thou dost speak, must no man make reply?
CREON: This passes bounds. By heaver, thou shalt not rate
And jeer and flout me with impunity.
Off with the hateful thing that she may die
At once, beside her bridegroom, in his sight .
HAEMON: Think not that in my sight the maid shall die,
Or by my side; never shalt thou again
Behold my face hereafter. Go, consort
With friends who like a madman for their mate. [Exit HAEMON.

Antigone tr. Storr

Anne: Didst thou not kill this King?
Richard: I grant ye —- yea.
Anne: Dost grant me, hedgehog? Then God grant me too
Thou mayst be damned for that wicked deed!
O, he was gentle, mild, and virtuous!

Richard: The better for the King of Heaven that hath him.
Anne: He is in heaven, where thou shalt never come.
Richard: Let him thank me that holp to send him thither;
For he was fitter for that place than earth.
Anne: And thou unfit for any place, but hell.
Richard: Yes, one place else, if you will hear me name it.
Anne: Some dungeon.
Richard: Your bedchamber.
Anne: Ill rest betide the chamber where thou liest!
Richard: So will it, madam, till I lie with you.
Anne: I hope so.
Richard: I know so. But, gentle Lady Anne,
To leave this keen encounter of our wits
And fall something into a slower method . . . .

Richard: Take up the sword again, or take up me.
Anne: Arise, dissembler; though I wish thy death
I will not be thy executioner.
Richard: Then bid me kill myself, and I will do it.
Anne: I have already.
Richard: That was in thy rage.
Speak it again, and even with the word
This hand, which for thy love did kill thy love,
Shall for thy love kill a far truer love;
To both their deaths shalt thou be accessory.
Anne: I would I knew thy heart.
Richard: 'Tis figured in my tongue.
Anne: I fear me both are false.
Richard: Then never was man true .
Anne: Well, well, put up your sword.
Richard: Say then my peace is made.
Anne: That shalt thou know hereafter.
Richard: But shall I live in hope?
Anne: All men, I hope, live so.
Richard: Vouchsafe to wear this ring.
Anne: To take is not to give.
(She puts on the ring)

A FAMOUS CATECHISM IN INDIRECT DISCOURSE

John Hollander

She asked her son, pointedly, where he had been; he replied that he had been to the green wood, and thereupon immediately implored her to make up his bed, explaining

that he was wearied with hunting, and would lie down to rest. But she continued her questioning, inquiring who it was that he had met in the wood. It was his true love, he said, and begged again for the bed and the rest. But the mother pushed on, and demanded to know what the lady in question had given him to eat. It had been eels, cooked in broth; and as always, he concluded his answer by ordering that his bed be made up. Again the. mother wanted to know more: what had happened to the table-scraps? Upon being informed that he had fed them to his hawks and hounds, she led him to confront the consequences; the beasts had stretched out their legs and died. At this, she cried out to him that she feared he had been poisoned; and yes, he confessed, he had indeed been poisoned, and at this point his repeated request for a bed to lie down in was modulated by a change of tune, as it were, and he now explained that he was “sick at the heart”, as he put it, rather than maintaining as he had up to this moment, that it was the chase that had exhausted him.

Assignments on Stichomythia

Ground rules: A and B are two speakers, of the same or different sexes, ages, conditions of life, etc. You may name them, and give them identities, as you please. At some point in the course of a dialogue between them—which itself occurs at some point in the history of their acquaintance—there is some rapid exchange between them.

1. Write a page of stichomythia between your A and your B (about 20 lines). They should speak either speech or prose, unless you can write good blank verse. Your page should be neither boring nor pointless. If possible, the relation between A and B should change over the course of the dialogue. Use strictly dramatic form, with no stage directions.

2. Rewrite what you wrote for (i) all in indirect discourse. Be sure to vary the verbs of discourse (not "A said..., then B answered that,...and A said that...;" but "A maintained that..., which B denounced as being..., at which A whimpered that..., whereupon B bellowed that..." etc.), and make them do the work that the conversational fencing had done before .

3. Take A's first line in (1) and a retort of B (not necessarily the next one, but any of B's lines). Embed them each in a paragraph (of which each can be the topic sentence, a closing one, or somewhere in the middle). The bulk of the paragraphs should be a narrator's account of A's and B's thoughts, feelings, motives, etc. or (as a substitute for these) some kind of external description of their actions: the point is to frame the two direct quotations in description. Classic example: In James' *The Wings of the Dove* the protagonist, Milly Theale, not sure whether the obscure misery she is suffering is a mortal disease or merely her own timidity about life, consults the famous Doctor, Sir Luke Strett. Sir Luke concludes his examination of Milly by telling her (as so many other characters in James do) that she should "try to live more." Milly, wondering whether that means that she should try to live more because the problem is that she has not given herself fully to life or that she should try to live more because she does not have long to live, asks, "Does that mean I am going to?" Sir Luke replies, "My dear, isn't that exactly what I am asking you to do?" (By the way, she gets the point: she's really dying.)

4. Describe the scene—indoors or out—in which (1) is set. You can have it remain static during their exchange, or modulate. it as the exchange progresses. (If it does change—why? As a result of what is said? Can an environment comment on what people say to each other within it?)

5. Describe either A or B.

29 Point of View

Example Reading

1. Lily, the caretaker's daughter, was literally run off her feet. Hardly had she brought one gentleman into the little pantry behind the office on the ground floor and helped him off with his overcoat than the wheezy hall-door bell clanged again and she had to scamper along the bare hallway to let in another guest. It was well for her she had not to attend the ladies also. But Miss Kate and Miss Julia had thought of that and converted the bathroom upstairs into a ladies' dressing-room. Miss Kate and Miss Julia were there, gossiping and laughing and fussing, walking after each other to the head of the stairs, peering down over the banisters and calling down to Lily to ask her who had come.

   It was always a great affair, the Misses Morkan's annual dance. Everybody who knew them came to it, members of the family, old friends of the family, the members of Julia's choir, and of Kate's pupils that were grown up enough and even some of Mary Jane's pupils too. Never once had it fallen flat. . . (Opening Paragraph of *The Dead*, by James Joyce)

2. Love seeketh not Itself to please,
   Nor for itself hath any care;
   But for another gives its ease,
   And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.

   So sang a little Clod of Clay,
   Trodden with the cattle's feet;
   But a Pebble of the brook,
   Warbled out these metres meet.

   Love seeketh only Self to please,
   To bind another to its delight:
   Joys in another's loss of ease,
   And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite.

   (William Blake, *Songs of Experience*

3. Great buildings often have great doors: but great doors are heavy to swing, and if left open they may let in too much cold or glare; so that we sometimes observe a small postern cut into one leaf of the large door for more convenient entrance and exit, and it is seldom or never that the monumental gates yawn in their somnolence. Here is the modest human scale reasserting itself in the midst of a titanic structure, but it reasserts itself with an ill grace and in the interests of frailty; the patch it makes seems unintended and ignominious.

   Yet the human scale is not essentially petty; when it does not slip in as a sort of interloper it has nothing to apologize for. Between the infinite and the infinitesimal all sizes are equally central. The Greeks, the Saracens, the English, the Chinese and Japanese instinctively retain the human scale in all that part of their work which

is most characteristic of them and nearest to their affections. A Greek temple or the hall of an English mansion can be spacious and dignified enough, but they do not outrun familiar uses, and they lend their spaciousness and dignity to the mind, instead of crushing it. Everything about them has an air of friendliness and sufficiency; their elegance is not pompous, and if they are noble, they are certainly not vast, cold, nor gilded.

4. The eye and its retinal elements have ranges of magnitude and limitations of magnitude of their own. A big dog's eye is hardly bigger than a little dog's; a squirrel's is much larger, proportionately, than an elephants's; and a robin's is but little less than a pigeon's or a crow's. For the rods and cones do not vary with the size of the animal, but have their dimensions optically limited by the interference-patterns of the waves of light, which set bounds to the production of clear retinal images. True, the larger animal may want a larger field of view; but this makes little difference, for but a small area of the retina is ever needed or used. The eye, in short, can never be very small and need never be very big; it has its own conditions and limitations apart from the size of the animal. But the insect's eye tells another story. If a fly had an eye like ours, the pupil would be so small that diffraction would render a clear image impossible. The only alternative is to unite a number of small and optically isolated simple eyes into a compound eye, and in the insect Nature adopts this alternative possibility. (D'Arcy Thompson *On Growth and Form*)

5. Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humor, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three-and-twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. Her mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news.

Exercises

Another Daily Themes treat!

1. Two separate paragraphs. Consider some actual or imagined room. In your first paragraph, describe the room's interior from a vantage point outside it, e.g., through an open door, a window, a skylight, etc. Then, in your second paragraph, describe what the viewer sees looking outward from within the room, through the same aperture. The task of your prose here will be to make each paragraph cohere, and, if possible, to coordinate the ways in which each characterizes the room. In either case, the nature of the room (its size and contents) will help to condition what is seen in it or from it. One good way to consider the point of this assignment is to consider how a well-lit but empty room might look through the doorway into the next room, where a rowdy party is going on, then to consider how the same room might look through the window from outside, where it is sleeting.

2. Take another room, real or imaginary. Again in two separate but connected paragraphs, describe the interior from the point of view (a) of someone intimately familiar with that room, and (b) of a stranger, someone who is seeing it for the first time. A moment's thought about this will make you realize that a major decision about the writing of these paragraphs will be one about the implicit purpose of the account for example, why does someone describe something he or she knows well, and to whom? Example: Describe the aspect of a familiar room as it might appear to a father whose son has just died, but say nothing about the son or the fact of his death.

3. Choose a pair of objects or phenomena you consider to be polar or antithetical (for example: sun-moon, night-day, mountain-valley, dog-cat, lion-unicorn, acid-base, land-sea, water-wine, body-soul, fish-fowl). Take the part of one of them, and, speaking either in the first person or (recording discourse indirectly) in the third, comment on the opposing member of the pair: i.e., write as the sun about the moon, or vice-versa. This will demand that you have a firm sense of the possibly complex relation between the two members of the pair, and that you can express that sense in revealing the attitudes of one toward the other. (Example: Innocence is a young man in love with an older woman, whose cynicism he mistakes for worldly wisdom. Experience is the older woman in love with a younger man, whose naivete she mistakes for vitality.)

4. Now (naturally) vice-versa. You have spoken from the point of view of x on the subject of y. Now speak from the point of view of y on the subject of x.

5. Now choose some third element (z) that is equidistant from the other two, existing apart from, beyond, or out of range of, the polarization between them. Let z speak on the nature of the Opposition between x and y—on the virtues and/or shortcomings of what x and y have said, on whether y, who spoke last, really does have the

last word, on any special knowledge z thinks it has about x and y, etc. (For instance: earth on sun-moon, air on land-sea, eagle on lion-unicorn;..) This new point of view might well seem strongly objective, but to what extent might distance be a mask for subjectivity?

30 Agreement and Disagreement

Examples

An orator can hardly get beyond commonplaces: if he does, he gets beyond his hearers. The most successful speakers, even in the House of Commons, have not been the best scholars or the finest writers—neither those who took the most profound views of their subject, nor who adorned it with the most original fancy, or the richest combinations of language. Those speeches that in general told the best at the time, are not now readable. What were the materials of which they were chiefly composed? An imposing detail of passing events, a formal display of official documents, an appeal to established maxims, an echo of popular clamour, some worn-out metaphor newly vamped-up,—some hackneyed argument used for the hundredth, nay thousandth time, to fall in with the interests, the passions, or prejudices of listening and devoted admirers;—some truth or falsehood, repeated as the Shibboleth of party time out of mind, which gathers strength from sympathy as it spreads, because it is understood or assented to by the million, and finds, in the increased action of the minds of numbers, the weight and force of an instinct. A COMMON-PLACE does not leave the mind "sceptical, puzzled, and un- decided in the moment of action:"—'it gives a body to opinion, and a permanence to fugitive belief.' It operates mechanically, and opens an instantaneous and infallible communication between the hearer and speaker. A set of cant-phrases, arranged in sounding sentences, and pronounced "with good emphasis and discretion," keep the gross and irritable humours of an audience in constant fermentation; and levy no tax on the understanding. To give a reason for anything is to breed a doubt of it, which doubt you may not remove in the sequel; either because your reason may not be a good one, or because the person to whom it is addressed may not be able to comprehend it, or because others may not be able to comprehend it. He who offers to go into the grounds of an acknowledged axiom, risks the unanimity of the company "by most admired disorder," as he who digs to the foundation of a building to shew its solidity, risks its falling. But a common-place is enshrined in its own unquestioned evidence, and constitutes its own immortal basis.

A: Canary wine is pleasant.

B: How can you say that? It tastes like canary droppings.

A: Well, I like it.

C: He plays beautifully, doesn't he?

D: Yes. Too beautifully. Beethoven is not Chopin.

D1: How can you say that? There was no line, no structure, no idea what the music was about. He's simply an impressive colorist.

C: Well, I liked it.

E: There is a goldfinch in the garden.

F: How do you know?

E: From the color of its head,
F: But goldcrests also have heads that color.
E: Well, it's a goldfinch to me. (or: Well, I think it's a goldfinch.)

A and B are discussing C.
A: How is he these days? How's he getting on in his job at the bank?
B: Oh, quite well, I think; he likes his colleagues and he hasn't been to Prison yet.

---

1) Miss X than sang "Home Sweet Home."
2) Miss X then produced a series of sounds which corresponded closely with the score of "Home Sweet Home."

Most of us believe that Hannibal crossed the Alps, that Neptune is a planet, that frozen foods thaw when left at room temperature overnight. We also share beliefs of a higher order—beliefs about our beliefs. We all hold, for example, that those gained from respected encyclopedias and almanacs are much more to be relied on than those gained from television commercials. Further, we agree that what we think we see is, much more often than not, genuinely there. Seeing is not quite believing, but it, together with the continual "testimony" of our other senses, fairly bombards us with new material that requires assimilation in our body of belief. So it is that each one of us is continually adopting new beliefs, rejecting old ones, and questioning still others. One's repertoire of beliefs changes at least slightly in nearly every waking moment, since the merest chirp of a bird or chug of a passing motor, when recognized as such, adds a belief—however trivial or temporary—to our fluctuating store. (Quine)

The graces of writing and conversation are of different kinds, and though he who excels in one might have been with opportunities and application equally successful in the other, yet as many please by extemporary talk, though utterly unacquainted with the more accurate method, and more laboured beauties, which composition requires; so it is very possible that men, wholly accustomed to works of study, may be without that readiness of conception, and affluence of language, always necessary to colloquial entertainment. They may want address to watch the hints which conversation offers for the display of their particular attainments, or they may be so much unfurnished with matter on common subjects, that discourse not professedly literary glides over them as heterogeneous bodies, without admitting their conceptions to mix in the circulation.

A transition from an author's books to his conversation is too often like an entrance into a large city, after a distant prospect. Remotely, we see nothing but spires of temples, and turrets of palaces, and imagine it the residence of splendor, grandeur, and magnificence; but, when we gave passed the gates, we find it perplexed with narrow passages, disgraced with despicable cottages, embarrassed with obstructions, and clouded with smoke.

Polonius. My Lord, the Queen would speak with you, and presently.
Hamlet Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in the shape of a camel?

Polonius. By th’mass and ‘tis, like a camel indeed.
Hamlet. Methinks it is like a weasel.
Polonius. It is backed like a weasel.
Hamlet. Or like a whale.
Polonius. Very like a whale. Hamlet. Then I will come to my mother by and by.

(Hamlet, III,ii)

Assignments

(From Daily Themes Again)

Take some debatable proposition, on any matter of pressing public or private concern that you wish. It can be of the form, for example, of

- "One should (always/never) do X"
- "One should do X, if Y is the case."
- "All X's are really Y's."
- "Since all X's are really Y's, one should do Z."

However you frame this view (let us call it P), you should probably select a position on a matter you don't care about, or else, if you feel up to it, one that you totally disagree with. In any case, you'll have to espouse P for a while.

1. Write a paragraph in which speaker A propounds P. Then write a second paragraph in which speaker B also propounds P, but in different terms, using a different argument, giving different examples, etc. (It may be that B is a disciple or follower of A, that B knows more or less about the matter of P than A, or even that B feels that A's arguments are bad, even though B agrees with A that P is true. Be sure you can specify to your tutor the relation of B to A.)

2. Write a paragraph in which A propounds view P in a way that is apparently cogent, but which nonetheless indicates that A is not convinced of what he/she is saying. Then in a second paragraph have B shore up A's presentation in a way that would lay to rest a hypothetical audiences justifiable suspicion of A's viewpoint.

3. Now take another position, Q, but this time a position you strongly agree with. Your whole task here is to propound Q and justify your viewpoint. But you must give what you feel, or know, to be bad arguments (ones that don't apply, are illogical, prove nothing, or commit you to things you don't want to be committed to) even though they are in support of something you do believe. Restrict yourself to bad arguments which are already in common circulation, avoiding palpably nonsensical arguments, e.g. (for universal suffrage) "Well, there are a great many people in the United States," or (against arson) "It's wasteful of fuel."

   Then in a second paragraph analyze the errors in your first paragraph.

4. Return to the two paragraph format concerning positions of A and B. Let A and B disagree about P or Q or some new proposition R. But have them start from another proposition (say, S), which they profoundly agree with.

5. Now, let B refute A on P (or Q or R), showing what he/she thinks is wrong with A's position. But let there be something wrong with B's interpretation of A's discourse: a flaw in reasoning, a misconception of meaning, a tendentious ascription of motive, a misunderstanding of tone.

31 Overlapping Consensus

1. Imagine that you are in a serious and protracted moral or political dispute with someone over issue p. Put aside for a second whatever external considerations may move your opponent, O, to take the side he or she does (interest, ideology, tradition, the standing assumptions appropriate, say, to O's race, religion, nationality, party, class, gender, or whatever), since however telling they may be in the story you want to tell about why O is the way he or she is, they aren't germane to understanding O's convictions about p as convictions, as expressions of critical rationality. (Proviso: one can still make recourse to those things if one assumes that O will respond to arguments that he or she should be able to rise above the constraints that those things impose. But the usual use of those considerations — to show that O is a creep whom nobody should take seriously — are out of bounds as far as critical rationality is concerned.) Assume further, that O is principled, intelligent, reasonable, and well-disposed, and will make the same assumptions, at least provisionally, about you. Consider the following things:

   (a) Some of the very great values that you share with O in whose terms you may construct a commanding appeal about p. (And sketch in the arguments)

   (b) Some of the very great values that you share with O in whose terms O may construct a commanding appeal about p. (ditto)

   (c) Some of O's other values that you do not share, but do feel yourself bound to respect the depth of. (How will knowing what these are change your argumentative strategy about p? Clearly you can expect that arguments that cross these values, while they may be legitimate from your point of view, cannot possibly be telling with O. Is it fair for you, who do not share these values but nevertheless in some way acknowledge them, to make argumentative use of appeals to them? Under what circumstances is it permissible or impermissible for you to make such appeals?)

   (d) Ditto, with the parties reversed

   (e) Some of the values that you do not share with O, and do not feel have any moral legitimacy at all. What stance is appropriate to take with regard to these values? Do you ignore them? Refute them? Put them to argumentative use even though you do not feel you owe them respect? Are there circumstances under which it is permissible (and not merely expedient) to appeal to these values?

   (f) Ditto, with the parties reversed.

   (g) Some of the arguments which are immensely persuasive to you, but which you cannot imagine that O will buy without a fatal moral sacrifice on O's part.

   (h) Ditto, with the parties reversed.

2. We often construct parodic accounts of our opponent's psychologies and moral natures, sometimes without being aware that they are parodic. What are the standing

assumptions you make about people like O that may be false? What are the standing assumptions O may make about you that may be false? What circumstances give the color of plausibility to O's nightmare account of you? (The reverse question is as boring as it is self-serving, so don't bother with it.)

3. We often adopt positions that are "suicidally apodictic." (A suicidally apodictic argument is a compact, show-stopping argument for p that does not in fact reflect your real convictions, but which is a convenient weapon to brandish in an opponent's face. The risk of engaging in suicidally apodictic arguments is that they invite one to enter into a death-spiral of reciprocated vituperation. To concede that a particular argument for p is suicidally apodictic is not to concede that one lacks other reasons for p or that one's adherence to p is shaky.) What are arguments about p from your side that you consider suicidally apodictic? What are arguments from the other side that you consider suicidally apodictic? One adopts suicidally apodictic arguments from the suspicion that the arguments that in fact have weight with you are rhetorically, if not morally, vulnerable. What are some of the rhetorically vulnerable — but not stupid or immoral — arguments on both sides? What evidence do you have that your account of O's vulnerable arguments is correct? What evidence do you have that your own vulnerable argument is widely shared on your side of the fence? (Note that this question and the last are related: nothing gives more color to our nightmare suspicions about each other than our own suicidally apodictic arguments.)

4. What are arguments for your side of p that you consider, although widely held, to be fatally flawed? What are arguments for O's side that have weight with you, although possibly not deciding weight?

5. Is there a related issue q, which you and O could come to agreement about, which would require on both sides a non-fatal backing down from p? Is there another issue r, which, on the basis of O's convictions about p, you would expect to find yourself in agreement with O about? Construct the convictions of another party, F, who agrees with you about p but disagrees with you about r.

32 Figure plus condition

This exercise is more of the creative writing kind than of the composition kind, but if you file it you might find it useful sometime. Start with a pattern of the following kind:

> A is more B than C would be if D.

I have forgotten how the blanks are filled in the poem from which I took the line, or even what poem it is (although I remember it is by Anne Sexton). See what you can do with it:

> The moon is more dappled than a horse would be if the sky were a meadow.
>
> Your thought is harder than water would be if it were just as cold.
>
> His singing was a dark as a monk's would be, if he chanted in a language he did not have to not understand. (with thanks to Faulkner)

33 Style Exercise

(from Carolyn Maibor)

For today's class I asked you to choose a writer you admire and bring in some photocopied passages which illustrate his or her style. Reread these samples and get a feel for the rhythms, the structures, and the special effects that contribute to your author's distinctive style. Then choose a well-known story or fairy tale and retell it in that style.

The following is the opening of "The Three Little Pigs" as one student imagined Edgar Allan Poe might have done it:

It began as a mere infatuation. I admired them from afar, with a longing which only a wolf may know. Soon, these feelings turned to torment. Were I even to set eyes upon their porcine forms, the bowels of my soul raged, as if goaded by some festering poison. As the chilling winds of November howled, my gullet yearned for them. I soon feasted only upon an earnest and consuming desire for the moment of their decease.

34 Audience Exercise

This is an exercise contributed by Judith Tabron.

Take in to class printed copies of the lyrics to the Spin Doctors' "Pocket Full of Kryptonite (Jimmy Olson's Blues)." Also take the tape and a stereo and play it. (They love loud noise in the classroom and it's a great icebreaker.) Ask them to look at the lyrics. The OSTENSIBLE audience of the text is Lois Lane (ask them leading questions till they tell you this.) Is this the ACTUAL audience? (Most students say no.) How can you tell? (Generally we discuss that Jimmy would never actually say these things to Lois.) Why would the narrator have an ostensible audience different from the actual audience?

This is a great exercise to point out to them that as authors they create their own audience through what they say and the expectations they have of how their audience will react to them (in this case, Jimmy's actual audience is those who have sympathy for the underdog — a self-selecting audience but a large one.) It gets across to them the difference between the OSTENSIBLE and the ACTUAL audience, and is a great companion piece to Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," which also has an ostensible audience (the clergymen who have criticized him for his civil disobedience) and an "actual" audience which is much larger.

Jimmy Olsen's Blues

Well, I don't think I can handle this
A cloudy day in Metropolis
I think I'll talk to my analyst
I got it so bad for this little journalist
It drives me up the wall and through the roof
Lois and Clark in a telephone booth
I think I'm going out of my brain
I got it so bad for little miss Lois Lane

Lois Lane please put me in your plan
Yeah, Lois Lane you don't need no Super Man
Come on downtown and stay with me tonight
I got a pocket full of kryptonite

He's Leaping buildings in a single bound
I'm reading Shakespeare at my place downtown
Come on downtown and make love to me
I'm Jimmy Olsen not a titan, you see
He's faster than a bullet, stronger than a train
He's the one who got lucky got his cape around miss Lois Lane
I can't believe my dilemma is real
I'm competing with the man of steel

35 Plagiarism Exercise

(from Nancy Nies)

Read the following passage, then write three accounts of what it contains as if you were using it as a source for a research paper. (You don't need to repeat every detail given; rather, use it as you would a source, citing what you need to make your point.) In the first account, plagiarize the information; in the second, paraphrase it; in the third, summarize. In all three, be sure to use the appropriate parenthetical documentation. Use your MLA Handbook and Hacker as needed to make your references accurate.

> Poisoning the earth can be difficult because the earth is always trying to cleanse and renew itself. Keeping this in mind, we should generate as much waste as possible from substances such as uranium-238, which has a half-life (the time it takes for half of the substance to decay) of one million years, or plutonium, which has a half-life of only 0.5 million years but is so toxic that if distributed evenly, ten pounds of it could kill every person on the earth. Because the United States generates about eighteen tons of plutonium per year, it is about the best substance for long-term poisoning of the earth. It would help if we could build more nuclear power plants because Each one generates only 500 pounds of plutonium each year. Of course, we must include persistent toxic chemicals such as polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) and dichlorodiphenyl trichloroethane (DDT) to make sure we have enough toxins to poison the earth from the core to the outer atmosphere. First, we must develop many different ways of putting the waste from these nuclear and chemical substances in, on, and around the earth.

From "How to Poison the Earth," by Linnea Saukko, from *The Bedford Reader*, eds. X.J. Kennedy and Dorothy M. Kennedy. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988, pp. 280-81.

36 On Using the Web and Internet for Research

A practical rant by Johanne Blank

The Internet and World Wide Web are indeed wonderful tools for research and information, and are capable of putting a dizzying variety of information literally at your fingertips at any time of the day or night. It can be tempting, when you're doing a research paper, to go and look up your topic on the Web and use the information you get this way in the same way as you would use any other source.

Sometimes, this is fine and dandy. Other times, it really makes you look like you're being extremely lazy, as well as not being any too discerning about the quality of your research.

Most college teachers and professors will be highly suspicious of any website, webpage, or web-based article you cite in any research paper. This is a reasonable suspicion. The Web hasn't been around long. Most academic disciplines do not yet have established web-based journals which are monitored for quality of content and research. There are some exceptions to this, but in general, materials in print, on paper, in books and journals and so on, are going to be considered much more reasonable sources for research than materials found on the Web.

Why is this? On the surface it seems like there should be no difference: it's just a bunch of fuddy-duddy old college professors making a big stink about the fact that this article is written on paper in a journal and this article is written in hypertext on a computer server somewhere. That's a cosmetic difference, you might argue.

That "cosmetic difference" actually hides some deeper issues.

The simple fact is this: any schmo with a computer and a copy of Word can now save his or her immortal rants in HTML format, post them in his or her ISP-provided server space, and share their thoughts with the world. After all, if your writing instructor can write this rant about appropriate use of online sources and then just go right ahead and slap it up on the Web without so much as a by-your-leave, what's to stop any other bozo with an air of authority from speaking ex cathedra all over the Internet? Nothing, that's what.

And that, more or less, is precisely what happens. There's no quality control on the Internet or the Web. This means that quality varies dramatically, from the excellent to the godawful, and there are no guarantees – particularly if you don't know much about the topic you're researching – that you'll find the excellent ones (if there are any).

With print media, on the other hand, someone somewhere has to make the decision to publish a given article, book, or other work, and it takes a lot of production effort and costs quite a bit of money to do so. This means that not everything that gets written gets published. Not everything that gets written is worthy of being published. At least to some degree, the simple process of having work reviewed by publishers, editors, and so forth tends to weed out a lot of the really cruddy useless stuff. That review/editing process doesn't happen with the majority of the material that appears online.

I'll be the last one to tell you that there's not a lot of utter crap available on the printed page. But the various stages of review that go along with the print publishing process – including the fact that someone has to think enough of the work to purchase it for an

academic library – tends to mean that what you'll find on the library shelves is going to be of higher quality than what you'll find on the Web or via the Internet.

> [Important note: there are exceptions to this, particularly in some of the more technologically-grounded fields, where web-based journals and reports can be even more timely and useful than what has made its way into print. However, time is not always of the essence, and just because something was written more recently doesn't necessarily mean it's better. Even in tech-driven fields of endeavour, all the standard caveats still apply with regard to online writings and research.]

The difference, simply stated, is one of accountability. Web authors are usually accountable only to themselves. Print authors are held accountable for what they say and how they say it by a whole community of people who are responsible for helping to put those words into print.

But back to the Web.

There are more problems with using web-based resources than just the issue of accountability. For instance, there's the problem of simply finding appropriate material.

Search engines like Yahoo, Altavista, Lycos, and so forth do not discriminate on the basis of quality. Search engines will find you ANY DOCUMENTS that are web-accessible which contain the terms for which you are searching. Knowing how to do sophisticated searching is helpful, but it won't solve all your problems. You still have to be able to sift items on the basis of content, context, authorship, and sound scholarship.

For instance, a Lycos search on "Don Giovanni" will net you things like the following:

- a restaurant review of a Cafe Don Giovanni
- an article about tourism in the Czech Republic which mentions a production of Don Giovanni
- an amazon.com listing for a recording of Don Giovanni
- the box office webpage for the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion
- a page about author Don De Lillo
- and some pages that actually have something to do with Don Giovanni the opera.

Of the pages that have something to do with Don Giovanni the opera, most of them come in two classes: someone's personal opinion presented without citations or bibliography, or plot synopses, program notes, and other similar documents presented by opera organizations like the San Francisco Opera, the LA Opera, or the Metropolitan Opera. Of these, the only ones that may be of a high enough quality of information to make them appropriate to cite in a paper are the synopses/program notes from major, established opera companies.

Note that I say may be.

I say this because I want you to think about what kind of writings these are, and what level of research they probably represent. Any time you evaluate a piece of writing to see whether it's something that would be appropriate to cite in a research paper, ask yourself these questions:

1. WHO WROTE THIS?

   A person or institution with some track record in the field and some level of respectability and accountability, or just some guy with a website? Can you find any trace of the author's credentials on the website or figure out what their background is in the subject?

2. WHAT IS THE INTENDED AUDIENCE?

   Readers with no prior knowledge of the subject matter? If so, it's probably too general for research purposes anyway. Readers with some prior knowledge of the subject matter? Readers with a great deal of prior knowledge of the subject matter? Is the article intended for experts? How can you tell? Articles intended for readers who are expert or at least reasonably well-read are more likely to be suitable articles to use in your own research.

3. ARE THERE REFERENCES OR CITATIONS OF OTHER WORKS?

   An absence of references or citations (whether in the text or in footnotes/works cited lists) often means one of two things:
   a) the author is stating received opinion or personal opinion without bothering to provide sound evidence for those opinions, OR
   b) the author is talking about the subject at such a general level and for such a general audience that s/he is basically just re-presenting what would be considered common background knowledge on the subject, information that absolutely anyone with any prior knowledge of the topic would already know. Be very wary of articles that have no references to any other sources!

4. WHAT IS THE CONTEXT OF THE ARTICLE?

   Is it published in a formalized web journal, an academic website, or just any old corner of the Web? Does it seem to have some scholarly integrity and accountability? Where is the article located – is it within a larger journal or website, is it a reprint from a print journal, or is it just some freefloating webpage? In terms of its overarching subject, does the context of the page have something to do with the subject of your research?

As an example, go and look at these three articles. These all came up as results in response to a websearch on "Orientalism."

First look at http://www.leeds.ac.uk/music/Info/CMJ/Articles/1997/02/01.html
Now, look at http://www.salonmagazine.com/travel/wlust/1999/04/30/turkey/index.html
Last, look at http://www.proaxis.com/ sadira/painting.htm
As you look at them, consider the points I made above.

Which one would YOU choose if you were writing a term paper on Orientalism in Bizet's opera Carmen, and why? I know which one I'd pick!

To sum up, let me simply say this:

Research assignments imply the use of the library. The Web can be a useful adjunct to the library – and some aspects of the Internet and Web (which are not the same thing, by the way) can be absolutely indispensable to your research. Services like online library databases, Music Index online, Lexis-Nexis, Psych Abstracts, the online version of the Oxford English Dictionary and the upcoming online Encyclopedia Brittanica are wonderful, useful, accountable places to find information.

BUT!

The Internet and the Web are not appropriate substitutes for library research and the use of books and journal articles.

If you do decide to use online resources in your research projects, make sure they can hold up to scrutiny. Is it a reference of which you think your professor would approve? Remember, your instructor can go look it up online and read the original just as easily as you found it. What if they think it's crummy and won't accept it? How would you defend your choice according to the criteria listed above?

If you're not sure whether or not an online resource is valid, DO NOT USE IT. Alternatively, ask your instructor. Print it out and bring them a copy. See what they think.

Remember: there are a lot of people out there who have written on topics from Alaskan ice fishing to Zimbabwean economics. You want to use the best of the material that's out there for your own research, not just whatever you happen to stumble across.

- BE choosey. Read with a critical eye.
- BE suspicious of what you find online unless you can prove its worth.
- DON'T believe that "if it's on the Internet it must be true." It ain't necessarily so.
- DON'T trust a search engine to do your work for you.
- DO think for yourself.
- DO question the works you use for research.
- DO favor material that has been reviewed by publishers and editors over material that has been vanity-published by its authors.
- DO research authors to see what else they've written or published and find out what their background and credentials are in your subject area.
- DO your research not according to what's easiest to pull up without leaving the comfort of your dorm room, but according to what's actually the best information you can find.

Your academic work, your learning experience while you're in college, and your ability to use the Internet and Web profitably will all be much the better for it.

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