

The Restoration and the Eighteenth Century



Ways In

Students are apt to find the eighteenth century more alien than the periods on either side. Shakespeare they have heard in high school, and the nineteenth century's presence persists in many forms: in lingering Romantic conceptions of art and celebrity; in innumerable representations of the novels on film and video (where the eighteenth century has figured less often, and fared less well). Survey courses rarely afford a pause for breath, but this may be the place for one, to choose short texts and assign small tasks designed to offer students a way in to this strange, intriguing world.

Some of the biographical prose (Pepys's accounts of the coronation and of his marriage; Carleton's *Case*; Cavendish's *True Relation*; Boswell's *London Journal*; Thrale's *Family Book*) can give students a particularly quick sense of the material and emotional textures of lives lived. So can some of Swift's poems (the two "Descriptions," the "Dressing Room") with their dense catalogues of debris. Most immediate and copious of all, perhaps, are the pictures: Bowles's *Medley*, the frontispiece of the section (how does it differ from the earlier frontispieces? what does it show and suggest about the culture it depicts?); the century-spanning portraits of women that punctuate the general introduction (what changes do they trace?); and above all the *Rake's Progress*, which tracks one fool through eight sites crucial to the culture (home, salon, tavern, square, church, gambling den, Newgate, Bedlam), and unfolds the story of his ruin in the plethora of people, texts, garb, and artifacts that surround him.

Students will move more confidently and perceptively through the literature of the period if they learn to recognize (even reproduce) some of the recurrent shapes in which writers cast their language: the periodic sentence; the running style; the heroic couplet. The writer of a polished period, with its intricately balanced structure and delayed resolution, performs a pointed mastery over information, arrangement, even time itself. The structure implies a kind of foresight: "I know what comes next, though you, the reader, may not." Plainer styles—simpler clauses,

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either clipped or strung together in long run-ons—embody a different take on time: “The content of this clause has been established, but *anything* may happen next.” The periodic sentence can readily impart that “extensive view” of the world (*Vanity of Human Wishes*, l. 1) which Dryden, Pope, and Johnson often aspired to. The running style often facilitates what Samuel Richardson called writing “to the moment,” that prose practice which prompted so many of the period’s literary innovations, in newspapers, diaries, letters, essays, travel narratives, and novels. Students can get at the pulse of both these modes by reading aloud some specific examples (ask them to “predict” the sentence’s end before they get there, or to snap their fingers when they hear a clause complete itself) and by casting some new sentences into these same shapes: sentences they’ve made up and sentences they’ve “translated” from other sources—conversation, songs, etc. Some periodic/running pairs for practice: *Rambler* No. 60’s global opening sentence (2708) and the particulars from Aubrey’s life of Bacon (2056); the *Female Spectator*’s first paragraph on Seomanthe (2357) and the first passages from Pepys’s and/or H. F.’s accounts of the plague (2008, 2304). (A useful aid in teaching this topic is Richard Lanham’s chapter on “The Periodic Style and the Running Style,” in his *Analyzing Prose* [Scribner, 1983].)

Imitation and translation are also among the surest ways of initiating students into the structures, challenges, and pleasures of the heroic couplet; for specific suggestions, see the section on Alexander Pope, below. Since hearing poetry always enhances the reading of it, a particularly useful tool for teaching is the series of *Penguin English Verse* cassettes: volume 2 (The Seventeenth Century: Donne to Rochester, ISBN 0140861319) and volume 3 (The Eighteenth Century: Swift to Crabbe, ISBN 0140861327) offer good performances of many of the poems in the anthology. Christopher Fox’s collection of essays by many hands, *Teaching Eighteenth-Century Poetry* (AMS Press, 1990), includes pieces on many of the major poems and poetic topics (satire, couplet, landscape). Margaret Anne Doody’s *The Daring Muse: Augustan Poetry Reconsidered* (Cambridge UP, 1985) bursts with original, eminently teachable insights on many, many poems.

For teaching the prose of the period, the resources are more scattered; see the suggestions under individual authors, below. Jeremy Black’s *Illustrated History of Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Manchester UP, 1996) provides helpful cultural backgrounds and a terrific array of pictures. James Sambrook’s *The Eighteenth Century: The Intellectual and Cultural Context 1700–1789* (Longman, 1990) is perhaps the one most valuable book to keep at hand. With clarity and grace, Sambrook presents a wealth of detailed information—as well as a superb set of short biographies and bibliographies—useful for teaching nearly every text in this section of the anthology.

Samuel Pepys

Students find Pepys's predicaments intriguing, but at first they sometimes think his prose a little chilly; it takes a while for them to hear how his reportorial style (clipped and run-on at the same time) encodes emotion, anxiety, and (often) comedy. One shortcut to such understanding is provided by Kenneth Branagh's recorded reading (Highbridge Audio, ISBN 1565111346): the voice in the text comes through live and clear. What Branagh's recording does for sound, Robert Latham's *Illustrated Pepys* (Berkeley, 1978) does for sight, providing useful pictorial ways in to the diarist's world.

Our distance from this diary is also worth confronting head-on: What is Pepys doing in his diary? How do his ideas of what a diary is for differ from our own? One useful way of answering these questions is to read Pepys alongside the selections from James Boswell and Hester Piozzi later in the anthology. Their diaries, dealing in passions openly stated and energetically (even psychoanalytically) explored, are of a kind more familiar to present readers, and help to highlight both the different narrative game that Pepys is playing and the cultural changes of the intervening hundred years, where Locke's mapping of the associative mind, and Hume's doubts as to the fixity of identity, partly displaced the Puritan and fiscal models of self-tracking that Pepys (and Ralph Josselin and Robinson Crusoe) are working from. The opening entries of Pepys's, Crusoe's, Boswell's, and Piozzi's journals can make for a particularly fruitful grouping, a good class hour of comparisons.

Whether alone or in conjunction with the opening gambits of other diarists, Pepys's first entries are worth some discussion (for a close reading of these entries, see Stuart Sherman, *Telling Time* [U of Chicago P, 1996] 29–76). They provide a key to the whole, a chance to identify and explore concerns, motifs, and methods that drive the diary, cropping up in almost every entry thereafter. I'll highlight a few of these elements here, and then discuss most of the entries in chronological sequence.

Time and motion Pepys is fascinated by beginnings and endings. He commences his diary at the start of a new week, month, year, and decade, and he frames most subsequent entries in a neat enclosure that begins with “up” and ends with “to bed.” But he treats these termini as useful markers for tracking a life of constant motion, in which time is both fluid and full. The flux is conspicuous in the opening paragraphs, where verb tenses shift from present to past to neutral (as they will throughout the diary) and where temporal perspectives change swiftly too, reading sometimes like current reportage, sometimes like projected history (“the condition of the state was thus”). The biblical text that Pepys quotes on New Year's Day is rich in implications for his own new enterprise: his diary performs the “fullness of time” by reporting (as apparently no diarist before had done) each day's full sequence, from wake to sleep, in an unbroken series. Of course this “fullness” is a textually managed illusion: in fact Pepys selects a few incidents, moments, and thoughts from each day, but by his abundant recurrent connectives (nearly endless *thens*, *thences*, and—above all—*ands*) he fosters a deep sense of continuity, of flow. He treasures not only the immediacy of the passing present, but also its ignorance. Though he often revised his

entries days or even months after their date, he rarely suffuses them with foreknowledge: he prefers to perform the day's uncertainties, even when he knows how they have since resolved themselves. (For the richest account of the diary's composition, see William Matthews, "The Diary as Literature," in the first volume of *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* [U of California P, 1970], xcvi-cxiii).

Death and posterity The diary's first sentence touches on death; so will its last. Pepys recalls the "old pain" of his bladder stones, which prompted him to risk his life in an operation that (with fifty-fifty odds) ended up healing rather than killing him. Loss hovers too over the second and third paragraphs, where hopes of progeny vanish for the moment (Elizabeth Pepys never bore children, possibly—as Pepys perhaps already suspects—because of sterility induced by his surgery). From its first lines, then, the diary presents itself as a (surrogate?) gesture towards posterity, an attempt at self-perpetuation along new textual lines. For all its fascination with endpoints, Pepys's diary is an essentially open-ended structure: the series of entries will continue indefinitely, and in one sense with no conclusion. The diarist will not be able to record the day of his death—and this fact makes the diary's actual conclusion, nine years later, all the more interesting and intricate.

The public, the private, and the secret In the opening entry, Pepys modulates in a moment from the condition of his wife to the condition of the state, and concludes with a wildly unstable reckoning of his public status ("esteemed rich") and private agitations ("indeed very poor"); the sentence affords a hilarious introduction to a recurrent Pepysian dialectic, which proposes opposite extremes and ends up somewhere in the middle. As Pepys progresses chronologically through the day, he moves constantly among the public, the private, and the secret; the entries on Charles's coronation (23–24 April 1661) offer a rich instance of this motion, with Pepys carefully tracking his private connections (wife, patron) and releases (pissing, vomiting) amid the public festivities. The pressures of containment and the pleasures of revelation drive the diary between them: it operates at highest energy when depicting those moments (the fire, the domestic crisis of Deb Willett) where objects, feelings, and secrets burst forth from their enclosures. (For a subtle assessment of Pepysian secrecy, sexuality, textuality, and power in the diary, see James Grantham Turner, "Pepys and the Private Parts of Monarchy," in *Culture and Society in the Stuart Restoration*, ed. Gerald MacLean [Cambridge UP, 1995]).

Pleasure The phrase "with great pleasure" recurs with great frequency throughout the diary; so does the exclamation "But Lord! to see . . ." (whatever there is to be seen and recorded). The diary presents itself as a running catalog of pleasures, and above all (despite Pepys's passion for music and for food) as a chronicle of pleasures of the eye. The language of pleasure, first glimpsed in Pepys's attention to such matters as the New Year's turkey, is at its richest in the selections on "Theater and Music" (the backstage tour, though, prompts a mixture of pleasure, fascination, and horror: the diarist, for once, has seen too much).

In the entries on the plague year, two of the diary's deepest concerns—with pleasure and with death—come into highly charged convergence. Pepys comes up

with an astonishing array of tactics—in his life and in his prose—for simultaneously *registering* his fear of death, and for keeping death at bay. Among the most striking of these: his purchase of tobacco to allay his alarm at seeing the red crosses on the quarantined houses of infected families (7 June 1665); his account of the children's game of levitation and "resurrection," complete with transcription of the French incantation (7 July); the nearly hysterical laughing session (10 September) with John Evelyn, whose puns on the words *may* and *can* suggest darker plague-time resonances (who will be permitted to live? what can anyone do to forestall death?); Pepys's dream of "dalliance" with Lady Castlemaine (15 August), which prompts him to recast Hamlet's suicide soliloquy in a more hopeful mode: Hamlet fears "what dreams may come" during the sleep of death, but Pepys devises a counter-fantasy in which those dreams perpetually sustain (even enhance?) the pleasures of real life. (Pepys's maneuvers here are so intricate as to be worth a good discussion, possibly with the text of Hamlet's soliloquy at hand.) Pepys invokes pleasure as though it were an operative antidote to plague—not merely a mode of enjoying life, but a means of prolonging it.

Pepys's entries on the plague invite—almost demand—comparison with the selections from Defoe's fictional *Journal* of the same *Plague Year*, published 1722 (2304–10). For Defoe's narrator, H. F., the plague is an agent of alienation, sundering each London denizen from all others, who may carry the threat of infection. For Pepys, by contrast, social connection itself works as a kind of plague preventative, albeit a precarious one. It is in his links with others (with Evelyn, with Captain Cocke, and in dreams with Lady Castlemaine) that furnishes joy and distraction; the mix of social pleasure, pride, and agitation is perhaps most vivid in his account of the wedding (31 July) which he himself has deftly arranged, and which prompts in him an interesting oscillation between misgiving and self-satisfaction. At the same time, Pepys's position as writer is more dangerous than that of Defoe's narrator. H. F. too supposedly wrote journal entries in 1665, but now, decades later, he recasts them in a running narrative as both a history and a warning to later generations. He *rewrites* as someone who has survived the plague (and must now make some sense of his own survival); Pepys writes as someone who may not—and must make some sense, and pleasure, from his own predicament. Taken together, the two texts may also prompt thoughts about genre—about the differences between the kind of "run-on" memoir, free-associative in structure and free-moving in time, that deeply interested Defoe, and the date-compartmentalized format that Pepys devised for his diary.

Pepys's account of the Fire of London, the most famous passage in the diary, may benefit from comparison with John Evelyn's entries for the same dates (included here as a companion reading)—and with the *London Gazette's* account (2313–14). Like Defoe's H. F., Evelyn rewrites his earlier memoranda in frank retrospect: "This fatal night . . . began that deplorable fire," which (so the *that* declares) is at the present moment of writing (ca. 1680) a familiar historical datum. Evelyn makes sense of the fire by casting it within even larger arcs of time, as a "resemblance of Sodom, or the last day," and as an echo of falling Troy (2 September). These last lines of this entry offer a rich and compact instance of typological thinking; Evelyn's way of

interpreting London's destruction is to set the city into a patterned history (Sodom past, Judgment future) composed by God and embellished by authors classical and scriptural.

Pepys records at greater length more local data. As he does throughout the diary, he confines himself almost exclusively to reporting what he experienced and knew on the date of the entry (though the catastrophe of the conflagration prompts him to half-break this rule: he admits early on that he was unprepared for "such fires as followed"). Like Evelyn, Pepys seeks out pattern amid the chaos, but he finds it (or creates it) from immediate observations: the pigeons, like the people, cling to their homes until "the very fire touched them." While typology sets its stamp on Evelyn's account, a kind of proto-sociology pervades Pepys's. He is fascinated by the data about people's lives that the fire suddenly makes available, noting, for example, that perhaps one householder in three (to judge by the cargo in the rescue boats) possesses a "pair of virginals" (2016). Perhaps every diarist, in writing down the world, ends up making the world resemble the written record. In Pepys's account of the fire, the fire "works" like the diary: it provides an occasion for the exposing of secrets, the disclosure of domestic privacies. The fire entries attain their greatness in part from this carefully wrought empathy between the diarist and the occasion he records.

Where Evelyn casts his account from the vantage of distance (temporal, typological), Pepys takes pains to write from the midst. He emphasizes his role as middle man between those working on the blaze and the king and duke who supervise the labor; he contrives to bring both his person and his text "as near the fire" as he can, in language seemingly devised (whether consciously or no) to bring an imagined reader with him: "and all over the Thames, with one's face in the wind, you were almost burned with the firedrops—this is very true" (2016). The immediacy of the fire entries, often praised, is the product of careful work. Pepys inscribed these entries into his journal book a full three months after the events they record, working from memoranda drawn up during the fire which the pressures of the disaster itself forestalled him from expanding to his satisfaction. Like Evelyn, then, Pepys is rewriting events from a certain remove, but with a different purpose: not so much to set the catastrophe into a firm and larger framework, as to recreate—by choice of incident, by arrangement of phrasing and cadence—the intensities and uncertainties of the lived experience. Where Evelyn seeks fixity, Pepys attempts to recapitulate motion, and the movement of his long first entry (2 September) is so crucial to its impact that any class on the topic would do well to begin with a reading aloud (or the listening to a tape) of the entry whole, as a first step in understanding and savoring its many parts.

Pepys's intrigue with Deborah Willett proves so intriguing to students that it practically teaches itself; in fact, though it comes at the conclusion of the diary, it offers an excellent starting point, an easy way in (students will often appreciate earlier entries more after reading these). These entries focus and dramatize questions of gender that run throughout the diary. As a result of the crisis, Elizabeth Pepys's personal history and inner life (and to a lesser extent Deborah Willett's) occupy the imagination of the diarist, and the pages of his diary, as never before. (For an

imaginative reconstruction of Elizabeth's inner life, see Dale Spender's antic *Diary of Elizabeth Pepys* [Grafton/HarperCollins, 1989]). The struggle for control and for autonomy is played out in the text, in ways that shed light on both gender and class: the negotiations between wife and husband, the differences in status (economic, amatory, imaginative) between mistress and maidservant. This section also brings to an intricate culmination many of the diary's most abiding concerns: with secrecy (all those revelations and counter-revelations, all that diving into the further secrecy and revelation of the *lingua franca*); with time (the crisis precipitates a heightened, agitated fluidity in the prose, and even a confusion about dates); with writing as a vehicle of truth and manipulation (see the stratagems involved in Pepys's break-off letter to Deb), with ending and with loss: Pepys is eager and reluctant to end the liaison, and writes and acts accordingly. Note especially the resonant ambiguities of the diary's last entry (31 May 1669), in which he visits the "World's End"; in which, having resolved upon fidelity, he pursues the pleasures of an old infatuation; in which he makes explicit the link between his writing and his *amours*; in which he proposes to end the diary and not to end it; and in which he leaves unclear whether it is the prospect of blindness or of concluding his diary that seems to him as frightening "as to see myself go into my grave." Even in this final fantasy of death, there persists the diarist's devotion to self-observation as a means of self-perpetuation: he not only goes into his grave, he gets to *see* himself do so.

Mary Carleton

Carleton writes with scorn and verve about the ordeals she's endured, the trouble she's caused, the fools she's thwarted, and the triumph she's enjoyed; students may well find much to say about her sardonically subversive autobiography.

Among the excerpts printed here, perhaps the most important is the fascinatingly convoluted paragraph beginning "What harm have I done in pretending to great titles?" (2032–33). Here Carleton almost (but not quite) confesses to having made up the story of her aristocratic origins that she steadily sticks to throughout the rest of the pamphlet (though "pretending" *could* just mean "laying legitimate claim"). The passage suggests something about the taste of the reading public for narrative that was neither patent fact nor patent fiction but hovered tantalizingly between the two (sensational pamphleteers and artful novelists would skillfully exploit this predilection). But Carleton goes on to argue that pretense, feigning, and fictive emulation are the very currency of the culture, indeed the language in which it couches its morality: "the best things are to be imitated." *If* she has perpetrated a deception (a very lively *if*, as she presents it here), at least she has thought hard about what she's doing, and has managed the trick with admirable panache. In her often comic courtship narrative, she makes clear that her accusers, the Carletons, are more obtuse. In exaggerating their status to deceive her, they are also (she strongly suggests) deluding themselves as to their own importance and power—their power (among other things) to trick this solitary and gullible young woman. Theirs, Carleton suggests, is the way of the world; her way, of seeing through deceptions even while perhaps perpetrating a few of her own, amounts to innovation—a new way out.

The innovation had analogues. Carleton's "case" has often been compared with that of the actresses newly arrived in the Restoration theater who, having impersonated aristocrats onstage, often moved among them offstage as the mistresses and (more rarely) wives of men in power. Pepys's dismissal of Carleton's acting (quoted in the headnote) may smack of ironic condescension: in the temple of impersonation, the great impersonator doesn't perform well at all. But the irony readily reverses. The trick she could not bring off onstage she had already managed triumphantly in the larger, more volatile venue of real life. In her autobiography, Carleton commutes her "case" into a critique of marriage in general (see her address "To the Noble Ladies") and of England in particular (see the closing paragraphs). In her impersonations and in her rhetoric, she pursues an autonomy which, as she angrily points out, neither the institution nor the nation makes available to women.

Carleton's case teaches well in tandem with the selections from Margaret Cavendish (for explicit comparisons, see Janet Todd, *The Sign of Angellica* [Columbia UP, 1989]; and Mihoko Suzuki, "The Case of Madam Mary Carleton: Representing the Female Subject, 1663–1673," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 12:1 [1993]: 61–84); with Pepys, that "very rising man" for whom her tale seems so highly charged (perhaps because so parallel in some respects); with Rochester, Dorimant (*Man of Mode*), and Macheath (*Beggar's Opera*), in whose company she moves interestingly as female libertine, pursuing schemes and autonomies normally reserved to men; and with Defoe (*Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*, as well as the anthology selections), whose copious narrative circumstantialities may derive in part from her own prose.

 PERSPECTIVES

The Royal Society and the New Science

For a single session on this material, a few overarching questions may prove useful. First, the experimental method accorded new centrality to the data supplied by the senses. The Fellows of the Society, Sprat observes at one point in his *History*, feel surest when inquiring into “things” that can “be brought within their *own touch and sight*” (italics his); they feel less secure about experiments in which they are “forced to trust *the reports of others*.” Yet from a reader’s point of view, *all* writing consists in “the reports of others”; apart from the reader’s use of sight to discern the letters read, prose makes no direct appeal to the senses. Hence a crux and a question: how does each of the writers here attempt to bring the senses into play within his prose? The answer is perhaps most obvious in Hooke’s *Micrographia*, where our eyes take in directly the drawn-up data—even as the data, obtained by means of microscope, alert us to the *inadequacy* of human vision heretofore. The answer is only slightly less elusive in Aubrey, whose biographies deal so abundantly in things touched, smelled, tasted, counted (it is worthwhile, perhaps, to compile a quick catalog in class: Bacon’s aversion to neat’s leather, his strong beer, his snow-stuffed goose . . .). The *Transactions* seeks to build a sturdy chain of sensory testimony (the fetus-stone of the monstrous calf has been carefully palpated and repalpated in Hampshire, and pieces of it are being sent to Robert Boyle); and Sprat himself returns repeatedly to the dream (savagely mocked by Swift) of a method in which words attain the “nakedness,” specificity, and palpability of *things*. Of course all these writers are inescapably involved in acts of surrogacy; even with Hooke we are looking not through a microscope, but at his drawings. The question concerns what strategies the Fellows devise to compensate for the surrogacy, to close the gap between their report and the thing itself.

The second question concerns another challenge to writers, intrinsic to the Society’s agenda. In phrases key to this Perspectives section, Sprat emphasizes the importance of *incompletion* in the Fellows’ work: “their purpose was to heap up a mixed mass of experiments, without digesting them into any perfect model,” and to present their reports “not as complete schemes of opinions, but as bare, unfinished histories” (2043). How does each of these writers attempt to convey the sense of a heap, a mixed mass, an unfinished history, in the structure of his writing? In what ways—and for what reasons—do they complicate this agenda by insinuating order, hypothesis, point, and rhetorical flourish in their prose?

Thomas Sprat

At crucial moments, Sprat’s prose famously seems at odds with his program. He is at his most ornately rhetorical when denouncing ornate rhetoric. His scornful rejections of “this vicious abundance of phrase, this trick of metaphors, this volubility of tongue,” and of “all the amplifications, digressions, and swellings of style,” are both instances of the Ciceronian tricolon (or three-parter), that amplification and swelling of style that had long afforded writers and orators the kind of prefabricated

grandeur that putatively prompts Sprat's rage (students may enjoy seeking out other instances of such ornament). Sprat was uncomfortably conscious of the inconsistency: "The style in which [this history] is written," he confessed in his preface, "is larger and more contentious than becomes that purity and shortness which are the chief beauties of historical writings," but for this fault he blames the Society's detractors. So severe are their attacks, Sprat argues, that he must deploy all the rhetorical resources available to him.

The Sprat selection pairs irresistibly with Swift's parody of it in *Gulliver's Travels* (2392–97). How does Swift call the bluff inherent in Sprat's dream of a "primitive purity and shortness, when men delivered so many *things*, almost in an equal number of *words*" (2043)? (Note the concession built into Sprat's *almost*.) What (as Swift suggests) can *words* do that *things* cannot?

Philosophical Transactions

The question of rhetoric recurs: Oldenburg's ornate introduction (an attempt, perhaps, to produce new converts?) contrasts with the plainer style of his reports (preaching to the already converted?). It may be worthwhile to read an excerpt of each aloud.

The newly developing genre of the periodical provided a near-perfect implementation of the "mixed mass" and the "unfinished history." The table of contents for each number blazoned an ostentatious variety of topics. In the matter of "the monstrous calf," erroneous observations in the first number are comfortably corrected in the second. Boyle's conjectures about ambergris, though erroneous in themselves, fulfill flawlessly the Society's agenda for inquiry: its proud dependence on information gathered by merchants and "mechanicks" engaged with the real world; its use of a manuscript "journal" (another mode of periodical) in which the data are recorded fresh, at the time and place of their first gathering.

Robert Hooke

Rhetorically, Hooke sustains a continual traffic between small things and great: he presents (in the first dedication) a "small present" to a great king; apologizes (in the second) for his own "faults" before an "illustrious assembly"; yet he makes clear, throughout his text that the microscope's minutiae have much to teach us about Creation and about the "true philosophy" in which Hooke and his colleagues are engaged. Like other modesty *topoi*, Hooke's is rich in potential inversion. He insists repeatedly on his subordinate status (real enough at the Royal Society) while all the while establishing his value as a discoverer. In a book where small things are made great on every page, his claim gains pictorial potency.

Hooke's preface highlights the double status of the human senses in the Society's agenda: the senses are all-important, and they are woefully inadequate. New instruments must be used to extend their reach and refine their grasp. Hooke promptly remakes this point, with subtle visual force, by showing us a printed period (or full stop) many times magnified in the book's first illustrative plate. In the text that accompanies the picture (indeed in every text we read) we have beheld numberless periods of ordinary size. The plate inducts us deftly into the book's central revelation: that the things we have looked at all our days, we have not fully

seen. We are alerted both to the insufficiency of our senses, and (as Hooke emphasizes) to the inferiority, the imperfection, of works of “art” (human artifice) in contrast with works of nature. Once having seen the magnified period in the plate, we cannot look at the periods on the page in quite the same way again, and so we advance a little way into that collaborative process of skeptical inquiry which the Society so prized. Hooke draws us thither again and again by inviting us to do our own “work” on the plates he presents, as at the end of the commentary on the flea.

Hooke’s depiction of the flea seems to have produced the most shock and fascination of any of his plates, partly because of the implicit violence of the image (see the metaphors of armor and weaponry that Hooke deploys in his description) but partly too because the picture was a foldout, glued into the book but four times the size of the book’s normal page. Having perhaps become accustomed to the magnifications on early pages, the reader was confronted, here at the very end of the book, with expansion expanded—and with the implication that *Micrographia* and its attendant inquiries would prove an unending program, of which this first installment was a bare, unfinished history.

Among those agitated by the depiction of the flea was Margaret Cavendish, whose *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* is in large measure a retort to *Micrographia*. The two texts make a useful pairing; see the section on Cavendish below.

John Aubrey

Aubrey’s *Lives* are unfinished history incarnate: even in this copious array of notes towards biography, he leaves blanks that he never got around to filling in. The real question is what makes them so pleasurable as prose and so persuasive, in their own way, as biography. It may be best to hear a few items read aloud, some short (Bacon’s “hazel eye”; Harvey’s “young wench”) and some longer (Harvey’s involvement at Edgehill, with its striking train of narrative thought), and to ask, one by one, what effects Aubrey achieves in these items and how he achieves them. One key may lie in Sprat’s recurrent praise of “naked” language (and “bare” history). Aubrey’s anecdotes seem unadorned, unmediated, as though rawly reported in accord with the Beat credo, “first thought, best thought.” At the same time, Aubrey is conspicuously and pervasively present, as gatherer (“Mr. Hobbes told me. . .”) and as shaper: it seems clear, for example, that Aubrey admires both these men tremendously, though he does not directly say so. How, then, can we tell?

The *Lives* teach very well in concert with the selections from Johnson’s *Lives of the Poets* or (closer in time) from Edward Hyde’s *True Historical Narrative of the Rebellion*. The difference between Aubrey’s clipped, simple sentences (and sentence fragments) on the one hand, and Hyde’s and Johnson’s polished periods on the other, embodies two prose-patterns and world-views in flux and sometimes conflict throughout the Restoration and eighteenth century (for more on this distinction, see the introductory section on “Ways In,” above). To state the contrast over-simply: the period figures, as syntax, those “perfect [i.e., polished, completed] models” of thought and report that Sprat rejected; the running style embodies the provisional model, the sense of history unfinished, which he celebrated. To teach students the

differences in the two modes is to enable them to make sense of much eighteenth-century writing (Fielding's periodic sentences and narrative structures work alike; so do Defoe's running sentences and provisional, improvisatory narratives). Yet writers, particularly in the Restoration, availed themselves of both modes. Pepys wrote ornate Ciceronian "public prose" (letters, speeches), but chose a far plainer style for the data-gathering of his diary.

This section on the New Science will work well in combination not only (as suggested above) with Hyde, Cavendish, and Swift, but also with Pepys and Defoe, whose prose styles and narrative tactics have much in common with Sprat's advocacy and Aubrey's practice. Two points of contact: 1) The close affinity between the seventeenth-century definitions of *experiment* and *experience* (the two terms were sometimes used interchangeably). To what extent can Pepys's or Defoe's records of private *experience* be understood as the bare unfinished history of a mixed mass of self-centered *experiment*: the gathering of data in the unending attempt to document and understand a single mind, a lived life? 2) The odd applicability of the term *micrographia*: what new bearings do small things have upon great in this emergent culture of magnified examination, copious documentation?

Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle

In virtually every one of her works, from the shortest poem to the longest treatise, Cavendish oscillates energetically between the poles of self-deprecation and self-assertion. This doubleness has been variously interpreted: as a protective strategy in which Cavendish's true, outspoken self dons shyness as a disguise in order to move acceptedly through a patriarchal culture; as the moodswings of a narcissist; or as an inconsistency which Cavendish deliberately refuses to resolve, the polarity itself—the containing of multitudes—being an essential element of her cherished “singularity” (see Eve Keller, “Producing Petty Gods: Margaret Cavendish’s Critique of Experimental Science,” *ELH* 64:2 [1997]: 447–471). Because the doubleness is difficult to explain away, and because it takes so many different forms in the different texts, it makes a useful touchstone in class discussions of Cavendish’s work.

Cavendish’s short poems *about* her poetry oscillate rapidly, in both their “arguments” and their metaphors. In the first, Cavendish prevails over the arguments of Reason against publishing her book, then promptly suffers misgivings (interestingly enough, in the poem’s first edition Reason was gendered female, a “she” rather than a “he”). The second poem reverses the process: it begins as funeral for the poems (and the fevered poet?), but ends in hoped-for resurrection. In the third poem, the verse that was a corpse becomes her child: to publish poetry, then, is simultaneously to risk the death attendant upon disgrace and to court a perpetuity of admiration, to build a “pyramid of fame.”

Is “poor Wat,” the victim-protagonist in “The Hunting of the Hare,” a further figure for the poet and her poems? Some have thought so (“I am as fearful as a hare,” Cavendish once remarked). The condemnation of the male hunters who invade the natural world, rather than paying it the sympathetic attention that Cavendish here models, will surface again in her critique of experimental science. Virginia Woolf wove this poem into her eulogy for the Duchess: “. . . few of her critics, after all, had the wit to trouble about the nature of the universe, or cared a straw for the sufferings of the hunted hare. . . . Now, at any rate, the laugh is not all on their side” (“The Duchess of Newcastle,” in *The Common Reader*, ed. Andrew McNeille [Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1984], 77).

A *True Relation*, like so much of Cavendish’s work, professes itself to have been written out of a mix of strength and fear. “There is nothing I dread more than death,” Cavendish wrote in her *Sociable Letters*. “I do not mean the strokes of death, nor the pains, but the oblivion in death.” As Cavendish makes clear in the final sentence of the *Relation*, that dread has driven her to write her autobiography. Men frame the narrative—her father at the start, her husband at the end—but women prevail between, in Cavendish’s admiring portrait of her mother, and in the sustained self-reckoning that she carries out in her conclusion. Here she lays out the contradictions of her character as points of fascination and (intermittently) of pride—as the sources of her singularity. Cavendish’s counter-offensive against oblivion seems to consist in an attempt to make herself wholly seen, in the hope (often frustrated) that she will win thereby a wholehearted approval (such as she receives from her husband), and thence immortality. The reader, as witness and

judge, becomes indispensable to her schemes of redress and resurrection, of presence and permanence. A striking instance: her attempt to describe her handwriting, so that we “see” the original messy manuscript that lies behind the delusive neatness of our printed book. Her careening syntax has some of the same self-insistent effect—an index, she implies, of her teeming, speeding fancy. As chronicler of the self, Cavendish bears comparison with Pepys (he is not half so introspective), with Carleton (who constructs herself along the opposite vector: overwhelming confidence in pursuit of feigned aristocracy), with Mary Wortley Montagu (whose fascination with Turkish dress collates interestingly with the Duchess’s fashion-consciousness), with Hester Thrale (who shares some of Cavendish’s anxieties as a woman writer), and with Boswell who (unexpectedly perhaps) turns out in some ways to be her closest co-practitioner, at once proud and distressed at his own exhaustively catalogued contradictions.

Cavendish’s doubleness finds its most intriguing literary manifestation in her *Observations* and *Blazing World*—two works of very different kinds, pointedly yoked together. The *Observations*’ attack on *Micrographia* can serve as a salutary reminder to students of how little-established, how precarious in status, how open to objection, the experimental method was among many of Hooke’s contemporaries. Cavendish’s particular objections collate interestingly with some late-twentieth-century modes of thought about the history of science (see Keller). She argues that the microscope, far from presenting an “objective” image, produces its own distortions, and that the notion of an objectivity achievable by instruments and machines is itself an illusion, an “artifice,” a construct—perhaps a peculiarly masculine construct, propagated by the men of the Royal Society, whom she here depicts as boys playing uselessly with bubbles (interestingly, Cavendish describes the microscope’s distortions themselves as “hermaphroditic,” neither male nor female: half artifice, half nature). A question that may prompt much talk: what is Cavendish rightly seeing about Hooke’s methods and intentions here, and what is she missing?

The preface to *Blazing World* (“To the Reader”) has occasioned much comment, and rightly so. Cavendish here makes some amazing literary and conceptual moves, especially in the passage where she declares herself “Margaret the First.” Catherine Gallagher’s article, “Embracing the Absolute: The Politics of the Female Subject in Seventeenth-Century England” (*Genders* 1 [1988]: 24–39) remains the best way in to what is now a thriving debate about the import of Cavendish’s gesture here. To couch part of the debate as question: To what extent do Cavendish’s grand gestures, here and in her epilogue, ally her with her readers (and particularly her women readers), and to what extent does she set herself apart? Are we all to enjoy the privileges of “creating worlds,” of producing imperial fictions—or only some of us, or Cavendish more than anyone? As for the *Blazing World* itself, it has been explored as utopian fantasy, feminist tract, philosophical treatise, and science fiction. It is also (as the excerpts here may help suggest) one of the most extraordinary pieces of self-portraiture—of autobiography—ever penned, and bears interesting comparison with the author’s *True Relation*, as well as with all the other self-writing of the period and beyond.

John Dryden

Absalom and Achitophel

Of all the great English poets, Dryden seems at once the most transparent and the most resistant to the immediate pleasures of reading and contemplation. Part of the problem is surely the intense topicality of his great poems, and no verse presents that topicality in a more demanding fashion than *Absalom and Achitophel*; this is topical verse veiled beneath scriptural reference. One good way to begin is with selections from the scriptural story that Dryden uses (2 Samuel, 14.21–19.8). These passages will at least make the narrative outlines of the poem come clear; yet of course, the drama of the poem has only begun to be unfolded by the Scripture. Next, it will be necessary both to identify the contemporary players veiled by scriptural identities and to suggest the very contemporary drama of the Exclusion Crisis which the scriptural episode is made to narrate. A brief summary of that crisis appears on p. 2076; for fuller, but still usefully concise accounts, see Ronald Hutton's biography *Charles II* (Clarendon Press, 1989) 358–66; or J. R. Jones, *Country and Court* (Harvard UP, 1978) 200–02.

The real problem, of course, is how to set the historical materials into play with both the preface and the poem itself. Here, it's worthwhile to spend time first reminding the students of the gravity of the Crisis and of the virulent partisanship that surrounded all of the events and personalities involved, and then taking note of Dryden's careful insistence in the preface on modesty, moderation, and diffidence. Why, we might wonder, should the introduction to a poem that is after all virulently partisan so strenuously affect moderation? The answer to that question is in fact the key to the poetics of this whole enterprise: the rhetoric of political modesty in the preface; the frame of scriptural narrative; the seeming balance with which Dryden calculates the virtues and defects of the wicked characters; the structural counterpoint between the Hydra-headed cohort of the king's enemies (ll. 541–681) and the "small but faithful band" of the king's supporters (ll. 810–916); and the crowning oration that Dryden ventriloquizes for the king, who after the strain of long forbearance calls for the sword of the law. And here it will be good to point out that the excisive conclusion of the poem is foretold in the images of amputation hidden in the Latin quotation at the close of the prose preface.

Other features to note in unfolding the drama of this verse are the brilliant ways in which Dryden achieves ambivalence in the opening portrait of Davidic patriarchy, the inclusion of substantial echoes from *Paradise Lost* in the drama of Absalom's political seduction, and the startling gallery of portraits in which Dryden memorializes a cast of political thugs and operatives (the depiction of Zimri, ll. 544–68, provides an excellent short sample for close reading). It will also be worth noting that Dryden balances these brilliant figures with cooler and more integrated portraits of those who stood with the king. One of the points to make about these portraits is that in fact they are hardly as memorable as Dryden's satiric verse on the political operatives—surely the aesthetics here constitute a political argument that a well-ordered and affective commonweal can run only when a vaunting individualism is subdued to the interests of the whole.

Dryden's most astute student was Alexander Pope, and the mock-epic of the *Dunciad* absorbs and extends the lessons both of heroic satire and of punishing diminution. But it's worth noting that we should not reduce *Absalom* to the genre of mock epic, for Dryden assiduously avoids generic identity for this verse, pointedly referring on the title page to *Absalom and Achitophel* as "A Poem." Not only elevation but also generic combination is at issue, for what Dryden sets in motion with this epithet is the brilliant mixture of kinds that the verse captures: surely satire, but also heroic poetry, poetry of praise, poetry of civic debate, and verse of political theory.

One of the great puzzles that has interested readers of this poem nearly from the moment of its publication is Dryden's political position. Dryden gives us many indications of real forbearance and political moderation; just as surely he handles the rhetoric of moderation with studied brilliance. The portraits of Charles II's Whig enemies are devastating, often libellous. There was nothing moderate about this portraiture, nor was the poet's suggestion of political excision the solution of a moderate in this crisis. True moderation had suggested tempering the threat of a Catholic succession with limitations on the crown (Lord Halifax was a good example of this position), and in teaching this poem we do well to point out that Dryden's immediate contemporaries found nothing moderate in this verse, and responded in kind with outraged satires.

But another address to the question of political values might be formulated out of the passage on government (ll. 753–810) in which Dryden seems to speak in his own voice, posing possible solutions to the present crisis and ways of theorizing the State. This passage might convincingly open the whole problem of satiric argument and political values. Can a poet who seems devoted to demolition and all the offices of slander really maintain a balanced and judicious mind in matters of state, particularly in a culture in which so much was dependent on the will of monarchy? At this point it might be well to turn to the language of the monarch himself in the companion reading, *His Majesty's Declaration*, and to compare the rhetoric and the values of political proclamation and political poem. Like Dryden's David, Charles strikes the pose of breaking out from long forbearance into new and firm resolve; like Dryden himself in the poem's preface, Charles propounds a surgical strategy (to purge from the polity "the restless malice of ill men," [2102]) in place of the more extreme measures that cost the biblical David the life of his beloved son. Note Dryden's careful statement in the preface: "The conclusion of the story I purposely forbore to prosecute" (2077).

Mac Flecknoe

It is difficult for students (indeed for all readers) now to become engaged by the kinds of literary rivalry that clearly drove this poem. Indeed it is hard to believe that characters like Thomas Shadwell, Richard Flecknoe, Thomas Heywood, and James Shirley could really have posed a threat to a poet of Dryden's brilliance. And perhaps it pays to remember that our sense of their various reputations was certainly not the contemporary sense. Indeed, Dryden had to fight for patronage with Shadwell, for the brilliant satirist the Earl of Rochester, among others, preferred Shadwell's drama to Dryden's.

But this kind of contextualizing only goes so far in getting to the heart of Dryden's accomplishments in the poem. What students may respond to most readily is Dryden's arsenal of insult. Let them count the ways and means by which Dryden manages to put Shadwell down: by grotesque inflation (see the opening lines, which grandly and casually yoke Flecknoe and Augustus); by lewd and excremental association (the suggestive abbreviation Sh—; locations like Pissing Alley; and the conflation of text with toilet paper [l. 101]); and by weirdly inappropriate intertextuality. Throughout *Mac Flecknoe*, Dryden applies Virgilian echoes of imperial succession to a debased literary inheritance; the poem was written ca. 1678, and it is important to remember that like *Absalom and Achitophel* this is in some ways a poem on the crisis of succession. Part of Dryden's art consists in the ways he conflates parturition with defecation, and repeatedly literalizes the "downwardness" implicit in lineal "descent" (see especially the closing lines). Other pleasures that this poem affords to late-twentieth-century readers include the brilliantly individual lines that manage both compactness and convolution ("But Sh—never deviates into sense" [l. 20]); and as always with Dryden, the subtle management of ironies that allow the poet to ventriloquize stupidity, all the while leaving the puppet (Flecknoe) clueless, and winking the reader into complicity with the humiliation.

The art of this poem points both to the more serious forms of Virgilian intertextuality that Dryden uses in the poem to Oldham (where in fact he reworks some of the same materials into eulogy rather than derision) and again to Pope's *Dunciad*, where Pope achieves such a triumph of competition and humiliation, and where *Mac Flecknoe's* comparatively local crisis of literary mediocrity expands into apocalypse.

To the Memory of Mr. Oldham

The handful of lines that Dryden wrote in memory of a minor satirist, John Oldham, have come down to us as some of Dryden's most admired poetry. In teaching this poem, quoting some translations of the materials that Dryden himself adapts and translates in this verse will suggest how intimate the poet is with the texture of so remote an age as Virgil's, how Dryden made utterly contemporary to the late seventeenth century—in fact, utterly his own—such a distant poet, which in turn can serve to remind us of how seriously seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers and readers took their communion with Augustan Rome: its language, its cadences, its political personalities, its forms of governance.

Dryden writes not only with Virgil and Catullus over his shoulder, but with Oldham himself. The poem seems almost as much competition as commemoration (hence the relevance of Nisus and Euryalus, whose friendship in the *Aeneid* [5.286–361; 9.314–449] merits a retelling—perhaps a reading aloud—as one of the central resonances in Dryden's poem); the particular art of this verse is to be able to hold the competition at bay in the service of commemoration. A pointed contrast with this double move is provided by Jonson's commemorative verse on Shakespeare, and Marvell's commemorative verse for the second edition of *Paradise Lost*.

Ode to Anne Killigrew *and* Alexander's Feast

Students can readily see what makes a Pindaric ode Pindaric, and quickly hear it too. No verse paragraph resembles any other in visible layout or in rhyme scheme. The poet leads the reader on a sustained journey whose next turn (even *within* each paragraph) is always unpredictable. By its copiousness and variety, the Pindaric ode is meant to display concurrently two opposite qualities: a mastery of verse technique and a susceptibility to strong emotion, even to poetic "possession" by the poem's stirring subject. The "conduct" of an ode, wrote the poet Edward Young, "should be rapturous, somewhat abrupt, and immethodical to a vulgar eye" (quoted by Margaret Doody, at the outset of a very useful close reading of the Killigrew ode: *The Daring Muse* [Cambridge UP, 1985] 249–55). The abruptness, and the seeming absence of method, attest the rapture.

It falls to the reader to detect the method within the rapture. Part of what distinguishes the ode is the broad range of its concerns. In both of Dryden's odes here, that range becomes a central attribute of the personage being celebrated: Killigrew the multi-faceted artist, Timotheus the infinitely versatile musician. Both Killigrew and Timotheus are seen mediating and modulating among many modes and moods, and at the end of both poems the very processes of art make possible a larger modulation, from the realms of poetry, painting, and music, to that of the Christian cosmos. On Judgment Day, Killigrew, "a harbinger of heaven," will lead the way from earth below to realms above. At the end of *Alexander's Feast*, St. Cecilia reverses this vector (and trumps Timotheus too): by inventing the celestial-sounding organ, she "drew an angel down" to earth.

The ode to Killigrew will read well in conjunction with the poem to Oldham (how do the poems enact Dryden's different attitudes to the commemorated poets?), with Gray's *Elegy*, with Collins's ode on Thomson, and (oddly but interestingly) with Swift's *Verses* on his own death. In all elegies, it is valuable to ask about the *I*, the *you*, the *we*, and the *they*: how does the speaker position him- or herself in relation to the lamented dead and to the communities they have inhabited together? *Alexander's Feast* pairs interestingly with Pepys's rapturous entry on the *Virgin Martyr* (2024–25) and with Pope's remarkable invocations of the poem in the *Essay on Criticism* (ll. 374–83, 483–93).

Fables Ancient and Modern

Teaching Dryden's last work allows us to appreciate his art as both a translator and a prose writer. One of the most notable features of Dryden's prose is a conversational quality that, more than any of his verse, makes him seem our contemporary. (For a lively, teachable close reading of the preface's first paragraphs, see Richard Lanham, *Style: An Anti-Textbook* [Yale UP, 1974], 41–43.) In fact, in the preface to the *Fables*, there is nothing in syntax or diction or stance to distinguish this late-seventeenth-century writing from modern prose. But casualness in this prose is not simply a sloughing off of Dryden's own time. The digressive and even irregular pace of the prose allowed Dryden to move with utter freedom among personal

concerns, artistic ambitions, theories of translation, and the contemporaneity he felt at the end of his life with the spirits of all poets—with Ovid and Boccaccio, Homer and Chaucer. This improvisatory quality of the preface opens it up to a volatility of self-presentation, of literary stance, and even of personal identity. The superb economy of Dryden's prose makes it as artful in its own way as all the studied and managed brilliance of the preface to *Absalom*, and even of that poem's opening lines.

One figure particularly useful for teaching the *Fables* is the idea of transmigration—the transport of souls across time. Notions of reincarnation suffuse the collection. Dryden begins with a poem to the Duchess of Ormond, whom he figures at different points as the “second coming” of Homer's Penelope, Virgil's Dido, and Chaucer's Emily (from *The Knight's Tale*); near the end of the *Fables*, he recasts into heroic couplets Ovid's presentation “of the Pythagorean philosophy” of reincarnation (*Metamorphoses*, Book 15). Within the preface proper, reincarnation becomes something of a running argument. Dryden has been “emboldened” to translate and embellish Chaucer because “I found I had a soul congenial to his” (2126); when reading the *Canterbury Tales* “we have our forefathers and great granddames all before us” (2124); “Spenser more than once insinuates that the soul of Chaucer was transfused into his body” (2120). By this logic, imitation and translation—the chief activities of the *Fables*—are poetic modes of reincarnation. Dryden's confidence in these processes contrasts instructively with Pope's pithy, pessimistic line in the *Essay on Criticism*, in which he argues that changes in the volatile English language will always render great poets obsolete: “And such as Chaucer is, shall Dryden be” (l. 483, 2472). Dryden's figures, of still-vital souls “transfused” into new vessels, comfortably accommodate changes of language and form. For Pope, by contrast, to lose original form is to lose everything; only apocalypse can follow (see the simile of “treach'rous colors” and fading “creation” with which Pope elaborates the line on Dryden and Chaucer).

By reading the excerpts from “The Cock and the Fox” in tandem with the corresponding lines from Chaucer's original *Num's Priest's Tale*, students can witness firsthand Dryden's tactics of “transfusion.” What does Dryden preserve, and where does he embellish? At many points, history (both political and literary) has intervened. Chanticleer perhaps resembles James II in his vulnerability to scandal (“though ne'er so good,” [l. 21]) and Charles II in his very public promiscuity (here incestuous), which Dryden comically defends—as he did Charles's, at the opening of *Absalom*—by invoking ancient precedent (here the Ptolemies!). In “The Moral,” Dryden sums up Chaucer's tale in the diction of Restoration satire theory (with “Fool and Knave,” compare his poem to Oldham [l. 6, 2109]). The choice of tale itself sorts well with the *Fables'* theme of poetic transmigration. Chaucer centers his story on the power of rhetorical tradition, on the appeal—and the dangers—of those songs the cock learnt from his father, which the fox cunningly begs to hear.

Aphra Behn

Poems

Behn seizes and adapts a number of conventional poetic tropes and positions that pay off fruitfully in discussion. Teaching “The Disappointment” in tandem with Rochester’s “The Imperfect Enjoyment” (2196–98) is the most obvious opening strategy. Behn takes a different narratorial point of view, a different poetic form, a different set of images, and a notably different ending, to produce a poetic experience that, as its very title suggests, registers much more empty than “half-full.” The narrator, unlike the speaker in Rochester’s poem, is not one of the characters, and so has a different sort of authority about what really happens. The tidy ten-line stanzas (nine lines of fairly consistent tetrameter, with a tenth of emphatic pentameter) contrast with the insistent heroic meter of “The Imperfect Enjoyment” that is, typographically speaking, almost engulfed by its own lambasting stanzas. Behn’s poem, like Rochester’s “The Disabled Debauchee” (2195–96), uses military imagery to set up tensions of sexual power, and, according to the war/sex conventions, gives all power to Lysander: Chloris can “defend herself no longer”; she “wants power”; she breathes faintly; she admits “the conquest of [her] heart”; he, on the other hand, is “unused to fear” as well as “capable of love,” and looks on her nearly naked body as “The spoils and trophies of the enemy.” The power is *heaped* on Lysander and makes the “disappointment” (his? or hers?) all the more embarrassing; not even his obvious masturbating can put things right (ll. 89–90). Meanwhile, when Chloris, dreamily waiting for something nice to happen, accidentally-on-purpose lays a hand on the snake beneath the leaves, she’s granted two more complete stanzas of her own in which her shock, confusion, disdain, shame, and death of love get full exposure. In the last stanza the narrator chimes in to grant Chloris experiential authority, allowing us to listen to Lysander’s blaming everything and everyone, most especially Chloris, for his failure; and this narrator, unlike many male narrators in the “disappointment” tradition, leaves him, at least textually, in “the hell of impotence.”

In “To Lysander at the Music-Meeting” Behn makes use of the narratorial position to reverse the usual terms of the (male) gaze, visually and descriptively eroticizing the female and, like Harriet as the “mask” in Etherege’s *The Man of Mode*, constructs a little power-play of her own, for the pleasure of her (female) readers: “I saw the softness that composed your face, . . . Your mouth all full of sweetness and content / . . . Your body easy and all tempting lay, / . . . A careless and a lovely negligence, / Did a new charm to every limb dispense” (ll. 15–25). Like any male narrator, this speaker is wounded, slain, undone, dissolved in desire by this sight; but here the beloved object is a sexy young man in a suggestive pose.

As the introduction to Behn’s works in context mentions, shaping the poems as letters (to Lysander, to Mr. Creech, to the fair Clarinda) gives them an almost voyeuristic intimacy for the reader, who seems to be reading the private, fairly explicit love letters of a stranger. The speaker creates a small, warm, close world that deliberately excludes the public, or draws attention to its own privacy by alluding to the larger, colder world of rules and conventions: “For sure no crime with thee

we can commit,” says the poet to Clarinda, since both are women, “Or if we should—thy form excuses it” (ll. 14–15). And in the cumulative effect of her love poetry, Behn creates an almost androgynous world, a more idealistic flipside to that of Rochester’s speakers, who generally see a common ground—or common orifice—in everyone, man and woman, aristocrat and page, whore and linkboy. Behn’s speakers play with the imagery, appropriate the positions, and claim the rights of the traditionally masculine position (“Or give Amynta so much freedom back: / That she may rove as well as you” [2134]) in order to imaginatively join “soft Cloris with the dear Alexis” (2139)—to join the feminine with the masculine not only in heterosexual or homosexual love, but in individual *identities*.

Oroonoko

Oroonoko has, among its many other excellent qualities, the ability to excite and engage almost any student not in principle committed to sleep. It appeals to all the standard requirements of *dulce*—it’s got action, adventure, romance, beauty, horror, treachery, exoticism, and familiarity. It borrows comfortably from the romance tradition in its high heroism; as George Starr argues, it is also grounded in an early anti-Hobbesian form of sentimentalism that “examines what it means to be powerless in a society where, despite Christian pretenses and protestations, power is everything, and the Beatitudes are a prescription for endless torment” (“Aphra Behn and the Genealogy of the Man of Feeling,” *Modern Philology*, 87:4 [1990]: 362). Many critics place this work among early modern novels in its “real life” context of “true histories,” vividly rendered physical and psychological detail, and occasionally plausible dialogue. It of course fits beautifully into late-twentieth-century interests in gender, class, and race studies. As Catherine Gallagher comments: “Each century seems to have been able to reconcile this one story with its ideas of what a woman writer should accomplish” (*Nobody’s Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace 1670–1820* [U of California P 1994] 54 n. 11).

The narrator of *Oroonoko*, like Defoe’s narrators, takes great pains to establish the truth of her story. Pretty much appearing as herself (Behn really was, as later twentieth-century critics confirmed in the face of earlier suspicions, the daughter of the late-intended lieutenant-governor of Surinam and present at the historical version of these events), the narrator repeatedly assures the reader that she was an “eyewitness” to most of the story, and the rest she fills in “from the mouth of the chief actor,” Oroonoko himself (2152). But as a character, the narrator invites all sorts of questions. Although she remains largely shadowy in her narration of Oroonoko’s and Imoinda’s story, in her actions both as character within and writer of the story, she sometimes directly influences—by omission—the events. Because Oroonoko was sold to her own overseer (2171), she was able to know him, to establish friendship and trust—and to become the “female pen to celebrate his fame” (2173). At two points her absence seems to entail Oroonoko’s fall: when Oroonoko calls the slaves to a sense of injustice and an act of revolt, “all the females [flew] down the river,” and Oroonoko’s capture was marked with a vicious cruelty that the narrator supposes she would have had “authority and interest

enough . . . to have prevented" (2188). Upon Oroonoko's recapture after the sacrifice of his wife and unborn child, when the narrator departs down the river, reassured by the promises of Trefry and the servants to guard his life, she notes: "I was no sooner gone, but the governor . . . forcibly took Caesar, and had him carried to the same post where he was whipped," dismembered, and executed (2192). On the levels of plot and politics, the narrator sees herself unwittingly complicit in the white men's crime; on a more allegorical level, as Gallagher argues, the narrator defines herself in some ways as Oroonoko: "Like him, she arrives a stranger in Surinam but is immediately recognized as superior to the local inhabitants; like him, she appears a shining marvel when she travels to the Indian village; and like his words, hers are always truthful. . . . [A]s the story moves forward, narrator and hero polish each other's fame" (*Nobody's Story*, 68). At the end of the story, the narrator, like many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers anxious to negotiate the whole English literary tradition (cf. the last lines of Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*), puts herself-as-writer in a position of final and immortalizing authority: "Yet, I hope, the reputation of my pen is considerable enough to make his glorious name to survive all ages, with that of the brave, the beautiful, and the constant Imoinda" (2193).

Behn's treatment of race is a hot topic among critics; most notice that the descriptions of Oroonoko and Imoinda are both poised against and defined within contemporary European prejudices about "savages." Their actions conform entirely to European traditions of chivalric romance; their features, apart from pigmentation, are European; yet their very blackness, as Gallagher points out, is pointedly laden with linguistically positive connotations: "brilliant," "polished," "beautiful." And for much of the story, racial characteristics entirely disappear: Oroonoko's conflict with his grandfather over Imoinda is simply a human story of love, lust, jealousy, and revenge, with its own tradition on the Restoration stage.

The characterization of Oroonoko is also part of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century interest in the basic nature of human beings. Oroonoko and Imoinda, along with their vast European sophistication (Oroonoko is learned in many arts and sciences and speaks several languages), are also classic models of the "noble savage." This text could be linked profitably to other analyses and satires of the human condition as European "civilization" has corrupted it, versus "the first state of innocence, before man knew how to sin" (2153). The English governor, for example, might in his treachery be a model yahoo for Swift's later Houyhnhnms. The Indians, believing only death would keep a man from his word, mourned for the death of the governor who promised to come; when he finally showed up, not dead, they asked: "what name they had for a man who promised a thing he did not do? The governor told them, such a man was a liar, which was a word of infamy to a gentleman. Then one of them replied, 'Governor, you are a liar, and guilty of that infamy.' They have a native justice which knows no fraud, and they understand no vice, or cunning, but when they are taught by the white men" (2153).

Other fruitful points of discussion: why is Imoinda's face carved (or her head cut) from her body? Gallagher links this to masks (see the discussion of *The Man of Mode*). What do Oroonoko's various dismemberments imply? What, along with

his body, is allegorically chopped up and/or kept whole? Why is it necessary to kill Imoinda when she becomes pregnant? What does it suggest when her name is the last mentioned in the narrator's account?

Aphra Behn in Context: Coterie Writing Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers—both men and women—were intrigued by the combinations of “masculine” and “feminine” traits that could be found or encouraged (or discouraged, of course) in cultures, in arts, in languages, and in individuals. The writers represented in this section all share, with Behn and Astell and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, a greater or lesser commitment to the basic idea that women's intellectual and spiritual abilities, if not their historical accomplishments, were equal to men's and ought to be given equal encouragement, granted equal voice. Some students find it difficult to see literary works or ideological positions within historical context and often want more from these writers than their own place in sheer history would permit—students want to see themselves in the past, not inadequate aliens. Emphasizing the historical and political weight of the patriarchal assumptions (not to mention laws) that constricted these early writers should give more dour resonance to Lady Chudleigh's opening lines, “Wife and servant are the same, / But only differ in the name.” In some sense what might now be hyperbole was then a nearly literal truth.

Mary, Lady Chudleigh By 1701 Lady Chudleigh was a public figure, with male as well as female followers, and Dryden, among others, a critical benefactor. Her poems were known for their classical learning, their knowledge of philosophy, natural science, and history. “To the Ladies” was apparently very popular among her contemporaries, especially the ladies themselves: the poem was frequently transcribed into other texts, such as one Elizabeth Brockett's First Folio of Shakespeare (see Margaret Ezell's introduction to *Poems and Prose of Mary, Lady Chudleigh* [Oxford UP, 1993]). This poem is a tight little compression of Astell's argument in *Some Reflections upon Marriage* published three years earlier; students might analyze the advantages that go along with the choice of poetic form, such as the emphatically closed couplets, the connotations in the choice of paired rhymes (same/name, tied/divide, speak/break, despise/wise), the choice of tetrameter, the suggestive assonance of the first and last words of the poem (wife/wise).

In “To Almystrea,” on the other hand, that not-so-artless tribute to Astell, Chudleigh uses other strategies. Like many of Behn's poems and prologues, and Finch's “The Introduction” (2141), “To Almystrea” acknowledges, by its very gesture of humble second-bestness, an already rich literary tradition of women's writings. The intrinsic merit of Astell's writings has already created a space for Chudleigh's own, even if Chudleigh's Muse is (as she modestly claims) more heavy-footed; still, Astell's “exalted height” paradoxically beckons into print Marissa's “failures” to prove her love, and Almystrea's beamy brightness attracts others to follow in “the lofty roads of fame.”

Anne Finch, Countess of Winchelsea How does the very first line of “The Introduction” work? “Did I my lines intend for public view—”; we know that, unlike many such protestations in and about poems and letters, Finch pretty much

meant this one—this poem was not published until this century. What kinds of things does the speaker allow herself to say in the privacy of her own writing-closet? There's clearly a will to "come out," to say these things aloud. The poem creates its own sense of audience (and, as manuscript poems circulated among friends, that imagined audience would come alive) through pronouns, among other things: the "I" of the first line quickly becomes "us" and "we" facing a hostile or contemptuous "they" who *tell us* things (l. 13). Finch's speaker then goes on to re-construct history, one rather different from those in which "[men] recount each others' great exploits" (Astell 2287), one which instead more objectively recognizes that, as in biblical history, women "with alternate verse, complete the hymn divine" (l. 32).

How does the dialogue structure of "Friendship Between Ephelia and Ardelia" work, like the use of pronouns in "The Introduction," to *construct* a world of friendship in the act of defining it? In "A Ballad to Mrs. Catherine Fleming," how does the valorizing of rural solitude combine with the classic country-house poem tradition of a pastoral bounty that flings itself gratefully back into human hands, to create that world of sturdy friendship, literary straightforwardness, and the inhabiting of a literary tradition?

Mary Leapor "The Headache" offers its own take on the literary history angle. Leapor's poem calls in all the troops: the Restoration cuckolds, the pastoral swains and shepherdesses, the tropes of gallantry and insult, are all employed to highlight the poet's wryly comic perception of herself poised between the literary and the all-too-human worlds. The gossip, it seems, has a kind of durability, if not immortality, beyond that of the poet; in a wry twist on the *carpe diem* tradition, this speaker seizes her day in tolerant tandem with the "oral" tradition: "I'll still write on, and you shall rail" (l. 53).

"Advice to Sophronia" and "An Essay on Woman" might be read against Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, particularly Clarissa's unpopular but apparently commonsensical speech (2505–06); "The Epistle of Deborah Dough" invites questions about perspective, choice of narrator, play of dialect, the ironic construction of a self-image, the poet's ability to inhabit other identities, to speak other voices.

John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester

The chronicler John Aubrey recorded a contemporary evaluation of Rochester as poet: "Mr. Andrew Marvell, who was a good judge of wit, was wont to say that he was the best English satirist and had the right vein" (*Brief Lives*, ed. Richard Barber [The Boydell Press, 1982], 326). David Vieth, the editor of the standard edition of Rochester's poems (*The Complete Poems of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester* [Yale UP, 1968]), suggests that "Rochester's poems possess value in three directions which are difficult to separate in discussion: historically, as a crucial contribution to the shaping of the new literary idiom which was brought to perfection by Swift, Pope, and their contemporaries; biographically, as part of a life-story so compelling that it constantly threatens to overwhelm his poetry; and artistically, as unique formulations of universal human experiences" (xxxiii). Discussion of the poems can usefully sort through all three. Historical issues can include the development of satire as an increasingly dominant cultural form; the deliberate devolution of traditional tropes; the contexts of sexual and political promiscuity; the frequent presence of, shall we say, bodily fluids and earthly filth in the "highest" of Augustan art (Dryden, Swift, Pope). Aesthetic issues can address the choice of heroic couplets for unheroic matter—the constraints imposed, expectations established, and ironies created by rhymed iambic pentameter; the creation of *immediacy* (sensual and psychological) through the ironic intersection of multiple planes of experience, as Vieth puts it.

But often the most compelling direction for students lies in an intersection of the biographical and aesthetic: analyzing the voices—the masks—of the various speakers in Rochester's chameleon poems. Bishop Gilbert Burnet, Rochester's advisor and biographer, relates of the poet: "He took pleasure to disguise himself, as a porter, or as a beggar; sometimes to follow some mean amours, which, for the variety of them, he affected; at other times, meerly for diversion, he would go about in odd shapes, in which he acted his part so naturally, that even those who were in on the secret, and saw him in these shapes, could perceive nothing by which he might be discovered" (quoted in *Complete Poems*, xlii). Although the poems are largely autobiographical, Rochester loved to play both personally and aesthetically with multiple identities, and the insistent "I's" of his poems are rarely the same. How is the "disabled debauchee" presented? Rochester frequently compares sexual with military conquests (an old tradition, of course), but his comparisons often emphasize the ironic distance between the traditional figuring of the one ("some brave admiral . . . pressed with courage still" [l. 1]) and the immediate rendering of the other ("I'm by pox and wine's unlucky chance / . . . On the dull shore of lazy temperance" [ll. 14, 16]). Who is his audience? Lines 37–40 suggest a lover, Chloris, as the immediate audience ("Nor shall our love-fits, Chloris, be forgot"); but the speaker obviously imagines a wider, later audience of rapt, advice-hungry lads to whom "With tales like these [he] will such thoughts inspire / As to important mischief shall incline" (ll. 41–42). But brave old admirals have a hard enough time telling their tales; the entire construction of the rake's world presumes that the impotent old sot has no audience: as the speaker in "Against

Constancy” points out, “old men and weak . . . can but spread their shame” (ll. 9, 11, p. 2194).

The speaker in “The Imperfect Enjoyment” is yet another voice. This poem really demands to be taught with Behn’s “The Disappointment” (2130–33); Behn’s poem was originally published with Rochester’s in his *Poems on Several Occasions* (1680), and both come from a tradition of poems describing sexual disappointment beginning with Ovid. Note how Rochester’s speaker loses all sorts of control. The most startling, for students, is the linguistic shock: from warm but conventional euphemisms (“charms,” “fire,” “melting,” “flaming,” “Love’s lesser lightning,” “all-dissolving thunderbolt”) the lines are first interrupted by—then consumed with—crude, graphic, and finally obscene language (“her very look’s a cunt”). The erotic tradition dissolves into the pornographic, except that the shift, deliberately shocking, becomes *comic*.

Rochester loves the silly side of sex, as another textual slippage illustrates. The poem begins most definitely with two people in bed (“Naked she lay, clasped in my longing arms”), and “she” remains physically and textually embraced throughout the first two stanzas—but then, as his attention, his shame, his anger, and his dialogue turn to his penis, Corinna pretty much disappears, lost among the thousand “oyster-cinder-beggar-common whore[s]” and “ten thousand maids” who participated in his success. And by the last stanza, the speaker himself has more or less disappeared into his own penis (as women are so frequently reduced to “cunts”), and that figure itself overwhelmed: “And may ten thousand abler pricks agree / To do the wronged Corinna right for thee” (ll. 71–72).

The speakers of “A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind” and “Upon Nothing” offer yet another set of voices, of cultural and aesthetic issues, that teach well with the Perspectives: Mind and God section; with Pope’s *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* and the selections from the *Essay on Man*; and with Swift’s *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift* and *Gulliver* selections. Whatever their ideological polarities, these works tend to agree at least on the strangenesses of “those strange, prodigious creatures, man” (“A Satyr,” l. 2).

George Etherege

Drama can sometimes be more difficult for students to understand than poems and novels because it's harder for them to "see" the characters, their actions, or their setting: early modern drama rarely offers much in the way of stage settings or descriptions, inflections for dialogue, or directions for actions. Plays are constructed primarily by conversations, not descriptions of scenes or actions; there are wide interpretive spaces between characters' words. One way to approach a play for class discussion can be to have the students imagine themselves producing the play and writing a brief essay describing the set, the costumes, gestures of a particular scene, and the specific textual reasons for their choices. The interpretive differences can be staggering—and profitable.

One could begin with the title itself: *The Man of Mode, or, Sir Fopling Flutter*. Steele writes that "the character of Dorimant . . . is more of a coxcomb than that of Fopling"; Collier growls that the "fine gentleman" of Restoration comedy (that "fine whoring, swearing, smutty, atheistical man") is put "at the head of fashion." Certainly Dorimant ferociously distinguishes himself from Sir Fopling; but just as certainly Dorimant—like Etherege, like Rochester, like Sedley—is the "man of mode"—how does the disjunction "or" operate in the title? Posing that question alongside Dorimant's first dressing scene can produce interesting results—as recent diametrically opposed productions in London have suggested. Handy "fiddling" about Dorimant stages a potentially revealing little production in front of Young Bellair and Medley. Dorimant brusquely shoos Handy away, insisting on his own manly indifference to clothes. But does Handy, in the classic servant role, give the show away? "You love to have your clothes hang just, sir"; "Will you use the essence, or orange-flower water?" Young Bellair chimes in: "No man in town has a better fancy in his clothes than you have" (2214). Contrast this scene with Harriet's first entrance at the beginning of Act 3 (2226). Busy has to plead with her to smooth her curls and pin her knots: "Will you never leave this wildness? . . . Ah, the difference that is between you and my Lady Dapper! How uneasy she is if the least thing be amiss about her!" So, is Dorimant sprawled in his chair, manly chest bared, sweeping away the ministrations of an impertinent valet on a set clean and spare—or, as one recent production suggests, do his opulent dressing room, his gorgeous dressing gown, his careful Carolinian curls, his array of perfumes, and his assiduous manservant give him away? Who, and what, is "the man of mode"? Who is the object of satire? Is Dennis right in arguing that Etherege and the other Restoration rakes were laughing at themselves as well as the fops and cits? (Think of Rochester's "The Disabled Debauchee," or "The Imperfect Enjoyment," for example.) Is the play a celebratory mirror or a cynical microscope? (Or, as in Pope's early satires such as *The Rape of the Lock*, both?)

Perhaps the most insinuating, complicated, and culturally compelling image in the play is the mask. If indeed the Restoration theater as an institution "provided a national mask" as well as "sustained a critique of masquerade" (introduction, 1985), *The Man of Mode* can be said to offer a study of the icon of the mask. Half the characters are looking for reliable signs of the truth; the other half are studying

ways to conceal it. Or perhaps it's more accurate to say that half the time a character looks for truth, and half the time she hides it. How many kinds of masks can the students come up with? And how do they all interact?

There are the literal masks, of course, worn by women at the theater, or by both men and women at social masquerades, as when Sir Fopling and friends enter "in masks" in Act 4, mistaking a private gathering for a social event. Terry Castle, in her wonderful study of the masquerade in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England (*Masquerade and Civilization*, Stanford UP, 1986), decodes its sartorial language and reproduces its verbal: Sir Fopling, when he turns to Harriet and says, "Do you know me?" would be squeaking. If he were disguised to reveal himself through symbols of otherness, as Castle argues (duchesses dressed as shepherdesses to play at innocence; women dressed as men and men as women; and the most popular "code" of all was the cloak of religion—nuns and priests looking for sex), what would Sir Fopling be wearing? What do disguises, like fashionable dress, reveal?

Students (and most of us, probably) are fascinated by the psychological freedom allowed by partial disguise. Castle argues that, even with the little black velvet "vizard" that only partially covered the face, men and women often felt extraordinarily uninhibited behind a mask. The world of the seventeenth-century masquerade is not unlike the virtual spaces of e-mail or Internet chatrooms, where even shy persons feel themselves somehow liberated by the sense of anonymity and disguise. Both are spaces for psychological play—and danger. What does concealment permit?

In one sense, the Restoration stage, with its innovation of permitting women on the public stage, allowed women visibly to inhabit different identities, including male identities—many plays of the time (particularly those by women, such as Aphra Behn's *The Rover* and *The Widow Ranter*), featured "breeches parts," where female characters dressed as men to assume some control over their lives and loves. One tradition of feminist criticism sees this literal spectacle of women on the stage as part of larger cultural and gender issues of female objectification, of putting women's bodies on display (both Charles II and Pepys vastly approved of seeing women's legs), of rendering women as objects rather than subjects through the male-fantasy "gaze." Dorimant, after all, "has been *with a vizard* at the playhouse" (2211; emphasis added)—the woman metonymically reduced to her mask. But more recent criticism has complicated the vectors of "the gaze." In one sense, for example, though Harriet's very first entrance in the play is as a "mask," yet as Dorimant remembers it, "there was a mask *observed me* indeed" (2208, emphasis added). Whose gaze is fixing whom? Foggy Nan, the orange-woman (another pointed metonymy) lets fall that this "mask" aped all he did: "she told me twenty things you said too, and acted with her head and with her body so like you" (2209). The mask *becomes* the mirror; Harriet later "acts him" to his face: "Is not this like you?" (2237). The actress's character Harriet acts her own masquerade of the times; Harriet's lovely scene with Young Bellair (2228), when they instruct each other in the art of flirtation, makes for a wonderful in-class acting assignment (and a good point for comparison with current courtship rituals). Harriet can so well imitate, because she so well understands, the social spectacle of this London world.

The characters in *The Man of Mode* mask their emotions as frequently as they mask their faces. Or at least they try to. Bellinda, sensing Dorimant's betrayal, pales: "I am so frighted, my countenance will betray me" (2256); Harriet turns away from Dorimant towards the end, confessing: "My love springs with my blood into my face. I dare not look upon him yet" (2263). Dorimant himself confesses his heart in his asides, though he generally retains control of his face: "I love her and dare not let her know it. I fear sh'as an ascendant o'er me and may revenge the wrongs I have done her sex" (2245). His own self-masking is richly opportunistic: he has to feign love or indifference by turns in order to secure his sexual conquests. When Medley senses Dorimant's uneasiness at Mrs. Loveit's apparent flirtation with Sir Fopling, Dorimant has to control his own conflicting emotions and desires:

DORIMANT [*to himself*] He guesses the secret of my heart. I am concerned but dare not show it, lest Bellinda should mistrust all I have done to gain her.
 BELLINDA [*aside*] I have watched his look and find no alteration there. Did he love her, some signs of jealousy would have appeared. (2241)

Though the human face can unwittingly betray itself, with a little self-control a character needs no vizard to conceal the truth.

There's potential for real debate about the extent to which the play celebrates masking or seeks a space for truth—and whether there's ultimately anything beneath the mask. Harriet herself wears no make-up, no masks (though she rather brutally recommends "hoods and modesty, masks and silence, things that shadow and conceal" for ugly women [2226], and vizards in general for faces she does not like [2245]). But in spite of her own proclivities for acting parts (the scene with Young Bellair; concealing her love for Dorimant), she does a fair job of *unmasking* many of the pretensions of the hero. Dorimant himself wants to unmask the characters around him—the fopperies of Sir Fopling, the passions of his mistresses—but his efforts, say some of his contemporary (and current) critics, tend towards self-indulgence and cruelty. If Bellinda hadn't been present at one point, he would have made Loveit "pluck off this mask and show the passion that lies panting under" [2241].) And his later revenge on Loveit demands her public renunciation of Sir Fopling, and (what she didn't count on) her own public disgrace—in which Harriet participates. But Harriet herself pokes through Dorimant's mask of vanity and sexual aggression. She declares: "When your love's grown strong enough to make you bear being laughed at, I'll give you leave to trouble me with it" (2245). (Bellinda does a bit of this unmasking herself; when she complies with his scheme to make Loveit jealous, she witnesses more than she bargained for: "H'as given me the proof which I desired of his love; but 'tis a proof of his ill nature too. I wish I had not seen him use her so" [2226].) Harriet is "sorry" that her face "does not please [him] as it is; but [she] shall not be complaisant and change it" (2244). Act 5 moves towards its finish with Harriet and Dorimant essentially asking each other how to see and know the truth in each other. Harriet insists: "Did you not tell me there was no credit to be given to faces—that women nowadays have their passions as much at will as they have their complexions, and put on joy and sadness, scorn and

kindness, with the same ease they do their paint and patches?" Dorimant replies: "You wrong your own while you suspect my eyes. By all the hope I have in you, the inimitable color in your cheeks is not more free from art than are the sighs I offer" (2263). (Of course, a few moments later he's assuring Mrs. Loveit he's only courting Harriet for her money, and assuring Bellinda he'd like to trust again.) But though the various characters muddle through betrayal and discovery, the inclusion of asides permits the audience, at least, some perceptual stability, a glimpse at the emotional "truth" of emotive claims. The structure itself supplies interpretive possibilities.

Discussing the structure of the play can help identify, if not finally sort out, a number of its fascinating ambiguities. As one critic puts it: "[T]he play is nothing more nor less than the old sentimental story of the rake reformed, indeed redeemed, by the love of a good woman. At least that would be the basic form of the action were it not so variously undercut by irony" (Norman Holland, *The First Modern Comedies* [Harvard UP, 1959]). The play does not end in the marriage of Dorimant and Harriet, merely with his "promise" (a currency repeatedly proven worthless) to visit her in the country, where she'll assess that profession of reform in due course. Will they or won't they? Should they or shouldn't they? We are given Young Bellair and Emilia—Restoration comedy frequently offers us the "good" or stable example, though usually only in subplots. Why? Some critics argue that it was only through the sort of reform movements articulated by Collier and the *Spectator*—along with the increasing voice and power of a prosperous middle class in and about the playhouse—that created a space for the possibility of a "companionate marriage" (see Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* [Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977]) as outlined by Astell and Defoe. What kind of sturdy relationship is possible when life is a masquerade? Where is the end of the chase, when, in Waller's words, "In love the victors from the vanquished fly; / They fly that wound, and they pursue that die"?

One way of textually and culturally making a space possible for "love," as we tend to define it now, is actually to privilege the wit—the mind—of the woman as well as the man. Harold Weber emphasizes the power-plays within Restoration drama: "In Dorimant we discover a libertine whose lust for power begins to overwhelm his lust for physical pleasure. Etherege's play portrays a rake who satisfies his aggression only at the expense of his sexuality; for Dorimant sexual satisfaction is not necessarily an end in itself, merely the seal of his success as a conqueror" (Harold Weber, *The Restoration Rake-Hero* [U of Wisconsin P, 1986], 80). The idea that Dorimant-is-Rochester, wielding Waller's verses, certainly supports this view. But in Harriet, as with other Restoration-rake relationships that end—or nearly end—in the rake's "reform," he seems to have met his match. Harriet is first identified as an heiress (well, actually, as discussed above, first as the observing, mimicking "mask"); Dorimant's next question to Medley: "And handsome?" But, of course, all the women Dorimant plunges in with are "handsome" (the vocabulary of gendered beauty is worth discussing here, and we get a rare, detailed description of Harriet's kind of beauty that can be mapped on to the portraits reproduced in the anthology). In a world where, as Dorimant declares, there is no room for "con-

stancy" from a young, strapping, virile man—"Tis not a virtue in season; you might as well expect the fruit the autumn ripens i' the spring" (2224)—female beauty affords no security; the familiar becomes boring, the fruit cloy, the organic metaphors turn rotten. So what lasts? What works? Dorimant's last-but-clearly-not-least question is the crucial one: "Has she wit?" (2210). A bit later Young Bellair urges him: "Talk to her; her wit is better than her face" (2236). Within the complicated etymology of the term at the time (send students to the OED), Harriet controls all its connotations: she can not only banter with the best of them, she can also control herself, her emotions, and their physiological manifestations—unlike the weaker Bellinda, who does not hold out for "church security" (2254), or the passionate Loveit, who cannot contain herself, and suffers a final public humiliation. Harriet is all for "a little harmless discourse in public walks or at most an appointment in a box, barefaced, at the playhouse" in contrast to Dorimant's preference "for masks and private meetings"; she articulates her own strength: "Because some who want temper have been undone by gambling, must others who have it wholly deny themselves the pleasure of play?" (2236).

The play offers Harriet—and Emilia and Lady Townley, for that matter—as women who have a sense of themselves, of their power, of their principles, who see through men's masks, who guard their own, who order events, who await conclusions—who match men in wit above lust, who control language along with appearance, who may well be in the game for the duration. And who, in some sense, reproduce the cultural power of the mask: for Dorimant, Harriet "has left a pleasing image of herself behind that wanders in my soul"; though he insists "it must not settle there," it obviously does (2237).

The Man of Mode *in Context: The Collier Controversy*

Jeremy Collier One critic suggests that "Collier is a much maligned critic who deserves more sympathetic attention than he has generally received. The sharpness of his verbal thrusts ('The Modern Poets seem to use Smut as the Old Ones did machines, to relieve a fainting Invention') shows a wit and perception which make him an effective match for opponents as distinguished as Congreve and Vanbrugh" (Michael Neill, "Heroic Heads and Humble Tails: Sex, Politics, and the Restoration Comic Rake," *The Eighteenth Century*, 24:2 [1983]: 121). Collier always repays attention to form as well as content. Students should understand not only the presence but the appeal of didacticism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; people, it seemed, liked to be lectured at for hours on end. Once students recognize this point, they may be able to enter into the pungency of the debate. What are Collier's main points, how does he drive them home, and do they fairly apply?

Clearly Collier wants to adjust a moral balance, to restore the apparently lost values of honesty and honor, conscience and manners, good nature and "civil hypocrisy" (2271); but as Neill argues, Restoration drama itself "is actively concerned with the nature of 'restoration' . . . , with the business of re-forming a civil order in the face of those 'barbarous' but 'natural' impulses towards revolution, anarchy, or tyranny which constantly threaten to destroy it" (Neill, 120). After sorting

out precisely what it is that Collier objects to in the notion of “delight as the main business of comedy,” it might be worth asking students whether they think *The Man of Mode* as a whole “persecutes worth and goodness under every appearance” (2271). A didactic text, in which linguistic transparency is a primary virtue (Collier’s sarcasm nearly scalds with its unmistakable implied meaning), can be extraordinarily useful in interpreting an imaginative text; it offers itself as a measure against which the reader says, “Yes, very true,” or “Wait a minute here—.”

Richard Steele Steele’s essay, like Collier’s, combines sarcasm and didacticism to deliver its judgment. Steele had been immediately impressed with Collier’s *Short View*; as he recalls in his *Apology for Himself and His Writings* (1714): “Mr. Collier had, about the time wherein this [his second play, *The Lying Lover* (1703)] was published, written against the immorality of the stage. I was (as far as I durst for fear of witty men, upon whom he had been too severe) a great admirer of his work, and took it into my head to write a comedy in the severity he required” (quoted in John Loftis, et. al, eds., *The Revels History of Drama in English*, 5 vols. [Methuen, 1976] 5:55). Steele’s rhetoric, like Collier’s, outlines through a series of sarcastic epithets and loaded adjectives the photographic negative of his own vision of a “gentleman”: “our hero,” he points out, is characterized by knavery, clownishness, falsehood, and barbarity. As with Collier’s piece, Steele’s is useful in clarifying some of the murkier issues in the original text. What is, for everyone concerned in these different if overlapping times, the nature of a gentlerperson? Clearly manners have changed by Steele’s time; have morals as well? After the time of Collier and Steele, the dramatist would no longer, according to the nineteenth-century historian and critic Thomas Babington Macaulay, “represent adultery . . . as the calling of a fine gentleman” (*Thomas Babington Macaulay: Selected Writings*, ed. John Clive and Thomas Pinney [U of Chicago P 1972], 85). What morality operates in *The Man of Mode*? (It’s worth discussing the reaction to Puritanism, the fear of bigotry, the influence of France.)

Another approach to the play offered by the *Spectator* essay: interpretive latitude. Steele writes: “As to the generosity of [Dorimant’s] temper, he tells his poor footman, if he did not wait better he would turn him away, in the insolent phrase of, ‘I’ll uncase you’” (2274). Much of the interpretive tension in Restoration drama depends on the level of wit, of irony, of slippage between meaning and intent that the reader or the director perceives. Can the student imagine the scene played utterly different ways, each utterly true to the text? Dorimant as contemptuous aristocrat and Handy filled with proto-revolutionary resentment; Dorimant as cool, sexy, flippant, his lazy affection belying the violence of his words. And Harriet: emphasize the malice, or emphasize the sense? Steele reads the cruelty of the words and comes to a judgment; students can be shown the large spaces *between* text and criticism.

John Dennis Dennis, according to Brian Corman, though he insists on exposing Steele’s misreading of *The Man of Mode*, ends up following a similar pattern, “[pursuing] a morality hunt, finding exemplary lessons in every character from Dorimant to Loveit” (“Interpreting and Misinterpreting *The Man of Mode*,” *Papers on Language and Literature* 13:1 [Winter 1977]: 37). Does Dennis overdo things in

a different direction? How are students beginning to negotiate all these critical contradictions?

Dennis can be quite useful in sorting out the ongoing argument between moral and aesthetic criticism and historical context. He points out that the whole nature of satire is to ridicule “corrupt and degenerate nature,” and that the “heroes” of Etherege’s play are as vulnerable to ridicule—from the characters within to the audience without—as poor Sir Fopling himself. Both Collier and Steele, argues Dennis, are making a moral and historical mistake by arguing that *The Man of Mode*, or Restoration comedy more generally, equates gentility with morality. He recovers rather than imposes a sense of historical and cultural context: “I appeal to every impartial man if, when he says that a man or a woman are genteel, he means anything more than that they are agreeable in their air, graceful in their motions, and polite in their conversation. . . . Dorimant is an admirable picture of a courtier in the court of King Charles the Second” (2277). *The Man of Mode* is among other things a play about fashion—fashion in clothes, fashion in love, fashion in marriage. To what extent is Dennis pointing to a fashion in criticism? And does this period permit the idea of a fashion in morality?

Mary Astell

Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, complained about Astell: “Had she as much good breeding as good sense, she would be perfect; but she has not the most decent manner of insinuating what she means, but is now and then a little offensive and shocking in her expressions; which I wonder at, because a civil turn of words is what her sex is mistress of. She, I think, is wanting in it. But her sensible and rational way of writing makes amends for that defect, if indeed anything can make amends for it. I dread to engage her” (quoted in Astell, *Political Writings*, ed. Patricia Springborg [Cambridge UP, 1996], Introduction, xiv). A bit unclear on the concept, Atterbury separates out Astell’s mind from her gender, and implies, in the tradition that Astell so acerbically parodies, that Gender in the end matters more than Mind. As Catherine Gallagher argues, it is precisely the mind—rather than the body or soul—that interests Astell, that for her forms the basis of a consistent and rational identity (see “Embracing the Absolute: The Politics of the Female Subject in Seventeenth-Century England,” *Genders*, No. 1 [1988]: 25, 34). Astell’s pugilistic prose is her way to fight into the heart of the matter. She clearly is not much interested in decently insinuating meanings and civilly turning words—such placatory tricks are precisely the forms that traditionally reified women’s (self-) subjection.

Astell plays beautifully with those forms; much of the rhetorical force of *Reflections* turns upon the demure presentation of the accepted line, and then its wide-eyed disembowelment: “But how can a woman scruple entire subjection, how can she forbear to admire the worth and excellency of the superior sex, if she at all considers it? Have not all the great actions that have been performed in the world been done by them? . . . They make worlds and ruin them, form systems of universal nature and dispute eternally about them, . . . they recount each others’ great exploits, and have always done so” (2283, 2287). Students might see why Atterbury would dread to confront her, and work up his own verbal thrust-and-parry in defensive retreat. How would Astell respond to Atterbury?

Astell neatly combines traditional political and rationalist argument to simultaneously upset and secure the status quo. As Ruth Perry argues, Astell’s “conclusions about women are inseparable from her religious faith, her belief in political authority, and her commitment to philosophical rationalism” (“The Veil of Chastity: Mary Astell’s Feminism,” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 9 [1979]: 25). On the one hand, Astell points out, “tyranny . . . provokes the oppressed to throw off even a lawful yoke that fits too heavy. And if he who is freely elected, after all his fair promises and the fine hopes he raised, proves a tyrant, the consideration that he was one’s own choice will not render more submissive and patient, but I fear more refractory” (2288). Echoes of the Civil War, the Commonwealth, and the Restoration might all resonate in the contemporary mind, and be introduced into the students’. On the other hand, “if man’s authority be justly established, the more sense a woman has the more reason she will find to submit to it” (2284); therefore it is “very much a man’s interest” that women should be educated intellectually, spiritually, and politically (2286). At the end of the treatise she speaks directly first to her male and then to her female readers. Towards whom does the weight of her

argument lie? In riling, instructing, threatening, and soothing the men? In prodding, poking, and promising the women? Her last sentence suggests both: “the man’s prerogative is not at all infringed, whilst the woman’s privileges are secured” (2289); does this balance adequately resolve the tensions within the argument as a whole?

Daniel Defoe

Defoe loved to play among the boundaries between fact and fiction: his novels are filled with lists and measurements and dates; his nonfiction with characters and conversations. One useful way of approaching *A True Relation of the Apparition of Mrs. Veal* and the excerpts from *A Journal of the Plague Year* is to get students to work out how Defoe constructs the appearance of historical truth. As one of Defoe's nineteenth-century critics claims of the *True Relation*: "It is one of the most remarkable exhibitions ever seen of a power of giving an exact air of reality to imagined facts. Its old formal precise air . . . meant it to convince" (from an 1856 review; quoted in *Defoe: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Pat Rogers [Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972] 147). A gathering of authorities, an accumulation of physical details, a reproduction of dialogue, all shore up a sense of authenticity and at the same time offer a sense of a full human world; the boundaries between fiction and fact are at once delineated and blended.

What counts as evidence? In *A True Relation*, for example, the clock striking, the hand of Mrs. Veal continually drawn across her eyes, the sense of fabric, of upstairs and downstairs, of intimate detail, are first related in Mrs. Bargrave's account to the "editor," and then *repeated*, in a classic Defoean move, with the recapitulation of the pros and cons of the story (2296). For Defoe, it's as if a fact gets stronger in repetition—which, in scientific theory, may be methodologically true, but which in human discourse works two ways: just because I say it's true five times doesn't mean it's five times truer; on the other hand, if I don't deviate from my story in five retellings, the officers of the law are a bit more likely to believe me.

Another criterion of belief or verifiability that the student might look for, in the larger context of Restoration and eighteenth-century preoccupations, is the reading of faces in both texts. Mrs. Bargrave is not only reliable because she doesn't take money for her story (a particularly apt criterion in our own time); her veracity is also established, for the "editor," by her face, in which "there is not the least sign of dejection" (2292). Even a text as wildly different as *Etherege's The Man of Mode* exhibits the same concern with the possibility of reading truth in faces. H. F.'s account of Robert the waterman wins his own conviction by the sight of the man's "countenance that presently told [him, he] had happened on a man that was no hypocrite, but a serious, religious good man" (2308)—though the narrator, in his habitual skepticism, finds a little extra empirical evidence not amiss: "'Well, but,' says I to him, 'did you leave her the four shillings too, which you said was your week's pay?' 'YES, YES,' says he, 'you shall hear her own it'" (2310). And she dutifully does.

On the other side of things, how does Defoe play with imaginative elements to advantage? In some ways, *A True Relation* reads like a proto-mystery: the paragraph beginning the narrative itself opens with a place and time ("In this house, of the eighth of September last") and closes with a temporal chime that ushers in its own form of suspense ("At that moment of time, the clock struck twelve at noon" [2293]). It's only later the reader finds out when Mrs. Veal died; it's only the next paragraph that she makes her very physical entrance; the narration of the visit emphasizes its reality in

its mundane details. The reader is geared, by knowing beforehand that Mrs. Veal is indeed an “apparition,” to look for “signs” of her ghostliness—the “long journey,” the unwillingness to touch lips, the shadowed eyes, the heavenly assurances, the demands for promises, the disposing of the worldly goods.

Ultimately, students should also be clear about the good-faith use that Defoe sees in these accounts (a use that doesn’t always have a current parallel), and where such use is carefully spelled out, either by the narrator or by the characters. Fact is used to support faith; there is a life hereafter, and we should acquit ourselves accordingly. As with the Royal Society members such as Hooke, Boyle, and Sprat, precision in empirical detail comfortingly grounds spiritual abstractions. Whatever the nineteenth-century critical skeptics thought, Defoe’s religious upbringing and convictions operated every bit as powerfully as his love of fictional identity-exploring and his love of a buck—or a guinea, so to speak.

 PERSPECTIVES

Reading Papers

We live lives enmeshed in media, and students generally find it fun to trace long-used forms (the breaking news-bulletin, columns of advice and opinion, letters to the editor, etc.) back to their origins in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The pieces here assembled can yield both entertainment and a salutary alienation. To read these familiar genres as they were first devised and manipulated, in a culture three centuries distant from our own is often to become more aware of cultural force fields and media tactics that we tend to take for granted. These brief texts can raise big questions: In what ways do the new print modes mirror the community they addressed? In what ways, and for what purposes, do they seek to reform the community they address? And in what ways do they *create* the communities they address, so that the community defines itself, at least in part, as that group of people which reads these particular texts? For investigating such questions, the passage from Anderson (*Imagined Communities* [Verso, 1991], 35), quoted in the section headnote (2311), furnishes an eloquent place to start.

Two particularly rich resources for teaching the periodical essay are Kathryn Shevelov's *Women and Print Culture* (Routledge, 1989), with compact, perceptive chapters on the *Athenian Mercury*, *Tatler*, *Spectator*, and *Female Spectator*, and Erin Mackie's anthology *The Commerce of Everyday Life* (Bedford, 1998), which presents the most thorough sampling available of eighteenth-century periodical literature (including many of the pieces printed here), surrounded by copious and useful commentary on the papers' political, social, and economic positions, purposes, and contexts.

The texts here are arranged into five clusters wherein the selections, drawn from a variety of papers, are meant to speak to each other, exploring the same topics from different vantages of format, rhetoric, genre, gender, and social position. Read as clusters, these pieces can simulate (and stimulate?) the kinds of conversation that the papers sought to prompt among their customers at tea tables and in coffee houses (the section frontispiece, Bowles's *Medley*, makes clear how copiously such texts could accumulate, even interact, on any available surface). Here I'll sort things a little differently, beginning with comments on each of the major periodicals in chronological order, then offering some suggestions about the clusters as they appear in the anthology.

The Papers

The Athenian Mercury: This paper, the birthplace of one of the formats students will find most familiar, can make a useful starting point for the whole section. What relationship does the paper perform between its inquiring readers and knowledgeable responders? At first, the Athenians figure as learned lawgivers, answering at length the brief questions put to them (often in the formulation "whether it be lawful . . ."). Later, the proportions change, as readers' narratives occupy more space (2353). One question about this pioneering periodical concerns subsequent

refinements: How did later papers—*Review*, *Tatler*, *Spectator*—manage to include and respond to their readers without relying exclusively on the letter-response, question-answer format? (For some suggestions, see ensuing comments.) Comparisons with current columns of advice and information may also prove fruitful: what relations do contemporary audiences demand between the print “authorities” (Ann Landers, Cecil Adams) and their correspondents? How are these relations encoded in the columns’ language and format? How are the transactions of the Internet (e-mail, bulletin boards, etc.) reworking and redistributing textual authority?

A Review of the State of the British Nation: Defoe had written (anonymously, of course) for the *Athenian Mercury*. In the *Review* he devised the least anonymous of all periodical personae, a readily recognizable version of himself: beset, pugnacious, exasperated, and undaunted. The paper’s title implies retrospect, but the *Review*, more than any subsequent paper, presented the ongoing spectacle of a single journalist vehemently engaged with breaking news. Defoe’s ways of performing this engagement collate interestingly with his other writings in the anthology, both fiction and non-. His alertness (in *Mrs. Veal*) to the way dress and other commodities encode both social class and private predicament becomes, in the *Review* (1.43, 2340–41), a socio-economic analysis of the changes in trade that remake a neighborhood. His imaginative evocation of a real-life duellist’s tormented conscience (*Review* 9.34, 2349–50) has much in common with his conjuration of Crusoe’s despair (*Perspectives: Spiritual Self-Reckonings*), and of the desperate solitudes in *A Journal of the Plague Year*.

The Tatler: The *Tatler* attracted readers by supplanting the *Review*’s stringency with Bickerstaff’s gregariousness. What perhaps distinguishes the paper most is its sheer populousness: all those crowded coffee houses in the opening salvo (No. 1), the dispossessed society of news writers and the long list of characters who occupy the *Tatler* (No. 18), and the copious cast of walk-ons (comparable in some ways to the recurrent guest roles in situation comedies) who crop up (*Seinfeld*-like) even in the precincts of “My Own Apartment”: Partridge (No. 1), Jenny Distaff (No. 104), the Political Upholsterer (No. 155). The paper, from its title onward, undertook to mimic talk and to critique it. Dunton’s “Athenians” read and responded to letters, and Bickerstaff does that too. But he derives much of his authority, as the vaunted Censor of Great Britain, from the skill with which he hears, dissects, and prompts ongoing conversation.

The Spectator: The *Spectator*, by contrast, mimics silence. (The paper pervaded its culture, and crops up correspondingly in other parts of the anthology: alongside *The Man of Mode*; and in the *Perspectives* sections Mind and God and Landscape, Pleasure, Power.) A key passage for the reading of any *Spectator* is the fictive author’s initial self-portrait, as a “silent man” suddenly determined “to print my self out,” in the form of a “sheet-full of thoughts every morning” (2325). He construes capacity for silent observation as both a means of pleasure and a mode of power (see for example No. 69, where he takes effectual possession of the Royal Exchange by admiring it in action). The plan “to print my self out”—to multiply himself daily, not only on paper but in the minds of his readers—may con-

stitute the largest power play of all, a way of monitoring and instructing that works less by overt instruction than by osmosis. By its fusion of silence with diurnal form, the *Spectator* fosters a fiction of reciprocity between itself and its readers, in which each party not only mirrors the other but appears to occupy the other's place in space and over time. Readers occupy Mr. Spectator both as objects of his attention and as presences in his paper: writers of letters, performers of actions, recipients of counsel. He occupies them—or rather “informs” them—as the figure of that silent part of themselves which they, as gregarious social beings, least recognize; in a constantly recurring phrase, he offers them the “secret satisfaction” (2334) that arises from the precise observation of self and others. These strategies of self-figuration inflect the style and the argument of nearly every paper: How does Mr. Spectator take possession of his public (No. 10)? How does he celebrate the appropriations of commerce (No. 69) while critiquing its inhumane excesses (No. 11)? How does his modelling of silent self-containment inform his assault on the libertinage of *The Man of Mode* (No. 65, 2273–75), and his paean to the expressive silence of the cosmos (No. 465, pp. 2640–41)? How do his notions of observation as pleasure and as power converge in his theory of beauty and his reckoning of landscape (Nos. 412 and 414, 2867–71)? How does osmosis operate in his program of moral instruction, and particularly in his address to female readers (Nos. 10 and 128)? He clearly acknowledges and reinforces gender boundaries; does he also in any way transcend them, by cultivating identification with his female as with his male readers?

Some of the *Spectator's* impact can be discerned in Boswell's admiring comments fifty years later (2799), and some of its most important origins can be traced in the excerpts from Locke (2630–35), whose account of ideas and associations underlies both the form and the substance of Mr. Spectator's silent thought. Another useful companion reading is Pepys's diary, whose transactions between self and world the paper effectually inverts. From the vantage of its first readers, the *Spectator's* most surprising innovations—its diurnal timing and its silent persona—gave it the salient features of a diary, but of a diary turned inside out: the work not of a public or social figure (like Pepys), composing a more secret version of the self in a single sequestered manuscript, but of a wholly secretive sensibility imparting itself entirely through print, to be read by a wide and varied public in the daily rhythm and at the running moment of its making.

The Craftsman: Much of the *Craftsman's* craft consists in pointedly alienating its readers from their own familiar (albeit unacceptable) political predicament, by transposing their circumstances into an alien milieu, so that Walpole becomes a “vampyre” (2317–20) and *South Sea stock* a comically potent set of nonsense syllables, capable of inducing frenzy in the hearer (2346). In the *Craftsman*, Walpole's censorship produces an extraordinary traffic between news and fiction (note, for example, the use of a genuine *London Journal* piece to launch the economic satire on the vampires). Only by careful deflection, and by outright lying, can Amhurst and colleagues tell the truth as they see it.

The Female Spectator: In an astute reading of the first paper's second paragraph (2326–28), Kathryn Shevelov points out a central difference between Haywood's

approach to periodical didacticism and that of her male predecessors. They propose to teach their readers from a position of patriarchal authority and innate rightness, whether grounded in learning (the Athenians), savvy (*Review*), sociability (*Tatler*), or inborn, enlightened eccentricity (*Spectator*). The Female Spectator, by contrast, undertakes to teach from her *mistakes*. “Hers is the voice of error rather than propriety, experience rather than innocence . . . [S]he has been guilty herself of the conduct she is to criticize.” By thus “basing her persona’s claims to authority upon her culpability rather than her superiority, Haywood rewrote the moral essay” (*Women in Print Culture*, 168–70). The tactic operates throughout. Quickly discovering her own “infinite deficiency” as author, the Female Spectator seeks out collaborators, with whom she works closely from the start (2327–28); later, she yields to the “superior judgment” of her collaborator Mira and ends her own argument early rather than running it into “dangerous” excess (2360). The collaborator’s response to their reader’s letter (2361) smacks more of community and collaboration than of the condescension and counsel that mark the *Athenian Gazette* (and that filter also through the *fair-sex* texts of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*).

The Clusters

News and Comment: Students will be struck first by the blatancy of bias in government-sponsored papers (*Mercurius*, *Gazette*) that during the Restoration were often the only print-news sources legally available. The *Gazette*’s account of the fire quickly becomes a paean to His Majesty’s solo efforts; the accounts by Pepys and Evelyn (2014–20) offer instructive contrast. The important difference is not between private emotion and objectivity but among the different sorts of feeling (panic, piety, patriotism) that each narrator strives to evoke. The later, independent *Daily Courant*, by contrast, grounds its claims of impartiality in scrupulous documentation of sources. The passions bestirred by news furnish the *Spectator* and the *Tatler* with a steady source of comedy (2328–32).

The mix of plausible fact and intense feeling shaped both newspapers and novels—the two most lasting narrative modes the period produced. For a sketch of their relations, see the general introduction (1998–99). Students can here track the traffic between fact and fiction in the *Craftsman*’s use of the *London Journal* item (itself of questionable veracity) as prompter for the satiric discourse of Caleb D’Anvers and his friends. They can also watch Defoe deploy one narrative device—the “to the moment” reportage of significant sounds—in several narrative contexts: firsthand reports of fact (the cannonade announcing Union, 2316–17); the secondhand “relation” of a tale (the bell that tolls Mrs. Veal’s arrival—and death, 2293, 2295); the projecting of fictional experiences onto a historical background (H. F.’s recollection of the mourner’s groans as his family disappeared into the plague pit, 2306).

Periodical Personae: For comments on the personae, see discussions of the individual periodicals (above). A useful question in each instance: In what ways do the personae cultivate an identification with their readers, and by what means do they set themselves apart? The answers play out differently in the Athenians’ aloof

ness, Mr. Spectator's busy but almost invisible movement among his readers (No. 10), the Female Spectator's consortium of collaborators.

Getting, Spending, Speculating: As J. G. A. Pocock has shown, Addison, Steele, and Defoe write both to celebrate commerce and to restrain it; to remedy the newly speculative culture's fixation on the fictitious future (where stocks will rise, debts will be paid, and profits accrue) by prescribing a prudent focus on the present (see Pocock's *Virtue, Commerce, and History* [Cambridge UP, 1985], 113–16). The time form of Augustan journalism did much to abet these economic interventions. The close succession of dates at the top of the thrice-weekly *Review* and the daily *Spectator* consistently grounded their “speculations” (in Addison's frequent term) about trade (and everything else) within the local limits of the present.

The first three essays here can be read profitably in conversation with each other, and in conjunction with several of Pope's poems which subject the nation's new prosperity to varied scrutiny: *Windsor-Forest*, *The Rape of the Lock* (particularly Canto 1), and the *Epistle to Burlington*. What are the bounties that empire brings forth? An expanded community, new national centrality, all those ornaments for women (*Spectator* No. 69). What are the costs that commerce incurs? A starkly reduced humanity (No. 11); an unthinking obsession with luxury (*Review* 1.43).

In the little collection called “A Bubbler's Medley,” ambivalence about the new commerce runs another way. Each of these pieces critiques the South Sea catastrophe, and yet each in some measure exploits it, making it (by widely varied rhetorical strategies) the occasion of entertainment and instruction for the reader, and profit to the author. This assortment of takes on the South Sea Bubble should teach very well with the Thomas Bowles engraving of the same title that serves as frontispiece to the whole section (1978). In his quasi-scrapbook of printed papers casually scattered across the picture's plane, Bowles manages to cram many of the culture's most pressing and durable preoccupations: with money, trade, and empire; with miscellany; with evanescence; with “memorial.” But most of all he suggests a cultural addiction to text itself, a world in which print representations (and misrepresentations) of reality are at once the most common and the most prized commodities; in which readers (like the invisible assembler of this collage, and like the denizens of the coffee house in the upper-right corner) are perpetually engaged in assembling their own ephemeral anthologies.

Women and Men, Morals and Manners

For a sketch of the periodicals' role in the propagation of “politeness,” see the general introduction (1987–89). The essays on duelling by Steele and Defoe afford one of the most instructive contrasts in the section. Steele seeks to laugh duelling out of fashion by looking at its language: the ludicrous incongruity between the words used and the actions they describe serves as shorthand for the folly and waste of the entire enterprise. Defoe sermonizes. The imaginative, casuistical method that would later drive his fiction prompts a kind of fiction here. Projecting from his own “*unhappy experience*,” he “guess[es]” at the “perturbed thoughts” of Hamilton

on the eve of his death. What would it be like (he asks and answers), to be this person in this predicament?

In the papers on relations between men and women, the author's arguments are clear enough. What is more interesting, and sometimes more elusive, are the gestures by which the papers *perform* (as opposed to preach) those relations, in the gendered transactions between persona and audience. In the *Athenian Mercury*, a woman is permitted to pray to God for a husband, just as the (putatively female) inquirer has been permitted to *ask* permission for such a prayer from the Athenians, who here offer a male-written script for women to "use . . . if they are not better furnished already" (2352; the *if* clause offers a little room for autonomy). Bickerstaff describes his sister's moral progress after marriage in terms that plainly sketch the kind of influence that this confirmed bachelor hopes to wield over female readers: "Upon talking with her on several subjects, I could not but fancy that I saw a great deal of her husband's way and manner in her remarks, her phrases, the tone of her voice, and the very air of her countenance. This gave me an unspeakable satisfaction . . ." (2354)—a satisfaction which need *not* be spoken, in part because the desired male-female ventriloquy ("the tone of her voice") has already been so successfully accomplished. The *Female Spectator's* tale of Seomanthe, by contrast, quietly ironizes the authority of its female narrator, who writes to show the danger "of laying young people under too great a restraint," only to discern that she is exerting too little restraint over her own "expat[iat]ing" argument; she promptly seeks to redress the discursive balance (2360). The episode performs wisdom more as process than as pronouncement.

Jonathan Swift

Poems *and* The Journal to Stella

An “aubade” is “a musical announcement of dawn, a sunrise song or open-air concert” (OED), and that’s exactly what “A Description of the Morning” sets out to corrupt. (Some call this poem “The Hangover.”) It’s a pleasure to work with this poem’s structures of order and disorder. The poem begins in and reiterates the sense of the present, and a constant, eternal presence: “Now, Now, Now.” What, in fact, does the morning reveal? What spaces are lit up by the sun? Something not unlike cockroaches when the kitchen light turns on. It’s as if the underside of London, the things that live and bloom in darkness, shape the daylight contours: Betty rumples her bed, the duns dog the lords for their debts, the prisoners pretend once again to be imprisoned, the boys head listlessly towards the semblance of an education. What is the order of the aubadic revelation? We see the servants, who imply their masters; we see the public places that imply the private ones; the morning is defined not by its soft colors and sweet scents but by the sights and sounds of urban activity, by the people who work to make appearances work. Morning brings, not decency, not beauty, but the false, fragile semblance of order.

“A Description of a City Shower” offers a similar satiric rumpling of poetic and psychological expectations. As a “georgic,” the poem is supposed to tell us what to do: know the signs, recognize the patterns, learn the tricks. The rain, like the city’s morning sun, reveals the social contours of London even as it obscures physical ones: venting spleens (a physiological complaint or a metaphorical gripe?), vomiting clouds, dust indistinguishable from rain, Tories covering with Whigs. Physical proximity threatens social distance: “Here various kinds by various fortunes led, / Commence acquaintance underneath a shed” (ll. 39–40). Finally, the kennel itself “in huge confluent” carries the whole literal and symbolic mess that pretends to distinguish itself topographically (“Filths of all hues and odors, seem to tell / What streets they sailed from by the sight and smell” [ll. 55–56]), but ironically, of course—who’s going to sort garbage by smell? Students often liven up at the sight of a map; tracing the course of the city’s garbage adds to the ferocious concreteness of the poem. The poem—as *poem*—offers a specious sense of structure and order that comes most beautifully undone in the last triplet, which reads aloud now as richly and rudely and ringingly as it must have done for Swift’s Londoners, spilling its wonderfully fetid imagery into readers’ awareness. The triplet itself, despised by Swift as a cheap trick of prosody, pushes the sense of overflow in repetition. The Alexandrine hexameter (as opposed to the loose heroic couplets of the rest of the poem) gives extra rhyme, extra sounds, extra room, extra time to all these disgusting, mingled things that all lead to a kind of parodic purging. But to what end? What happens, figuratively speaking, to the “pensive cat” (l. 3) by the last line? What kind of purging is possible in this post-diluvian poem?

Stella’s birthday poems come rather sweetly among these selections of Swift’s characteristic explorations of fetidness; they help students understand that Swift was not a sick, twisted mind (often their first delighted or appalled conclusion), but a very caring, committed man who spent a rather large amount of time showing us

our darker, filthier sides in the distant hope of reform. The Stella poems, like the coterie poems in the Behn section, presume an intimate audience but also speak to a larger one. *How* do the poems create that sense? Look at the parentheticals, the asides, the direct addresses. How does the speaker work with his tone? Different students might try out different ways of reading this poem aloud, imagining their Stella in front of them. Which lines would be read “straight,” and which with a half-smile? Which affectionately, which teasingly, which ironically, which sadly, which admiringly?

Students should try to keep the Voice of the Stella poems in mind as they find themselves trapped in “The Lady’s Dressing Room.” This poem shocks students, and asking them to read particularly revolting lines aloud increases the general queasiness, but no one sleeps through this one, and it can open up wonderful discussions. The poem works delightfully on the level of close structural analysis: the first couplet, almost but not quite iambic pentameter, has its last foot cut off, so to speak, in a limping “feminine” or unstressed-syllable ending; it plays mischievously with puns (“void” [l. 5]) and sounds (“issues” and “tissues” are like onomatopoeic sneezes). But of course the big question is “Why?” Why all this intimate dwelling on the disgusting? The question applies not only to Strephon, but also to the narrator, and by implication, that appalled but fascinated voyeur, the reader (“Strephon bids us guess the rest” [l. 16]). It’s useful to ask: can things *really* be this disgusting? Or, as “Celia’s magnifying glass” (l. 60) suggests, is the poem playing on the psychological implications of perspective? Neither the worm nor the squeezing of it, for example, is really there—thing and act are extrapolated by Strephon or the narrator. The voyeurism magnifies the horror; the very act of seeing what one’s not supposed to see lends a darker luster to things that would probably shift to some extent into ordinariness if openly offered. Have a few signs of female physicality been magnified by Strephon into a Brobdingnagian horror-show of Femaleness? Or is Celia particularly filthy in her personal habits; if so, why generalize to all women? Do we think Strephon keeps his own room any better? Who is the real object of satire here? Who’s punished?

That last question is a good opener for *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*, that lively, wicked, fascinating poetic autobiography that pairs so richly with Pope’s *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*. How does the poet construct an image of himself, of his work, of his world? How does Swift use the initial bit of Rochefoucauldian cynicism to present in the end a picture of human generosity? Why does the speaker imaginatively kill himself off as the premise for the poem? How does the poet’s image shift within the various constructions? In the fourth stanza, for example, the poet is One of Us: “I love my friend as well as you, / But would not have him stop my view” (ll. 17–18); not too much further along, however, he inverts Pope’s “damning with faint praise” to praise with faux-envy, thereby revealing himself as a pretty generous-hearted guy: “In Pope, I cannot read a line, / But with a sigh, I wish it mine: / When he can in one couplet fix / More sense than I can do in six” (ll. 47–50). How does dialogue enter and operate? Think especially of the end, when “One quite indifferent in the cause / [His] character impartial draws” (ll. 305–06). It’s a long, long character being drawn, and given its quite favorable re-

view, and given that it is, after all, Swift creating Swift's voice that gives over to the anonymous biographer, there's a lovely subtle irony to be worked out here.

The *Journal to Stella* entry gives us yet another Swiftian voice—playful, cooing, boyish, happy, chatty, silly. What does the genre of a private, *journalized* correspondence permit the writer to say and do in offering a self-portrait, a virtual dialogue, a “converse of the pen”, as Richardson calls it? As Stuart Sherman shows, Swift tries to render contemporaneity, a sense of the immediate, living moment, by constructing scenes that he in London and Stella and Rebecca Dingley in Dublin can share: “He contrives, for example, to simulate second sight and inform the women of what they are doing at the exact instant of his writing, and then later gloats at having done so” (*Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries, and English Diurnal Form 1660–1785* [U of Chicago P, 1996], 176). Political events and social gossip, large thoughts and small speculations, a day's acts and a day's inaction, are all presented as if unsorted, in a jumble that represents the full skein of daily life. The journal can recreate, represent, and stand in for living, speaking, sharing, joking; the journal can be self, other, life.

Gulliver's Travels

Swift wanted his satires to be clear; he read portions of *Gulliver's Travels* aloud to his servants to make sure they could understand every sentence. That deadly clarity has paradoxically produced an extraordinary history of critical ambivalence. The Victorian Thackeray said: “Mr. Dean [Dean Swift] has no softness, and enters the nursery with the tread and gaiety of an ogre. . . . [Book 4] is Yahoo language: a monster, gibbering shrieks and gnashing imprecations against mankind—tearing down all shreds of modesty past all sense of manliness and shame; filthy in word, filthy in thought, furious, raging, obscene” (quoted in Michael Foot's introduction to the Penguin edition [1967], 13). Hazlitt had another view: “Whether the excellence of *Gulliver's Travels* is in the conception or the execution, is of little consequence; the power is somewhere, and it is a power that has moved the world. . . . He enlarges or diminishes the scale, as he wishes to shew the insignificance or grossness of our overweening self-love. [This] he has done . . . with mathematical precision, with complete presence of mind and perfect keeping, in a manner that comes equally home to the understanding of the man and of the child. . . . It is an attempt to tear off the mask of imposture from the world; and nothing but imposture has a right to complain of it” (ibid.). The early twentieth century spent much time on psychoanalyzing Swift; Huxley, Orwell, and Leavis thought him diseased, equating author and text; Norman O. Brown's classic essay “The Excremental Vision” (reprinted in the Norton Critical Edition of Swift's writings) offers a direct Freudian approach to texts and issues; Kathleen Williams in the 1950s finds a “unity and consistency” that are employed for “a positive and constructive purpose.” Swift's alleged misanthropy, his textual preoccupation with scatological imagery, the savageness of his wit, the obscurity of his implied ideal, all continue to insure that, like the critics, students are morally certain to differ in their responses and disagree in their interpretation of the many changing Swiftian voices.

The selections from Book 3, *A Voyage to Laputa*, almost *must* be paired with Perspectives: The Royal Society and the New Science. As Marjorie Hope Nicolson and Nora M. Mohler have shown, though the description of the Academy reads like parody, in many cases Swift simply “set down before his readers experiments actually performed by members of the Royal Society, more preposterous to the layman than anything imagination could invent and more devastating in their satire” (“The Scientific Background of Swift’s *Voyage to Laputa*,” in Nicolson’s *Science and Imagination* [Cornell UP, 1956]). For precisely this reason, students often find this book of *Gulliver’s Travels* to have particularly current resonance, especially if they happen to be familiar with Dave Barry’s reports from Alert Readers about Our Tax Dollars funding various federal experiments on cow flatulence (“I swear I am not making this up”). Students should know about the popularity of “projecting” in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which someone (like Defoe) would come up with a good idea (for new roads, for insurance, for finding buried treasure, for getting sunlight out of cucumbers) and then hunt around for people to fund the project. The projects were sometimes legitimate, but often, of course, scams, as with the machine that would allow “the most ignorant” to write learned books on any subject “without the least assistance from genius or study”—which project “might be still improved, and much expedited, if the public would raise a fund for making and employing five hundred such frames in Lagado, and oblige the managers to contribute in common their several collections” (2395).

The structure of Book 3 is different from the other books (and has been criticized for it), in that it has much less of a story, offering instead a loose collection of anecdotes, snippets, pictures, glimpses. Since we always presume authorial choice, we ask students *why* Swift might have wanted to structure this part of *Gulliver’s Travels* differently. Book 3 as a whole is a larger version of the chapter on the academy, in which each “character” essentially seals himself in his chamber with his experiment that is patently going nowhere. The common denominator of the experiments is that, if they’re not actually destructive (the poor dog bursting from his cure; the plan to sow fields with chaff), they’re simply useless. And that’s just on the “applied science” side of the Academy. The whole Book represents a sort of virtuoso’s collection of unsorted, arbitrarily classified, and useless *things*.

“Things” play an active role of course in the linguistic projects. The passage describing the abolishing of language and adopting the convenience of carrying things around instead, is worth reading aloud and even enacting: “I have often beheld two of those sages almost sinking under the weight of their packs, like peddlers among us; who when they met in the streets would lay down their loads, open their sacks, and hold conversation for an hour together; then put up their implements, help each other to resume their burdens, and take their leave” (2396). This scene can be played out against Sprat’s agenda for linguistic transparency and how, as the teaching suggestions for that piece note, his own ornate rhetoric confounds that agenda.

A complicated but stimulating exercise is to sort out the fine layers of irony in this book. Oddly enough, perhaps the only thing that makes any sense in Book 3 is Gulliver’s own narrative clarity. His habitual naiveté comes closest to supplying

the reader with a standard of normalcy and sense against which all these mad scientists come up so absurd, pathetic, ineffectual, or obstructionist. And this may be largely because most of the experiments speak for themselves, and Gulliver lets them: “I saw another at work to calcine ice into gunpowder, who likewise showed me a treatise he had written concerning the malleability of fire, which he intended to publish” (2393). That’s the entire paragraph. When is irony voiced, when implied? When is the irony directed primarily at something or someone within the text, and when does it pivot out towards us? Why, for example, after Gulliver articulates a common human dream of beneficent immortality, does Swift make the Struldbruggs “opinionated, peevish, covetous, morose, vain, talkative, but incapable of friendship, and dead to all natural affection” (2400)? Why does that particular false utopia get so much narrative space to itself?

Book 4 brings the reader back to the world of story, of near-linear narrative. But the story is a shocking one. The *Voyage to the Houyhnhnms* has been historically the most controversial of the four books, exciting great passions amongst the critics, primarily over the precise satirical status of the Yahoos and the Houyhnhnms. One useful entry into Book 4 is to follow Gulliver’s path of horrified reluctance as he gradually begins to recognize the Yahoos as human. At first, he sees the track of human feet among cows’ and horses’, and then some animals in the field and trees: “Their shape was very singular, and deformed, which a little discomposed me. . . . Upon the whole, I never beheld in all my travels so disagreeable an animal, nor one against which I naturally conceived so strong an antipathy” (2403). In between these observations is the physical description of the Yahoo: is it recognizable? Do students identify the creatures as human on a first reading? Gulliver is discomposed—what part of his composition is upset here? The very first word he learns is “Yahoo,” and it’s the first word he speaks—*announcing himself* (2405). The first Yahoo he examines is “a perfect human figure” (2407); analyze “perfect”—at this time Gulliver is still a Lover of Mankind.

Gulliver’s conversion to the Houyhnhnms brings up the great question about the satiric measure here, the presumed Good against which the Yahoos are judged and condemned. What are the qualities of the Houyhnhnms? Students, like critics through the past two and a half centuries, tend to be divided. On the one hand, they’re ideal inhabitants of Plato’s *Republic*, so they have in fact occupied human imaginations of the utopic; on the other, they’re by definition not human. Why horses, and not lions or tigers or bears? As students familiar with horses often point out, horses are stupid. On the other hand, there’s *Black Beauty* and a long tradition of noble associations. Is the horse an ideal, a joke, or simply alien? Can this satire legitimately propel us into admiration and emulation? Or are we meant to leave both Gulliver and the Houyhnhnms behind in our process of self-reformation?

Besides offering images to nudge the reader’s self-reform, or at least self-recognition, Book 4 also offers *lists*—and some of the best in eighteenth-century literature. As the introduction points out (1987–88), the eighteenth century was generically fond of lists as ways to group and categorize a messy, dangerous, confusing world. Some of Swift’s most poignant satire emerges simply in the litany of

darkly self-explanatory things, such as the list of crimes (2415). It's worth reading aloud the causes of war (2416–17), and then that most fearsomely powerful understatement about the human condition: “What you have told me (said my Master), upon the subject of war, doth indeed discover most admirably the effects of that reason you pretend to: however, it is happy that the *shame* is greater than the danger; and that Nature hath left you utterly incapable of doing much mischief. For your mouths lying flat with your faces, you can hardly bite each other to any purpose, unless by consent” (2417). Gulliver then follows this with the dreadful list of weapons (also worth reading aloud, 2417). Note that the Master's description of the Yahoos (European humans included) immediately follows Gulliver's of Europeans; the same description from different perspectives; an unsettling match of violence, lust, avarice, politicians, dirt, spleen, and sexual vice. Gulliver's standing at the end is a crucial structural point. He has begun to trot and neigh; he rejects his family; he loves his stable and groom, and talks to his horses; he argues his last point against pride: “I here entreat those who have any tincture of this absurd vice, that they will not presume to appear in my sight” (2447). How do those last words position Gulliver within his own argument? Where do we find ourselves vis-à-vis Gulliver? Swift is usually not the gently poking Horatian satirist, but the deeply thrusting Juvenalian. If there is an implied satiric ideal here, where and what is it? Are we Yahoos or not?

COMPANION READINGS

Correspondence

Swift's letter to Pope of 29 September 1725 articulates his most basic and truest vision of satire: “I have ever hated all nations, professions, and communities and all my love is towards individuals” (2447). Unlike Pope, who deliberately targeted those he believed were soiling the halls of literary purity, Swift rarely skewered individuals; he truly meant to skewer all of us, as a species who hubristically define ourselves, à la Aristotle, as rational animals. We are only, says Swift (and Hume) *rationis capax*—capable (pathetically) of reason. That's one reason so many critics over the period have been upset by Swift: he upsets our best constructions of ourselves. Although as Pope points out, “no considerable man [was] very angry at the book” (2448)—it's much easier to exempt oneself from the diatribe if one doesn't feel pinpointed—if we can make *ourselves* “exempt.”

A Modest Proposal *and* Petty's Political Arithmetic

Satire depends upon a sense of humor (gallows or otherwise); the success of something like *A Modest Proposal* depends upon the reader's understanding the precise distance between the narrator's voice and the author's—something that often got satirists in trouble. Swift here introduces a narrator who *cares* about the poverty, the overpopulation, the underemployment of Ireland; his “compassion” moves towards an objective, scientific means of alleviation, parodying at once the bizarre

optimism of projectors and the callousness of the larger (English and even Irish) world towards the calamity at home. He uses the language of the political arithmetic of Petty—"reckoned," "calculate," "subtract," "number" (2452)—in order to introduce a scheme that "will not be liable to the least objection" (2453). Cannibalism, of course, just happens to be one of the deepest human taboos. The charity depends on depravity, the humanity on inhumanity. The speaker goes on for several pages in a mild, reasonable, hopeful voice about the particular delicacies of infants' flesh, its seasonability (like game), the overall expenses involved. The suggestions—in the same mild, benevolent tone—get more and more gruesome: flaying (2454), for example. The elderly, offered as another reasonable concern, are reasonably dealt with: "they are every day dying, and rotting, by cold, and famine, and filth, and vermin, as fast as can be reasonably expected" (2455). The whole project is offered as something that will economically, socially, and politically advantage the troubled country of Ireland. The end of the piece reiterates the horrifying reality: how will anyone "find food and raiment for an hundred thousand useless mouths and backs"? (2457). The last lines declare the narrator's disinterestedness: his own youngest child is nine, his wife is past child-bearing. Much as he'd like to, he can't offer one of his own.

What do any of us do with this? The aching humanity behind this friendly inhumanity makes this text utterly unforgettable. It makes the William Petty reading all the more striking. Petty has it all figured out—the numbers, the reasons, the effects: "then the said people, reckoned as money at 5 percent interest, will yield 3 millions and a half per annum" (2458). England will then be "enriched"; and that's what counts. Petty's postscript argues, much like Swift's narrator, that the overall good includes Ireland as well, offering "a competent livelihood" to all able and interested parties (2458). The sheer emphasis on numbers, on bodies over persons, renders this straightforward text at least as chilling as *A Modest Proposal* itself. We might ask, which should be the "context" piece here?

Alexander Pope

In his *Life of Pope*, Samuel Johnson wrote of the poet: “From his attention to poetry he was never diverted” (*Lives of the Poets*, 1781). Pope’s life, in many ways, was spent in shaping his poetry and at the same time was shaped by the various effects his poetry had on the world around him. Johnson’s details suggest a life spent listening, observing, poised for writing: “If conversation offered anything that could be improved he committed it to paper; if a thought, or perhaps an expression more happy than was common, rose to his mind, he was careful to write it; an independent distich was preserved for an opportunity of insertion, and some little fragments have been found containing lines, or parts of lines, to be wrought upon at some other time.” The continuity Pope created in a life committed to writing—an intensely solitary task—was at the same time the product of a close-knit community of friends. From his days in the Scriblerus Club, Pope created in his writings a confident sense of an always-present, always-understanding audience, intrinsically different from the legion of dunces, hacks, and small-minded critics festering in vast numbers outside the magic circle. This implicit sense of audience that began among a community of authors ties together the community of Pope’s writings, from the freshly confident *Essay on Criticism*, the saucy *Rape of the Lock*, the nostalgic *Windsor-Forest*, the pensive *Eloisa to Abelard*, all the way to the ringing *Essay on Man* and the raging *New Dunciad*. How Pope draws the line between inside understanding and outside idiocy, how he teaches the reader to read and creates a space for reform, is always a useful way to begin ranging around in the vast literary fields of Pope.

A second overarching strategy for approaching Pope is to spend some detailed time on the nature and phenomenon of the heroic couplet. Pope wrote almost *everything* in rhymed iambic pentameter couplets; it’s a staggering thought. He says, “As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame, / I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came” (*Epistle to Arbuthnot*, ll. 128–29, 2539). One tends to believe him. Students should work on getting a good grasp on the couplet from within and without. Getting them to write some heroic couplets helps (although it’s odd how often the idea of scansion seems utterly elusive); there finally (usually) comes a point where the precise, rhythmic, alien form suddenly crosses over into natural speech patterns (one of the form’s virtues, according to eighteenth-century poets), and students “get it.” Then they find they can read the poetry much more clearly; the form no longer gets in the way but—pretty much as Pope claims (“But true expression, like th’ unchanging sun, / Clears and improves what’e’er it shines upon, / It gilds all objects, but it alters none” [*Essay on Criticism*, ll. 315–18, 2468])—clarifies the sense of the subject. Students’ readings then, both internal and oral, tend to open them up oratorically to nuance, pause, and emphasis, away from the metrically monotonous and intellectually unintelligible “da DA da DA da DA da DA da DA.”

Once students understand both the complexity of writing heroic couplets and the equally unexpected ease of reading them, they can begin to apply some formal analysis to the different ways Pope uses the couplet, reproducing “the grandeur

and the sonority of the lines in which ancient poets composed their epics” in order “to encompass all the things and actions of the world” (see the period introduction, 1997). By the time they come through on the other side, they should be dazzled.

An Essay on Criticism

“The things I have written fastest have always pleased most. I wrote the *Essay on Criticism* fast, for I had digested all the matter in prose before I began upon it in verse”—so Pope said to his friend Joseph Spence in February or March 1735 (Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men, Collected from Conversation*, ed. James M. Osborn [Clarendon Press, 1966], #107). Yet as Johnson illustrates in his *Life of Pope*, this boast can be misleading; Pope may sometimes have been fast in his creation, but never *hasty*. As Johnson puts it, “To make verses was his first labor, and to mend them was his last.” The *Essay on Criticism* is a study of the art of writing, the art of reading, and the art of analyzing literature (very useful for the instruction and delight of young persons). It enjoyed virtually all of the success for which the young aspiring poet hoped; Dennis hated it, but for Dennis, all things Popean “[looked] yellow to [his] jaundiced eye” (*EC*, ll. 558–59, 2473). Addison, on the other hand, praised the poem in almost the same terms that the poem determines for praise: “*The Art of Criticism* [i.e. *An Essay on Criticism*] . . . is a masterpiece in its kind. The observations follow one another like those in Horace’s *Art of Poetry*, without that methodical regularity which would have been requisite in a prose author. They are some of them uncommon, but such as the reader must assent to, when he sees them explained with that elegance and perspicuity in which they are delivered. As for those which are the most known, and the most received, they are placed in so beautiful a light, and illustrated with such apt allusions, that they have in them all the graces of novelty, and make the reader, who was before acquainted with them, still more convinced of their truth and solidity” (*Spectator* No. 253, 20 December 1711). What oft was thought but ne’er so well expressed? Sorting out the basic precepts makes a good basic exercise that can be highlighted with marking and paraphrasing those phrases and epigrams that made their way into proverbial status and still have currency today (“fools rush in,” etc.). (A brief look at *Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations*, in print or online, produces instant respect.) And perhaps the most pointed place to begin is with the criterion: “A perfect judge will read each work of wit / With the same spirit that its author writ”; and with the advice: “In every work regard the writer’s end” (*EC* 233–34, 255, 2466).

The most famous passage is typically the most pleasurable and profitable for students to play with—the stanza in which Pope teaches by example: “A needless Alexandrine ends the song, / That like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along” (ll. 356–57; the passage begins “But most by numbers judge a poet’s song” [l. 337, 2468]). Precisely what students often expect of and dread in Pope’s poetry is anticipated and dissolved in this passage; Pope teaches us to read his poetry by distinguishing the subtle from the unsubtle ways of doing the job. The *effort* put

into the art of writing heroic couplets emerges briefly here—the effort that, once mastered, disappears back into a now-complicated sense of fluid ease: “True ease in writing comes from art, not chance, / As those move easiest who have learned to dance” (ll. 362–63).

The eighteenth-century preoccupations with politeness as well as learning and sense are addressed in lines 572–83 (see period introduction, 1988); to what extent does this poem follow its own moral and pedagogical precepts as well as it does its poetic principles?

The “little learning” passage (ll. 215–32, 2466) is a good place to see how Pope builds the couplet into verse arguments (see J. Paul Hunter, “Form as Meaning: Pope and the Ideology of the Couplet,” *The Eighteenth-Century: Theory and Interpretation*, 37:3 [Fall 1996], 257–70). It also connects well with the fissures of doubt that attended the new realms of scientific “enlightenment” illustrated by the selections in *Perspectives: Mind and God*:

While from the bounded level of our mind,
 Short views we take, nor see the lengths behind,
 But more advanced, behold with strange surprise
 New, distant scenes of endless science rise!
 So pleased at first, the towering Alps we try,
 Mount o'er the vales, and seem to tread the sky;
 Th' eternal snows appear already past,
 And the first clouds and mountains seem the last:
 But those attained, we tremble to survey
 The growing labors of the lengthened way,
 Th' increasing prospect tires our wandering eyes,
 Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise!

Issues of perspective, of changing lenses, connect a number of texts in this period selection, and Pope's poetry, historically as well as ideologically central and reflective, offers a good point for summary and anticipation.

Windsor-Forest

This poem was written, in its two stages, to celebrate a number of pasts (England's and Pope's) and a number of futures (Britain's and the world's). Pope pieces together memory, imagery, history, mythology, and prophecy in complicated ways; students might pick one strand, follow it through, and describe how it relates to the poem as a whole. It's often helpful to have them write a very brief explication of a short passage; one close reading can open up key issues of meaning, form, and context. How does the poem use hunting as a displaced image of war throughout the poem? What varying perspectives does the poem offer on both hunting and war? The hunting of the partridge is compared parenthetically—“(if small things we may with great compare)” (l. 105)—to England eagerly bent on taking “some thoughtless town, with ease and plenty blessed” (l. 107); the perspective is that of

the hunter moving closer and closer until he seizes the surprised prey, and “high in air Britannia’s standard flies” (l. 110). But then the perspective suddenly shifts in the next stanza: the invocation “See!” is to the reader, who then “sees” the scene from the perspective of the victim. The pheasant’s triumphant flight ends in a graphic, lingering death (“he feels the fiery wound, / Flutters in blood, and panting beats the ground” [ll. 113–24]). We get to “know” that whirring pheasant in some detail—his colors, his crest, his eyes, his feathers, his wings, his breast. Then scene follows scene of hares, lapwings, perch, eels, carp, trouts, pikes, harts, unceasingly hunted. The final shift from country pastime into familiar mythology moves us into identification with a human figure: Lodona pursued by Pan, his “sounding steps” catching up with her, his shadow overtaking her, his breath on her neck—all the panic of the chase and the complicated implications of escape and release. How does the poem work all these different perspectives into its accounts of English history and a British future? Although the image of Britannia’s standard waves over a number of stanzas, does this poem present an unambivalent imperialism?

This poem, particularly the episode of the whirring pheasant, is also useful for illustrating a particular brand of eighteenth-century poetic detail. “Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature,” said Johnson (2755), who elsewhere counselled against numbering the stripes of a particular tulip (2749). A visual image must capture the “general nature” of something with one powerful adjective: “whirring pheasant,” “scarlet-circled eyes,” “clam’rous lapwings,” “leaden death,” “quiv’ring shade,” “scaly breed”—the scene abounds with model tags. The poetic world is colorful, memorable, distinctively drawn and universally applicable. This kind of visual detail smooths the move from particular to general, from scene to analogy; the world of things and the world of interpretation are poetically entwined.

The Rape of the Lock *and* Sarpedon’s speech from *The Iliad*

In 1818 William Hazlitt commented about the *Rape*: “It is like looking through a microscope, where every thing assumes a new character and a new consequence, where things are seen in their minutest circumstances and slightest shades of difference; where the little becomes gigantic, the deformed beautiful, and the beautiful deformed” (*Lectures on the English Poets* [London, 1818], 4:142). Making connections with the selections from Boyle’s *Meditations* and Hooke’s *Micrographia* can show how the “new science” offered new opportunities for poetic experiment and imagery. The microscope and the telescope (the latter makes an actual appearance within the poem as “Galileo’s eyes” [5.138]) supply images through which to analyze the exaggeration and miniaturization of the poem, to see how the “mock” transforms in paradoxical ways the “epic.”

This poem can be approached in so many ways. The most obvious beginning is to sort out the precise distances between “the trivial *matter* and the heroic *manner*,” as the introduction suggests. Comparing Sarpedon’s speech to Clarissa’s is an excellent beginning. Pope had much earlier than the publication of the *Iliad* itself

published a translation of Sarpedon's speech in the 1709 *Miscellany*, so Clarissa's speech (added in 1717 to "*open more clearly the MORAL of the poem*") was already a parody of his own text. Where does he strike out differences? What is the difference in the contexts of the two speeches? in their intended audiences? and in their effects? Why does Pope make the speaker of the moral the same character who hands the Baron the scissors in the first place (3.127–30)?

Pope's poetic technique is at its most dazzling here. Take students through the rich connections of zeugma: "Or stain her honor, or her new brocade" (2.107); "Dost sometimes counsel take—and sometimes tea" (3.8). And through the interpretive prisms of metonymy: Belinda's dressing table, on which India and Arabia are reduced (1.129–36), or Japan and China on "the board" (3.105–12), the poem at once celebrating and satirizing the symbols of imperialism. Visit the dark corners of the mind in the Cave of Spleen, where boundaries of gender and identity blur: "A pipkin there like Homer's tripod walks; / Here sighs a jar, and there a goose pie talks; / Men prove with child, as pow'rful fancy works, / And maids turned bottles, call aloud for corks" [4.51–54]). And what do students think Belinda means when she cries out, "Oh hadst thou, cruel! been content to seize / Hairs less in sight, or any hairs but these!" (4.175–76)? (John Dennis was incensed at the implicit obscenity here; students don't have to worry that they're "reading into" the poem some 1990s sexual sophistication or deviance.)

That last question can lead into the overarching and contested issue of the "rape" itself. The Latin word *rapere* means to "carry away"; the lock is literally stolen. But "rape" then as now had its violent sexual meaning; of what else is Belinda "raped"? How do the genderless—or cross-gendering—sylphs fit into the scenario? Why does an "earthly lover lurking at her heart" (3.144) become the crux of vulnerability? What, in this central interpretive issue, are the "epic" meanings and the "mock-epic" exaggerations? *Windsor-Forest* ends with the poet modestly asserting a humble Muse, unambitious strains, careless days, and retired content; but the last line does remind us of the "I [that] sung the sylvan strains"; the end of *The Rape of the Lock* (and of *Eloisa to Abelard*, and the whole of *Epistle to Arbuthnot*) sings the power of the poet in the scheme of representation. It's always worth studying Pope's construction of the poet in his poems; in his life he did much both to professionalize the poet—to pull away from the system of private patronage and move into the public world of booksellers and publishing—and to privatize the realm of poetry, to authorize the writing of self along with monarch, national events, philosophical issues. (Aphra Behn is another, earlier figure in this development of the professionalized writer—one who writes for bread—publicly writing about a private self.) The final stanza recommends, with an implicit "I," that Belinda cease to mourn her ravished hair; she should instead cheer up because the Muse is about to make her immortal; the story is about the rape of Belinda's lock, but it's also very much about the telling of the rape of the lock.

Eloisa to Abelard

In this poem Pope assumes the voice and perspective of a woman to explore the experience of anguished, solitary love. In some ways this poem is biographically

allegorical: politically disenfranchised, religiously marginalized, and sexually disadvantaged, Pope himself was immured and wounded; he was also at this time writing half-witty, half-anguished letters of “epistolary gallantry” to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu as she travelled in Europe towards Turkey with her husband. At some points he would be imagining her “soul stark naked, for I am confident ‘tis the prettiest kind of white soul, in the universe” (1 September 1718); other times he would confess, “I can’t go on in this style: I am not able to think of you without the utmost seriousness, and if I did not take a particular care to disguise it, my letters would be the most melancholy things in the world” (October 1716). It’s a toss-up whether Pope gives “Eloisa” a voice, or Eloisa gives Pope one.

The form of heroic epistle allows Eloisa to create the fiction of a dialogue with her absent lover, or attempt the reality of a dialogue with God, but the very presumption of the form underscores a sense of isolation, futility, and silence engulfing the voice, the constructed “conversation.” How does the poem formally and imaginatively negotiate the tensions between the “erotic and pious, gothic and tender”? Spend some time on the rhyme, for example. “Love” frequently ends a line, and yet is never matched up with an exact rhyme; the oral union of sound, like the intellectual union of resolution, always slips away (“remove,” “prove,” “move”). “God,” too, never finds an exact rhyme (it’s always “abode,” an implicitly unstabling housing of thought), and in fact “God” appears much more rarely than “love” in the authoritative position of an end rhyme. The key rhymes, like Eloisa’s earthly/divine dilemma, find no resolution.

The story, in fact, is passed into mediation: Eloisa imagines “some future bard” who, also condemned to lovers’ separation, will join his own griefs to hers and tell the story. The poet thus once again emerges in the final lines, simultaneously appropriating Eloisa’s voice as he voices her story.

Epistle to Burlington

“In the greatest literary document of the neo-Palladian movement, the *Epistle to Burlington*, Pope moves naturally from the pompous utility of Roman architecture (ll. 23–24) to the old English patriarchal ideal of rural landownership (ll. 181–86), and then, in the remaining verses to the end of the poem, just as naturally to an expansive vision of healthy national cultural renewal expressed in great and noble civic building” (James Sambrook, *The Eighteenth Century: The Intellectual and Cultural Contexts of English Literature, 1700–1789* [Longman, 1990], 161). Pope’s poetry and Pope’s world-view always look for integration, coherence, a fundamental relationship between form and content, inside and outside, appearance and function. “‘Tis use alone that sanctifies expense, / And splendor borrows all her rays from sense” (ll. 179–80).

This poem could be taught along with other “country house poems” in this anthology, and/or with the “Perspectives: Landscape, Pleasure, Power” in this period section. What is the ideology of wealth here? In some ways Pope’s poem departs from the usual requirement of the country house poem—that owner and tenant, house and land, all coexist in mutual obligation and support; tenant works for

owner, owner protects tenant, owner hunts and fishes, game and fish leap onto owner's table. Pope's vision here is primarily aesthetic; "sense" is to be applied to the owner's and visitor's use and pleasure, not to a larger social ecosystem. (One brief stanza excepted: in Timon's villa, that "huge heap of littleness," at least "the poor are clothed, the hungry fed; / Health to himself, and to his infants bread / The lab'rer bears: what his hard heart denies, / His charitable vanity supplies" [ll. 169–72]. In an odd move, even senseless wealth, architecturally depicted, has its justification.)

Students can sort out first the aesthetic requirements and then their stated or implicit social and political correspondents. If possible, illustrations of some of the real Palladian "villas" would help tremendously; particularly for American students, the traditional descriptive language of country house poetry (even the terms "house" or "villa" themselves) conjures up something almost cozy in size and appearance—nothing remotely like Penshurst, Prior Park, Hagley, or Stowe. Pope's poem witnesses a change in aesthetic preference; at Timon's villa the garden is in the formal Versailles style: "Grove nods at grove, each alley has a brother, / And half the platform just reflects the other" (ll. 117–18). What is the aesthetic (i.e. conceptual) advantage in "pleasing intricacies" and "artful wildness"? As the texts in "Landscape, Pleasure, Power" suggest, perspective was shifting from the owner's architectural self-statement to the observer's interpretation; the ideas of solitude and individuality were investing all aspects of life. And in this poem, as in all of Pope's poems, there's at least one couplet that could be used to define Pope's poetic art itself: "He gains all points, who pleasingly confounds, / Surprises, varies, and conceals the bounds" (ll. 55–56). Following his own instructions in the *Essay on Criticism*, Pope carefully constructs his art and just as carefully conceals its artfulness, "as those move easiest who have learned to dance." How does this poem, in overall structure and local detail, conform to its own precepts for use and beauty and sense in architecture and landscape design?

from An Essay on Man

Pope published this poem anonymously, and watched with wicked interest as his enemies, while assiduously attacking his other works and the patently evil mind behind them, praised the *Essay on Man* to the skies for its wisdom, probity, freshness, and moral inspiration. (Later editions of the *Essay* include portions of those rave reviews.) Few thought there was anything original in the work, but that was scarcely the point; most praise closely conformed to the precepts in the *Essay on Criticism* in finding it "true wit"—"What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed" (*EC*, ll. 297–98).

Pope himself had long mulled over the basic claims of perspective, human inconsistency, divine order, and the interconnectedness of things. In an early letter to Joseph Addison he wrote: "Good God! What an incongruous animal is man? how unsettled in his best part, his soul; and how changing and variable in his frame of body? . . . What is man altogether, but one mighty inconsistency! . . . What a bustle we make about passing our time, when all our space is but a point? . . . Our whole extent of being no more, in the eyes of him who gave it, than a

scarce perceptible moment of duration. Those animals whose circle of living is limited to three or four hours, as the naturalists assure us, are yet as long-lived and possess as wide a scene of action as man, if we consider him with an eye to all space, and all eternity. Who knows what plots, what achievements a mite may perform in his kingdom of a grain of dust, within his life of some minutes? and of how much less consideration than even this, is the life of man in the sight of that God, who is from Ever, and for Ever!" (14 December 1713).

The opening stanza of the *Essay on Man* sets up the perspective—and the issues of perspective—for the whole poem: the speaker and the philosopher Bolingbroke will together explore the “scene of man” which turns out to be “A mighty maze! but not without a plan” (l. 6). The image of the maze is deliberate: a garden fancy, a popular human construction, a very earthbound and recognizable image. The perspective is consistently human, grounded, looking down towards insects and mites, or up towards God and angels, but never assuming omniscience in all its assertions of God’s omniscience. Students can trace the consistency of this perspective and discuss the ways it connects to the overall argument of design.

In the “Design” of this poem, Pope explains that he chose verse instead of prose to distill and present the argument. How does he explain the advantages of verse in philosophy? As the selections in the “Mind and God” section show, philosophy doesn’t typically represent itself poetically. How does Pope’s “design” fit in with “God’s”? This poem works perhaps best of all for students’ understanding of the relationship between form and function. This is a poem about ontological order that employs the ultimate in poetic order not only to explain but to illustrate—almost to prove—the “argument by design.” Each word, each line, each stanza, each section relates to every other. It’s an architectural masterpiece, and students tend to enjoy finding and explicating those connections. All those connections must, in the end, lead to the intensely controversial claim (then as now): “Whatever IS, is RIGHT” (l. 294). How do students debate that claim? Do any feel that this confident, assured poem has any interesting fissures in its (assertions of) plenitude? The same kind of rhetorical analysis that was suggested for the selections in “The New Science” can work well here in precisely these intersections of perspective, assertion, and implication.

An Epistle from Mr. Pope, to Dr. Arbuthnot

This formal “apology” is in one sense Pope’s autobiography, and in another a biography of his time, in which “many will know their own pictures” (2535). It is perhaps the most fully grounded in precise, local, unexaggerated detail of all his poems, almost novelistic in its use of dialogue and the immediate intersections of time and space: “Shut, shut the door, good John! fatigued I said, / Tie up the knocker, say I’m sick, I’m dead” (ll. 1–2). What other details throughout the poem contribute to the creation of a real, believable, concrete world? To what extent does a “real world” contribute to the “reality” of the self-construction and self-explanation here?

Compare this poem to *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*. How are the major sections of the poem arranged? The breathlessness of the opening lines suggests Pope

has just barely made it inside, hotly pursued by hordes of would-be poets. “What walls can guard me, or what shades can hide? / They pierce my thickets, thro’ my grot they glide” (ll. 7–8). Pope has become a spectacle in his own time. Once “inside,” he has time and space to analyze the problem, consider the causes (going back through his own childhood), study his actions and others’ reactions, ponder the unfairness of it all, utter a few last wan words of blessing on his friend and a wish for peace for himself and his mother, and in the whole process create a kind of textual protection that reveals the “true” Pope and wards off both attacks and unreasonable appeals. What is the image of Pope created and offered here? What “evidence” does Pope use to support that image? In an unexpected way, the methods of this poem intersect with those of Defoe: historical data—names and places and numbers and lists—play a powerful part.

One particularly useful approach to understanding this self-construction pivots on Pope’s deformity. Pope was haunted all his life by enemies playing viciously on his humped back and shortened stature, calling him toad, spider, ape. Pope first marches painfully through the “helpfulness” of “friends”: “There are, who to my person pay their court, / I cough like Horace, and though lean, am short, / Ammon’s great son one shoulder had too high, / Such Ovid’s nose, and ‘Sir! you have an eye—’ / Go on, obliging creatures, make me see / All that disgraced my betters, met in me” (ll. 115–20). Helen Deutsch argues: “In Pope’s literary self-fashioning . . . deformity and poetic form create the ultimate couplet, guaranteeing the author, if not possession of his text, at least a kind of patent on it. . . . [A]n ability to anticipate and manipulate such responses [informs] Pope’s career-long strategies of self-authorization” (“The Truest Copies’ and the ‘Mean Original’: Pope’s Deformity and the Poetics of Self-Exposure,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 27:1 [Fall 1993]: 6). Watch for the ways Pope uses animal imagery back: particularly with Sporus (Lord Hervey), that insect, that spaniel, that familiar toad who “Half froth, half venom, spits himself abroad” (ll. 319–20), and even worse, that “Amphibious Thing! that acting either part, / The trifling head, or the corrupted heart!” (ll. 356–27).

The *Epistle to Arbuthnot* draws local portraits as well as the poet’s own. Perhaps one of the most famous in the gallery of insults is Pope’s portrait of Addison (Atticus, ll. 193–214), who so memorably damns with faint praise, and assents with civil leer. Have students take this apart, to see its own deft balance of faint praise, civil leer, attack and regret. And the brief, sharp portrait of Gay, or rather, Gay’s career (ll. 256–60)? In some sense Pope’s portraits, indeed the entire poem, answers his own apparently rhetorical question: “Heav’ns! was I born for nothing but to write?” (l. 272). Well, of Gay’s “blameless life the sole return” seems to have been Pope’s epitaph on his tomb; and much of his poetry seems designed to have a real, concrete effect upon the world, to change things by rewriting them. This poem, unlike many, does not end with the poet reinscribing the ultimate powers of poetry in the last line; but then, this whole poem is the autobiography of a poet.

from The Dunciad, Book 4

The New Dunciad is the darkest and harshest of all of Pope’s works; Pat Rogers sums up a frequent critical suspicion that there is “something ill-proportioned” about its

shape, that the new events in the new book are not fully integrated into the poem as a whole. The scope of the satire widens considerably, from the original “plague of authors and a publishing ecodisaster” to “a vision of ubiquitous moral, political, and social decay” (“Literature,” *Eighteenth-Century Britain: The Cambridge Cultural History*, ed. Boris Ford [Cambridge UP, 1991, 1992], 177). Students of course won’t be able to analyze such a formal criticism with the selections here, but they should have a sense of apocalypse, of a poem very different in tone and structure from, say, *The Rape of the Lock*. What are the elements of darkness, of stasis employed in these stanzas? How do the different parts feed into and upon each other? Rogers’s term “ecodisaster” seems apt: Pope has always used poetic structures to illustrate ontological infrastructures; here, the interconnections of education, travel, experimentation, natural philosophy, religion, law, politics, and art all damage each other, all need each other to die. And this poem ends without even the hope of Poetry and the Poet for future reclamation: the hand of the Anarch, not the pen of the poet, closes the poem, and “Universal Darkness buries All.” Students might choose a particular passage, a particular image, and sort out the realistic from the surrealistic detail, using other texts in the period as bases for measurement. The texts in “The New Science” or “Mind and God,” for example, can help plot a cultural and imaginative trajectory that leads to Swift’s Academy in Book 3 of *Gulliver’s Travels*, or to the point in the *Dunciad* where the Goddess reminds her sons: “Yet by some object every brain is stirred; / The dull may waken to a hummingbird; / The most recluse, discreetly opened find / Congenial matter in the cockle kind; / The mind, in metaphysics at a loss, / May wander in a wilderness of moss; / The head that turns at superlunar things, / Poised with a tail, may steer on Wilkins’ wings” (ll. 445–52). What does Pope find missing from such attention to detail? In what ways do the contemporary religious and scientific “explanations” of the world lead to the dismantling of it? How does the *Dunciad* portray an anti-world, a structure of dissolution, the very opposite of that produced in *An Essay on Man*? And how can the world-order so confidently asserted in the *Essay on Man* permit the world of the *Dunciad* to come into being?

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

The selections of Montagu's writings presented here—of the kinds of things she chose to write about and the ways she chose to present them—permit a brief but accurate glimpse into a very complex mind. Lytton Strachey, with typical sweep, called it a mind of an age: “She was, like her age, cold and hard; she was infinitely unromantic; she was often cynical, and sometimes gross” (“Lady Mary,” *Biographical Essays*, 1907). Presumably not only the Montagu selections here, but the selections for the “age” belie Strachey's characterization; still, Lady Mary was at once stoic and sensual, serious and witty, learned and graceful, careful and contemptuous. She knew her Newton, but at times could say: “I allow you to laugh at me for the sensual declaration that I had rather be a rich Effendi with all his ignorance, than Sir Isaac Newton with all his knowledge” (Letter to Abbé Conti, 19 May 1718, in Robert Halsband's edition of her letters [Clarendon Press, 1965], 3:23). On the other hand, she was committed to the rigors of honest self-scrutiny; she knew her Locke as well: “The most certain security would be that diffidence which naturally arises from an impartial self-examination. But this is the hardest of all tasks, requiring great reflection, long retirement, and is strongly repugnant to our own vanity, which very unwittingly reveals even to our selves our common frailty, though it is every way a useful study. Mr. Locke (who has made a more exact dissection of the human mind than any man before him) declares he gained all his knowledge from the consideration of himself. It is indeed necessary to judge of others” (to Lady Bute, 1 March 1754; Halsband, 3:48). All of Montagu's writings here reveal sharp powers of observation and analysis of both self and others.

What does Montagu's choice of the epistolary form as vehicle for her travel narratives permit her, that a straightforward essay would not? (In other words, why might she choose to retain the epistolary form for the entire collection to be published posthumously?) What kind of a cultural and social critic is she? How does she approach foreign customs and habits? How “fair” does she seem to us? One way of approaching these questions is to look at the way she balances perspective: sometimes she is the observer (her entrance into and description of the bagnio), sometimes the observed (“I believe in the whole there were two hundred women, and yet none of those disdainful smiles or satiric whispers that never fail in our assemblies when anybody appears that is not dressed exactly in fashion” [2559]). To what extent does she familiarize the foreign by translating it into English terms (“'tis the women's coffee house” [2560]), and to what extent does she let things remain alien? And what is her tone towards unassimilable difference? (“I own I cannot *accustom myself to this fashion* to find any beauty in it” [2561; emphasis added].)

It is also worth pursuing Montagu's talent with detail—the luxuriance and precision of the Turkish ladies' dress (2561) makes that distant world present, fresh, vivid, *real*—the whole point of legitimate travel narratives.

Analyzing Montagu's discussion of women and gender-related issues will discover more layers of intellectual and rhetorical complexity. Compare the account of the veiling of Muslim women (2561–62), the advice to her daughter suggesting

that a woman should “conceal whatever learning she attains” (2564), and the point in the “Epistle from Mrs. Yonge to her Husband” when the speaker notes that though “I hide my frailty from the public view,” her vindictive, philandering husband pursues her even “to this last retreat” (ll. 47, 52, p. 2566). In what ways are the veils, masquerades, concealments of women liberating? Self-generated? Counter-productive? Paradoxical? Futile?

Montagu observes and records a female world constructed of imposed contradictions, a world in which it becomes virtually impossible to live straightforwardly. The poem “The Lover: A Ballad,” for example, even as it constructs an ideal, implicitly acknowledges the limits of even imaginative possibility. (This speaker, after all, imagines a clandestine lover, not a *husband*—though marriage, as Astell, Finch, and others point out, is the culturally produced dream of every girl, the chance of finding a good husband is, according to Montagu, one in ten thousand [2565].) And most poignantly, why is “The Lover” a *ballad*? The form predetermines the futility of the vision.

In “The Reasons that Induced Dr. S. to write a Poem called *The Lady’s Dressing Room*,” how does Montagu play with male/female perspectives to show in yet another form the kinds of contradictory expectations and interpretations of women that men employ? Isobel Grundy argues that the poem is “a virtuoso pattern-book of Swiftian technique: rapid narrative, ruminative digression, pedantic analogies, scatological or titillating detail. But one weapon of Pope [Montagu] avoids; her rebukes to [Swift], unlike her rebuke to Bathurst, make no use of idealizing self-construction” (Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *Essays and Poems and Simplicity, A Comedy*, ed. Robert Halsband and Isobel Grundy [Clarendon Press, 1993], xviii). Like Behn’s “The Disappointment,” this poem shows a “reality” of male inadequacy that male prose and male posturing will try to efface or explain away (“The fault is not in me. / Your damned close stool so near my nose . . . / Would make a Hercules as tame” [ll. 69–72, p. 2570]). But in a way the poet does make some use of idealizing self-construction. The last line of the poem takes up, in a rather new way, the literary tradition of privileging the author, of giving the poet the final word, the final power of creation: “She answered short, ‘I’m glad you’ll write. / You’ll furnish paper when I shite’” (ll. 88–89). The speaker, in conversation, and the poet, in the final couplet, pronounce in chorus their comment on the literal and poetic future of the frustrated male poet’s textual revenge.

John Gay

In order to grasp the pleasures and intricacies of the *Opera*, students need to hear the music. It's a good idea to make available to them a full recording, and to play a few of Gay's most artful arias as part of the lecture and/or discussion (a few suggestions follow). Many recordings distort the music with patently twentieth-century re-orchestrations. Jeremy Barlow's rendition, by contrast, is scrupulously authentic and gloriously vivid (*John Gay's The Beggar's Opera*, The Broadside Band, Hyperion CDA66591/2); it comes complete with dialogue (brilliantly performed), and is ardently recommended.

It is worthwhile in class to attend to the *Opera's* opening moments fairly carefully, in order to show how deliberately and deftly Gay disorients his audience. The piece's title promises an opera, and the opening night audience (including, according to the next day's papers, "a prodigious concourse of Nobility and Gentry") would surely have expected to hear music from start to finish. Instead, Gay gives them two men talking—they establish, among other things, that in this "opera" recitative will be supplanted by talk. (One consequence is that the songs contrast their "surroundings" more sharply than in opera: they burst in with heightened energy and artifice. The modern "book" musical derives, of course, from Gay's strategies here.)

Only now does the overture commence, followed by Peachum's opening number. It's worth hearing in class, because it states compactly (and to an interestingly melancholy tune) one of the arguments central to the whole. In the punch line, Peachum makes clear that he is more "honest" than the great men in the world (and in the audience) because, while he practices the same chicaneries as they, he knows (unlike them) who he is and what he's up to. For an audience so freshly set adrift amid the genre-disorientations of the past few minutes, Peachum's confident knowingness must exert a strong appeal, but at a semi-comic cost. In grabbing on to his witty and persuasive outlook as a spar amid the muddle, they become complicit in calling their own bluff.

In fact the whole musical strategy of the ballad opera is well-designed to keep the audience off balance, oscillating rapidly between knowingness and uncertainty. They would know each familiar tune within the first bar or two, but would be unable to forecast what new lyrics Gay would supply—what new tone and texture he'd import. A famous instance is Air 6 (worth playing), sung to music by Henry Purcell whose original lyric was a deeply conventional love-lament sung by a young suitor about the object of his desire: "What shall I do to show how much I love her? / How many millions of sighs can suffice?" Gay reverses the gender and immeasurably complicates the situation. Polly sings the song, in an attempt to persuade her father that she is as calculating as he wants her to be—teasing presents out of Macheath without surrendering "what is most material," her chastity. And yet the new lyric smacks more of vulnerability than of avarice. "Virgins are like the fair flower," capable of attracting "gaudy butterflies" (like the young lover of Purcell's aria?), but susceptible to rapid ruin. In the song's second half, Polly traces the "plucked" flower to Covent Garden, site of theaters, floral markets, and prostitutes, where the flower (like the deflowered virgin) "rots, stinks, and dies, and is

trod under feet.” The downward motion is Swiftian in its savagery (compare the last lines of “City Shower,” the whole of “A Lady’s Dressing Table”), and runs directly counter to Purcell’s original, in whose second half (with its brightening from minor into major), the young man redoubles his idealistic amorous resolve: “I will love her more than man e’er loved before me. . . .” And yet all the while, Polly’s litany of cynicism and fragility, decay and despair, is suffused with the sweetness of Purcell’s original air, and with the echo of its young lover’s passionate, hollow protestations. Gay’s song, wrote the musicologist Charles Burney, quickly became “the favorite tune in the *Beggar’s Opera*,” perhaps because it epitomized the whole. Here and throughout, the audience is prompted to move rapidly (even concurrently) among a wide range of emotions and responses, sometimes conflicting, but curiously coinciding. Disorientation has by now become a source of fascination, a rich and various form of pleasure.

Much of the pleasure and fascination centers on the figure of Macheath. His name suggests a “son of the open field,” and more than any other character he embodies the volatility of genre—the free, rapid, and inspired shifts from mode to mode—that Gay had built into the entire structure. Macheath is both dashing and easily duped, brilliant and a bit of a jerk. But his passion for remaining at large, for exercising his liberty to the fullest, for exploiting others at no cost to himself, made him attractive to many in Gay’s time and after (James Boswell was perhaps the Captain’s most ardent hero-worshipper). Macheath’s charisma as a gallant comes through most clearly perhaps in the gorgeous Air 16, where Gay enacts remoteness in various ways: by the song’s fantastical geography; by retaining the tune’s famous refrain (“Over the hills and far away”) but delaying it to the very end (two lines later than in the original); by implying the remoteness of any possibility that Macheath actually means anything he sings to Polly. For sheer volatility, nothing surpasses the near-lunatic sequence of airs (58–67) which Macheath sings, one after another, while in prison awaiting execution. Here the operatic predicament and the mostly homespun melodies collide head-on. The heroes of opera and tragedy, Gay suggests, are really no more than this: scared, self-interested scoundrels singing their torment in a fancier dress. At the same time, the speed with which Macheath shifts from tune to tune makes his panic palpable, even pitiable (and comic too, in his devotion to drink). Sending up the heroes of grander genres, he manages also to join their number—not so much a mock hero as an anti-hero, a genuine hero for degenerate times. Macheath makes real the paradox implicit in Swift’s original hint about a “Newgate pastoral.” Newgate is a place of confinement, the pastoral a genre devoted to celebrating the exuberant freedom of shepherds’ lives. Macheath is that freedom principle incarnate and rerouted: moved into—and finally out of—the walls of Newgate.

The “happy ending” that sets him free affords one last instance of Gay’s ingenious doubling. (Weill and Brecht rework it compactly and brilliantly in *The Threepenny Opera*, and a recording of that work’s final song is worth playing too.) On the one hand, we know the ending to be “false,” generated by the characters’ desires and our own rather than by any likelihoods in the narrative. On the other hand, we know the ending to be true: the “great men” for whom Macheath and Peachum here serve as figures do indeed get away with this sort of thing (and

worse) every day. By now, after some two hours of Gay's sublime and subliminal tutelage, we have perhaps become masters of disorientation, able to navigate it for all the multiple and intricate pleasures it affords.

Three points about the play as satire:

The political satire is worth noting, explaining, and enjoying, but not perhaps obsessing over: point-for-point correspondences between Macheath's world and Walpole's are in fact rather elusive, and if students come to think of the whole thing as "code," more crackable by its contemporaries than by us, they will surrender some of their capacity to savor other features of Gay's exuberant mockery. Colin Nicholson sketches the underlying politics succinctly: "Within a parody of currently fashionable Italian opera, [Gay's] immediate joke, of course, lay in the projection of London as a den of thieves, with the political bite of the satire coming from the implicit and wholesale indictment of the Whig administration in general and Walpole in particular. If we had no further evidence that the ascendant Hanoverian Whigs who rode to power on the back of the new finance and stayed there after the collapse of the South Sea Company appeared to some contemporaries as no more than a state banditry, then Gay's manipulation of the comic-opera would remain convincing testimony" (*Writing and the Rise of Finance* [Cambridge UP, 1994], 123–24).

Gay's sendup of crime literature is less often attended to but very fruitful. What made crime writing so popular was the writer's implicit promise to show readers a profoundly "other" world, a world concurrent with their own in time and space, but virtually invisible to them in daily life. Gay's counter-argument: the criminal world is neither a parallel world nor an invisible world; it is instead the very world we live in, work in, and profit by every day. Hogarth's painting, in which audience and actors occupy the same Newgate space, helps drive the point home.

Finally, Gay writes a satire of gender relations at times almost Wildean in its inversions, forthrightness, and surprises. One of the easiest ways into the piece is to spend some time on the early dialogue among Peachum, his wife, and Polly on the subject of marriage. It plays out Peachum's earlier assertion that he (and by extension, his clan) are more honest and astute than most about who they are, what they're about, and the commercial fabric of which their lives are woven. But Polly's knowledge (as Air 6 makes clear) is a complex thing, a mix of cynicism and sadness. How does her knowingness operate—how does it conduce to power and to powerlessness—in her relations with her lover and her rival?

The Beggar's Opera will teach well in tandem with Swift's poems (particularly "Morning" and "Shower": how do Swift's genre-mixes differ from Gay's? For one thing, Swift mixes ancient with modern; Gay remains mainly in the modern—opera, criminal biography, etc.) and with *Gulliver* (the satiric management of mirrored worlds); with Mary Carleton, who comes off at times as a gender-reversed Macheath, autonomous and free-moving and involved with a family bent on "securing" her one way or another; with Rochester; with *The Man of Mode* (Macheath works new variations on the by-now remote model of the Restoration libertine); with Hogarth (how does his satirical mirroring resemble and differ from Gay's?); and with James Boswell, Macheath's ardent emulator at a remove of several decades.

William Hogarth

A Rake's Progress provides glorious opportunities for close reading. Each detail speaks, and by working out what it says and how it says it, students may develop a sharper eye for the speaking detail in works of prose, drama, and poetry produced in a world where the relations among *minds*, *words*, and *things* were newly charged for everyone from scientists to novelists to philosophers to graphic artists (for more on these relations, see the discussions of Sprat, above, and Locke, below).

For reading Hogarth's details, the most compendious companion is Ronald Paulson's *Hogarth's Graphic Works* (Alan Wolfson Fine Arts, 1989); the most convenient is Sean Shesgreen's inexpensive *Engravings by Hogarth* (Dover, 1973), with its large reproductions and copious captions (from which most of the information accompanying the anthology's plates was distilled). Shesgreen's volume makes it easy to compare the *Rake's Progress* with its closest antecedent, *A Harlot's Progress*; and to compare the engravings in their first state (printed here) with Hogarth's later revisions, of which the most notable appear in Plate 3 (where he added in the lower-right-hand corner a cluster of children busily mastering the vices of their elders), and in Plate 8 (where the madmen's activities became more global in implication).

The *Rake's Progress* will teach well with all the other literature of libertinage in the volume: Rochester's poems and some of Behn's; *The Man of Mode* and its contexts; Boswell's *London Journal*; and above all *The Beggar's Opera*, close in date and content. As Jenny Uglow observes, Plate 4 might almost serve as an illustration for that moment in the *Opera's* Act 2, Scene 4 (2590–91) when Macheath cavorts among his wenches on the verge of being betrayed by one of them (*Hogarth: A Life and a World* [Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997] 251–52). Like Macheath, Tom Rakewell is a rake transported (and thereby translated) from the glittering Restoration court to a new, drabber, and perhaps more precarious world of commerce. He is, Uglow points out, “no dashing blade, conquering fashion, decoying women, and terrorizing the town with nonchalant, demonic arrogance. He is a young bourgeois, first seen as a trembling youth with a fresh face haloed in curls, attractive, open, innocent—and weak. . . . Tom is less a seducer than an outsider who is himself seduced, ruined and killed by the city” (244).

Like earlier commentators, Uglow deftly writes out as verbal narrative the story that Hogarth's sequence suggests to her (244–59), thereby confirming the widespread sense that he worked like and in league with the satiric novelists—with Swift, Fielding, Sterne, Smollett. Authors and artists of the period cherished Horace's dictum *ut pictura poesis*: poetry is [or ought to be] like a picture (for a signal instance, see Dryden's ode to Anne Killigrew [ll. 88–141]). Such comfortable conflation, however revelatory, are worth testing in class discussion. Do we really follow Rakewell's progress exactly as we do Christian's, or Crusoe's, or Gulliver's, or Pamela's, or Tom Jones's? What differences obtain between the ways pictures and prose fiction work in time—between the freeze-frame of the one and the verbal flow of the other? (For purposes of comparison, it may be useful to consult the verse commentary that Hogarth engraved beneath each picture, legible in Shesgreen's large reprints but irreproducible here.) Hogarth's *tableaux* were first

published as plates which could be displayed all at once, rather than riffled through as pages in a book. Such a design renders the eight stages of the story abidingly and perhaps concurrently present, a simultaneity rather than a sequence—as though each were always there and always true. How does such an effect differ from our experience of prose fiction, and how does it contribute to our sense that Rakewell's decline may be both mechanical and inexorable, a foregone conclusion determined by cultural forces over which he (and we?) have culpably lost control?

 PERSPECTIVES

Mind and God

This section invites questions that parallel those raised by “The Royal Society and the New Science”—as Newtonian physics and Lockean psychology seemed to chart with some clarity and even reliability the outer and inner universes of human experience, what was going to happen to God? What does the privileging of sensory experience displace? How does each writer here use *text*—the written word in a chosen shape—to negotiate territories apparently resistant to empirical approach? How are many of these writers engaged directly or indirectly in persuasive or argumentative discourse with each other? Note the generic divisions among the texts included here: while religious argument is often couched in philosophical discourse, philosophical argument is pointedly left behind in the religious poetry. What *are* the various rhetorical merits of the letter, the essay, the dialogue, the hymn, the psalm, the poem?

The selections in this section are all, in their various methodological and rhetorical ways, trying to do the opposite of what Sprat declares the Fellows of the Royal Society are up to: where the Fellows’ “purpose was to heap up a mixed mass of experiments, without digesting them into any perfect model,” these writers look for *completion* and *wholeness*, either in the mechanical workings of the universe, the epistemological workings of the mind, or the divine workings of God. One might ask of these authors in what ways—and for what reasons—their texts complicate this agenda by insinuating doubt, disorder, counter-example, pointlessness, and rhetorical flourish in their prose and prosody.

Two Pope selections would work well with this section: the *Essay on Man* for its poetic distillation of philosophical argument, and the excerpts from the *Dunciad* for the apocalyptic vision of cosmic inertia and centrifugal destruction. The *Essay on Man*, Pope says, he might have done in prose, but he “chose verse, and even rhyme,” in order to “strike the reader more strongly at first” and to achieve the most powerful concision in his argument (2527). The poem, then, sells itself on Lockean principles (association, memory) in order to sell Newtonian ones (order, harmony). The *Dunciad* ushers in the goddess Dullness, whose main plan is “to destroy *Order* and *Science*” (2546); the same fine, strong heroic couplets that built up a conceptual universe in the *Essay on Man* describe its destruction in the *Dunciad*: “Physic of Metaphysic begs defense, / And Metaphysic calls for aid on Sense! / See Mystery to Mathematics fly! In vain! they gaze, turn giddy, rave, and die. / . . . Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall; / And Universal Darkness buries All” (2557).

Isaac Newton

The choice of genre is always a useful way to begin discussion. In some ways, of course, Newton’s “choice” here is predetermined: he’s responding by letter to Bentley’s epistolary request for help in adequately transmitting a Newtonian convergence between science and faith. So what does the *form* of a letter permit him to do? He can, and does of course, essentially write a small essay, but that essay

takes on the qualities of dialogue, of a “converse of the pen” (to use Richardson’s phrase) in which doubts, implicit or explicit, can be answered directly. There are several “minds” here, Newton’s and various real or imagined others: the “public,” to which he has done or may do some service; Bentley, of course, to whose queries he directly responds, point by point; other natural philosophers such as Descartes (when Newton discards a “Cartesian hypothesis” [2628]); the even more imaginary second-guesser that any good thinker anticipates in an argument (“it may be represented” [2629]); and the vague combination of all three (“unless you will urge it” [2630]). The textual creation of a participating audience characterizes several of the selections here: Berkeley’s religious dialogue; Watts’s hymns, implying a congregation; Hume trying to catch himself in a moment of identity; Smart speaking to and with Jeffrey as he chants to and with God; Cowper in an imagined broken dialogue with the castaway’s comrades, with the world, and with God.

Newton’s letter begins with the assertion of an explicit agenda (“I had an eye upon such principles as might work with considering men for the belief of a Deity”), and then follows that agenda with carefully qualified statements: “I do not think”; “I know no reason but”; “I see not why”; “I see nothing extraordinary.” He does not say: *it is, only, I think it is*. His prose manages to set up two universes, one which would not permit things-as-they-are, and one which does; and the latter, he says several times, he does not think “explicable by mere natural causes” but must be ascribed “to the counsel and contrivance of a voluntary agent” (2628). God is fitted within the epistolary constructs of a rational argument based on known facts, rejected alternatives, and reasoned truths. Order is established; but the very sense of being “forced to ascribe” one answer is precisely what someone like Hume, in other contexts, will insist he is forced not to do. The answers are plausible, but not irrefutable. As the introduction to this section points out, “for Newton, Locke, and countless other inquirers, empiricism promised to explain the ways of God; but they had begun a process which, in other hands, might threaten to explain God away” (2626).

John Locke

Locke’s epistemology is crucial for understanding, among other things, the eighteenth-century fascination with things, with lists, with a compartmentalizing of the universe at the same moment of attempting to unify it. Locke breaks down “ideas” into *things*, arguing that our epistemological operations spring from the *perception* of individual sensations and of various psychological processes such as “perception, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing, willing” (2631). Ideas of substances “are nothing else but a *collection of a certain number of simple ideas, considered as united in one thing*” (2633). Not until the advent of twentieth-century phenomenology would human psychology be argued back towards wholes perceived first, details later artificially abstracted out. Locke argues that when an English person sees or thinks of a swan, she sees or thinks of a “white color, long neck, red beak, black legs, and whole feet, and all these of a certain size, with a power of swimming in the water, and making a certain kind of noise” (2633); the human

mind *puts these things together* to construct a whole. The “whole” comes second to the parts. And for Locke, it appears, we put together the *idea of God*, composed of bits of what we know magnified to an imagined perfection (2633).

What does this form of epistemology tell us about the penchant for *lists* in Swift and Defoe? Gulliver’s lists of the causes and weapons of war in Book 4 of *Gulliver’s Travels* unite into an epistemological and ethical horror of human nature; Defoe’s lists of graveyard measurements and body counts amount to a different horror of human experience. Locke’s epistemology sorts, separates, categorizes—and leaves room for new fictions, not always comforting.

Isaac Watts

The selections here show two very different minds, one rhythmical and orderly, one symbolically as well as rhetorically free-verse. “A Prospect of Heaven Makes Death Easy” offers a simple metrical and rhyme scheme that opens with a promise (“There is”), and that opening offers us everything we habitually dream about: no pain, no night, no faded flowers. Its middle describes the timorous Us, fearful of the impeding isthmus; its end describes the larger, telescopic perspective that would and should nudge us into faith. Try having students analyze the poetic form, the rhyme scheme, the simple meter and rhymes that set up psychological expectations that get quickly and firmly answered by those very poetic schemes. This hymn offers a structure of reassurance fundamentally different from the structure of argument, which argues with doubt in such a different way. This hymn *records* the experience of doubt but displaces it swiftly with the promise of a different, larger perspective.

Watts’s “The Hurry of Spirits” is a very different animal; the free verse permits the doubt; little is “closed” between lines; much spills over into the next. Clauses or even sentences often end in the middle of lines; form as well as content is in a relative uproar, only relatively contained by a basic pentameter. Students could linger over the choice of forms here, and think about the ways that form expresses mind: “Abrupt, ill-sorted” abruptly stops a line and asks for sorting (l. 20).

“Against Idleness and Mischief” returns to smooth sorting (it’s a lovely idea to reproduce Carroll’s version [“How doth the little crocodile”] to demonstrate another of Locke’s ideas, not reproduced here, about the association of ideas). The whole idea of *form* is so crucial here: when to bolster with meter and rhyme and music and a general sense of congregational *chorus* to support an idea, and when to let the idea bleed itself out in other ways.

Joseph Addison

Addison’s *Spectator* essay raises its own questions: what’s the relative importance of solitude in negotiating the difficulties of faith? The eighteenth century was an age of conversation, but as the introduction points out, it was also an age of solitude (2001). Addison observes that the world is too much with us; as Hume says, “our eyes cannot turn in our sockets without varying our perceptions” (2645). Precisely *because* knowledge was coming to be perceived as the product of sensory experience, we need time to sort things out, to watch the operations of our own mind,

to “reflect” in Locke’s sense. The very obviousness of God, on Newton’s argument from design, requires an observer who is not too caught up in the empiricism of her own daily life.

Speculate on Addison’s switch from prose to poetry: the difference in typesetting on the page is something to consider in class as a call to a different mode of thinking. We are forcibly moved from the engulfing prose of the page to the spatially isolated ode; the large margins of page-space itself give room for reflective thought. (One might compare this in form and intent with Finch’s poem “A Ballad to Mrs. Catherine Fleming in London” [2143–45].)

George Berkeley

Berkeley chooses dialogue for his form; why? How does it help to have two persons on the stage? What is the difference between expounding and discussing? The reader, in a dialogue, is given voice, so to speak, and even a choice of voices—with whom will she identify? The choice is programmed, of course, towards the mind-loving Philonous, but at least the reader is offered an outlet, a way of asking those embarrassingly obvious questions. Jules David Law argues: “Far from making language into a transparent window onto the empirical world, Berkeley’s philosophy seems almost to render the sensory world transparent before language” (*The Rhetoric of Empiricism: Language and Perception from Locke to I. A. Richards* [Cornell UP, 1993], 94). How does Berkeley work to make Philonous’s position seem the right, the sensible, the transparent choice? How does conversation itself work to make abstract ideas concrete, to make philosophical peculiarities seem commonsensical?

Even some great minds of the eighteenth century never felt fully satisfied with Berkeley’s system. Boswell recounts Samuel Johnson’s distinctive form of refutation: “After we came out of the church, we stood talking for some time together of Bishop Berkeley’s ingenious sophistry to prove the non-existence of matter, and that every thing in the universe is merely ideal. I observed, that though we are satisfied his doctrine is not true, it is impossible to refute it. I shall never forget the alacrity with which Johnson answered, striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it, ‘I refute it thus’” (*Life of Johnson* [Oxford UP, 1980] 333). How would Philonous answer Johnson?

David Hume

However much ignored when it was first publicly articulated, Hume’s theory of identity—basically, that we have none, it’s all convenient psychological construct—perhaps still offers the best theoretical insight into much of eighteenth-century literature. The anxious reading of faces in *The Man of Mode*, the multiple voices in Rochester’s poems, Behn’s play with identities, and the general cultural preoccupation with masks, all suggest a search for some sort of identity, some sort of stability, a shift in epistemological and ontological underpinnings. Hume’s connection between personal identity and the theater is apt; one might call in those Restoration voices to confirm the uncertain cultural sense of self that Hume puts in theatrical terms: “The mind is a kind of theater, where sev-

eral perceptions successively make their appearance: pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations” (2645). If Hume did, in fact, articulate a larger cultural sense of epistemologically disenfranchised selves, how might this work towards explaining the explosion of new genres of self-hood? In a way, biography, autobiography, familiar letters, travel narratives, and the novel itself might all be part of a culture trying to enter most intimately into what it calls the *self*, trying to catch a self grounding all those perceptions and ideas.

The issues of solitude and society surface prominently in Hume, but where Addison (and Finch) recommend retirement for self-study, self-composure, and acquaintance with God, Hume finds himself “ready to throw all [his] books and papers into the fire” and find a sociable game of backgammon (2646). Hume discovered and bequeathed an uncomfortable paradox: he “is convinced that skepticism is logically irrefutable; nevertheless, he is convinced also that scepticism is psychologically untenable” (James Sambrook, *The Eighteenth Century: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature, 1700–1789* [Longman, 1990], 60). The path of philosophy, of solitary contemplation, when truly steadily pursued, leads the pursuer into skeptical darkness; careful questions and honest answers discover the dissolution of the idea of self, of cause and effect, of an external world, of God. But human beings cannot live in this cold darkness; with a hallmark Humean twist of sense and humor, “after reasoning away reason, Hume turns his irony upon himself” (Sambrook, 60). Fortunately for us, we simply do not have the psychological stamina to be full-time philosophers. So why does he keep going back to it? One can see the appeal of a Newtonian project that seems mathematically to guarantee order, beauty, and divinity; but if, as Hume suggests, one keeps pushing that project further and the world disintegrates, what happens to the value and point of truth? Is he really saying, okay, read your serious Saturday issue of the *Spectator*, think quiet solemn thoughts on Sunday, but don’t think too much?

Christopher Smart

In Oxford in the 1740s, Robert Lowth (1710–87) delivered lectures on *The Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (published in Latin in 1753 and English in 1787), in which he demonstrated the differences between Old Testament prose, marked by regular word order (“correct, chaste, and temperate”), and poetry, in which “the free spirit is hurried along, and has neither leisure nor inclination to descend to those minute and rigid attentions. Frequently, instead of disguising the secret feelings of the author, it lays them quite open to public view; and the veil being as it were suddenly removed, all the affections and emotions of the soul, its sudden impulses, its hasty sallies and irregularities, are conspicuously displayed” (*The Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, trans. by G. Gregory [1787], lecture 14; quoted in Sambrook, 188). Such a description offers a perfect entry into discussing the form and content of Smart’s amazing poem *Jubilate Agno*. With strategies utterly unlike mathematical or philosophical discourse—without argument, without formulas, without deduction, without induction, but instead with religious history, with linguistic puns, with hebraic

parallelism, with public emotion, with sudden impulses, with moving irregularities—Smart constructs a God-warmed universe as intimately bound and breathtakingly structured as Newton’s gleaming mechanical one.

This poem demands to be read aloud, and it can be a great pleasure simply to begin by going around the room, each student speaking a line. As a sort of chorus emerges, students might “consider” the poem and watch for all the linguistic, historic, emotional, religious, and imaginative connections that sustain its all-encompassing prayer. How are the sacred and the secular arranged? How are they combined? (“For there is nothing sweeter than his peace when at rest. / For there is nothing brisker than his life when in motion” [ll. 738–39].) What does the word “for” mean, and what is the effect of its ceaseless repetition? What is the power of the last line: “For he can creep”?

William Cowper

As with Watts, it is revealing to watch the change in generic form as Cowper changes his poetic perspective. The three selections here offer different attitudes, different tones, different structures, different visions. What is the difference between the kind of vision or observation made possible by “philosophic tube” (the telescope) and by poetry, by the word of God? What does it mean to “baptize” philosophy? How does poetry itself work into that process?

Pat Rogers suggests that Cowper’s verse “rises in technical control when he approaches matters of close personal concern,” most poignantly in the Calvinistic allegory of “The Cast-away” (“Literature,” in *Eighteenth-Century Britain: The Cambridge Cultural History*, ed. Boris Ford [Cambridge UP, 1991, 1992], 170). Have students analyze how the choices of structure, rhyme scheme, meter, stanzaic pattern, all contribute to the power of the anguish and loss first of the “real” story, and then of the “realer” one—the speaker’s religious despair. In a way, like the other writers in this section, Cowper moves from experience to reflection, from empirical data to philosophical implication, from a story current in the world around him to a darker story within himself. Cowper’s poems reveal both the promise of hope and the thread of doubt occasioned by the very “advances” in science and reason in the eighteenth century.

James Thomson

“Ah, what shall language do?” Thomson asks at one point in *The Seasons* (*Spring*, l. 475). “Ah, where find words,” he continues, to render all the sensual plenitude of nature—its sights, sounds, smells? His own solution: to arrange words in ways that saturated the senses, particularly sight and hearing (note *Winter*’s first word, “See!,” and the many like imperatives that follow). Blank verse abetted this purpose. In a world crowded with heroic couplets, blank verse suggested boundlessness, an impulse to track the data of the world, the train of thought, wherever it might lead, unfettered by the bonds of rhyme. Students who find the poem peculiar on the page are often surprised to feel it take possession of the tongue and ear. They should first read or hear swatches of it aloud (the Penguin collection includes a complete performance of Thomson’s first *Winter*), and then savor analytically the abundance of particular lines. When Thomson asserts that the autumn woods “the country round / Imbrown; a crowded umbrage, dusk and dun” (2662), what effects does he achieve by the enjambment of words that nearly rhyme? by the surprises of wording (“Imbrown,” “umbrage”)? by the array of words fashioned from the same few sounds (*ow*, *c*, *d*, *r*, *n*)? by the correspondence between the aural texture he thus creates and the monochrome he describes? At times Thomson’s blank verse seems not so much a banishment of rhyme as rhyme run riot: sounds everywhere echoing sounds, and thereby transmitting nature’s plenitude.

The poem’s boundlessness extends beyond its blank verse structure. *The Seasons* celebrates metamorphosis (note how Thomson wedges in an account of autumn early in his first version of *Winter*), enacts metamorphosis (as in the changes rung around “Imbrown”), and undergoes a metamorphosis of its own, through the poet’s numerous revisions; it was proffered to the public, over the course of twenty years, as a poem almost without end. The cross-references in the footnotes should help make possible a close comparison of Thomson’s first and final versions of some passages. In the earlier version, the evocation of “philosophic melancholy” (l. 66, 2660) precedes a list of conventional feelings, conventionally expressed (“the tender pang,” “the pitying tear”). In the revision, Thomson transmutes abstraction into personification (“Philosophic Melancholy” [l. 1005, 2663]) dramatically described: “He comes! he comes!” and there follows in his wake a far more intricate account of the traffic between nature’s abundance (“Ten thousand thousand fleet ideas,” i.e. images) and “the mind’s creative eye”—in short, a theory of the processes that have produced the poem, and that should suffuse the reader. Typically, Thomson soon veers elsewhere. He is borne once again to “embowering shades,” but promptly recoils (“Or is this gloom too much?”) and betakes himself to Stowe, the best (and most politically significant) of Britannia’s gardens. In Thomson’s poem, motion perhaps matters most, because every move delivers a new piece of the whole picture, demonstrating humanity’s “fragmentary perception of the beauty and sublimity of the world and leading to an act of faith in God’s love and wisdom,” which alone comprehends the whole (Ralph Cohen, *The Unfolding of The Seasons* [Johns Hopkins UP, 1970], 247).

“Rule, Britannia” was first performed in a garden, and students won’t fully get it until they hear the music (an authentic version is available on the Broadside

Band's *English National Songs* [Saydisc CD-SDL 400], which contains many other tunes useful for transmitting eighteenth-century ethos). But don't allow Arne's vaulting melody to obscure the argument. The last verse collates well with the passage from *Winter* (2662) where Thomson envisions the British Muse in the company of Homer and Virgil. And the penultimate verse is particularly instructive in relation to the last part of *Windsor-Forest*: where Pope envisions commerce supplanting conquest, Thomson finds the two more intertwined, with both sea and shore "subject" to Britain's imperial power (and the "fair" of the final line exalted and subjected all at once). How sharp a line does the song draw between subjection and slavery? Thomson manages to make "generous" (l. 19) mean both itself ("bountiful") and something like its opposite: ferocious, retributive.

The Seasons *in Context: Poems of Nightfall and Night*

Anne Finch, A Nocturnal Reverie This poem is best read alongside (or aloud with) the dialogue it echoes from Shakespeare's *Merchant*. All the love affairs that Jessica and Lorenzo invoke end in disaster. So, in a sense, does Finch's poem, with the return of daylight and distraction. But night, the site of delusion for all those ancient lovers, affords Finch a respite from delusion, a respite expanded by the poem's long-stretched periodic structure (all those *Whens* and *Ands*), which finds a too-brief resolution ("let me abroad remain" l. 47) on the very verge of morning's breaking. The poem invites comparison with both Thomson's and Cowper's busier evenings, with Gray's *Elegy*, and with three poems more remote: the opening of the *Canterbury Tales* (similar in its syntax and suspense), and Wordsworth's *The World is Too Much with Us* and *Westminster Bridge*, written by one of the first poets to acknowledge Finch's power.

Edward Young, from Night Thoughts Thomson and Finch portray themselves as so immersed in the world's sensations that darkness itself can promote, rather than interrupt, their cherished communion with nature. In Young's poem, by contrast, night cuts off the speaker from the world—but in doing so it only intensifies a depression and alienation that he plainly feels by day as well. Enclosed in night's "opaque of nature," Young must (to adapt Thomson's phrasing, l. 1016, 2663) disperse the unwanted thoughts that "crowd" him, and deploy his "mind's creative eye" a different way: in hatching visions more than rendering realities. The argument of the excerpt runs along similar lines: the repose that "Nature's sweet restorer" can't supply (l. 1), he must attain for himself; the passage dramatizes his resolve to do so. If the students have *Hamlet* in their heads, they can hear him speak anew in the two passages here: ll. 61–67 echo "To be or not to be"; ll. 66–87 replay "What a piece of work is a man!" What changes does Young ring on Shakespeare? The dreams that may come are initially (as for Hamlet) dreadful (l. 8) but ultimately wondrous (ll. 90–103). They (and not nature, as in Thomson) form the basis of the visionary power that the poet will deploy throughout his poem.

William Collins, Ode to Evening and Ode on Thomson The "Ode to Evening" contrasts with most contemporary odes in its brevity and in its blank verse (compare Dryden's odes); still, the poem harbors a Pindaric variability of its own. As Richard Wendorf argues, the *Ode to Evening* enacts a learning curve. In the first twenty lines, the speaker beseeches Evening to become his teacher and his

muse (note the lovely pun, l. 19); as if to confirm her consent, he then “dares to introduce Evening in the company of her traditional machinery,” clothing “his elusive figure in classical and native superstitions” (ll. 21–40); finally (ll. 41–52) he makes a pledge of enduring fealty, confident where his first lines were tentative, and couched (like Thomson’s allegiance to all of nature) in the language of the shifting seasons (*William Collins and Eighteenth-Century English Poetry* [U of Minnesota P, 1981], 127–33). In the ode to Thomson, Collins again seeks to clothe his “elusive subject in classical and native superstitions” (the lament of the shepherds, the evocation of the Druids). This time the subject is Thomson himself, elusive in death, and the poem’s exquisite balance inheres in the way Collins brings in all that mythology while adhering (Thomson-like) to the actual geography of Thomson’s world (the river at Richmond), and to the actual texture of Thomson’s lines (see, e.g., l. 33).

William Cowper, from *The Task* Students may find it worthwhile (and something of a relief) to work out the differences between Thomson’s more elaborate and Cowper’s more colloquial blank verse. In the passage on the newspaper, a curious thing happens: with the world outside occluded by night, the newspaper itself becomes a kind of landscape, marked by a “mountainous and craggy ridge” (in the news about ambitious city big shots); adorned with “roses” and “lillies” (in the advertisements). Cowper’s semi-comic, semi-satiric use of the newspaper as an index of retirement, as a measure of his remoteness (ll. 88–119), contrasts with Collins’s more conventionally idealized conjuring in “Ode to Evening” of “the sylvan shed” (l. 49) from which he’ll adore his muse. Cowper too invokes Evening in verses clearly influenced by Collins (ll. 243–66), but here she too is domesticated, a “matron” rather than a mythic shape-shifter, “not sumptuously adorned, nor needing aid . . . of clust’ring gems.” Blanketing both nature and man for the night, she bears some relation to the comforting, caretaking “fair” (l. 53) who allow the poet to read his paper in silence.

Thomas Gray

Of the four poems presented here, three concern actual deaths; the fourth (*Eton College*) traces a metaphorical death, of hope and joy. It may be useful to teach all four as elegies—tonal and technical variations on the theme of loss.

The sonnet on West focuses relentlessly on the plight of the speaker abandoned and alone after his friend's death. It bears comparison with the emergent poetry of solitude represented (in the section just preceding) by Finch's "Nocturnal Reverie," Young's *Night Thoughts*, and Cowper's *Task*. At the same time, it contrasts sharply with earlier pastoral elegies—Milton's *Lycidas*, Collins's ode on Thomson—where the poet joins with nature and its mythical embodiments (nymphs, naiads) in a community of mourning. In Gray's own subsequent elegies, too, mourning entails communion: with the boys at Eton, with the owner of the "favorite cat," with the dead themselves in the *Elegy*. "I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear," Gray laments in the sonnet; in the *Elegy* he will enact a less despairing and more "fruitful" conversation between the living and the dead.

Familiarity may have flattened the final pronouncement of the ode on Eton College, and made the whole poem seem an exercise in wistfulness, far more sentimental than it actually is. Vincent Newey points out the near-Hobbesian darkness of Gray's vision: "The impulses that seemingly enhance childhood—the courage of the 'bold adventurers' who seek out 'unknown regions,' 'Gay hope,' the 'tear forgot'—are in truth but a training for subsequent devastating vulnerability, where, for example, to aspire is to be a sacrifice to 'grinning infamy' (ll. 71–74), unfulfilled desire 'inly gnaws the secret heart' (ll. 61–70), and 'Unkindness . . . mocks the tear it forced to flow' (ll. 76–77). In the long run, delight and liberty are a delusion. . . . No poet has put more graphically on parade the evils of living." ("The Selving of Thomas Gray," in *Thomas Gray: Contemporary Essays*, ed. W. B. Hutchings and William Ruddick [Liverpool UP, 1993], 28). In fact, the darkness touches Gray's early stanzas on the children's pleasures, where even "joy" is "fearful," where tears, though soon forgot, are shed nonetheless, and where things desired are "less pleasing when possessed."

How, then, in the ode on Walpole's cat, does the poet manage to make death seem comic? Mostly through the mock-epic matrix of allusions, to ancient practices ("Tyrian hue"), venerable proverbs ("Nor all that glisters, gold"); and global grandeurs ("China's gayest art"); but also through the stringent gendering of Selima's error. Walpole and Gray laugh together at a woman's mistake; the disappointment of desire, tragic in the Eton College ode, is cast as comic here. The poem invites comparison with Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, many of whose topics and strategies Gray compactly reworks. Pope suffuses the *Rape's* last lines with intimations of death and pathos. Does Gray here wholly laugh death away? A short companion reading may help with the question: the epic episode of the warrior-queen Camilla's death (*Aeneid* ll. 768–835)—a chief source for Selima's misadventure—will heighten students' sense of both the comedy and the possible tragic undertow in Gray's antic poem.

The *Elegy* begins with a fading of light and sound and an assertion of silence (“All the air a solmen stillness holds”), which Gray immediately complicates with a haunting litany of exceptions (“Save where . . .”). The opening stanzas enact in miniature the motion and argument of the poem, where the silence of obscure lives—and of death itself—modulates into utterance through the ventriloquy of the poet’s voice. “Ev’n from the tomb,” Gray insists, “the voice of nature cries,” but it is the elegist who makes that voice heard, first on behalf of others, and finally (in the closing stanzas) for himself. Gray offers the reader a kind of ear-training, a heightened attention to the way sounds emerge from silence. Partly for this reason, the poem’s actual sounds repay careful hearing (beginning perhaps with the vowel rhymes, closely allied but sharply distinguished, of the opening stanza). The poem’s quatrains were themselves an innovation in a world dominated by couplets; they too enhanced the sense, memorably noted by Johnson (at the end of his life of Gray) that the poet had achieved something new: “The four stanzas beginning ‘Yet even these bones’ are to me original: I have never seen the notions in any other place; yet he that reads them here, persuades himself that he has always felt them.” Roger Lonsdale has defined Gray’s innovation more specifically. The *Elegy* is “in one aspect a sustained struggle to find decorous ways of talking about the self and the meaning of one’s life”—and about a self more sequestered than that “idealized, public self” which Pope “dramatized” and made fashionable in his Horatian poems (*The Poetry of Thomas Gray: Versions of the Self* [London: Oxford UP, 1973], 9).

In Gray’s letters to Walpole about the *Elegy* (2680–81), the poem as object travels a course parallel to that of its own argument, from the quietude of manuscript to the noise of publication. Gray’s final metaphor for the poem is antic and pointed: the published *Elegy* is his *misfortune*, an infant he had no desire to bring forth into the world; the publisher Dodsley is its incompetent nurse, Walpole its generous relation. In these letters, and in the others gathered here, Gray’s strategies of intimacy involve both playful figuration, and—as Bruce Redford points out—a pervasive allusiveness to knowledge the correspondents share (“The Allusiveness of Thomas Gray,” in *The Converse of the Pen: Acts of Intimacy in the Eighteenth-Century Familiar Letter* [U of Chicago P 1986], 95–132). Note, for example, the way Shakespeare, Congreve, and Cibber converge in Gray’s early reproach to Walpole for not writing (2678–79), and the way typology heightens his biblical lament to West about life at Cambridge (2679).

Samuel Johnson

Reading Johnson, like reading Shakespeare, takes some practice. Students become more familiar and more comfortable over time with the motion of his sentences, the range of his diction, and the thrust of his arguments. I like to begin with a few “graduated” exercises, short texts or passages for close reading and basic training. Among the likeliest (here listed in rising order of “challenge”): the poem on Levet; the letter to Chesterfield; the opening sentence of *Rambler* No. 60; and the opening sentence of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (for suggestions about each of these, see the individual discussions below). In grappling with Johnson’s sentences, students need ear-training in parallel structure and periodic suspense; old-fashioned sentence diagramming can help with this, and the *Rambler* sentence is tailor-made for the purpose (though virtually any paragraph will supply samples). They also need alerting to the pleasures and purposes of Johnson’s well-timed shifts in diction (often from high and Latinate at a passage’s or paragraph’s outset, to plain and punchy at its conclusion). Examples: the last stanza of the Levet elegy; the punch line of the “Short Song of Congratulation”; the plain speaking in the Chesterfield letter (“I never had a patron before”; “encumbers him with help”); the lists in *Vanity* (“Toil, envy, want . . .” [l. 160]); the famous (and almost self-contradictory) injunction about “the streaks of the tulip” (*Rasselas*, ch. 10). It is valuable, even important, to establish from the start that Johnson’s style is not all parallelism and orotundity. The power of plain words matters everywhere in his writing, and in his conversation (the dialogues from Boswell’s *Life* can make for an interesting comparison here).

As students become familiar with Johnson’s style, they will learn also to recognize his sense and substance. Johnson is an anthology in himself. His versatility across genres was one of the main means by which he established himself as the “Great Cham” (Khan, or emperor) of eighteenth-century letters. The Johnson selections here are organized by a combination of genre and chronology, but they work well when taught thematically too. Johnson’s central arguments recur throughout his writings; I’ll touch on some of them here (listing particularly relevant selections) before treating the works one by one. An enormously useful handbook for teaching both the central themes and the individual texts is *Approaches to Teaching Samuel Johnson* (hereinafter *Approaches*), edited by David R. Anderson and Gwin J. Kolb (Modern Language Association, 1993).

“The dangerous prevalence of imagination”: The phrase comes from *Rasselas*, the point recurs throughout: in *Vanity*; in the *Rambler* (Nos. 4, 5) and *Idler* (No. 31); in Pope’s and Jenyns’s complacent self-delusions about human suffering (review of Jenyns); in the account of disappointments in the Preface to the *Dictionary*, and in the definition of *imagination* itself (2738–39); in the history of Imlac (*Rasselas*). By imagination mortals delude themselves ruinously about their capacities and their prospects; the proper counter-measure is a combination of religious faith and close attention to the plain truth. “The use of traveling,” Johnson remarks in a letter to Thrale (2769), “is to regulate imagination by reality, and instead of thinking how they may be, to see them as they are.” For Johnson, this was also the proper use of writing, and a central purpose of living.

Time: “Time is,” Johnson remarks in the Preface to Shakespeare, “of all modes of existence, the most obsequious to imagination” (2760). In context, this sentence makes a very specific point: Shakespeare’s audiences can readily accommodate his rule-breaking leaps in time. The proposition also works well as a touchstone for Johnson’s abiding preoccupation with the problem of the way time operates on the human mind. People enmeshed in present dissatisfaction (or “vacuity”) delude themselves with the promise of future prosperity; the delusion produces both immobilizing passivity (with so pleasing a prospect, why work?) and inevitable disappointment. Time, then, is *dangerously* “obsequious to the imagination”: the seeming plasticity of the future lets imagination run riot, rendering the actual future a kind of wasteland. The theme recurs in all the works mentioned under “imagination,” above; in Johnson’s *Dictionary* definition of *future*, with its striking quotation from *Macbeth* (2737–38); in the letter to Chesterfield; and in the remarkable paragraph on Pope’s pace in translating the *Iliad* (*Life of Pope*, 2784). As *Idler* No. 31 suggests, Johnson’s admonitions on this topic were often self-directed. Boswell records that Johnson had inscribed on his watch-dial the first words of “our Savior’s solemn admonition to the improvement of that time which is allowed us to prepare for eternity: ‘The night cometh, when no man can work’” (John 9.4).

Suffering: “From first to last,” observes John Wain (in a sentence quoted in the headnote), Johnson “rooted his life among the poor and outcast,” to whose plight he returned obsessively throughout his work: in his esteem for the charity of an impoverished doctor (the poem to Levet); in his fictional, first-person account of the prostitute Misella (*Rambler* Nos. 170, 171); in his furious demolition of the argument that the pains of the poor can be explained by a proposition like Pope’s, in the *Essay on Man* (l. 1.294, 2535), that “Whatever IS, is RIGHT” (the Review of Jenyns, 2719–23; *Lives*, 2787–88); in his analytic reconstruction of the lost culture of the Highlands (*Journey*, 2774–77).

Connection and loss: “Our social comforts drop away,” Johnson laments near the start of the poem to Levet. The line touches at once on two of his prevailing concerns: first, his deep investment in the satisfactions of friendship; second, his profound susceptibility as a mortal, and his fascination as a moralist, with the experience of loss, with the severing of human connections through alienation or through death. His impassioned but analytic eloquence on loss emerges in the *Ramblers* on Misella and on ending (Nos. 170, 171, 207); in the peroration of his Preface to the *Dictionary*; in the “Annals” of his own life; throughout his letters (and particularly in the final sequence to Hester Thrale); and in the writings of Boswell and Piozzi (notably their discussions of Johnson and death, 2816–17; 2842–43).

Experience and authority: At first, many students hear in Johnson’s voice an impenetrable smugness, an unwavering self-certainty. But close attention to his arguments reveals a tendency to question almost everything, including tenets he himself has articulated in past years or in the previous paragraph. A devotee of the New Science, Johnson values ongoing experience over fixed authority (in this re-

spect he bears interesting comparison with Chaucer's Wife of Bath, as well as with Hooke, Newton, et al.). He wields experience *against* authority in his demolition of Jenyns (*Review*), in his dismantling of the Aristotelian unities (Preface to Shakespeare), in his innovative insistence on deriving his *Dictionary* definitions from demonstrable usage rather than earlier dictionaries. We can watch him questioning his own previous stances in the Preface to the *Dictionary* (where he details and disavows his earlier conception of the project), in the chapters from *Rasselas* (where he projects a sequence of self-debunkings onto Imlac), and in many of his periodical essays (for more detail, see the discussion of them below). Waging battle against the human propensity for self-delusion, Johnson uses (and recommends) self-interrogation—an abiding *uncertainty*—as an indispensable weapon.

The general and the particular: The movement between these two categories accounts for much that is most compelling in both Johnson's style and his thought. Johnson's arguments favor the general. "The business of a poet," Imlac remarks, "is to examine, not the individual but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances" (2749); Shakespeare establishes his mastery through "just representations of general nature" (2755); biographers trace those universal arcs of experience that the emperor and the laborer traverse in common (2709). At the same time, Johnson makes clear at every turn that, to carry conviction, the "general" must be embodied in the judiciously portrayed "particular": Imlac promptly invokes "the streaks of the tulip" (2749); Johnson as editor pays obsessive attention to the details by which Shakespeare composes his "just representations"; biographers, he argues, must traffic abundantly in the "domestic particularities" and "minute details" of their subjects' lives. Details, though, pose the greater danger. Travel writers overdo them, and thereby lose sight of larger truths and plainer purposes (*Idler* No. 97); and even biographers can choose incorrectly (see the instance of Addison's pulse, 2710). Johnson often seems to have devised his own intricate style as a means of mingling, within a single sentence, forceful generalizations and sharp discriminations, with each concurrent activity lending credence to the other. (Again, the opening sentence of *Rambler* No. 60 affords a striking instance.)

Poems

The Vanity of Human Wishes: In the opening sentence, Johnson's initial personification produces in the reader a mix of detachment and engagement that he will play upon throughout the poem. Technically, it is "Observation" who is to "survey mankind," but as the long sentence advances, the verbs come to seem directly imperative: it is *our* job to "remark," "watch," and "say," with the goal of avoiding the errors we witness. Meanwhile, ominously, the intricacy of the sentences themselves (particularly the second) may involve us in a syntactic labyrinth to match the fatal mazes that Johnson here describes: we prove susceptible to confusion, even as we're being urged towards clarity. (Garrick complained that the poem was "hard as Greek," but Johnson arranges his difficulties with a purpose.) In the poem's great peroration (ll. 343–68), Johnson urges again our disengagement from the horrors we have witnessed, as we renounce the instabilities of desire for the firmer ground

of Christian faith. (His renaming of the cardinal virtues, “faith, hope, and charity,” works interestingly: for “hope,” whose perils he has exposed throughout the poem, he substitutes “patience,” a merit more in keeping with the pains the poem has shown.) Between the general arguments of the first and the final lines, Johnson presents a welter of particulars, calculated to involve us with the folly and anguish of the aspirants he names (Hester Thrale reports that when he read the poem aloud many years after composing it, Johnson himself “burst into a passion of tears”). The exemplum of the ambitious student (ll. 135–64) is particularly rich: here Johnson builds a swelling best-case scenario with all those parallel, desirable “Shoulds,” only to puncture it with a bitter summation (“Yet hope not . . .”). Other instances likely to hit home: the account of Wolsey (99–128) and of beauty (319–42).

To read Johnson’s poem alongside Juvenal’s (perhaps in the excellent Penguin translation by Peter Green) is to learn much about the eighteenth-century art of imitation, and about Johnson’s particular tactics and purposes here (for a brief comparison, see 1997). Another excellent resource is Thomas Jemieliety’s essay on “*The Vanity of Human Wishes* in the Classroom,” in *Teaching Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. Christopher Fox (AMS Press, 1990); among many other points, Jemieliety argues that the teacher should start by mapping the poem’s structure: opening argument, specific examples of aspirants towards Preferment, Power, Intellectual Eminence, Military Fame, Beauty; and, in conclusion, an urgent question (l. 343) and “dynamic, affirmative” answer. Also useful is Michael Pennington’s lucid recorded reading of the poem (in the Penguin *English Verse* collection; see “Ways in,” above). *Vanity* teaches interestingly with Gray’s *Elegy*, which surveys lives led in the absence of aspiration.

Couching deep feeling in plain syntax, reworking private loss into both a tender portrait and a larger lament (“As on we toil from day to day”), Johnson’s poem “On the Death of Robert Levet” affords a particularly rich introduction to all his writing. The metaphors (“Hope’s delusive mine”), the personifications, the mix of empathy, esteem, and instruction (“Nor, Lettered Arrogance, deny . . .”), all deeply characteristic of the author, here take a particularly clear and compact form. Christ’s parable of the talents (Matthew 25.14–30) is worth reading aloud in class; Johnson touches on it lightly here (as in many other of his works), but its import pervades the poem.

“A Short Song of Congratulation” works as counterpoint: attack, not tribute, plainly couched and artfully caustic.

Periodical Essays *and* The Review of Jenyns

The selections from *The Rambler* and *The Idler* may usefully be read as a set, and in conjunction with the periodical essays in the Perspectives section—particularly *The Spectator*, whose immensely successful model Johnson both esteemed and reworked. In the epigraph to the first *Rambler* presented here (No. 4), Johnson invokes Horace’s injunction that writers must supply both “profit” and “delight.” One way into a comparison might be to ask what kinds of profit and what modes of delight each periodical undertakes to provide (*Spectator* No. 10 and *Rambler* No.

207 may prove particularly useful here). Addison, Steele, and Johnson all undertake to serve (in Hawkins's phrase) as "instructors of mankind"—but what differences obtain between the kinds of instruction they offer, and the language in which they offer it?

The comparison can work to Johnson's disadvantage: students will often find him complacent, even overweening, in the weight and seeming certainty of his pronouncements. It pays to show them (slowly, not stridently) how often Johnson deals in human *uncertainty*, not only as his topic but as his method. His essays often live up to the original meaning of the term: they are *attempts* and (partly, at least) improvisations; they opt to enact a search rather than to present "finished" findings. (They are in fact far more elastic, less "authoritative" in form, than the symmetrical, "inverted triangle" essays we tend to require of our students: thesis, demonstration, conclusion.) As an analysis of the extraordinary *movement* of Johnson's essays, and as a useful companion in the teaching of them, nothing surpasses Paul Fussell's superb chapter "The Anxious Employment of a Periodical Writer" in his *Samuel Johnson and the Life of Writing* (Norton, 1971), 143–80.

Among the Johnson essays presented here, a grouping of those on writing may prove fruitful: *Rambler* Nos. 4 (fiction) and 60 (biography); *Idler* Nos. 84 (autobiography) and 97 (travel writing).

Rambler No. 4, about the "comedies of romance" (i.e., novels) newly fashionable at the time, will work well in conjunction with almost *any* novel being read in the same course. What elements of the new genre does Johnson pinpoint accurately—perhaps surprisingly? What are his assumptions about the ways such fiction operates upon the reader? What alarms him about the "mixed" characters, compounded of good and evil traits (one thinks of *Pamela's* Mr. B.), which the novel presents with new ingenuity and abundance?

Rambler No. 60 is perhaps the essay worth spending the most time on. A compact, enormously influential investigation of the purposes and methods of biography, it opens approaches to many other texts, within this section (Pepys, Aubrey, Carleton, Cavendish, Montagu, Boswell, Piozzi) and beyond (Kempe, Coleridge, Strachey). The opening sentence compasses many of Johnson's most important stylistic and conceptual moves: as Johnson signals by his initial "All," he aims at a comprehensive pronouncement on human nature. But he writes as though the only hope for accuracy in such utterance lies in the careful drawing of distinctions: between experiences (the *ors*), among degrees (the *however*s), within modes of cognition (the temporary "deception" as against the abiding, implied reality). The elaborate architecture of the sentence works (as so often in Johnson) to sort things out in the very act of pulling them together. After this magisterial opening, the essay moves with ease and suppleness. Biography, it emerges, is one instance of this pleasing and potentially useful "deception"; its value derives from the universality of basic human experiences (that "all" again); its proper management requires close investigation into the "domestic privacies" and "minute details," followed by tact in their selection and display. By such modulations, Johnson works his way from the "deception" of the opening sentence to the valuable "truth" of his final word.

Idler No. 84 makes a useful pendant: it argues the much more surprising claim that autobiography is reliable because disinterested. Is Johnson merely “talking for victory” here, defending an untenable point? Or is he arguing from his own limited experience as an unusually frank, even brutal, autobiographer? The essay invites comparison with his own “Annals” (2788–92).

Idler No. 97 meshes well with Johnson’s travel writing and with Boswell’s. Here, Johnson takes to task those travel writers (their number was growing almost exponentially) who “crowd the world with their itineraries,” and fill their books with too many details of their trip, too little analysis of the country and culture they visited. To what extent does Johnson in his *Journey* live up to his own precepts here? What about Boswell, in his *Journal* of the same trip (2809–13)?

Another grouping of essays (*Rambler* Nos. 5 and 207; *Idler* Nos. 31 and 32) centers on self-delusion. The theme is consistent, the tone and presentation different in each instance, from the eager anticipations of *Rambler* No. 5 to the valedictory broodings of No. 207; from the semi-comic “case study” of *Idler* No. 31 to the more acerbic reproaches of No. 32. Johnson is at all times moralizing against a propensity towards inattention and delusion to which he considered himself deeply susceptible. One interesting question to ask of these essays (as of much of Johnson’s prose) concerns the place of the first person: Where does the “I” appear explicitly? How is the author’s investment in the topic couched or redirected in larger pronouncements, about “he” (“poor Sober” in *Idler* No. 31) and “we”? How does Johnson persuade his readers that he is speaking accurately of both himself and them?

The essays purportedly by Misella (*Rambler* Nos. 170 and 171) present a striking counterpoint in this regard. Johnson writes in a ventriloquized (and cross-gendered) first person, from the point of view of a woman who (in fulfillment of one of his favorite precepts) “instead of thinking how things may be, [sees] them as they are” (2769). To what causes does Misella attribute her plight? How accurate and thorough (by Johnson’s standards, by ours) is her analysis—economic, familial, psychological—of her predicament? How does Johnson’s creation of this character fit or diverge from the precepts for moral fiction that he sets forth in *Rambler* No. 4?

Johnson has long stood accused of misogyny—though not, interestingly enough, by Mary Wollstonecraft, who resolutely admired him. (The case against has often boiled down to one notorious quotation from Boswell’s *Life*: “Sir, a woman’s preaching is like a dog’s walking on his hinder legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all.”) How, if at all, do the Misella essays complicate this claim? The female-voiced essays in the Perspectives section “Reading Papers” may serve as useful touchstones here: see the excerpts from *Athenian Mercury* (esp. 2352–53) and the *Female Spectator*. Boswell considered Johnson’s ventriloquy a stylistic failure: “Johnson’s language . . . must be allowed too masculine for the delicate gentleness of female writing. His ladies, therefore [including Misella], seem strangely formal, even to ridicule” (*Life of Johnson* [Oxford UP, 1980], 160). For questions of Johnson and gender see also his letters to Thrale, her accounts of him in *Thraliana*, and James G. Basker, “Dancing Dogs, Women Preachers, and the Myth of Johnson’s Misogyny” in *The Age of Johnson* 3 (1990): 63–90.

The Review of Soame Jenyns’s *Free Inquiry*: Students who love a good debunking may well take pleasure in Johnson’s powerful dissection—painstaking and

pugilistic at the same time—of Jenyns’s errors in logic and distortions of language. See, for example, Johnson’s careful readings of *want of riches* (2720) and of *inconceivable* (2722), and his sardonic impromptu on Jenyns’s “consoling” argument that human sufferings may provide entertainment for some order of superior beings. Johnson ends by turning the analogy directly against Jenyns: in its presumption, his book has proven “very entertaining” (though not at all useful) for Johnson and (through Johnson’s arts of argument) for us as well. The review is noteworthy for the ways in which it melds cold logic with caustic laughter.

Boswell declared this “Johnson’s most exquisite critical essay,” and students may enjoy attempting an imitation: taking a short passage from some piece of social argument with which they vehemently disagree, and exposing its error through close attention to both the logic and the language by which it’s made.

The review may be read in conjunction with the selections from Pope’s *Essay on Man* (especially ll. 23–32, 43–48), and with Johnson’s critique of that poem in his *Life of Pope* (2787–88). In an excellent article on teaching Johnson’s review of Jenyns (*Approaches*, 92–98) Thomas F. Bonnell gives a useful guided tour to Johnson’s piece and to all the texts that prompted it.

A Dictionary of the English Language

Like Johnson’s periodical essays, much of his *Dictionary* (Preface and body) concerns the ways in which experience impinges on expectation. In the Preface, Johnson confronts the discrepancy between his original ambitions for the project and the limits of the actual book he has now produced (see especially the paragraph beginning “Of the event of this work . . .” [2734]), as well as the losses he has incurred along the way (see the Preface’s final paragraph).

As for the definitions themselves, Allen Reddick, in his excellent article on teaching the *Dictionary* (*Approaches*, 84–91), emphasizes the insistence and innovation with which Johnson derived these too from experience—from England’s continual reworking of its own language, and from Johnson’s own sustained and (in the years of the *Dictionary*) systematic encounter with English literature: “Johnson’s *Dictionary* became the first to rely to a large extent on a criterion of word *usage*, written usage, for establishing meaning.” Students, Reddick suggests, can profitably test for themselves the methods by which Johnson derives each definition from the quotations that follow it.

At the same time, even so scant a selection as the one presented here may support a reckoning of the *Dictionary* that is gaining increasing attention: as a work of literature, even of polemic. In what ways do the clusters of passages operate as a running anthology of English writing? What forms of pleasure and instruction do they proffer? (The definitions of *knack* and *imagination* provide interesting cases.) To what extent can an entry constitute an *argument* about the word or concept being defined, and how do sequence and selection contribute to the shape of argument? The notably “Johnsonian” quotations under *future* and *vacuity*, and the distinctions and elaborations under *imagination*, *judgment*, and *substance* all repay close scrutiny.

Rasselas

Like the entire tale, the short excerpt printed here radiates outward to touch on virtually everything that Johnson ever wrote. Recounting his own history, Imlac quickly and memorably sounds many of Johnson's central themes: the inevitability of self-delusion, the necessity of self-correction, the elusiveness of firm conclusion, the difficulties that beset "the choice of life." Johnson intertwines two skeins of error: the errors Imlac makes in projecting his future, and the errors Rasselas makes (as listener) in his responses—first eager, then renunciatory—to each of Imlac's choices (he will soon make similar errors in respect to his own). En route, Imlac takes up some of Johnson's most writerly concerns. The "Dissertation upon Poetry" has long served as the *locus classicus* for critical tenets about the general and the particular that Johnson would later expand and illustrate in his Preface to Shakespeare and his *Lives of the Poets*. The form of Imlac's history, however exotic in locale and genre, bears comparison with Johnson's other ventures into life-writing: the brutal biographical catalogue in *The Vanity of Human Wishes*; *Rambler* No. 60; the *Life of Pope*; and his autobiographical "Annals." To what extent can Pope's life and Johnson's (to say nothing of the vain wishers who populate Johnson's poem) be seen as travelling the selfsame arc of choice and disappointment that Imlac sketches here?

The Plays of William Shakespeare

For Johnson, Shakespeare's achievement is transhistorical. The playwright has produced "just representations of general nature," recognizable by all audiences in all cultures; "his characters are not modified by the customs of particular places." Such assertions sort oddly but fascinatingly with the historically localized Shakespeare set forth by recent scholarship (and by this anthology). On the other hand Johnson's account meshes quite comfortably with the "immediate" Shakespeare who surfaces in class discussion whenever a student says something like "Oh, I can really relate to this speech. Just yesterday I was talking to my father . . ." In short, our real conversations about Shakespeare—our real experience of Shakespeare?—oscillates between Johnson's "take" and the New Historicist's (what's more, the two are not sharply distinguishable; elsewhere in the Preface, Johnson is keenly alert to the cultural circumstances in which the playwright worked). So: In what ways, by our lights, is Johnson right about Shakespeare? And what elements of the plays, by our lights, does Johnson miss or misapprehend? (He condemns, for example, the very "quibbles"—the puns—which we have learned to treasure as some of Shakespeare's richest moments.)

The dismantling of the unities (2759–2762) makes for delicious reading. The appeal is immediate: Johnson is refuting critical pieties that now seem remote and absurd, in a culture weaned on the rapid cross-cuttings of film and video. His demonstration here has all of the efficacy, some of the comedy, but little of the violence conspicuous in his review of Soame Jenyns; he is simply describing the audience's experiences not (to borrow again his words to Thrale) "as they may be" in

the minds of theorists, “but as they actually are” in the seats of the theater. Johnson (like Shakespeare) rates the audience’s dexterity of imagination far more highly than does the theory from which he dissents. He describes our experience, and measures our capacities, both accurately and flatteringly.

The notes to *Othello* will work best in a course where that play has been read—and will work with particular energy *while* it is being read. Even within this small selection, Johnson performs many of the actions that all readers of Shakespeare undertake: collating the play with real life (1.3.141–42); paraphrasing Shakespeare’s lines, expanding his compressions, plumbing his obscurities (5.2.1–3); responding with raw feeling (5.2.67–69); assessing moralities and meanings (3.3.206–08, and the summation). Much of what Johnson does as editor overlaps with what we do as readers. Again, then: Is his Shakespeare our Shakespeare? What are the differences between these tasks as he performs them and as we do—in method, and in result? Much might be gained by comparing Johnson’s notes and Preface with the apparatus (headnotes, footnotes, companion readings, etc.) surrounding the text of *Othello* in this anthology. What information does each convey? What presuppositions about Shakespeare, *Othello*, literature, and history does each embody?

Travel Writing

These selections will work best when read in conjunction with Johnson’s *Idler* No. 97 (see comments under Periodical Essays, above) and with the excerpts from Boswell’s *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (see further comments under Boswell below). In the *Idler* essay Johnson mocks the personal details that had come to inundate contemporary travel writing. By comparing his journal-letter to Thrale and his *Journey* account of the same stretch of days, students will be able to detect the distinctions Johnson draws between the kinds of details proper in a letter to a beloved friend, and the modes of narrative and thought valuable in a published account; readers may also be struck by the difference between Johnson’s “private” and his “public” voice (even the shapes of his sentences change markedly). These comparisons can make for a good paper topic; a particularly intriguing parallel transpires between the two accounts of Johnson’s pause for rest in a “small glen” (2766; 2773). Johnson’s gesture towards the Thrales in the letter, and towards the reader in the book, coupled with his different description and analysis of his responses to the scene, say much about his alertness to audience, and his conception of travel.

Travel writers, Johnson argues in the *Idler*, ought to pay less attention to themselves and more to the culture they encounter. Ever since the *Journey*’s first appearance, the degree and precision of Johnson’s attention to the Highlands has remained a matter of dispute. Scots readers and others found Johnson’s preoccupation with paucity (the absence of trees and other amenities) insultingly reductive; for them, his comic comment about the inn at Glenelg—“of the provisions the negative catalogue was very copious”—might stand as a damning emblem of his attitude through the book. In travelling to Scotland, Johnson the empiricist was eagerly participating in the newly productive and powerful pursuits of ethnography and geography—in the careful delineation (often with a view

towards dominion) of distant lands and peoples. At the same time, Johnson finds in the Highlands much confirmation for arguments he has waged all his life—about mutability, about the human capacity for self-delusion, about human life being “every where a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed” (*Rasselas*, 2751). How, then, do Johnson’s presuppositions inform and inflect his ethnography here? Thomas Jemieliety’s article on teaching the *Journey* (*Approaches*, 99–106) is helpful on this and many other points.

The Lives of the Poets

The excerpt on Pope’s *Iliad* can be read most profitably in conjunction with the selections from that work (2509–12; how does Johnson’s account of Pope’s purposes square with the one offered by Pope himself?), and with Johnson’s own *Rambler* No. 60. To what extent does Johnson here follow the precepts on biography that he there articulates—the stipulation about “minute details,” the argument about universal usefulness? At the end of the *Iliad* excerpt, Johnson defends the particularity of his history of this, “the noblest version [i.e., translation] of poetry which the world has ever seen.” But how has he deployed the details he has selected? And by what means has he managed (in keeping with the *Rambler* essay) to suggest points of correspondence between the lives led by this matchless writer and by the ordinary reader? The paragraph on Pope’s pace of translation (2784) provides a compact instance of Johnson’s method. It begins with a small observation (“When we find him translating fifty lines a day . . .”) and ends with a universal pronouncement (“He that runs against time . . .”); the modulations in between are worth attending to.

Also worth noting is Johnson’s attention not only to the processes by which books get written and read, but to those calculations by which they are made and marketed: price, size, press run, profit, subscription, competition. A bookseller’s son, Johnson is here (as elsewhere in the *Lives*) melding literary biography with a cultural history of the book as commodity and artifact.

The critical excerpts, on *Paradise Lost* and Pope’s poems, are best read in conjunction with the works themselves. “I rejoice to concur with the common reader,” Johnson once remarked, and students may rejoice in turn to collate his judgments with their own. Johnson invites such collation at the end of his comparison between Pope and Dryden, and the last paragraph of the excerpt on Milton provides another well-trod testing ground.

Lawrence Lipking, in his splendid essay on teaching the *Lives* (*Approaches*, 114–20), suggests another apt companion reading: Johnson’s poem “On the Death of Dr. Levet.” Throughout the *Lives*, Lipking points out, Johnson asks of each poet and each poem the question he answers so confidently in his memorial to Levet: how well was the allotted talent here employed?

Annals and Letters

The “Annals” contrast interestingly with the excerpts from the *Life of Pope*. Here Johnson extenuates nothing and elaborates little; instead he focuses rigorously on “domestic privacies” and corporeal facts—eyes, sores, jack-weight, dog, cup, spoons,

frock, books. Only occasionally does he expand from the particular to an analysis of emotions and relationships, as when his problems of sight open out into a quick and sharp account of his parents' marriage (2789). There is in Johnson's procedure here a confidence in the revelatory particular, the speaking object, comparable to Aubrey's and to Hooke's. Beginning from his precarious emergence ("I was born almost dead"), he is investigating the raw materials of his own difficult life and writing them up for himself alone.

In his letters, he writes for someone else—for a reader specifically circumstanced and artfully addressed. In tone and tactics, the letters included here proffer first antithesis, then synthesis. In the one to Chesterfield Johnson crafts a dazzling and audacious rebuke: no aristocratic patron had been dismissed this way before. In his letter to Hester Thrale from Skye (2766–70), as in so much of their correspondence, Johnson performs gestures of intimacy across removes of space and time; in his last letters to her (2793–95), Johnson mingles reproach and tenderness, in measures intricately moving because his stance itself (against a marriage she deeply desires) now seems so unsympathetic (the excerpts from *Thralliana*, discussed in her section below, provide an impassioned counterpoint). In the letter of 19 June 1783, Johnson faces down two abiding fears: of losing Thrale, and of losing life. In his account of his "paralytic stroke" and its aftermath he attempts uneasily to renew his cherished connection with his friend ("How this will be received by you, I know not"), and he enacts once more the tenet he had earlier pronounced to her, struggling to see his illness and her alienation "as they are" (the Latin lines he wrote after the stroke "were not very good, but I knew them not to be very good"), while hoping against hope that they might be otherwise. In his superb article on teaching Johnson's letters (*Approaches*, 78–84), Bruce Redford argues that they "richly merit, and abundantly repay, the kind of close scrutiny we automatically accord the 'major' works"; he makes the claim convincing in close readings of the letter to Chesterfield and the final missive to Hester Thrale.

James Boswell

Five strands mingle vividly in nearly everything Boswell wrote: theatricality, nationality, filial attachments, gender, and genre. A question about any one of these matters will open up the wonders of the text—and carry you quickly to the other four, so inextricably are they intertwined.

Nowhere is their mingling more apparent and entertaining than in the *London Journal*. Boswell's early discovery (quoted in the headnote) "that we may be . . . whatever character we choose" makes a useful touchstone. Fascinated by the power, he found the choice perpetually perplexing; he worshipped actors because they possessed the power in full, with their "choices" both simplified and multiplied by the requirements of each successive role. Freshly arrived in London from Edinburgh, Boswell resorts immediately to role-playing as a way to define and re-define his perpetually confused cultural affiliations. This propensity comes through clearly enough in the early excerpts here, where he both confirms and counteracts his Scottishness by playing a "true-born Old Englishman" for a day (15 December), and by imagining himself longingly as West Digges, the Edinburgh actor famously capable of transforming himself into the London kingpin Captain Macheath (1 December); Boswell invokes this fantasy in order to soothe himself for the rapidity with which he has fallen back into the milieu of a Scots family visiting London—only a week or so after his own bold advent.

Boswell's passion for playacting shows clearest of all in the account of his intrigue with the actress Louisa, who, he is gratified to note (in a passage not in the anthology) "has played many a fine lady's part"—including Gertrude in *Hamlet*. En route to his assignation (12 January) Boswell dines with the actor Thomas Sheridan and debates the merits of superstar David Garrick, in his performance as the dying King Henry confronting his wayward son (like Prince Hal, Boswell is leading a London life deeply displeasing to his father). Arriving at the appointed inn, Boswell pretends to be the cousin of West Digges; following consummation, he solicits his actress-lover's applause for his performance(s). Eight days later (20 January), he presents his culminating confrontation with Louisa as a playtext, and after his ruffled departure from her he seeks out the paternal blessing of Garrick himself. Functioning simultaneously as playwright, actor, and director, Boswell is also his own most ardent, anxious audience.

Boswell's tendency to transmute autobiography into theater—to build a proscenium in prose—persisted throughout his career. Students may enjoy comparing the *Journal* passage on the first meeting with Johnson (16 May) with this revision in the *Life*: "Johnson unexpectedly came into the shop; and Mr. Davies having perceived him through the glass-door in the room in which we were sitting, advancing towards us,—he announced his awful approach to me, somewhat in the manner of an actor in the part of Horatio, when he addresses Hamlet on the appearance of his father's ghost: 'Look, my Lord, it comes.'" Boswell becomes the prince, Johnson his spectral father.

The deathbed interview with David Hume extends the father-son strand. Boswell seeks and assesses the views of a formidable figure, "just a-dying." A glance

back at his fervent account (2800–01) of the father-son scene in *Henry IV* may prove worthwhile here. But the richest comparisons will arise with the selections by Hume in *Perspectives: Mind and God* (2644–50), and with the “Conversations about Hume” excerpted from the *Life of Johnson* (2815–17). Johnson firmly dismisses Hume’s heresies. Boswell, by contrast, cannot let them go. In his talks with Johnson, he resumes the topic again and again over the course of years, seeking reassurance from this most authoritative father figure, but unable quite to absorb it. In his account of the deathbed interview itself, Boswell does uneasy battle with Hume’s views even as he transcribes them, and returns to the narrative field of combat twice after the death of his “opponent”—once by revising his first account, once by supplying “additions from memory.” (Contrast Hume’s own far more comfortable approach to self-revision: “I shall leave [my] history . . . as perfect as I can” [2808]) Much of Boswell’s fascination arises from the perceived incongruity between Hume’s cheerfulness (deeply attractive to the diarist) and his predicament (deeply dreadful): “There was no solemnity in the scene.” This is not death as *Boswell* would script it. (For a fuller reading, see Redford).

The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides again dramatizes the complexity of Boswell’s chameleonic allegiances. A proud Scot, he cannot “refrain from tears” (1 September) when re-hearing the defeat of the Highland rebels at the culture-crushing battle of Culloden—and then plunges into a partly dismissive analysis of his response (“with which sober rationality has nothing to do”). Proud companion of a supereminent Englishman, he is embarrassed by what he sees as the peasant woman’s price-gouging, and he laughs loud and long at the condescension displayed by escort Hay to “*Dr. Samuel Johnson*”—but he laughs at Johnson too.

These excerpts from the *Journal* work best when read in company with Johnson’s accounts of the same days in his letters to Hester Thrale and in his published *Journey*; Boswell’s competition with Thrale for the privilege of Johnsonian intimacy arises in his very first entry here. Competition is a keynote in the *Journal*. The sequence of composition, revision, and publication (sketched in the first footnote to these excerpts) prompted Boswell to argue, implicitly and explicitly, that now, ten years after the appearance of Johnson’s *Journey*, he had something new and valuable to impart about the trip: the portrait of Johnson himself, in energetic motion through an alien land. One version of the argument crops up in the contrast Boswell draws (1 September) between Johnson’s “great mind,” unsuited to “minute particulars,” and the “neat little scales” of his own mind, well-suited for weighing mundane details. Though Boswell purports here to be defending only his rude conduct on a Highland hillside, he is in fact arguing for his whole new narrative enterprise. He lightly echoes Johnson’s famous tenet (in *Rambler* No. 60) that all biographers should deal in “domestic privacies, and the minute details of daily life.” But Boswell also emphasizes that he is dealing in such particulars on a scale and in an abundance that Johnson never implemented—and consequently (so he implies) giving us “more” of Johnson than we have had of any human subject hitherto. In transmuting the minutely detailed daily record of his own life into the published portrait of another, Boswell was making a new kind of biography, a kind open then and now to buzzing questions: How much of any given passage is really about the biographer rather than

the biographee? And how does our knowledge (or illusion) about each man inflect our knowledge about the other, “relativizing” the whole so that we move among uncertainties rather than travel directly to biographical “truth”?

These questions arise everywhere in *The Life of Johnson*, for which the *Journal* served as prelude. The *Life* excerpts here will perhaps work most productively if read in company with Johnson’s own precepts about biography (*Rambler* No. 60, *Idler* No. 84), and with his practice in the lives of Pope and Milton. In the *Life of Johnson*’s opening sentence Boswell makes it clear that Johnson is not only his subject but also his model—the best biographer (and potential autobiographer) who ever lived. This sentence, cast pointedly as an elaborate period in Johnson’s own most ornate style, is worth reading aloud in class, by way of decoding and of pondering: Boswell is subliminally arguing that, even in the shapes of his prose, he has absorbed (as he elsewhere asserts, in a passage omitted here) *the Johnsonian ether*. A comparison with the Johnson excerpts, though, will reveal how much the two biographers differ. At one of the most striking points of divergence, Boswell in his introduction resolves as biographer to “‘live o’er each scene’ with [Johnson], as he *actually* advanced through the several *stages* of his life” (2814; emphasis added). As the diction suggests, this is essentially a dramatist’s dream, of rendering a life now ended so that it unfolds before us in what feels like the “real,” present time of the theater, rather than the retrospect of the reading-chair (for more on Boswell’s tactics, see Ralph W. Rader, “Literary Form in Factual Narrative: The Example of Boswell’s *Johnson*,” in *Boswell’s Life of Johnson: New Questions, New Answers*, ed. John A. Vance [U of Georgia P, 1985] 25–52). The fascination with prose-as-stage that first emerged in Boswell’s journals now shapes his *Life*.

In the famous “Dinner with Wilkes,” Boswell not only lives o’er the scene; he stages it in the first place. As usual with Boswell, the audiences are multiple: Johnson and Wilkes perform for each other, and for the other guests at the dinner, and (thanks to Boswell’s intricate mediation) for us as well. Boswell, of course, is everywhere, as scripter and prompter (see in particular his management of Mrs. Williams), director and actor, guiding the performances of others and assessing and interpreting his own. By letting us into his scheme from the first, Boswell gives us the sense that, in this situation at least, we know more about Johnson than does Johnson himself. Yet Boswell allows us, like spectators at a play, to shift identifications readily: Johnson as “dupe” emerges (as usual) as Johnson triumphant. All Boswell’s tactics as manipulator and narrator converge in the dialogue near the end of the episode, when Johnson and Wilkes collude in witticisms at Boswell’s expense—“and we ashamed of him” (2822). The two antagonists have (to literalize Lennon) come together over Boswell; without him they would not have come together at all.

The conversation at Streatham (2823–34) affords a fascinating instance of the way the men in Boswell’s circle “gendered” the privileges of life-writing. Boswell’s proud remark that “as a lady adjusts her dress before a mirror, a man adjusts his character by looking at his journal” suggests 1) that (as Pope wrote in his *Epistle to a Lady*) “most women have no characters at all”; hence 2) that the writing of journals occupies no proper place in a lady’s life. Yet Boswell presses on,

with much complacency and not a trace of irony, to mention with esteem the diary of Lady Cutts; at this point, all the gendering analogies get interestingly and precariously muddled. Hester Thrale, of course, is listening, and one of her *Thraliana* entries (10 December 1780, 2836–37) affords the perfect counterpoint to this passage.

The conversation at the Club (2825–28) conveys both the range and the mode of many similar exchanges throughout the *Life*. The speakers move through many topics, and reveal as they do so how clearly the art of conversation was construed as a mix of competition and collaboration. They are working with and against each other to produce a shapely, pleasurable flow of talk, one worth savoring in the moment, and living o'er afterwards. The contrast between Johnson as talker (his sentences generally short and punchy) and Johnson as writer (often more elaborate) is worth dwelling on. And Boswell's gifts as dramatist—as selector, shaper, reviser—remain in evidence: did a real-life conversation *ever* run so smooth as this?

The Boswell selections are closely linked (as I've already suggested) with those by Johnson and Thrale. Read with Rochester, Etherege, Gay, and Hogarth, Boswell completes a kind of mini-history of the London rake. His journals will work well also with Addison (whose overwhelming influence Boswell explicitly acknowledges) and with Pepys. The *Spectator's* model of a daily essay, and of the powerful observer recording both the ways of the world and the workings of his own mind, accounts for much of the difference between Boswell's diary and Pepys's, a century apart. Boswell also compares interestingly with Mary Carleton and Margaret Cavendish; like him, but working from different positions and using different techniques, they seek to construct identity and achieve authority in the records of their lives.

Hester Salusbury Thrale Piozzi

Piozzi's life-writing is *sui generis*—fascinating in itself (students generally take to it immediately), and even more revelatory when read against the men's journals excerpted elsewhere in the anthology: Pepys's and Boswell's, Crusoe's and H. F.'s (in Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*). Like Boswell, Piozzi pursued self-recording in many modes, from the calendrical regularity (at least in the first pages) of the *Family Book*, to the more sporadic effusions of *Thraliana*, a record of observations, reflections, conversations, and anecdotes composed at moments when leisure and impulse converged. But she never worked in the time-form characteristic of Pepys and Boswell: the continuous daily journal, temporally regular and exact. She herself drew the distinction in a *Thraliana* entry of spring 1778: "Mr. Boswell keeps a regular literary journal I believe of everything worth remarking; 'tis a good way, but life is scarce long enough to talk, and to write, and to live to rejoice in what one has written—at least I feel that I have begun too late." Piozzi's sense that she has started "too late" registers a difference not of age (she is thirty-seven, Boswell thirty-eight) but of situation. Piozzi has something like Boswell's appetite for self-recording, but nothing like his opportunities. Over and over within her texts, Piozzi makes clear how randomly, plentifully, and at times exasperatingly the predicaments of her children and the peremptoriness of her husband punctuate her days, precluding the long stretches of solitary time desirable for more systematic writing. For Piozzi and for other women similarly situated (including her dear friend, the copious but sporadic diarist Frances Burney), diurnal form is hardly an option: by circumstance, family obligation, and social pressure, they *must* write selectively and intermittently, leaving days and moments (however reluctantly) unrecorded.

Among the excerpts here, several passages invite particular attention: her agonizing record of the short sequence of her son's death, from the complacency of the morning to the catastrophe of the night (her detailed retraversal of that stretch of time, from ignorance to loss and anguish, bears comparison and contrast with Pepys's account of the London Fire). In her *Thraliana* entry about the rough drafts for Pope's *Iliad*, she genders her metaphors intricately and caustically. The male readers of the manuscript (Johnson among them) intrude violently and obtusely into woman's province: into "the cradles and clouts" of the nursery (Pope momentarily becomes yet another frail infant under Thrale's watchful care); into the naked vulnerability of the bath. At the same time, Thrale aligns herself with Pope as a kind of literary stage manager, anxiously wielding "wood and wire" behind the scenes in a bizarre game of performance and concealment ("stranger still that a woman should write such a book as this . . ."). The passage reads well as a retort to the Streatham conversation recorded in Boswell's *Life* (2823–23).

In her courtship narrative (2839–42) the circle of intruders expands to include not only men like Johnson, but women of her own blood—the very daughters whose early accomplishments she had chronicled in the *Family Book*. A reading of Johnson's letters to her during this period (2793–95) will convey a fuller sense of the pressures she was resisting; but only a close reading of her own prose can map the tackings between deference and defiance, diffidence and pride, by which she navigated a route to hard-won happiness.

The elegy on Johnson (2842–43), rueful, evocative, and searching, makes for an interesting contrast with Boswell's more aggressive claims to possess a kind of monopoly on the man he writes about (see the Introduction to the *Life* [2814], and his attack on Piozzi as biographer [2824]). Such claim-staking is anticipated and gently mocked by both Piozzi and Johnson in her reminiscence here—though of course, the very fact that they share such inside jokes works to enforce her own claim of intimacy with him.

snippet offers students a direct way into the rhetoric and conception of ownership in landscape visualization. Walpole says to his friend: “It is uncomfortable in so intimate a correspondence as ours, not to be exactly master of every spot where one another is writing or reading or sauntering” (2874). We are always interested in visualizing distant friends; an image of *where they are* lessens the psychological sense of separation; it locates them, rescues them from an imaginative void. So Walpole makes several visual gifts of his landscape to Mann: the drawing of the “enchanted little landscape,” his own verbal description, and the language of mastery: “you see.” The total package produces a wider sense of completion and possession: the terrace of “my” hill, which “commands both extremities,” by implication contains the “navigation of boats and barges,” the “coaches, post chaises, wagons and horsemen constantly in motion,” and the “fields speckled with cows, horses, and sheep.” Walpole creates a landscape of pleasurable power and powerful pleasure for himself and his imagination of himself in history.

Edmund Burke

Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla argue that the increasing presence of and fascination with the sublime in eighteenth-century discourse is due in part to “the crucial demise of theological certainties in the face of the new beliefs of the enlightenment. [There was a] general shift from a situation in which knowledge is grounded in religious beliefs to one in which a series of interlinked technical discourses determine, legislate, and police specific forms of knowledge” in order to, in some ways, explain away the subsequent experience of the sublime (*The Sublime: A Reader in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* [Cambridge UP 1996], 6–7). In other words, new theories of the sublime arose historically (not coincidentally) with the disintegration or over-explanation of God, substance, and self (see *Perspectives: New Science and Mind and God*).

Burke’s *Enquiry* introduces “pain” into the equation of landscape, pleasure, and power that groups these selections. What students often have most trouble understanding in Burke’s conception is that beauty plays no part in the perception of the true sublime—there is an “eternal distinction” between them (2878). (Gilpin’s conflation of the sublime and the beautiful within the picturesque [2884] suggests a comparable contemporary resistance to their complete separation.) But Burke is serious in his divisions—beauty has no grandeur; it is characterized by littleness, weakness, softness, frailness, even contemptibility.

Students might begin with Burke’s *argument* of power in the context of his *language* of power, and the implications of positioning power as the basis for perception, experience, and discourse. How does he argue that power relates to both pleasure and pain? What exactly is the power of the sublime over our minds? (“All its motions are suspended” [2876]—we’re paralyzed by something outside ourselves.) How do phrases like “you spoil it” and “only useful” (2877) work towards rhetorically supporting Burke’s argument? And do students think Burke is psychologically sound in all this? Do we really feel contempt for any strength “that is subservient and innoxious” (2877)? How could such a psychological analysis justify (or be used to justify) a nationalist or imperialist enterprise? Burke elsewhere deliberately genders his terms; as the comparison between the sublime and the beautiful suggests

(2878), the concepts also incorporate and reify a traditional characterization of the difference between the masculine and the feminine.

Burke's analysis of rhetoric and language (2880–82) might be used in a number of ways. Many writers and thinkers across history have asserted the fundamental ineffability of our most powerful emotional experiences; Burke claims that words make the most powerful experiences available, understandable, even fully experiential: “no tokens . . . can express all the circumstances of most passions so fully as words” (2880). What implications does this claim have for poetry? for philosophy? for politics? for psychology? What is the relation of language to our larger conception of the metaphysical, the realm beyond empirical experience?

Yet even for Burke it is not speech alone that creates or amplifies experience; it's as if language is the spark that *ignites* the well of potential feeling; description alone would not have the “smallest effect” if the speaker didn't contribute her own feelings to the delivery, or if the hearer or reader didn't respond emotionally in kind. Burke claims he considers words “to show upon what principles they were capable of being the representatives of . . . natural things, and by what powers they were able to affect us often as strongly as the things they represent, and sometimes much more strongly” (2882). In what way does Burke offer a very vivid argument against the linguistic philosophers in Book 3 of *Gulliver's Travels* (2396–97), who want so badly to replace words with things?

Thomas Gray

How does the observer relate to his observations in this “journal-letter” of Gray's? In many of the sentence constructions the “I” entirely drops out; perspective changes with the disembodied (or at least disidentified) walking, looking, hearing. The perceptions, the scenes themselves take a Humean center-stage as “the solemn colouring of night [draws] on” and the colors, shades, surfaces, textures, and subtle sounds emerge with the night, slip into the page, and seem to displace the act of description itself. Where does the observer re-enter his description as a discerning self? Why, and to what effect? Does Gray, too, use the language of power and appropriation in his description?

William Gilpin

Gilpin's essay is essentially a handbook for the discerning traveller—how to “see” what you *see*. What is the “ease” that he's offering (2884)? Gilpin compares the traveller to the hunter; what is the “prey” here? We see in Gilpin that shift in interpretive privilege from the owner of the house and garden to the “visitor, now trained by literature in the ‘correct’ art of reading” (Stephen Bending, “Rereading the English Landscape Garden,” *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 55 [1992], 380). For Gilpin, the traveller “pursues” and “attains” not just an image, a perception, an experience, but an “object” (2884). We examine and compare parts or wholes and are greatly amused. How does Gilpin's last paragraph both confirm and alter Burke's argument about the power of words, the power of analysis, and the fundamental nature of experience? “We rather *feel*, than *survey* it” suggests a pulling back, a passive rather than appropriative move. Does this still translate into power as well as pleasure?