

Principles of Literary Study  
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Office hours: Mondays 2:00–3:00 or by appointment

February 22, 2021. Speakers and addressees.

## syllabus revision

- ▶ skipping *The Waste Land* (planned for 2/25)
- ▶ selections date for 2/22 now for 2/25

## the first paper

- ▶ write about one (1) poem
  - ▶ (with mention of others if you wish)
- ▶ 1500–1800 words (5–7ish pages)
  - ▶ more is okay, less is a problem
- ▶ due March 12 (spring break, dudes)
  - ▶ 0–48 hours late: max 3.0
  - ▶ later: max 2.0

what matters

▶ evidence

# what matters

- ▶ evidence
- ▶ motive

## what matters

- ▶ evidence
- ▶ motive
- ▶ argument

## what matters

- ▶ evidence
- ▶ motive
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- ▶ evidence

## what matters

- ▶ evidence
- ▶ motive
- ▶ argument
- ▶ evidence
- ▶ also evidence is important

# poetry-analysis working methods

- ▶ copying out
- ▶ sentence-by-sentence paraphrase
- ▶ what goes with what?
- ▶ how are form and theme related?
  - ▶ (remember what you know about form)

## introduction exercise

- ▶ March 3 now
- ▶ try the formula: from specific to general

## review/segue

- ▶ Who is the speaker talking to in “Ode on a Grecian Urn”?

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When old age shall this generation waste,  
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
“Beauty is truth, truth beauty,”—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

apostrophe (“turning away”) figure of exclamatory address

prosopopoeia (“making a face”) representing something that isn't a person as a person

ekphrasis (“description”) description of a visual artwork

## thinking about address

- ▶ who speaks?
  - ▶ better: how does the poem construct a speaker?
- ▶ to whom is the poem addressed?
  - ▶ better: what kind of addressee is implied by the poem?
- ▶ who wrote?
  - ▶ better: what relation does the poem imply between author and speaker?
- ▶ who hears or reads?
  - ▶ better: what relation does the poem imply between reader and addressee?

## Donne: two ways or one?

### ▶ “The Flea”

- ▶ direct address from a lover to a beloved
- ▶ seductive argument (“Me it suck’d first, and now sucks thee”)
- ▶ implied response: squish (“Cruel and sudden”)
- ▶ implied counter: “when thou yield’st to me”

### ▶ “The Sun”

- ▶ apostrophe (“Busy old fool, unruly Sun”)
- ▶ seductive argument (“the world’s contracted thus”)
- ▶ implied response: gotta go
- ▶ implied counter: “these walls, thy sphere”

## Wheatley's double discourse

On Being Brought from Africa to America (1773)

'Twas mercy brought me from my *Pagan* land,  
Taught my benighted soul to understand  
That there's a God, that there's a *Saviour* too:  
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.  
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,  
"Their colour is a diabolic die."  
Remember, *Christians*, *Negros*, black as *Cain*,  
May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.

# dramatic monologue

- ▶ speaker as character: Browning's Ferrara
  - ▶ concrete situation within an implied narrative
  - ▶ game of the poem is figuring this out
  - ▶ self-disclosure is the major "drama"
- ▶ ambiguities: Eliot's Prufrock
  - ▶ a monologue, with a particular I
  - ▶ ...who is a generic nobody

## Melville, “Shiloh”

The gruesome carnage was unprecedented: Of nearly 110,000 soldiers engaged from both sides 23,800 became casualties, 3,500 were killed outright. The human devastation was the greatest known on the American continent up to that date; more casualties than the Revolution, War of 1812 and Mexican War combined.

“The Battle of Shiloh,” American Battlefield Trust.

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- ▶ What responses does the speaker consider to the battle in his “Requiem”?

Foemen at morn, but friends at eve—  
Fame or country least their care:  
(What like a bullet can undeceive!)  
But now thy lie low,  
While over them the swallows skim,  
And all is hushed at Shiloh.

- ▶ As a speech act, how does the parenthesis compare to what surrounds it?

Warner

# Warner

1. Locate a *motive* and a *thesis* in Warner's essay.
2. Look for a place where he analyzes "Shiloh" to support his claims.

## motive and thesis

- ▶ motive: textual problems and global ones
  - ▶ What is most interesting to me is a paradox in its redemptive language. (41)
  - ▶ I would like to know more about the genealogy of this abstraction, *violence*, and about its secular deployment. (45)
- ▶ thesis: small, large
  - ▶ The line, in short, encapsulates the dilemma of Northern liberal intellectuals. (42)
  - ▶ The point I want to make here is that neither violence nor redemption comes with uncontested valuations. (46)
  - ▶ I have tried to show here that the apparently simple act of naming violence...in fact mobilizes a complex structure of feeling, made possible by a vast historical background and a lot of textual condensation. (54)

## example analysis

The rhetorical exclamation is in parenthesis, I think, partly because it sits oddly against the picture of the innocent suffering that has preceded it. If any agent has injured these men, it can only be their own former state of deception—fame or country. (49)

## the speaker again

The line itself lingers in parentheses, floating free of its scene. Its picture of subjectivity, apparently merely negative, is in reality mediated by the conventions of lyric, with its eternal, placeless, overheard speech. (Warner, 51)

We should say that eloquence is *heard*; poetry is *overheard*. Eloquence supposes an audience; the peculiarity of poetry appears to us to lie in the poet's utter unconsciousness of a listener. Poetry is feeling confessing itself to itself, in moments of solitude, and embodying itself in symbols which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists' in the poet's mind.

John Stuart Mill, "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties" [1833], in *Dissertations and Discussions: Political, Philosophical, and Historical* (London: Parker, 1859), 1.71.

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Let us go then, you and I...

next: open forms

- ▶ focus on:
  - ▶ Rich, “Diving into the Wreck”
  - ▶ Ramanujan, “Elements of Composition”