

AUSTEN, POE, BRONTË, & STODDARD AND THE ART OF FICTION MIDTERM

Part I: Choose one of the following questions to answer. Be sure to consider form, content, and context in your response. (~700-900 words)

- a. New and improved transportation throughout the nineteenth century led to increased mobility and a new attention to movement and vision, which in turn led to numerous other developments. Discuss how Elizabeth Stoddard's *The Morgesons* or Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* registers this increased mobility and its consequences. How do you think that increased mobility in turn impacted literary work (e.g. form, aesthetics, genre)? In writing your brief response you may wish to consider giving a close reading of one particular illustrative passage.
- b. Beginning in the 1790s, most American novels followed the genre conventions of the novel of seduction or of the Gothic; beginning in the 1820s, the conventions stemmed from the success of Sir Walter Scott and the historical romance. However, in the 1830s and 1840s Edgar Allan Poe makes a return to the gothic (sometimes verging on the grotesque), yet often in the context of the romance. Take one of the two works we read of Poe's ("Ligeia" or "Berenice") and write a brief essay in which you take into consideration how Poe is using the Gothic in his fiction. For a quick recap of gothic genre conventions, see http://www.wvnorton.com/college/english/nael/romantic/topic_2/welcome.htm
- c. In Joshua Landy, *How to Do Things with Fiction*, Landy outlines three popular modes of reading fiction—exemplary, affective, and cognitive—and then comes up with a fourth—formative fiction. Write a brief essay in which you explain these different modes of reading using Jane Austen's *Persuasion*.

Part II: Choose one of the following quotations and give an explication of the passage in the context of the theme or themes of the work from which it comes. Be sure to identify both author and work in your response. (~300-500 words)

- a. "I do not think I ever opened a book in my life which had not something to say upon woman's inconstancy. Songs and proverbs, all talk of woman's fickleness. But perhaps you will say, these were all written by men. Perhaps I shall. Yes, yes, if you please, no reference to examples in books. Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands. I will not allow books to prove anything."
- b. "The teeth! - the teeth! - they were here, and there, and everywhere, and visibly and palpably before me; long, narrow, and excessively white, with the pale lips writhing about them, as in the very moment of their first terrible development. Then came the full fury of my monomania, and I struggled in vain against its strange and irresistible influence. In the multiplied objects of the external world I had no thoughts but for the teeth. For these I longed with a phrenzied desire. All other matters and all different interests became absorbed in their single contemplation. They - they alone were present to the mental eye, and they, in their sole individuality, became the essence of my mental life. I held them in every light. I turned them in every attitude. I surveyed their characteristics. I dwelt upon their peculiarities. I pondered upon their conformation. I mused upon the alteration in their nature. I shuddered as I assigned to them in imagination a sensitive and sentient power, and even when unassisted by the lips, a capability of moral expression. Of Mademoiselle Salle it has been well said,"

Que tous ses pas etaient des sentiments," and of Berenice I more seriously believed que toutes ses dents etaient des idees. Des idees! - ah here was the idiotic thought that destroyed me! Des idees! - ah therefore it was that I coveted them so madly! I felt that their possession could alone ever restore me to peace, in giving me back to reason."

- c. "And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigor? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will."
- d. "I whispered, 'Mother, your eyes are as blue as the sea yonder, and I love you.' She glanced toward it; it was murmuring softly, creeping along the shore, licking the rocks and sand as if recognizing a master. And I saw and felt its steady, resistless heaving, insidious and terrible."

Extra Credit

Ekphrasis is the act of describing or translating a piece of art from one medium to another. In other words, ekphrasis is relational. It is often used to describe one form of art, such as painting or sculpture, in terms another form of art, often through poetry, though sometimes through prose. Choose one of images below and engage with it through ekphrasis writing practices. You may use either poetry or prose but be sure to craft a thoughtful response.



"Western Gothic"



"Dulce Et Decorum, after Wilfred Owen"



"Magritte"