# Enlightenment Study Guide

## Enlightenment

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# Introduction

During the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment emerged as a social, philosophical, political, and literary movement that espoused rational thought and methodical observation of the world. The term "Enlightenment" refers to the belief by the movement's contributors that they were leaving behind the dark ignorance and blind belief that characterized the past. The freethinking writers of the period sought to evaluate and understand life by way of scientific observation and critical reasoning rather than through uncritically accepted religion, tradition, and social conventions. At the center of the Enlightenment were the *philosophes*, a group of intellectual deists who were centered in Paris. Deists believe in the existence of a creative but uninvolved God, and they believe in the basic goodness, rather than sinfulness, of humankind. Because this view of God contradicted the accepted religious views of the day, the *philosophes* were considered very dangerous. The church wielded considerable power at the time, so the *philosophes* were subjected to censorship and restrictive decrees carrying harsh punishments. Still, the *philosophes* continued to spread their views, and as the church's political power dwindled over the years, the Enlightenment gained momentum. In fact, by the 1770s, many *philosophes* collected government pensions and held important academic positions.

Scholars do not agree on the exact dates of the Enlightenment. Most literary historians support the claim that it ended with the onset of the French Revolution in 1789, and they place the beginning somewhere between 1660 and 1685. Although it was centered in France, the Enlightenment had adherents all over the world. Contributors to the movement include France's Denis Diderot (who edited *Encyclopédie*), Voltaire (*Candide*), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (*The Social Contract*), Germany's Immanuel Kant (who is also associated with Transcendentalism), England's David Hume, Italy's Cesare Beccaria, and America's Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. Most of the major contributors knew one another and maintained contact despite the great distances. The Enlightenment's influence extended not only geographically but also chronologically, as reactions to it became evident in subsequent literary movements such as *Sturm und Drang* and Romanticism.

# Themes

## Superiority of the Intellect

The *philosophes* claimed that humanity has the ability to perfect itself and society and that the state has the potential to be an instrument of that progress. Part of their criticism of the existing government was that it impeded such progress in its refusal to surrender power or resources to the people so that they could take control of their lives. The *philosophes* lamented the social conditions of contemporary France, but they remained confident that its people could attain happiness and improve living standards. Armed with these concepts and fortified by science and reason, the *philosophes* attacked Christian tradition and dogma, denouncing religious persecution and championing the idea of religious tolerance.

At the center of the belief in the superiority of the intellect was the Enlightenment reaction against traditional authority, namely the church and the ruling class. The *philosophes* claimed that rather than depend on these authorities for physical, spiritual, and intellectual needs, individuals could provide for themselves. By using their minds and demanding morality of themselves and others, people could actually change their realities for the better. This idea is evident in Rousseau's *The Social Contract* and in the *Declaration of Independence*. It is expressed more subtly in *Émile* wherein a child's education is designed to draw upon his unique capabilities and to teach the child to be his own person in adulthood.

## Basic Goodness of Humankind

The *philosophes* maintained that people were innately good and that society and civilization were to blame for their corruption. Because people are good, they are fully capable of ruling themselves and collectively working toward the welfare of all. Rousseau asserts this in *The Social Contract*, as he explains that despite individual differences and priorities, people as a whole will make decisions for the common good. In *Émile*, Rousseau applies this idea to the education of a child, demonstrating that the purpose of education is not to correct a child or mold the child to exhibit a certain set of characteristics but rather to draw out the child's unique gifts and goodness. Not all Enlightenment writers emphasized man's inherent goodness, however; in *Candide*, Voltaire provides numerous examples of humanity's cruelty and abuse of power. Once the characters are living peacefully on a farm (outside of civilization), they seem to be less violent, but the theme of humankind's goodness is diminished here.

## Deism

Deism is a religious belief system that emphasizes morality, virtuous living, and the perception of a creative but uninvolved God. Deists believe in the existence of God but reject the supernatural, including the miracles and resurrection of Christ. They reject the

idea that God is active in people's daily lives, instead claiming that God created the world but is now distant. This view of God directly contradicts the view of Catholic and Protestant churches. The *philosophes* were particularly incensed by the Roman Catholic Church, which they perceived as too restrictive and overpowering.

As deists, the *philosophes* were uninterested in life after death. They maintained that people should spend their time and energy improving this life, and they advocated pursuing worldly happiness and contentment. Diderot addresses these ideas in the *Encyclopédie*, and they are implied in the Preamble to the *Declaration of Independence*, which states that among a person's unalienable rights are "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

# Style

## Rhetoric

Over the course of the Enlightenment, there existed two clearly opposing schools of thought concerning rhetoric. The traditions of the Renaissance, largely influenced by the works of Peter Ramus, held over into the early part of the movement. Ramus attacked Aristotle's view that rhetoric and dialect should be integrated, indicating that, though they may have been used in conjunction in the past, they should be disengaged. Ramus advocated a linear style, bereft of embellishment, so that scientific and philosophical writings might be better representations of truth. This straightforward approach adhered naturally to the rational thought and methodical observation promoted by the Enlightenment. However, while this rhetorical convention was becoming less popular, another was quickly gaining ground.

Near the end of the Enlightenment, the Belletristic Movement was in full swing. Works like *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), by Hugh Blair, and *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776), by George Campbell, were published. Both authors embraced the idea of using eloquence, beauty, and emotion to allow one to communicate, with the most advantage, to his or her audience. The word belletristic comes from *belles-lettres* (French for literature), which is literature that is appreciated not just for its content but for its beauty as well. Belletristic rhetoric resonated with Aristotle's ideals, a complete reversal from where rhetoric began at the outset of the movement.

## Satire

Although there are few stylistic consistencies among Enlightenment works, the fiction of the period is almost always satirical. Satire is an indirect way of commenting on social or political issues. In satire, people and things are not what they seem on the surface, but readers can often identify what aspect of society is being ridiculed. Satire allowed the *philosophes* to get some of their writing past government censors despite its harsh criticism of the status quo. The number of censors increased in France during the Enlightenment because of the radical new ideas being put forth. When writers used satire, however, censors either missed the point of the writing or were unable to make a strong case for suppressing it.

Satire also served as a witty way to criticize. Enlightenment writers were often clever and sarcastic, and their work tended to attract an intelligent readership. A common satirical technique was to create a character that was a stranger to France. Because the character was naive and unfamiliar with this foreign society, it was not surprising to readers if the character was confused by French society or found fault with it. These characters were generally ignorant or silly, making their faultfinding seem equally ignorant or silly. The satiric irony, however, was that the character was the author's vehicle for pointing out the absurd and unjust in French society.

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# Historical Context

## Seventeenth-Century Advances

Among the important influences of Enlightenment thinkers were seventeenth-century scientists and thinkers such as Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, René Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, Thomas Hobbes, and John Locke. Locke's theory of sensationalism (the belief that knowledge is solely derived through sensation and perception) was especially important to Voltaire and Rousseau, and Locke's views on the relationship between the individual and society laid the groundwork for the social contract theories of Rousseau.

Along with the writings of these influential figures, the seventeenth century provided other inspirational advances for the Enlightenment. Discoveries and inventions made by scientists supported the Enlightenment belief in the superiority of the intellect, and world exploration led to a sense of relativism with regard to non-European cultures. These advances served to reveal new realities, and thus Enlightenment writers encouraged open-mindedness and tolerance. Unfortunately, these opinions did not influence most leaders in European governments, who continued their mission to discover and conquer new lands and peoples at almost any cost. Isaac Newton's discovery of the law of gravity suggested that God's laws were accessible to the human mind. Enlightenment thinkers extended this notion and claimed that all of the laws and structures of nature and society could be discovered and known by applying reason. Locke had taught that knowledge comes from experience, which further supported the belief that the mind was the portal to all knowledge, both scientific and moral. The Enlightenment encouraged people to seek knowledge by observation rather than by reading what past authorities (such as the Bible or the Greek philosophers) taught.

## Censorship

Open expression of thought in eighteenthcentury France was regularly curtailed by a stringent but often arbitrary censorship. Literary works were published only with the permission of the Director of Publications. Even when the censor granted permission, books could be suppressed by the clergy, the Parliament of Paris (the main judicial authority), the royal decree, or by other political and religious authorities. In 1754, a royal decree ordered the death penalty for "all those who shall be convicted of having composed, or caused to be composed and printed, writings intended to attack religion, to assail our authority, or to disturb the ordered tranquility of our realm." Despite its threatening tone, enforcement of the measure was often arbitrary. The *Encyclopédie*, for example, was published with royal sanction yet championed nearly all the radical doctrines of the century.

## Salons

As a result of censorship, salons played an important role in the spread and discussion of Enlightenment thought. Salons were gatherings of distinguished and intellectual people and took place in the homes of society's elite. The women of the salons of the eighteenth century dictated the standards of taste and exerted considerable influence in matters of fame and fortune. Both men and women hosted Paris's renowned salons. Nearly all of the *philosophes* depended on the salons for the success of their literary endeavors. Many books of the day were subject to the receptions they received in salons, where guests would discuss and debate the books before applauding or condemning them. Intrigue and intense rivalry characterized the restrictive, elitist society of the salons. In such an atmosphere of a highly developed sense of wit, both in conversation and in writing, being clever was one's sole saving grace and commonly ensured one's success.

## American Revolution

The American Revolution (1775-1783) exemplified the ideals of Enlightenment thinkers, who, in the 1770s, began exploring political and social realms. Extolling the virtues of freedom and a government intent on better lives for all people, Enlightenment writers such as Rousseau claimed that there should be a fair agreement between government and the governed. When the Americans took up arms against their British rulers, they were putting Enlightenment ideas into action. Early American leaders such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin were adherents of Enlightenment ideologies, and their influence was important in the formative years of the country.

## French Revolution

The onset of the French Revolution is considered the culmination of the Enlightenment. Among the revolution's causes were the incompetence of the ruling class, the dreadful living conditions and harsh taxation of the poor, and the ideology of the Enlightenment (especially Rousseau's doctrine of popular sovereignty). The American Revolution catalyzed the French Revolution in two ways: it was a real example of people fighting for self-rule, and France's financial backing of the Americans worsened the nation's own crumbling finances. Overwhelming economic and public pressure led King Louis XVI to authorize national elections in 1788. This enabled French citizens to vote for representatives in the Estates-General, a legislative assembly that had been adjourned since 1614.

With censorship temporarily suspended, political tracts were abundant. Many of these tracts expressed Enlightenment views. Shortly after the elections, the assembly convened to address France's finances, but numerous other grievances demanded attention. The divisive atmosphere and lack of progress exacerbated an already heated atmosphere, and on July 12, 1789, the French people began rioting. Two days later,

they stormed and overtook the Bastille, a royal prison that symbolized the rule of the Bourbons, the ruling family from which Louis XVI came.

In 1791, a constitution was finally approved that created a legislature to work with a limited monarchy. Suspicion, unrest, and frustration continued to swell, however, and in 1792, distrust of the king led to his suspension and a new constitutional convention. After royalist sympathizers were arrested, angry mobs stormed jails and massacred thousands of prisoners. The convention installed a war dictatorship with Maximilien Robespierre at the helm. Known as the Reign of Terror, this period was marked by extreme economic and political injustice. Thousands of suspected insurgents were arrested, and many (including the former queen, Marie Antoinette) were executed. Robespierre's harsh actions forced the convention to have him and many of his staunch supporters arrested and guillotined. A short-lived system of government consisting of a five-man board and a legislature fell victim to a coup, and the military hero Napoleon Bonaparte took control of France in 1799. This ended the French Revolution.

Ironically, the Revolution was partially inspired by Enlightenment thought, yet the violence that came out of this decade of fighting only tarnished its credibility among many Europeans.

# Movement Variations

## United States

The Enlightenment had an important impact on the formative years of the United States as an independent nation. Although little Enlightenment literature came out of America, the *Declaration of Independence* and the American Revolution embodied the principles espoused by the *philosophes*. Some of the central figures of early America (such as Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin) were admirers of Enlightenment writers, which influenced their decision-making and their political writing. In drafting the *Declaration of Independence*, Thomas Jefferson drew on some of the fundamental ideas of the Enlightenment, such as humanity's basic goodness and ability to rule itself, the injustices of corrupt governments, and the belief that all individuals should be free to pursue happiness. The Constitution, which lays out the American system of government, was drafted in 1787 and contains many ideas inspired by Enlightenment writers and theorists.

## Scotland

Hume's philosophical writings about human rational processes and Adam Smith's revolutionary economic views added important dimensions to the Enlightenment. As a philosopher, Hume was unique because he was located in Great Britain, while most of the *philosophes* were in Paris. His ideologies supported Enlightenment claims of rationalism, although his work claimed that knowledge —especially knowledge gained through the senses—is not as reliable as many philosophers suggested. Hume was also unique in his generally widespread acceptance. While most of the *philosophes* endured censorship and outrage, Hume's work was published and deemed acceptable, mostly due to the fact that his work did not address volatile issues such as politics and religion but instead focused on explaining human thought processes and rational approaches to philosophical questions.

Hume was well known both at home and in France. When he spent two years in Paris, he was welcomed into the most distinguished salons and embraced by the public. When he left, he took Rousseau with him, although the two fell out of favor with each other once they arrived in London. Hume was not only influential with the *philosophes*, but he also played an important role in Transcendentalism. Kant, whose philosophical doctrines are major parts of the foundation of Transcendentalism, said that reading Hume was a pivotal awakening in his life.

Smith's 1776 economic treatise, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (often referred to as *The Wealth of Nations*), was the first attempt to analyze systems of trade, production, and commerce in Europe. Smith's friendship with Hume helped shape and encourage his innovative theories. Besides providing an indepth look at economic scenarios, Smith included material addressing social ramifications of

various aspects of economics. *The Wealth of Nations* demonstrated that Enlightenment ideals had applications in virtually every area of life, and its principles were put into action in America.

# Representative Authors

## Denis Diderot (1713-1784)

Denis Diderot was born in 1713 in Langres, France. His father was an artist and had a great influence on the technical craftsmanship of Diderot's masterpiece, the *Encyclopédie*, a compendium of knowledge on a wide variety of subjects of which he was the editor and a major contributor. Diderot distinguished himself as a student at the University of Paris, from which he graduated in 1732. As an adult, his personal life was often tumultuous and mysterious. He secretly married an uneducated woman named Antoinette, whose temper made his life difficult. In 1755, he carried on a secret love affair with Sophie Volland, and his love letters to her are ranked among the best ever written.

Diderot was able to establish himself professionally while in his twenties and enjoyed a fruitful career as a translator and encyclopedist. His greatest accomplishment is his work on the *Encyclopédie*, a multiple-volume (the number of volumes ranges from eleven to thirty-five in varying editions) work that took Diderot and the other contributors more than twenty years to complete (1750-1772). The success of this work earned Diderot notoriety and the respect of such highprofile figures as Catherine II of Russia.

Diderot's other work includes fiction (most notably *The Nun*, 1782, and *Jacques the Fatalist*, 1784), drama, dialogues (simple theatrical presentations involving two characters discussing or debating issues and ideas), philosophical treatises, literary criticism, and essays. His particular concern was the rightful place of the artist in society, with attention to the difference between the appreciation for the artist by his contemporaries and by future generations. Diderot saw how the artist in eighteenth-century Europe endured the scrutiny of religious and political leaders and faced limitations imposed by censors. Despite a career subjected to such pressures, Diderot was respected by his peers because of his imagination, cleverness, and conversational ability.

Diderot often withheld his writing from publication to protect it from censorship and for fear that his contemporaries would not understand it. He preferred that it be preserved for posterity, and in fact much of his work has been more fully appreciated in the generations since his death. Sigmund Freud's Oedipal theory was influenced by one of Diderot's dialogues. Diderot himself offered early theories of psychology and evolution, and he predicted the inventions of Braille, the typewriter, and the cinema. Many scholars contend that Diderot was far ahead of his time.

Diderot died after a long illness in Paris in 1784. His work had a major impact on future writers, especially the German writers of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

# David Hume (1711-1776)

David Hume was born on April 26, 1711, at his family's estate near Edinburgh, Scotland. His interest in philosophy began at an early age, and when he was eighteen, he abandoned his plans to study law in favor of pursuing philosophy. His first work, *A Treatise on Human Nature* (1739), was poorly received, but his next effort, *Essays, Moral and Political* (1741), was praised by critics and readers alike. *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (1748) is among his most respected work. He wrote numerous philosophical and political treatises and enjoyed a varied career as a tutor, political secretary, and librarian. During the years he spent in Paris (1763-1766), he was acclaimed and invited to the most elite salons. Although Hume attracted his share of critics, his work was largely admired. Upon leaving Paris to go to London, he took French author Jean-Jacques Rousseau with him, but after a series of public quarrels, the two parted ways. He returned to Scotland in 1769, where he occupied a grand house in Edinburgh. It was there that he died peacefully on August 25, 1776.

Considered one of the most important philosophers of modern thought, Hume advocated a form of philosophical skepticism that claimed that all knowledge attained by experience is uncertain. His writings about perception and cause-and-effect reach into religion, politics, and ethics. Hume was particularly interested in the processes people use to secure knowledge and to deem it reliable.

# Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

Born in Geneva, Switzerland, on June 8, 1712, Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a writer, botanist, social theorist, and musician. When his mother died a few days after his birth, an aunt and uncle agreed to rear him. Although Rousseau was an engraver's apprentice, he ran away at the age of sixteen to be the secretary and companion of a wealthy woman named Madame Louise de Warens, who was enormously influential in the young man's life. At the age of thirty, he left for Paris, where he was a music instructor and political secretary. His friend Diderot commissioned him to contribute music articles to *Encyclopédie*, and Rousseau's writing career began. He wrote social commentary and essays espousing the belief that science and rationalism offer the way to truth. Rousseau's social commentary drew fire from Voltaire, and the two became rivals.

In 1756, Rousseau left Paris and went to Montmorency, France, where he wrote *The Social Contract* and *Émile*, both published in 1762. *The Social Contract* is considered one of the formative documents of the ideology of the French Revolution. Rousseau believed that the will of the people should guide government and that individuals should be free of pressures from church and state. The novel *Émile* presents an unorthodox view of educational theory, couched in a novel about a tutored student. Rousseau's views made him unpopular with authorities in France and Switzerland, so he went first to Prussia (a kingdom comprising parts of presentday Germany and Poland; it ceased to exist after World War II) and then to England with Hume. A series of disagreements,

however, led them to publicly denounce each other, and Rousseau returned to France in 1768. He died on July 2, 1778, in Ermenonville.

Rousseau's major contributions to the Enlightenment were *The Social Contract*, *Émile* (both 1762), and the autobiographical *Confessions* (published posthumously in 1782). These works are regarded as some of the most inspired and original of the Enlightenment era, and they had farreaching effects on political theory and education. While early Enlightenment thinkers championed rationalism above all else, Rousseau introduced a note of emotion. His work represented the merging of the two approaches without weakening the Enlightenment stance that truth is revealed through individual inquiry rather than through blind adherence to tradition and authority.

## Voltaire (1694-1778)

Born in Paris on November 21, 1694, François Marie Arouet wrote extensively using the name Voltaire. As a young man, he gravitated toward writing and was soon considered one of the most intelligent and witty Parisians to frequent the gatherings of distinguished guests, artists, and writers (held in private homes) called salons. Voltaire's sarcasm and irreverence toward authority earned him two jail sentences, after which he spent two years in London. In the ensuing years, he moved from one patron to another in France and Germany, as his critical and sarcastic writings alternately intrigued and enraged members of the ruling class. He finally settled in Ferney, France, in 1758, where he lived for the remaining twenty years of his life. There, he continued his literary career, completing such masterpieces as the novel *Candide*. His mature work criticized religion, politics, economics, and philosophy, broadening and strengthening the Enlightenment spirit. He died in Paris on May 30, 1778.

Voltaire is considered one of the most influential of the Enlightenment writers, and scholars find it impossible to discuss the Enlightenment without reference to *Candide* (1759). A prolific writer, Voltaire wrote fiction, nonfiction, drama, poetry, history, satire, essays, and philosophical treatises. In these diverse genres, Voltaire explored science, philosophy, and the emerging consciousness of his day. Critics often cite the elegance, wit, and thoughtfulness of his work, but Voltaire is also criticized for being overly concerned with historical detail and philosophical persuasion.

# Representative Works

## Candide

Voltaire's novel *Candide* (1759) is a satire attacking the philosophical leanings of his day. In the story, Candide and his traveling companions (Pangloss, an optimist; Cunégonde, his love; Martin the Pessimist; and Cacambo, his valet) endure hardships and witness the worst of humankind's cruelty and folly. In the end, Candide concludes that it is best to end the philosophical debates and simply cultivate one's own garden.

The winding plot of *Candide* includes incidents that Voltaire's contemporaries readily recognized as paralleling events of their time. Voltaire takes aim at philosophical optimism and pessimism, nobility, war, and religion. He reveals hypocrisy and abuse of power by the church and the state. Supporters of Enlightenment thinking praised Voltaire for his bold depictions of these social realities, while more conservative thinkers condemned him. Today, students of the Enlightenment look to *Candide* as an example of the type of fiction favored by the *philosophes* and for its presentation of Enlightenment ideology.

## Declaration of Independence

With the signing of the *Declaration of Independence* in July 1776, the thirteen American colonies officially separated from England. The purposes of the *Declaration of Independence* were to establish the existence of a government separate from England's, to declare war against England (with whom the Americans were already fighting), and to solicit foreign aid for the war effort. In addition, the document outlines the colonists' grievances in light of the treatment they had received from England's monarchy. When the Continental Congress decided to pursue independence, it formed a committee to create a draft of the document declaring this intention. Thomas Jefferson, who loved France and was impressed by Enlightenment thinkers, undertook the job of drafting this important document. With the *Declaration of Independence*, Enlightenment ideas were put into political action. The concepts of self-rule, civil liberties, and a social contract that benefits the ruled and the rulers are all embodied in the *Declaration of Independence*. Although Jefferson's draft was edited by the Second Continental Congress, he is still considered the architect of the document.

The *Declaration of Independence* opens with the Preamble, which states the purpose of the document and lists the goals of the emerging government. The Preamble asserts that citizens are entitled to basic rights, which the government has no authority to violate. Twenty-seven grievances against England's King George III are listed. These serve to demonstrate the type of government America will avoid, while explaining why the Americans feel compelled to create their own government system. The new nation of America asserts its right to wage war, collect taxes, carry on trade, be involved in international affairs, and otherwise function as an independent nation.

# Émile

Rousseau's didactic *Émile* (1762) was published the same year as his political treatise *The Social Contract*. In *Émile*, Rousseau presents his innovative ideas about education. He follows the fictional title character from infancy to adolescence, demonstrating the ideal education for him as a tutor teaches him individually. Rousseau believed that the purpose of education is not to provide facts and information in an attempt to increase the student's knowledge but rather to approach each child individually with the goal of drawing out the abilities he or she possesses. Rousseau's student-centered approach is more focused on talent and innate intelligence than on uniform standards and requirements.

The year 1762 was a turning point for Rousseau. With his radical ideas on politics and education reaching the public, he was considered a scandalous figure. The controversy over *The Social Contract* was more heated, but some of the religious content of *Émile* caused it to be banned in France and Switzerland. Today, however, the book is considered a classic work on educational theory, and Rousseau is regarded as a man ahead of his time. Although his theories are not carried out intact, the ideas introduced in the novel do influence teaching methods. Some scholars go so far as to claim that Rousseau was a crucial figure in the development of child psychology.

# Encyclopédie

The *Encyclopédie* is regarded as the embodiment of the spirit of the Enlightenment. Diderot and the other contributors spent more than twenty years working on it, and it is a masterpiece of compiled information in accessible but thought-provoking language. Although it was originally meant to be a translation of another work, Diderot envisioned a greater undertaking that would summarize the most important knowledge of the day. Its content ranges from technological and crafts processes to the history and topics of philosophy. Diderot's articles on the latter are among his most inspired writing. While encyclopedias today are objective, the *Encyclopédie* included point-of-view articles about science, politics, world cultures, religion, and philosophy. The *philosophes* spoke through these volumes to challenge existing theology and philosophy, while explaining Enlightenment ideals. Diderot shaped the *Encyclopédie* to be a source of information available to people who wanted to look beyond the traditional resource, the church.

# The Social Contract

Rousseau's 1762 political treatise *The Social Contract* asserts that a government has a set of moral responsibilities to the people it governs. As Rousseau sees it, most governments violate these responsibilities□"man is born free, but he is everywhere in chains." Real authority arises from a just agreement between the government and the governed, and Rousseau terms this agreement "the social contract."

Diverse theorists and philosophers influenced *The Social Contract*, including John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, and the Greek philosophers. Upon its publication, *The Social Contract* was received with indignation and outrage. Rousseau was hated throughout France, and efforts were made to censor *The Social Contract* and suppress it altogether. Although Rousseau died in 1778 and therefore did not see the French Revolution (1789-1799), his theories were instrumental in its ideology. In 1794 (during the French Revolution), Rousseau's remains were transported to Paris for a hero's burial in the Pantheon.

# Critical Overview

Literary historians describe the Enlightenment as a movement that profoundly affected not only literature but also science, philosophy, politics, and religion. Because it lasted for over one hundred years, it evolved and came to have many manifestations. In *The Enlightenment*, author Norman Hampson comments, "Within limits, the Enlightenment was what one thinks it was." He adds that "the Enlightenment was an attitude of mind rather than a course in science and philosophy." Critics almost universally applaud the Enlightenment for its insistence that the world should be analyzed and that authorities should be subject to questioning. In *The Party of Humanity: Essays in the French Enlightenment*, Peter Gay remarks:

The *philosophes* were the enemies of myth. . . . Their rationalism was, one might say, programmatic: it called for debate of all issues, examination of all propositions, and penetration of all sacred precincts. But I cannot repeat often enough that this critical, scientific view of life was anything but frigid. The *philosophes* . . . laid the foundation for a philosophy that would attempt to reconcile man's highest thinking with his deepest feeling.

The influence of the Enlightenment on the French Revolution is without question. Critics and historians agree that the revolution was built on the intellectual advances made by Enlightenment writers, especially Rousseau. Further, scholars often credit the Enlightenment with bolstering the resolve of the Americans in the American Revolution and with shaping both the *Declaration of Independence* and the Constitution. In an essay entitled "The Age of Enlightenment," Whittaker Chambers sheds light on the spirit of freedom and rebellion that arose from the Enlightenment to inspire some of history's most passionate conflicts:

The vision of the Enlightenment was freedom□freedom
from superstition, freedom from intolerance,
freedom to know (for knowledge was held to be the
ultimate power), freedom from the arbitrary authorityv of church or state, freedom to trade or work
without vestigial feudal restriction. . . . [The] Enlightenment
finally reversed the whole trend of European
culture.

# Criticism


- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4

# Critical Essay #1

*Bussey holds a master's degree in interdisciplinary studies and a bachelor's degree in English literature. She is an independent writer specializing in literature. In the following essay, Bussey compares the Grand Inquisitor in Voltaire's* Candide *to literature's most famous Grand Inquisitor, who appears in Fyodor Dostoevsky's* The Brothers Karamazov. *By comparing these parallel characters from different literary movements, she sheds light on the Enlightenment as a whole*.

Among the many characters who wander in and out of the pages of Voltaire's *Candide* is the Grand Inquisitor, a character with historical roots in the Spanish Inquisition. In 1478, Ferdinand V and Isabella I of Spain secured the reluctant approval of the pope to initiate what has come to be known as the Spanish Inquisition. Its original intent was to seek out and punish Jews who had been coerced into converting to Christianity but whose conversion was insincere. Next, the inquisitors began seeking out Muslims who had insincerely converted. In 1520, Protestants became targets of the inquisitors. Soon, everyone feared the Inquisition authorities and the dreaded *auto-da-fé*. An *auto-dafé* (which means "act of faith") was the ceremony at which a person's sentence (usually death) was handed down and then performed. The Spanish Inquisition finally came to an official close in 1834.

During the infamous Inquisition, Grand Inquisitors were members of clergy who were appointed to assume the highest positions in the effort. They were terrifying men who were responsible for thousands of deaths. The most famous Grand Inquisitor in literature appears in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. The similarities between Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor and Voltaire's Grand Inquisitor are based on the history of the Spanish Inquisition and its players, but the differences reveal a great deal about their respective literary movements. Voltaire's Grand Inquisitor directly and indirectly reflects Enlightenment ideas and attitudes, but Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor reflects existential ones. By comparing the two, students can learn more about the Enlightenment than might be expected given the Grand Inquisitor's brief appearance in *Candide*.

In *Candide*, the Grand Inquisitor is a man of impulse who pursues worldly satisfaction, not religious purity. Answering only to himself, he is either blind or apathetic to his own immorality. He uses his power to force a man to share his mistress with him, he thinks nothing of having people killed for any reason, and he indulges superstition by ordering that several people be burned to ward off additional earthquakes.

In many ways, the Grand Inquisitor in *Candide* is as much a philosophical figure as a religious one. He uses the power given to him by the Catholic Church to get what he wants. For example, the Grand Inquisitor desires Cunégonde, the mistress of the captain, and offers to buy her from him. When the captain refuses the offer, the Grand Inquisitor threatens him with an *auto-da-fé*, forcing the captain to bow to the Grand Inquisitor's will, and ends up sharing the woman. The captain fears the Inquisitor because he has the power to accuse him of an arbitrary charge and sentence him to

death. In another example, Dr. Pangloss expresses philosophical optimism, so the Grand Inquisitor has him hanged for being a heretic. Pangloss's philosophical optimism is heretical because it implies that people□without God or the church□have the power to shape their own perceptions and destinies. Ultimately, however, the Grand Inquisitor is killed when he discovers Cunégonde and Candide plotting an escape. Candide kills the Grand Inquisitor, making him a victim of the same cruelty and impulse that defined his life. The irony is that if he had controlled his lust, he would not have put himself in a position to be killed.

Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor is presented very differently. He is deliberate and unemotional and exudes a powerful presence that is intimidating. He is also well educated and intelligent and is able to bend philosophy and theology to support his own wildly twisted ideas. Seeing Christ performing miracles during the Spanish Inquisition, he has him arrested and then chides him for returning to Earth. The Grand Inquisitor claims that Christ has no right to return and add anything to existing doctrine□ once he left the Earth, the Church took over his work. The Grand Inquisitor sentences Christ to be burned the next day, and Christ's only response throughout the lengthy scene is a silent kiss at the end.

There are similarities between the two Grand Inquisitors. Both represent the belief that the intellect is superior to the emotions or the spirit. Voltaire's Inquisitor represents the belief ironically because his decisions are reactionary, not thoughtful. Dostoevsky's Inquisitor, however, states directly that in the conflict between intellect and faith, intellect is superior.

Another important similarity is that both Inquisitors cling to their power and use it immorally, and they have no tolerance for anyone who challenges them in any way. Voltaire's Inquisitor has Pangloss hanged for declaring philosophical views the Inquisitor finds ridiculous. He justifies the hanging by labeling the philosophical claims heretical, but Pangloss is not a religious figure at all. Although his charge is to eradicate challenges to the church's authority, Voltaire's Inquisitor does not allow his personal authority to be challenged. He readily invokes his power to subject the captain to an *auto-da-fé* when the captain refuses to share his woman. Similarly, Dostoevsky's Inquisitor refuses to be challenged and is so arrogant that he exerts his authority over Christ. Dostoevsky's Inquisitor is a high-ranking person in the Catholic Church□ a Cardinal□and his authority should rightly come from the Christ that the church worships. Yet when Christ appears, the Inquisitor responds with indignation. Without hesitation, he sentences Christ to be burned. Both Grand Inquisitors are powerful men. Because they often abuse their power, they also become extremely dangerous.

The differences between the two Grand Inquisitors reveal a great deal about the literary movements with which they are associated. Voltaire's Inquisitor is cartoonish and ridiculous. This characterization is in keeping with the Enlightenment's low estimation of the church and its clergy. He is a hypocrite who expects everyone else to follow the teachings of the Bible, while he thinks nothing of forcefully taking a mistress. His victims are foolish (like Dr. Pangloss), implying that the church has no real authority over anyone with intelligence. In contrast, Dostoevsky's Inquisitor is a fully formed character

who seems real to the reader. He exudes an air of cruelty and dispassion. This is typical of Dostoevsky's writing, in which characters are realistic, and the reader is often given insight into the souls of his characters. Dostoevsky's Inquisitor has a sharp mind, while Voltaire's Inquisitor flippantly orders people to be killed. Dostoevsky's Inquisitor engages in lengthy, profound philosophical and theological commentary, which gives him the power to persuade others to buy into his twisted perspective. His arrogance is so great that facing Christ, he condemns him with no concern for his own salvation. This scene is representative of Existentialism because it demonstrates the emphasis of existence over meaning. Christ exists to the Inquisitor, but because the Inquisitor strips away the meaning of Christ's existence and appearance at this particular moment, Christ's sovereignty means nothing to the Inquisitor.

The Enlightenment writers denounced the church for its restrictions and hypocrisy. Voltaire's Grand Inquisitor personifies what the Enlightenment thinkers perceived as the worst of organized religion. Existential thinkers emphasized existence over meaning, and their belief that reason is ultimately inadequate to explain the great mysteries of life is depicted in Dostoevsky's character of the Grand Inquisitor. The reader can see that his arguments and logic appear to be sound, but at the same time, it is clear that the Inquisitor has missed the mark. Both Inquisitors are creatures of the material world, but Voltaire suggests that the world can be better because his Inquisitor, for all his power and ability to frighten, is conquerable. He is ultimately defeated when Candide kills him. Voltaire's presentation of him as foolish also allows the reader to see through him and realize that he is destructible. Dostoevsky's existentialist Inquisitor, however, offers little hope to the reader. He has the power to kill divinity itself. This is where the existential view of possibilities in faith is relevant. If the reader believes that there is a world beyond the material one in which the Inquisitor is so powerful, then there is hope. This is very different from the Enlightenment emphasis on worldly happiness. To Enlightenment thinkers, if there is no hope in this world, there is no hope at all. These fundamental philosophical differences between the Enlightenment and Existentialism are represented in the parallel characters of the Grand Inquisitors. By comparing the brief appearance of Voltaire's Inquisitor in *Candide* with the lengthy appearance of Dostoevsky's Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov*, the reader can easily distinguish the fundamental differences between Enlightenment and Existentialist ideas.

**Source:** Jennifer Bussey, Critical Essay on the Enlightenment, in *Literary Movements for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

BOOKRAGS

# Critical Essay #2

*In the following essay, Doody examines the exploration and treatment of sensuousness, including that of the natural world, in poetry by women in the eighteenth century.*

Women's poetry in the eighteenth century has been dealt with in terms of its political statement and its moral and social awareness. Much good work has been done in tracing themes and looking at social perspectives. Above all, some essential work has been done□the spade-work□of locating poets, finding their publications and manuscripts, and giving a coherent account of their individual lives. I can rest on the assurance that predecessors such as Roger Lonsdale and Donna Landry have given us a vision and knowledge that we didn't have before, so I can take a slightly different tack.

In recent years also there has been much concern about 'the Body'□it is still a fashionable topic. The Body has been poked and inspected, hung up for examination, and dissected by modern anatomists. Under all this treatment, 'the Body' has dwined and pined into an abstract conceptual framework, a notional entity. The Body, in short, has been done to death. I want to examine, but I need a better word than 'examine'. I want to accompany, to go with, the sensuousness of poetry by women in the mid and late eighteenth century□ from, and including, the work of Mary or Molly Leapor (b. 1722, d. 1746) to that of Ann Yearsley (b. 1752, d. 1806).

It is probably no accident that my 'book-ends' as it were, the two poets who act as temporal poles in this project, are both working-class female poets. Doubly disadvantaged, they were unlikely candidates for publication, and it speaks for some of the best aspects of the eighteenth century that they were able to be published at all. With all their obvious disadvantages, including the sensationseeking and condescension combined that promoted the work of 'The Bristol Milkwoman', Ann Yearsley, or *'Lactilla'*, these particular poets perhaps had some advantages. They had reason not to write an abstract 'Poetry' but to connect their own experiences with the common literary language, even while remodelling that language. We feel the immediacy in lines such as Leapor's

□but now the dish-kettle began<br>
The boil and bubble with the foaming bran.<br>
The greasy apron round her hip she ties<br>
And to each plate the scalding clout applies.<br>
('Crumble Hall')

The comedy is fulfilled not only with an exact observation, but with a respect for the process described. This might be taken to be mere reportage, but the same qualities are found in poets who are imagining new scenes□such as the transformations satirically imagined by Yearsley, in a Pythagorean world where the famous ancients turn up in vulgar urban roles of the present day:

Fair Julia sees Ovid, but passes him near,
An old broom o'er her shoulder is thrown:
('Addressed to Ignorance, Occasioned by a Gentleman's
desiring the Author never to assume a
Knowledge of the Ancients')

Objects are treated with clarity, and the senses are explicit. So, too, are the activities not only of daily working life, but of bodily life, the impulses and receptions that make for sense-experience, as well as the realm of movement. The women poets present us with a clearly sensuous world. The mind cannot divorce itself from the senses. This is a matter somewhat difficult of discussion because of our present disdain for the word 'Sensibility'. And indeed 'Sensibility' will not serve my meaning here. The women poets are participants in that pan- European philosophical movement which both outlined modes of bodily response to external stimuli (discovering 'nerves' in the process), and delineated forms of social relations and psychosocial interaction. As writers such as Barker-Benfield (1992) have shown, the anxiety about the newly 'feminized' and nervous human entity could lead to a desire for greater control. Woman as the excessively sensitive person is *too* responsive□in contrast to the brutishly uncivil who are not sensible or sensitive enough. The novelists argue about these issues with some openness (culminating in *Sense and Sensibility*), but the poets of the eighteenth century□men as well as women□were trying to set up their own terms for discussing human experience and relationships to the world without getting altogether caught up in what some philosophers wanted to make of 'Sensibility'.

The eighteenth century's confident interest in sense impressions, fortified by the first part of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, was balanced by some unease. After all, Locke's concluding position is surprisingly close to that of Descartes. We have no *contact* with the real world out there, we are merely recipients of sense *impressions* always mediated by our own sensorium. The world is all in our minds. We look at snow, we think, but there's a sense in which we do not see it□we only 'see' the impression in our mental equipment. This sense of being locked into a cell of the self can be particularly disturbing. English poets of the eighteenth century thus went out of their way to counteract such a potential isolation in writing a poetry that is far more concrete and sensuous, less abstract, than that of either their predecessors (the Metaphysical and Baroque writers) or their successors (the Romantics). It is arguable□I would certainly argue it□that eighteenth-century poetry is the most directly sensuous poetry England has ever had. The reference to the impact of self and object, the re-creation of the fascinating and insistent world of particulars, can be found in the poetry of Swift of course, and over and over again, as in 'A Description of the Morning':

Now *Moll* had whirl'd her Mop with dext'rous Airs,
Prepar'd to Scrub the Entry and the Stairs.
The Youth with Broomy Stumps began to trace
The Kennel-Edge, where Wheels had worn the Place.
The Smallcoal-Man was heard with Cadence deep,
Till drown'd in Shriller Notes of *Chimney-Sweep*.

We are made to observe what the refined reader usually overlooks, or finds boring. We are participants momentarily in the activity of the working people, and close enough to observe the 'Broomy Stumps' and the traces of wheels.

I think Pope was partly inspired by Swift to amplify the observation of common things in his own poetry; although, unlike Swift, Pope is a poet with pretensions to the 'grand style', he does keep a close watch on diurnal realities. He too can cause the snort of disgust at confronting us with the evocation of the sensation of disgust:

To where Fleet-ditch with disemboguing streams
Rolls the large tribute of dead dogs to Thames
(*Dunciad*)

Pope is more hierarchical than Swift in his fine evocations of sensory experiences. Swift, arguably the strongest satirist, strikes one is curiously more broad-minded, that is, less inclined towards hierarchical arrangements of experience. I have written elsewhere of Swift's relation to the women poets, but I have been freshly struck by it, when, for instance, coming upon an open imitation of Swift's 'Morning' in Mary Robinson's 'London's Summer Morning' (written *c.* 1794, published 1804, according to Lonsdale):

Who has not waked to list the busy sounds
Of summer's morning, in the sultry smoke
Of noisy London? On the pavement hot
The sooty chimney-boy, with dingy face
And tattered covering, shrilly bawls his trade,
Rousing the sleepy housemaid. At the door
The milk-pail rattles, and the tinkling bell
Proclaims the dustman's office; while the street
Is lost in clouds impervious. Now begins
The din of hackney-coaches, waggons, carts;
While tinmen's shops, and noisy trunk-makers,
Knife-grinders, coopers, squeaking cork-cutters,
Fruit-barrows, and the hunger-giving cries
Of vegetable-vendors, fill the air.
. . . At the private door
The ruddy housemaid twirls the busy mop,
Annoying the smart 'prentice, or neat girl,
Tripping with band-box lightly. Now the sun
Darts burning splendour on the glittering pane,
Save where the canvas awning throws a shade
On the gay merchandise. Now, spruce and trim,
In shops (where beauty smiles with industry)
Sits the smart damsel; while the passenger
Peeps through the window, watching every charm.
Now pastry dainties catch the eye minute
Of humming insects, while the limy snare
Waits to enthrall them. . .

Pope's excuse for regarding low-life objects and describing—or evoking—sense reactions to them is largely satiric. This is by no means always the case with Swift, and seldom truly the case with women poets. Mary Robinson ('Perdita'), once mistress of the prince Regent, gives as it were a townscape secularized, a new *paysage non moralisé*. We feel the fullness of life, the cacophony, without being called on to register some hierarchical forms of disapproval or desire to reorder. There is such a superabundance of detail that we may miss the subtle connection between 'merchandise' and the 'smart damsel', the milliner or seamstress seated in the shop window, and between 'damsel' and 'pastry dainties'. Shopowners (including female milliners) did put the prettiest girls to work in the window with the design of attracting customers, especially males—a matter gone into in Frances Burney's *The Wanderer*. The displayed pastries are displayed for appetite, like the girls. But the sly observation is not followed into overt moralizing.

Acknowledged throughout Robinson's poem is the multiple connectedness, the omnipresence of consumerism. The speaker poet, in the *persona* of the woman who awakens to the growing noise and activity of the day, is not given a position of peculiar privilege from which to look down and moralize. For one thing, she is part of the consuming need and the need to consume. This is what differentiates Robinson's narrator—persona from Swift's in his 'Morning'. Swift's speaker just sees all these phenomena. Robinson draws us in further into reaction and response. The mop is not only *twirled*, again, its whirling drops affect others unpleasantly. One of the most startling touches is her invented compound adjective 'hunger-giving'. Other writers (not to mention graphic artists and musicians) had illustrated the 'Cries of London', a minor motif in entertainment since at least the time of Purcell.

But the customary description invites us to look on in amusement, to hear with detachment, the criers and their cries. Robinson's participle adjective participates in an immediate response which is not immune to the activity of the advertisement. 'The hunger-giving cries/Of vegetable vendors'— the phrase acknowledges that hunger is roused, and is there to be roused, in all—including the speaker herself. We are not free to withdraw from the cycle of consuming. That gut reaction, that urgent sensory need, linked with the pleasure of taste, connects us with the flies, who are also gazers with the 'eye minute' upon the pastry 'dainties'—which become all the stickier in their immediate connection with the flypaper, the 'limy snare' waiting to *enthrall* the little bugs. 'Enthrall' is usually a grand word, a romantic and literary word—this use returns it to its origins in ideas of enslavement, entrapment, imprisonment and power.

Robinson shows here an acute awareness of the effects and nature of heat; a surrounding atmosphere of urban warmth lessens our dependence on vision as primary sense. The female poets of the eighteenth century customarily show an awareness of graduations of heat and of cold—and of what might be called the pressure of environmental temperature or atmosphere. So it is with Mary Leapor as 'Mira', describing her birthday under the sign of Pisces:

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'Twas when the flocks on slabby hillocks lie,
And the cold Fishes rule the wat'ry sky:
('An Epistle to a Lady')

The 'slabby hillocks' are cool, damp and muddy□a sense of discomfort is, as it were, transferred to, and also acknowledged in, the wordless sheep, the flocks who are waiting out the less than pleasing late winter□early spring of an ungracious countryside. Sky and earth, unhierarchically, are alike damp and cool. Such lines draw on a sense of feeling not usually on our minds when we talk about the 'sense of touch'□a phrase that serves us well when, for instance, dealing with a poet's description of the down of a peach. We do not have only the particular pointed sensation of voluntary touch where we poke or stroke another object, but general senses of 'touch', as with our skin's relation to the circumambient atmosphere. Our sensual circumstances are known to be shared with other creatures□like the flocks in Leapor's birthday description, or the cow and the flocks in Yearsley's invocation of harsh winter:

The nymph, indifferent, mourns the freezing sky;
Alike insensible to soft desire,
She asks no warmth but from the kitchen fire.
Love seeks a milder zone; half sunk in snow,
LACTILLA, shivering, tends her fav'rite cow;
The bleating flocks now ask the bounteous hand,
And crystal streams in frozen fetters stand.
('Clifton Hill')

The cold can quell sexual desire in woman□ an astonishing observation in Yearsley's piece, as with it comes the assumption that a woman *should* naturally have a libido, and that this is a temporary *dis*-location of sexual energy, transferred to the cause of survival. Yet love of a kind does survive, because shivering Lactilla tends her 'fav'rite cow', and the cow remains a recipient of particular and individual favour even in the numbing cold. Human agency is of importance in helping the domestic animals in a crisis of sensation that still asks for activity□the 'bounteous hand' must move towards the 'bleating flocks' even while the streams are fettered and stand still, truly transformed into the conventional crystal. Sky, earth, and water share the cold, and there is no release into hierarchy of elements. The hierarchy subtly dismissed in an equation of sky and earth is also overthrown in the repeated emphasis in Yearsley's poem on the fellow-suffering of animals, and their importance. Here I think I have a new motif to discuss with you□and this is something that I have only just discovered myself in women's poetry of the eighteenth century.

I had intended to deal at large with sensuousness in general, and in particular with instances of sensuous evocation in women's poetry. I would have rambled through the jumble of Crumble Hall with Mary Leapor, alluded to champagne and chicken in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. I should have pointed to instances of the ability to use an unusual image, as Anna Seward does with her green star in 'The Anniversary':

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O! hast thou seen the star of eve on high,
Through the soft dusk of summer's balmy sky
Shed its green light, and in the glassy stream
Eye the mild reflex of its trembling beam?

I would also have dwelt on the use of unusual images of taste and smell, and comic pungent images like Anna Seward's description of the Boston Tea Party:

When Boston, with indignant thought,
Saw poison in the perfum'd draught,
And caus'd her troubled bay to be
But one vast bowl of bitter Tea;
('Verses inviting Mrs. C□to Tea on a public Fast-
Day, during the American War')

I should have done all this and more. . . But my attention was forcibly caught by something I had not fully seen, and certainly had not explored before, in dealing with women's writing and with eighteenth-century poetry. My topic is largely the relation of human to animal in poetic works by eighteenth-century women. These poets' exploration of sensuousness rests on a rediscovery and a reassertion of human relation to animal, bird, insect. The senses are validated in a new way through what I shall call (for short) the 'Pythagorean theme'. It has many important implications, and an understanding of it will illuminate women's poetry of the eighteenth century and later.

# Critical Essay #3

In *The Daring Muse* I have already discussed Ann Yearsley's poem 'Addressed to Ignorance', which uses the conceit of Pythagorean metampsychosis to invent a comic world where ancient characters of history and legend turn up in vulgar and prosaic modern guises. The significance of this comic reversal lies in its rebuke to the 'Gentleman' who told Yearsley that as a poor woman she had no right 'to assume a knowledge of the Ancients'. Yearsley rebukes him, borrowing a set of ideas from the 'ancients': she shows that she can envisage a cosmos without stable hierarchies, in which the class differences (along with national and other differences) that seem so solid to 'the Gentleman' don't count for much:

Here's Trojan, Athenian, Greek, Frenchman and I,
Heav'n knows what I was long ago:
No matter, thus shielded, this age I defy,
And the next cannot hurt me, I know.

As I noted then, 'Her poem is a declaration of human equality.' What I did not realize then is the fact that there is a tradition (if we can call it by so grand a word), a history, of women's use of the Pythagorean idea that Yearsley uses in 'To Ignorance' to deal with human equality. But the women poets more often evoke the Pythagorean idea in relating human life to animal life. Yearsley herself does this in 'Clifton Hill'. She describes, as we have noted above, the effects of extreme cold on the nymph, Lactilla, the cow, the flocks. She goes from human to animal to birds in noting reactions to the cold, and kinship among those who suffer from it. But her ensuing description of the robin moves into the description of the murderous male with the gun, whose response to other creatures is a delight in the powers of destruction:

The beauteous red-breast, tender in her frame
Whose murder marks the fool with treble shame,
Near the low cottage door, in pensive mood,
Complains and mourns her brothers of the wood
Her song oft waked the soul to tender joys,
All but his restless soul whose gun destroys;

Yearsley imagines a fitting vengeance:
For this, rough down, long pains on thee shall wait,
And freezing want avenge their hapless fate;
For these fell murders mayst thou change thy kind,
In outward form as savage as in mind;
Go be a bear of Pythagorean name,
From man distinguished by thy hideous frame.
('Clifton Hill (Written in January 1785)')

An earlier female poet had used the Pythagorean idea. Anna Seward treats the motif several times, and it may be that Yearsley had come upon some of the poems that

circulated in manuscript long before Seward's works were posthumously published, edited (at her request) by Walter Scott.

Like the other female poets in my discussion, Seward counts herself a Christian, but a Christian often vexed at what man made pronouncements and social structures and controls have made of religion. Most of these writers would have warmly assented to Anna Laetitia Barbauld's statement in her poem 'To the Poor', which declares that the rich and powerful not only make the present life of the poor painfully wretched, but seek to extend their own controlling image to God and the hereafter. The threats that the rich extend to the poor in the name of religion are something the poor have the God-given right to dismiss:

Safe in the bosom of that love repose
By whom the sun gives light, the ocean flows,
Prepare to meet a father undismayed,
Nor fear the God whom priests and kings have
made. ('To the Poor')

Man-made laws and concepts not only set up great barriers between human beings, but also create an impassable divide between the human and the other living creatures of this earth□a divide that is used to justify those other intra-human divisions, in terms like 'brutish', and so on. To turn the human into animal, or relate a man strongly to animal or insect life, is a terrific insult, as it is repeatedly in Pope's *Dunciad*:

Maggots half-form'd in rhyme exactly meet
And learn to crawl upon poetic feet.

How here he sipp'd, how there he plunder'd snug
And suck'd all o'er, like an industrious Bug.

As when a dab-chick waddles thro' the copse
On feet and wings, and flies, and wades, and hops;
So lab'ring on . . .
. . . Bernard rows his state.

To connect man and animal (or bird or insect) is to breed *monsters*, as bad poets do. Fear of the monstrous curdles much Augustan thought and literature. The reign of Reason seemed to depend on getting rid of 'monsters' of all kinds, but the notion was there at the philosophical centre. Locke in the *Essay* admits that Nature is not interested in clear lines between species, which are, like the 'species' themselves, an invention of the human mind. This subversion of Aristotle is a scandal that the eighteenth century partly succeeds in hushing up, but fear of the *monstrous* may be found everywhere, including a sense of horror at the approach of categories of species to each other.

I would argue that the women writers do not share this fear or horror, and that they approach the matter differently. Theologically, they are antignostic in defence of creation

and of matter. They are not reluctant to explore the activities of sensing and the sensed world as much more immediate (both as activity and object) than Locke allows. Locke emphasizes '*Human* Understand ing': the women want to see what we have in common with other life in a created world. There is a vindication of the senses and of that which actively senses. The Pythagorean theme, along with the strong interest in animals, birds and insects generally found in women's poetry, especially in this period, permits investigations and statements counter to a dangerously prevalent reduction of everything to the life of Mind□the proud Mind. The Pythagorean idea offers a philosophical theme opposed to much contemporary philosophy, but its stance is officially seen as so unquestionably out of the question as to arouse no very indignant reaction. The 'Pythagoreanism' we encounter in the women's writing is not, indeed, the classic Pythagorean ladder of progress towards purification. The women do not in the least want to emphasize a teleological objection of purity, freedom from the senses. Rather, they are fascinated by the imaginative idea that a conscious entity might have been a bird in the last incarnation and may be a beast in the next. A relatively early poem by Anna Seward, 'Ode on the Pythagorean System', picks up the theme in grand style, if a trifle gingerly. Seward is aware that the Pythagorean system of reincarnation conflicts with the Christian scheme, but she argues that there is a 'sacred sense' in the Pythagorean system, and a certain justice to the 'Spirit warm' has its appeal. Let persons express their moral nature by taking animal form in a new birth:

Then while revenge meets his congenial lot,
And howls the tiger of the desert plain;
While sensual Love burns in the odious Goat,
And in the Hog the Glutton feasts again;

For her part, Seward says, choosing the vegetable role, she would like to come back as a myrtle tended by her friend Laura. Except for its ending, this 'Ode' is conventional in its treatment of Pythagoreanism□faulty human beings become imprisoned in *bestial* expressive forms as punishment. But Seward won't leave it at that. She has a more unorthodox poem later which wrestles with the Biblical statement regarding 'The beasts that perish'; Seward attributes complacent judgement to 'proud Man . . . as he were doom'd alone/To meet, for guiltless pains, supreme reward'. If, she argues, animals are not to have a life after death, that would meet the terms of Divine Justice *only* if their lives on earth had been happy, and they had been allowed to fulfil their animal nature while alive. But this often does not happen, because of man's cruelty:

Alas! the dumb defenceless numbers, found
The wretched subjects of a tyrant's sway,
Who hourly feel his unresisted wound,
And hungry pine through many a weary day;

Or those, of lot more *barbarously* severe,
Who strain their weak, lame limbs beneath the load
Their fainting strength is basely doom'd to bear,
While smites the lash, the steely torments goad;

Here we feel the eighteenth-century's sensory identification with pain, as the speaker moves towards close identification with a suffering sentient creature.

Has GOD decreed this helpless, suffering train
Shall groaning yield the vital breath he gave,
Unrecompensed for years of want, and pain,
And close on them the portals of the grave?
('On the Future Existence of Brutes',)

No, Seward argues, God will surely do better than that. There must be some 'Expiatory Plan', or God is not just. The tenor of this poem is almost entirely to close the gap between Human and Brute. The Dog, she says, illustrates the animal power of emotional refinement, intelligence, susceptibility to education, and moral virtue. Why imagine that the Dog has no afterlife?

Ah, wretch ingrate, to liberal hope unknown!
Does pride encrust thee with so dark a leaven,
To deem this spirit, purer than thine own,
Sinks, while thou soarest to the light of Heaven!

Thinking about the fate of animals after death occupies a fair amount of Seward's time. In 'An Old Cat's Dying Soliloquy' she combines the comic with her questioning of human notions of the afterlife. The old cat knows she is near her end:

Fate of eight lives the forfeit gasp obtains,
And e'en the ninth creeps languid through my
veins.

But the cat is piously sure she has much to which to look forward:

Much sure of good the future has in store,
When on my master's hearth I bask no more,
In those blest climes, where fishes oft forsake
The winding and the glassy lake;
There, as our silent-footed race behold
The crimson spots and fins of lucid gold,
Venturing without the shielding waves to play,
They gasp on shelving banks, our easy prey;
While birds unwinged hop careless o'er the ground,
And the plump mouse incessant trots around,
Near wells of cream that mortals never skim,
Warm marum creeping round their shallow brim;
Where green valerian tufts, luxuriant spread,
Cleanse the sleek hide and form the fragrant bed.
('An Old Cat's Dying Soliloquy')

Now, it was certainly a truism that women poets think about pet birds and animals. Satire on women's involvement with their pets is fairly easy to find in this period. Richardson had a crack at women poets in his *Sir Charles Grandison*. Early in her sojourn in London, the heroine Harriet Byron meets a young lady, Miss Darlington, with 'a pretty taste in poetry', who is prevailed upon to show three of her performances.

The third was on the death of a favourite Linet [*sic*];
a little too pathetic for the occasion; since were Miss
Darlington to have lost her best and dearest friend, I
imagine that she had in this piece, which is pretty
long, exhausted the subject; and must borrow from it
some of the images which she introduces to heighten
her distress from the loss of the little songster.

Richardson indicates that women in general waste their emotion upon their pets, and that women poets may be expected to waste adjectives and images upon such a trite subject as well. As women have so little to occupy their minds, they will treat the mere death of a pet linnet as a major event. Richardson restores the hierarchies that female poets tend to rumple. Human beings must be kept distinct from birds. One should be able to distinguish with absolute clarity the distress caused by the death of a human friend from the feeling of loss relating to a mere animal.

The tendency of women to identify self and emotion with animal or bird is clearly marked, certainly from the time of Ann Finch. Perhaps partly inspired by her married surname, Finch identifies herself with a bird, most powerfully in one of her best poems 'The Bird in the Arras', where the bird exhibits panic, bewilderment, wild desire. In her best-known poem, 'A Nocturnal Reverie', Finch notices the relaxation and freedom of both vegetable and animal life as the sun sets:

When freshen'd Grass now bears itself upright,
And makes cool Banks to pleasing Rest invite.

Vision ceases to be so important, and creatures are known and know each other in darkness through various senses:

When the loos'd *Horse*, now as his pasture leads,
Comes slowly grazing through th'adjoining Meads,
Whose stealing Pace, and lengthened Shade we
fear,
Till torn-up Forage in his Teeth we hear;

The horse is identified not by vision (which creates an illusory monster) but by sound. The change in emphasis of sense reliance and sense instruction creates a connection between the human hearer's sense of the horse chomping on grass, and the horse's own touch-and-taste sense of the grass between its teeth. This is a time of pleasure, a senseholiday from the ruling power of sunlight and the obsession with sight.

BOOKRAGS

Their shortlived Jubilee the Creatures keep,
Which but endures while Tyrant-*Man*
do's sleep:
When a sedate Content the Spirit feels
And no fierce Light disturbs, while it reveals

The sunlight of Enlightenment, of reason, is associated with the oppression of man's rule and the social order. While 'Tyrant-*Man*' here *may* be read as the tyrant *human*, the phrase obviously refers to the tyrant *male*. In the night season, in their ramble together, Ann Finch and the Lady Salusbury are at one with the plants and animals. In this highly sensuous poem, sense life comes to full life in the presence of animals who are briefly allowed to have their full sensory life not restricted, censured, surveyed or used. The female companions also have a 'shortliv'd Jubilee' of sense pleasure, and expansion, so that all the senses (touch, smell, hearing) may be used harmoniously, not governed hierarchically by vision nor held in place by convention.

Women have been traditionally held to be the larger partaker in the animal nature. Man is spirit, man is mind. Woman is animal, if a higher animal. Richardson's hero Sir Charles Grandison explains it all, as Enlightenment philosopher. Nature clearly makes a difference in qualities such as courage between male and female in the animal kingdom: 'The surly bull, the meek, the beneficent cow, for one instance?'. And, allowing that human souls may be equal, 'yet the very design of the different machines in which they are inclosed, is to superinduce a temporary difference on their original equality; a difference adapted to the different purposes for which they are designed by Providence in the present transitory state.' Women have to bear children and give suck—so *obviously* that makes them inferior in this life. Such an assumption rests on the assumption that the 'animal' functions, like those of the meek cow, take over the greater portion of a woman's personality and her life. And that further rests on the assumption that the 'animal' functions and attributes can be clearly distinguished from the 'human'. Eighteenth-century women poets, it is clear, look upon animals in a manner very different from the way Richardson and his Sir Charles look upon them. Sir Charles's world is one of clear boundaries, strong divisions, clear designs. There should not be effeminate men and masculine women. The line between man and woman, as between human and animal, must be held. Within Richardson's novels, the female characters do maintain something of the women's dialogue, as their view of animal life differs in part from that of Sir Charles'—Charlotte compares herself and her husband to blackbirds with eggs to hatch. But that sort of play is not appropriate to Sir Charles, who as governing man must hold the line clearly.

It can be seen that the women poets enjoy playing with those boundaries that Sir Charles is at such pains to delineate. They defiantly adopt the sensibility of animals, team up, as it were with animals against 'Tyrant-Man'. Seward's insight into the cruelty to 'the wretched subjects of a tyrant's sway' rests partly on that of Finch before her. She too is willing to assume (for play, for seriousness) the sensations of the animal creature. This might be called 'poetic Pythagoreanism'—the poet assumes the senses of an animal, thus transforming herself into the creature in a temporary transmogrification.

The entrance into animal sensation is a kind of licence to give the sensory life its full due; that sensory life often denied in the cultural life of regulations and ideas.

Men are sometimes imagined (as in Yearsley's 'Clifton Hill') as being punished in a 'Pythagorean' manner by being made perforce to enter that animal nature that they have disdained. That would be a punishment because men think it so; they have this hectic urge to insist on their totally mental mode of being, their totally spiritual destiny. But the women poets show themselves as the true Pythagoreans, able to enter into the sensual life of animals□or even plants, as when Seward wishes to be a myrtle; to be a plant loved by a woman would be better than honour done her having her brows bound with myrtle. In 'An Old Cat's Dying Soliloquy' Seward makes us take comic pleasure in imagining the Elysium or Paradise of a cat□ sharing sensations with the cat, in an access of new sensuousness. We are free to indulge it because it is partly parodic, but once we do indulge it, we cannot maintain the aloofness of parody. The poem is 'parodic' of human serious descriptions of forms of heaven seriously desired. It is thus an Enlightenment poem in that it implicitly questions the religious conventions, and shows how they are related to cultural expectations. But in this case the cultural difference (between cats and ourselves) is so extreme, and so hitherto unthought-of, that we can enjoy the play upon the idea of heaven without serious religious or moral twinges. What seems most striking to me about the 'Old Cat' poem is its immediacy. The poem obviously and overtly owes something to Gray's *Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes* (published in 1748). It owes *something*□not too much. Gray's poem is a mock-heroic fable. The cat is just an object; we are to laugh at the beast and her fate, even while we may reject the too-placid moral on vanity and avarice. Gray's Selima is almost entirely an object of sight. 'Her coat, that with the tortoise vies / Her ears of jet and emerald eyes' are not her own description of herself. We see the goldfish too:

Still had she gaz'd; but 'midst the tide
Two angel forms were seen to glide,
The genii of the stream:
Their scaly armour's Tyrian hue
Thro' richest purple to the view
Betray'd a golden gleam.

This is *almost* seeing from the cat's-eye view□ but not really: 'angel' and 'Genii' carry no allusions to cat vocabulary. And the Popean touches regarding the fishes' colour carry us further into the realm of the literary and away from the cat□if the beginning of this stanza proposes the cat Selima as observer, by the end we have lost her. She remains fenced in by an Aesopic objectivity.

The descriptions of the fish in Seward's poem *do* remind us of Gray and, like Gray, Seward adapts the kind of language used in Pope:

There, as our silent-footed race behold
The crimson spots and fins of lucid gold.

But this is not, as it were, the main event. The by now conventionalized fish become much more what a cat would want□as they leave the water voluntarily. And they are overtaken by a host of other similarly amiable and catchable prey□products of a cat's imagination, not fitting any human aesthetic (in marked contrast to the fish):

While birds unwinged hop careless o'er the ground,
And the plump mouse incessant trots around.

The wells of cream offer another kind of sensory experience, and the piling up of sensuousness is achieved through the invocation of smell and touch simultaneously (and right after taste) in the 'Warm marum' (marjoram) and green valerian tufts. Yes, a cat's heaven would have cream, herbs and certainly catnip. We do not end the poem with these sensuous images so lovely to the cat. The last note is an elegiac regret at parting. Even in heaven she may miss her home and her human friend and the life she knew:

O'er marum borders and valerian bed
Thy Selima shall bend her moping head,
Sigh that no more she climbs, with grateful glee
Thy downy sofa and thy cradling knee;

The cat proves capable of loyalty and affection, her virtues thus making her implicitly worthy of cat heaven□or of human heaven too. There is a comic reversal, as Seward's Selima faces death in a style very unlike that of Gray's greedy and accident- prone Selima. Seward's Selima has conscious dignity and religious hope. The greater reversal lies in the cat's regret that her owner cannot be with her. Owners of animals in Christian (and other) cultures often express regret that their pets cannot be with them in an orthodox afterlife□ here the tables are turned. And indeed, what would a human do with plump mice, wells of cream, and tufts of catnip? But the poem shows what arrogance we exhibit when we assume that there is a heaven fit for human purposes to which animals are not allowed. The sharing (imaginatively and comically) of the cat's sensations and desires is a liberation into a range of sense experience, and an expression of confidence in the value of what we term the 'animal' nature.

When women poets are being most serious about the importance of the animal nature, they often disguise the seriousness in some form of comedy that can induce us to participate in the Pythagorean festival of throwing off our usual identities and expectations. Anna Laetitia Barbauld's 'The Mouse's Petition' is a poem in the *persona* of the mouse that has been caught in a trap and awaits the experimentation of Dr Priestley. The poem was, naturally enough, taken up as a statement against animal experimentations, and Barbauld, not wishing to appear unscientific, pointed out that 'the poor animal would have suffered more as the victim of domestic economy, than of philosophic curiosity.' In her later explanation Barbauld claimed that all she meant was to express 'the petition of mercy against justice'□but that is *not* what the poem says, for of course from the mouse's point of view what is being done to him is an extreme case

of *in*justice□it is arbitrary tyrannical cruelty. The mouse uses contemporary political language to make its point:

Oh¡ hear a pensive prisoner's prayer,
For liberty that sighs;
And never let thine heart be shut
Against the wretch's cries.

For here forlorn and sad I sit,
Within the wiry grate;
And tremble at th' approaching morn,
Which brings impending fate.

If e'er thy breast with freedom glow'd,
And spurn'd a tyrant's chain,
Let not thy strong oppressive force
A free-born mouse detain.
('The Mouse's Petition')

From the language of political rights, the mouse turns to the rights of nature, which are physical rights. The great natural law is the right to exist.

The well taught philosophic mind
To all compassion gives;
Casts round the world an equal eye,
And feels for all that lives.

Not only should there be compassion, but empathy. To see the world with an *equal* eye is to feel the claims of all life. From this philosophical point there is but a short step to the Pythagorean theme, and the mouse takes it:

If mind, as ancient sages taught,
A never dying flame,
Still shifts through matter's varying forms,
In every form the same,

Beware, lest in the worm you crush
A brother's soul you find;
And tremble lest thy luckless hand
Dislodge a kindred mind.

This is a moral-philosophical and even religious point of view remote from Christianity but closely resembling Jainism, and certain branches of Buddhism. It may well be that our poets were affected, however indirectly, by the new contact with India brought about by colonial expansion in the eighteenth century. But the mouse also entertains the

Epicurean idea that there is no life after death□ that the bodily life of this existence is our all in all:

Or, if this transient gleam of day
Be *all* of life we share,
Let pity plead within thy breast
That little *all* to spare.

Ostensibly the mouse is talking *only* of the annihilation in death of mere animals. But by this point there is no felt difference between 'them' and 'us'□all is subsumed as 'we', so the possibility of 'one transient gleam of day' allotted to *all*, man and animal, as the only portion of their existence, is truly included. It scarcely matters, however, which group will perish eternally and which only temporarily□the urgency is so pressing, the life of here and now so immediate. It is hard not to see within this petition a plea for all sense-life, and for the powers of sensing as of the utmost importance, worthy of religious respect. The animal life of 'mere' sensuousness, of sense perception, is the real life. That modern point of view is of course going to clash with Priestley's modern point of view that regards animals as implements in technological expansion. Priestley contradicts nature in deliberately and slowly taking from nature's commoners the vital air. Breathing itself becomes one of the first great primary sensations and sensepleasures as soon as its cutting-off is threatened.

Barbauld's very popular poem is highly efficacious as verse□if not in stopping experimentation on animals. It is perhaps, however, slightly marred by a hint of self-conscious cuteness. Barbauld's best poem on animal life and animal claims is 'The Caterpillar'. The speaker is the human woman who admits without apology that she has been rasing hundreds of cocoons and caterpillars from the orchard tree. But then she looks at one caterpillar on her finger, and cannot kill it:

No, helpless thing, I cannot harm thee now;
Depart in peace, thy little life is safe,
For I have scanned thy form with curious eye,
Noted the silver line that streaks thy back,
The azure and the orange that divide
Thy velvet sides; thee, houseless wanderer,
My garment has enfolded, and my arm
Felt the light pressure of thy hairy feet;
Thou hast curled round my finger; from its tip
Precipitous descent¡ with stretched out neck,
Bending thy head in airy vacancy,
This way and that, inquiring, thou hast seemed
To ask protection; now, I cannot kill thee.

The caterpillar does not speak in a fabulous manner, but its presence is insisted on. It becomes more real and more active as the speaker progresses. The description of the

appearance of the caterpillar is striking in its minute detail. We clarify the silver line, distinguish the azure and the orange.

Such detail combines the scientific interests of the period with its poetic interests. One finds details like this in Thomson's *Seasons*, and Erasmus Darwin's *The Loves of the Plants* (1789) is of course full of such detail. Darwin may himself have been influenced by Seward, the earlier poet; she knows and alludes to him, and his biology. His writing while in progress may have influenced her in turn; presumably his work was an influence on Barbauld's later work. We sometimes forget that the 1790s saw the first shoots of an evolutionary hypothesis which was to be formalized and turn into something else after the work of the later Darwin in the next century. Barbauld's description of how the caterpillar *looks* is still in keeping with the lines of what we may call 'male poetry'. But the continuation in intimate physical connection with the caterpillar strikes me as something that one would find only in female poetry□of any period. A subtle use of the Pythagorean motif whereby man and animal are equalized can be recognized in the equalizing of human and insect. 'My arm/Felt the light pressure of thy hairy feet'□'arm' and 'feet' are both words used of the human body. The woman and the caterpillar begin to share a body, as it were, to trade bodily sensations. The caterpillar is sensing the woman's hand while she senses him. If she is looking at it, so the caterpillar too is looking about. The individual caterpillar becomes a highly sensuous object, not only in its coloration (that kind of sensuous appeal can be captured in glass cases) but in the life that is in it that makes it an agent with impact on the world□the 'light pressure' of its 'hairy feet'. Both alien and homely, the caterpillar has the utmost reality. Its felt immediacy causes the woman to see it in a kind of religious sensation:

Making me feel and clearly recognize
Thine individual existence, life,
And fellowship of sense with all that breathes

To recognize ones own sensuous power, to write sensuously, should entail breaking through to 'the fellowship of sense'.

The pleasure that we might find in this moral is shadowed and complicated by the end of the poem. The woman speaker compares her sparing of the caterpillar in her general 'persecuting zeal' against caterpillars to the act of a soldier who in the midst of war urges on 'the work of death and carnage', but spares one enemy:

Yet should one
A single sufferer from the field escaped,
Panting and pale, and bleeding at his feet,
Lift his imploring eyes□the hero weeps
He is grown human, and capricious Pity,
Which would not stir for thousands, melts for one
With sympathy spontaneous□This not Virtue
Yet 'tis the weakness of a virtuous mind.
('Caterpillar')

We are here at the end in a very male world of ruthless violence, so consistent that the act of mercy is felt as an anomaly, a whim, a weakness that cannot be described as 'Virtue', but is merely a reflex in favour of individuality. The speaker's own act becomes impossible to categorize. She is not a moral example. There seems no sure way back to 'humanity', save to take the unthinkable road of respecting all life□which might doom her apple tree, but would also put an end to the inhumanity of war. The 'fellowship of sense' opens a way to something more than a sentimental moment. This telling phrase 'fellowship of sense' points towards a feeling or intuition of what might be called 'one flesh' in a sense different from that of the Bible or the Prayer Book's marriage service. The caterpillar is like the human victim□one flesh with us in the 'fellowship of sense'. We have the frustrating glimpse of alternatives that cannot be clearly set out. Barbauld refuses to sentimentalize herself or her sparing of the creature. The momentary relation between herself and that creature, however, is a moment of sensory pleasure, and the living with the caterpillar, following its senses too, offers a route of escape from limitation.

What I have called the 'Pythagorean theme' in eighteenth-century poetry is a trope (or set of tropes) emphasizing the value of the animal existence, the body's own capacities and energies, the holy vitality of the senses. Eighteenth-century women poets keep trying to find ways to express the respect that should be given to the animal and sensory nature. Like Ann Finch in her 'Nocturnal Reverie', they provide moments of escape from a world where everything is known, the hierarchies are clearly measured, and where the senses (like woman herself) occupy a low place, along with mere 'brutishness'. When I find these eighteenthcentury women poets dealing with the relation to animals, they are always trying to express some way of acknowledging equality, and relationship. The 'Pythagorean' poems (and now I know my word has become a kind of shortland) question assumptions about spiritual and moral life, and try to point to other responsibilities. In doing this, the poets exhibit great versatility, and powers not only of sensory description but also of conceptual re-positioning. Some male poets heard them, as well as the other women poets who followed them; I see the influence of these writers on Blake, for example, and certainly on Cowper, who perhaps took aboard more than any other male poetic writer what the women were saying. Yet in Cowper there is, it seems to me, always still that distance between animal and man that is a distance between subject and object□when he describes his hares, for instance. The women poets seem to be bent on breaking down that barrier between subject and object, between 'Man' and animal which is a barrier parallel to the Lockean barrier betwixt mind and world.

# Critical Essay #4

There is another trope or device that I would wish to emphasize, partly because it provides a contrast to the Pythagorean motif, a contrast and complement within the women's poetry. Like writing about animals and birds, this subject lends itself to ridicule and dismissal. Women poets often write about elves and fairies. Some of them got quite good at it. Percy told Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi that in her (unacted) verse drama *The Two Fountains* she had written better about fairies than anyone since Shakespeare. This was not a dubious distinction in Percy's eyes, though it might be to others. Women repeatedly chose to deal with elves and fairies partly because, like the animals, these (imaginary) beings offer a reflecting screen where sensation and reflection can be played with, away from the world of man-made regulations and cultural pressures. Moreover, fairies have the distinct advantage over animals□as over humans□that they do not know death. Even more remarkable, they do not know *pain;* emotional suffering is not part of their scheme of life.

Fairies do not have to be moral□a great convenience, and an enviable one to women, who are always being told they must be moral, chaste and very careful, and should always put other people first. Fairies do none of these things. Frances Greville puts the case most clearly in her 'Prayer for Indifference' of 1759. She asks Oberon to find her a magic balm that will render her unloving and uncaring. The poem is really about the emotional torment of a wife who is not loved by her husband. The fairy power would remove from her the acuteness of emotion which is like veritable sensation. As with physical sensation, pain is stronger than pleasure:

Far as distress the soul can wound,<br>
'Tis pain in each degree;<br>
Bliss goes but to a certain bound,<br>
Beyond is agony.

There is a certain affinity with Emily Brontë's Gondal poetry in this style and this tone□one could guess that Brontë knew Greville's often-anthologized poem. Should Oberon grant the boon, she will be saved from moral sensations of empathy, saved from the responsibilities of pity as well as from her own sorrow: 'The heart, that throbbed at others' woe / Shall then scarce feel its own.' If Oberon will grant this, she in turn will wish him 'never-fading bliss':

So may the glow-worm's glimmering light<br>
Thy tiny footsteps lead,<br>
To some new region of delight<br>
Unknown to mortal tread;<br>
('A Prayer for Indifference')

The elf going blithely off to the new region of delight is closely associated with the speaker who would also be gaining a new 'region of delight' unknown to other mortals. Oberon's life is a life of sensations rather than of thoughts. Sensations, unencumbered

by sorrow, guilt, or depression, become something most desirable. Such are the sense impressions that the poem ends with, having begun with the turmoil of inner emotional feeling and heart-sadness:

And be thy acorn goblets filled
With heaven's ambrosial dew,
From sweetest, freshest flowers distilled
That shed fresh sweets for you

Taste, physical taste, takes over from emotional- feeling again, an overturning of the hierarchical values that say emotional feeling is much more important than physical taste.

When they write about fairies (and elves and nymphs), eighteenth-century women poets gain a release from moral pressure and cultural direction. They can imagine a life where sensation is honoured and, as not the case with animals, honoured without pain. A number of writers wanted to take a moral holiday with the fairies, who can rejoice in pure sensation. So Anna Seward does, in her 'Song of the Fairies to the Sea-nymphs':

Hasten, from your coral caves,
Every nymph that sportive laves,
In the green sea's oozy wells,
And gilds the fins, and spots the shells!
Hasten, and our morrice join,
Ere the gaudy morning shine!

Surely this is imitated by Ann Radcliffe, in her heroine Emily's poem 'The Sea-nymph' in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), which might be called 'The Sea-nymph's Reply to Seward's Fairies'. Radcliffe's sea-nymph has the advantage over the fairies in being able to hide deep within the cool depths of the sea: 'Down, down a thousand fathom deep, / Among the sounding seas I go'. Sea-nymphs do not, like Ann Finch, need night to escape the heating sun: 'In cool arcades and glassy halls / We pass the sultry hours of noon,/ Beyond wherever sun-beam falls'. The sea-nymphs is not without moral responsibility she tries to save ships, and to cheer ship wrecked mariners with song. But 'Emily's' poem (which has its disturbing elements, and even undersea acknowledges authority and control emanating from Neptune) ends in a hope of perpetual pleasure:

Whoe'er ye are that love my lay,
Come, when red sun-set tints the wave,
To the still sands, where fairies play:
There, in cool seas, I love to lave.

The harmony between land and sea, imaged in the dancing of sea-nymphs and land fairies, can take place only at night-time. Both poems, but especially Seward's, fall into the category of Finch's 'Nocturnal Reverie' in imagining an escape from daylight, a

refuge from the hot glare of reason and certainty. The Enlightenment sun was certainly felt to have its negative side. Seward's fairies invite the sea-nymphs to join in the antique dance, the 'morrice' before 'gaudy morning'. The fairies and nymphs are somewhat timid creatures, it strikes us□they cannot be imagined as taking control, only as expressing elusiveness. They don't get pinned down□although it is hard to deal with fairy beings extensively without imagining their falling into pain and imprisonment too, as is the case with Mrs Piozzi's *Two Fountains*. At best, the idea of 'fairies' and other little supernatural beings like them permits the imagining of a fully pleasurable relation with nature. As the fairies are not encumbered with souls and responsibilities, they can love the natural world wholeheartedly and even take a share in its creation. Imagining such a love gives an imaginative release which yet is always known to be only evanescent, merely 'fancy'.

Emily, the author of the sea-nymph poem within Radcliffe's novel, is inspired by Renaissance public cultural images when she sees a water- pageant in Venice:

Neptune, with Venice personified as his queen, came on the undulating waves, surrounded by tritons and sea-nymphs. The fantastic splendour of this spectacle, together with the grandeur of the surrounding palaces, appeared like the vision of a poet suddenly embodied, and the fanciful images, which it awakened in Emily's mind, lingered there. . . She indulged herself in imagining what might be the manners and delights of a sea-nymph, till she almost wished to throw off the habits of mortality, and plunge into the green wave to participate them.

Venice offers images of sensuous pleasure and escape, and the possibility that Venice itself momentarily represents of the 'embodiment' of poetry stimulates Emily to search for more freedom of manners and sensation. Such needs for freedom of manners and sensations of course have to be encoded; the very needs themselves are like the seanymphs, kept below, in the depths. Emily knows enough to categorize her reveries in a knowingly negative way: 'she could not forbear smiling at the fancies she had been indulging'. But she goes ahead and embodies her 'fanciful ideas' in her poem.

Customarily, in 'fairy' poems the relation to the fairy world is thought of in terms of relation to water and air□those two elusive elements. The relation to the animal world is harder, darker, more land-based. Accounts of this relation bulge with substance, abound in impacts and disconcerting consumptions and destructions. That is the truer world, and of course the harder to deal with. Much had been done to separate animal from human. Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in its latter parts, however, admits the great difficulty of setting up boundaries□Locke even admits that Nature is not interested. But few followers of Lockean politics and epistemology wanted to grapple with that. The women were living in a culture which asserted that their own 'lower' status was clearly known and naturally definable, just as was the arrangement of the species below them. In order to liberate the sensuousness in their own writing, they found ways

to challenge the arrangements regarding species□including imagining the sensuous life in 'species' that didn't exist, or the harder task of imagining what it feels like to respect the sensuous life of other beings who really do indubitably share our planet, if often only at our will and sovereign pleasure. The sensuousness of the women's poetry seems all the more remarkable if one realizes how many cultural dictates militated against their taking note of their own sensations, and how surprising it is that (on the whole) they avoid that standby of Augustan appeal to the senses, the evocation of disgust. Women poets obviously suspect disgust as having ideological implications. Disgust belongs to the power of the categorizers, who know what is good and what is bad. Disgust is the reaction of the gazers who look at the female poet in Leapor's Mira's picture. Disgust won't do. It turns off the senses that need to be turned on.

**Source:** Margaret Anne Doody, "Sensuousness in the Poetry of Eighteeth-Century Women Poets," in *Women's Poetry in the Enlightenment: The Making of a Canon, 1730-1820*, edited by Isobel Armstrong and Virginia Blain, Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1999, pp. 3-31.

# Adaptations

*Candide* was adapted to film in 1961 by the French companies Courts et Longs Métrages and Société Nouvelle Pathé Cinéma; it was then given English subtitles and distributed in the United States by Union Films.

Television adaptations of *Candide* were made in 1973 by British Broadcasting Corporation and in 1986 by Public Broadcasting Service.

In 1989, a musical version of *Candide* was produced by the German company Deutsche Grammophon and the American company Video Music Production, featuring the compositions of Leonard Bernstein.

# Topics for Further Study

A central tenet of Enlightenment thinkers was that humankind is innately good. Research the idea of the "noble savage" and see how it relates to Enlightenment thought. Prepare a well-organized essay explaining your findings, complete with examples from literature and/or history. Be sure to include any aspects of the "noble savage" that contradict the Enlightenment point of view.

*Sturm und Drang* and Romanticism are two literary movements that are viewed, in part, as reactions against the Enlightenment. Choose one of these movements and prepare a web page that summarizes it and the Enlightenment, compares and contrasts the two, and explains why scholars interpret your movement as a reaction against the Enlightenment.

During the latter part of the eighteenth century □when literature promoted and reflected Enlightenment ideas□Neoclassicism dominated the art world, and Romanticism followed in the early nineteenth century. Read about these art movements and examine their representative works. Consider the paintings of Jacques-Louis David (Neoclassicism) and see how they relate in style and/or subject to the work of Romantic artist Eugene Delacroix, whose *Liberty Leading the People* is among the most famous paintings to champion freedom.

Read Victor Hugo's classic story of the French Revolution, *Les Misérables*, or watch a stage or screen adaptation of the novel. Select one of the main characters and compose a character sketch explaining how the Enlightenment did or did not affect the character's personality, emotional presence, and decision-making.

# Compare and Contrast

**Late Eighteenth Century:** By the 1770s, significant growth in the printing industry means wider distribution of newspapers and books. This enables Enlightenment writers to reach a greater audience. Censorship is also waning, enabling Enlightenment thinkers to write more plainly about their views and theories.

**Today:** The Internet enables anyone to reach a worldwide audience. Any information, theory, or ideology can be read by millions of people. Such communications are virtually unpoliced.

**Late Eighteenth Century:** In 1762, Rousseau's *Émile* is published. In this world-famous novel presenting a new approach to education, the author expresses the typical view of the day that limited education is acceptable for women but that ultimately they should be prepared for domestic life.

**Today:** Women are given the same access to higher education as men. Some well-educated women choose to stay home and rear their children, but this is a choice rather than an expectation.

**Late Eighteenth Century:** World exploration and colonization by European nations affects the Enlightenment in two ways. First, exposure to new cultures brings about the *philosophes*' view that culture is relative and that tolerance is necessary. Second, colonization often leads to oppression (because governing bodies do not share the *philosophes*' appreciation for other cultures). In the case of the United States, this oppression leads to the application of many Enlightenment ideals. Americans, seeking self-rule and an improved society, take up arms against their oppressors.

**Today:** The world has been explored and colonized. There are no new lands or peoples to conquer. As well, the ideas of the Enlightenment □most notably the principle of political freedom□have been so successful all over the world that the conquests and colonization of past centuries are repugnant to many modern people.

# What Do I Read Next?

Written by Jean Le Rond D'Alembert and translated by Richard N. Schwab, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia of Diderot* (1995) presents the original preface to the *Encyclopédie*. In addition, this book contains an excerpt of Diderot's writing in the *Encyclopédie* along with a list of other contributors to it. It is considered an excellent introduction to the ideas of the Enlightenment.

Edited by Isaac Kramnick, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* (1995) is an anthology containing the most important writings to come out of the Enlightenment. To cast light on the movement as a whole, this book also contains historical, religious, and philosophical context.

*The Portable Voltaire*, edited by Ben Ray Redman and originally published in 1949, is an excellent starting place for the student of Voltaire's work. Redman includes biographical information, philosophical overviews, and Voltaire's writings to demonstrate his importance to eighteenth- century thought.

In *The Cambridge Companion to Rousseau* (2001), editor Patrick Riley compiles background and biographical information about Jean-Jacques Rousseau to illuminate the selected writing also presented in this volume. Riley includes chapters about Rousseau's bestknown works, essays about his relationship to other Enlightenment writers, and commentary on his significance to literary history.

Rousseau's *Confessions* (1782) is the autobiographical account of the Enlightenment writer's life and his experiences all over Europe. Besides its value as a firsthand account by a major figure in the Enlightenment, critics consider this an important work to come out of the period. There are numerous translations available.

# Further Study

Broadie, Alexander, ed., *The Scottish Enlightenment: An Anthology*, Canongate Publications Limited, 1998.

Broadie reveals the importance of Scottish thinkers and writers during the Enlightenment by compiling historical information with relevant writings, some of which have not been reprinted since the eighteenth century. The book is arranged by subject, making it easy for students to find passages relevant to their interests.

Gossman, Lionel, *French Society and Culture: Background for Eighteenth-Century Literature*, Prentice-Hall, 1972.

Gossman presents a historical and cultural context for the Enlightenment and other writing during eighteenth-century France. This context depicts the society in which and for which the Enlightenment emerged.

Green, Frederick C., *Literary Ideas in 18th-Century France and England: A Critical Survey*, Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1966.

This enduring study of eighteenth-century thought and literature provides a thorough context for studying the Enlightenment. There are numerous references to the career of Denis Diderot, philosopher and encyclopedist of the Enlightenment in France.

Porter, Roy, *The Creation of the Modern World: The British Enlightenment*, W. W. Norton & Company, 2000.

Porter revises traditional opinion in regard to the importance of British writers during the Enlightenment. Although emphasis is usually placed on France and America, Porter demonstrates how the movement was advanced by the efforts of great British thinkers, who made a substantial impact on their society.

Spencer, Samia I., ed., *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment*, Indiana University Press, 1984.

This collection of essays sheds light on the role of women during the Enlightenment. The essays explore

the important contributions made by women in politics, society, culture, and science.

# Bibliography

Chambers, Whittaker, "The Age of Enlightenment," in *Ghosts on the Roof: Selected Journalism of Whittaker Chambers, 1931-1959*, edited by Terry Teachout, Regnery Gateway, 1989.

Gay, Peter, *The Party of Humanity: Essays in the French Enlightenment*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1964. Hampson, Norman, *The Enlightenment*, Penguin Books, 1968.

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**Introduction**

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Literary Movements for Students (LMfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, LMfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on

□classic□ novels frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of LMfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of LMfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in LMfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by LMfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an at-a-glance comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

LMfS includes The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature, a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Literary Movements for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the LMfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the LMfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Literary Movements for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Literary Movements for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from LMfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Literary Movements for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from LMfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Literary Movements for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of LMfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Literary Movements for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of LMfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Literary Movements for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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