

North Dakota Council of Teachers of English

July 31, 2012

Joseph O. Milner

1. Synthesis Trios: Henry
*Dybek, Jackson, Carver, Yeats, Shakespeare, Sexton,
Hardy, Mayo, McCord*
2. Collaborative Authors, Drawing Conclusions: Dixon,
Adams, Milner
Frost, Shelley
3. Choral Lessons: Blau, Wilhelm
Ordan
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Milner
Dybek, Jackson, Carver, Milenski
5. Critical Synthesis: Milner, Moore
Vonnegut

(A)

For Anne Gregory

Never shall a young man,
Thrown into despair
by those honey-coloured
Ramparts at your ear,
Love you for yourself, alone
And not your yellow hair.

But I can get hair-dye
And set such colour there,
Brown, or black, or carrot,
That young men in despair
May love me for myself alone
And not my yellow hair.

I heard an old religious man
But yesternight declare
That he had found a text to prove
That only God, my dear,
Could love you for yourself alone
And not your yellow hair

William Butler Yeats

(B)

Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken.
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come.
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom;
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

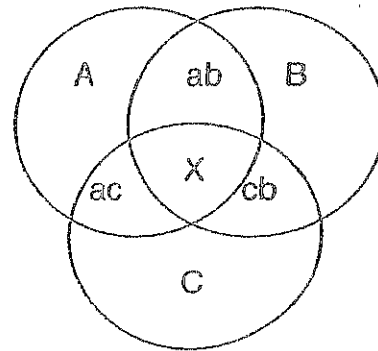
William Shakespeare

(C)

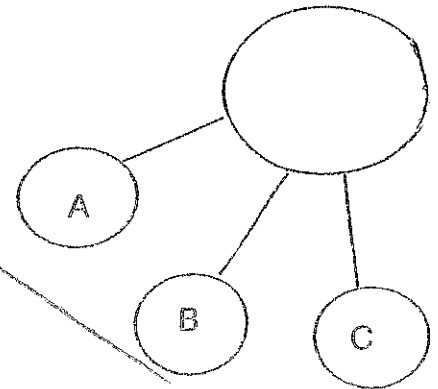
The Farmer's Wife

From the hodge porridge
of their country lust,
the local life in Illinois,
where all their acres look
like a sprouting broom factory,
they name just ten years now
that she has been his habit;
as again tonight he'll say
honey bunch let's go
and she will not say how there
must be more to living
than this brief bright bridge
of the raucous bed or even
the slow braille touch of him
like a heavy god grown light,
that old pantomime of love
that she wants although
it leaves her still alone,
built back again at last,
minds apart from him, living
her own self in her own words
and hating the sweat of the house
they keep when they finally lie
each in separate dreams
and then how she watches him,

still strong in the blowzy bag
of his usual sleep while
her young years bungle past
their same marriage bed
and she wishes him cripple,
or even lonely, or sometimes,
better, my lover, dead
Anne Sexton



Y



(B) *The Mole?*

E. L. MAYO

When the mole goes digging
He never meets a soul;
The stars are inattentive
To the motions of the mole.

He digs his frantic tunnel
Through chalk and clay and slime
His never-ending tunnel
A mouthful at a time,

Alone; no planet bothers
To tell him where to dig;
For moles are very little
And worlds are very big.

And when his tunnel ceases
The little mole lies stark,
And at his back is dimness
And at his head, the dark.

So to the mole all honor
And the labors of the mole,
With doubtfulness for tunnel
And ignorance for goal.

*An August Midnight*³

THOMAS HARDY

(A)

I

A shaded lamp and a waving blind,
And the beat of a clock from a distant floor:
On this scene enter — winged, horned, and
spined —

A longlegs, a moth, and a dumbledore;
While 'mid my page there idly stands
A sleepy fly, that rubs its hands . . .

II

Thus meet we five, in this still place,
At this point of time, at this point in space.
— My guests besmear my new-penned line,
Or bang at the lamp and fall supine.

"God's humblest, they!" I muse. Yet why?
They know Earth-secrets that know not I.

(C)

*Cocoon*⁵

DAVID McCORD

The little caterpillar creeps
A while before in silk it sleeps.

It sleeps awhile before it flies,
And flies awhile before it dies,
And that's the end of three good tries.

SUNDAY AT THE ZOO

WE DECIDED TO STOP drinking and spend Sunday at the zoo. It was going nicely until she worked herself up over the observation that it was a horrible thing to cage the animals.

"That's not very profound," I said, "everybody who goes to the zoo feels that sometime."

"Oh, you cruel bastard," she screamed, "I'm not *everybody*!"

She bellied over the guardrail and flung herself against the bars of the wolves' cage.

Three wolves had been circling and as soon as she touched the bars they froze, fur bristling along their spines.

She had her arms stuck in between the bars up to her shoulders and as much of her face as she could wedge in yelling, "Eat me! Eat me!" to the wolves.

Just that week the newspapers had carried an account of how a small girl had an arm gnawed off--she'd reached in to pet them and one wolf held it while the other ate. It was, in fact, what had led us, along with the crowd, relentlessly to the wolves' cage.

But the wolves held their ground, snarling, stiff-legged.

An attendant came running down the aisle between the fence and cages and grabbed her by the hair and throat, wrestling her back. She locked her arms around the bars and he kept slapping her face with a thick, purplish slab of meat he must have been feeding to one of the animals.

"I'll give you 'Eat me, Eat me,'" he grinned, kicking her down and grabbing his crotch.

At that instant all three wolves rushed against the bars so that they shook, and you could hear their teeth breaking on the metal. Their bloodied snouts jabbed through, snapping at air.

"Stop abusing that woman." I shouted from the crowd.

BILLY'S GIRL

FIRST BILLY WAS ON the raft and then he was not. Sun shone on the blue water. Carmine looked for him in the bathhouse, at the popcorn stand where he liked to waste time with Camille, then down by the lifeguard station. But nobody had seen him. If I catch that kid, Carmine said to me in the bathhouse, but I hadn't seen him either, what could I see from behind the counter there except a little stretch of open water, the sun bright on the big lake, pines in the distance. Occasionally some queenie would stroll by but I hadn't seen Billy at all, he could still be out there hiding among the big float tanks underneath the boards, his break over, turn up later rake in hand, why, Mr. D'Angelo, I've been clearing up this area like you told me to. It would be just like him.

But after a while they called the sheriff and two guys came into the bathhouse behind me and went into the storeroom where they keep the drag lines, these hooks as big as your head. By then it was late afternoon. The sheriff's guys were out there in their little boat putt-putting around the raft, lines hanging over the stern, when Billy's girlfriend came down that evening for a swim. When it was completely dark they switched on lights and kept at it.

He's only kidding, the way he always does, Billy's girlfriend said to me. She was perched on the edge of my counter swinging her legs, looking real good and knowing it. By then the place was pretty well cleared out. We went behind the rows of wire baskets and started to make out. There was nobody around, it was dark, and we sort of sank down on a pile of wet towels. Right away she stuck her tongue in my mouth. The towels gave off a sour odor. Her suit was still damp around the edges, I noticed. Out on the lake the motor died down again. Every so often they'd had to ease off, something tangled in the lines, seaweed or an old log. But this time it was Billy all right, like a big musky with all the fight gone out of him, hooked right through the eye the deputy said. By then I was into Billy's girlfriend pretty good, and she was liking it.

POPULAR MECHANICS

EARLY THAT DAY the weather turned and the snow was melting into dirty water. Streaks of it ran down from the little shoulder-high window that faced the back yard. Cars slushed by on the street outside, where it was getting dark. But it was getting dark on the inside too.

He was in the bedroom pushing clothes into a suitcase when she came to the door.

I'm glad you're leaving! I'm glad you're leaving! she said. Do you hear?

He kept on putting his things into the suitcase.

Son of a bitch! I'm so glad you're leaving! She began to cry. You can't even look at me in the face, can you?

Then she noticed the baby's picture on the bed and picked it up.

He looked at her and she wiped her eyes and stared at him before turning and going back to the living room.

Bring that back, he said.

Just get your things and get out, she said.

He did not answer. He fastened the suitcase, put on his coat, looked around the bedroom before turning off the light. Then he went out to the living room.

She stood in the doorway of the little kitchen, holding the baby.

I want the baby, he said.

Are you crazy?

No, but I want the baby. I'll get someone to come by for his things.

You're not touching this baby, she said.

The baby had begun to cry and she uncovered the blanket from around his head.

Oh, oh, she said, looking at the baby.

He moved toward her.

For God's sake! she said. She took a step back into the kitchen.

I want the baby.

Get out of here!

She turned and tried to hold the baby over in a corner behind the stove.

But he came up. He reached across the stove and tightened his hands on the baby.

Let go of him, he said.

Get away, get away! she cried.

The baby was red-faced and screaming. In the scuffle they knocked down a flowerpot that hung behind the stove.

He crowded her into the wall then, trying to break her grip.

He held on to the baby and pushed with all his weight.

Let go of him, he said.

Don't, she said. You're hurting the baby, she said.

I'm not hurting the baby, he said.

The kitchen window gave no light. In the near-dark he worked on her fist fingers with one hand and with the other hand he gripped the screaming baby up under an arm near the shoulder.

She felt her fingers being forced open. She felt the baby going from her.

No! she screamed just as her hands came loose.

She would have it, this baby. She grabbed for the baby's other arm. She caught the baby around the wrist and leaned back.

But he would not let go. He felt the baby slipping out of his hands and he pulled back very hard.

In this manner, the issue was decided.

It went many years,
But at last came a knock,
And I thought of the door
With no lock to lock.

I blew out the light,
I tiptoed the floor,
And raised both hands
In prayer to the door.

But the knock came again.
My window was wide;
I climbed on the sill
And descended outside.

Back over the sill
I bade a "Come in"
To whatever the knock
At the door may have been.

So at a knock
I emptied my cage
To hide in the world
And alter with age.

Robert Frost

OZYMANDIAS¹

I MET a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, (stamped on these lifeless
things,)

The hand² that mocked them and the heart³ that
fed:

And on the pedestal these words appear:

'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: 10

Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away.

1817

1818

Identifying Irony

Directions: Read the following examples of irony. Determine which of the three types of irony are being used and then explain your answer.

Dramatic irony – This occurs when the reader or audience understands more about the events of a story than a character.

Situational irony – This occurs when what actually happens is the opposite of what is expected or appropriate.

Verbal irony – A character says one thing but really means the opposite.

ANY MINUTE MOM SHOULD COME BLASTING THROUGH THE DOOR

SUDDEN FICTION 197

MOM DIED IN THE MIDDLE of making me a sandwich. If I had known it was going to kill her, I never would have asked. It never killed her before to make me a sandwich, so why all of a sudden? My dad didn't understand it, either. But we don't talk about it too much. We don't talk about it too much at all. Sometimes we try. Sometimes it's just the two of us at dinner, and things are almost good.

But only sometimes.

Most of the time it's different. Most of the time I do things like forget to leave her place out at the table. And then we don't know what to do. Then we don't even try to talk. Three plates. Three glasses. The kitchen shines. A bright, shiny kitchen, Mom used to say. And there we are — my dad, her place, and me. And any minute Mom should come blasting through the door, all bundles and boxes, my big winter coat squaring her off at the shoulders and hips, her face smiling and wrinkled like a plant.

I should have known better.

I should have known about these things.

Come on, Mom, what do you say? Is it going to kill you to make me one sandwich? Is it really going to kill you? Remember how you used to play with me? Remember? And then I snuck up behind her chair, undid her curlers, and ran my fingers through her hair until she said all right already, what kind did I want? Then she stood up, turned to my dad, and opened her bathrobe so he could get a peek just to see if the old interest was still there. But I don't think it was. What? he said. He hasn't seen this before? Make the sandwich, he said. And he let his body melt like pudding into the easy chair.

That was it. That was the last thing he said to her. Mom turned up the TV, went into the kitchen, and the next thing we knew, she was calling out for help.

Well, my dad didn't know what was going on anymore than I did, so he got up from his chair, trudged across the room — making sure to scrape his feet on the carpet all the way so he could really shock her good this time — and that was it. Mom was dead on the floor of the kitchen, her bathrobe open at the waist.

And I thought, Well, there's Mom dead, what now? No one thinks about that. No one thinks about what happens after you find your mother dead like that, all over the kitchen floor. But I'm telling you, that's when the real fun starts. That's when you have to try mouth-to-mouth on her — on your mother, for God's sake — knowing that if she does come around she'll spit up in your face, because that's what happens, but praying for it, anyway, because if she doesn't, then it's all over. That's when you've got to call an ambulance and wait for them to throw a sheet over her head so they can take her away from you. That's when you've got to sit there and watch them put their hands all over her body and know they'll never believe you even tried to save her. That's when the neighbors see the flashing red light in your driveway and wonder what kind of rotten son you are that you couldn't save your mother. That's when you've got your whole life to live, and all it's going to be is one excuse after another for why you didn't save her. What do you do? We didn't know, so my dad poured her on the couch, and we waited. We waited and watched TV.

It was on.

But like I said, we don't talk about it too much. How can we? Mom was the talker. That's what she used to say. She used to say, "Boys, what would you do without me?" And here we are, without her. My dad and I wouldn't know how to talk to each other if you paid us, so we don't even try. Not much, anyway. What am I going to say? How's your love life? What's it like to sleep alone? He doesn't want that. He doesn't want that at all. He wants me out of the house. But he doesn't really want that, either, you know. What would he do then? Six rooms can be too many if you're not careful. I tell him this at dinner sometimes. I tell him how much he needs me. How much he cares. But he doesn't care. He cares about the kitchen, the robe, the things I did to try to save his wife. My hands. Her body. My lips. Her mouth.

"Tell me," he says, "is that really how you want to remember your mother?"

TICKETS

TOBY HECKLER PLACED the slip of yellow paper under the windshield wiper of the black Oldsmobile that straddled two parking spaces. On the yellow paper Toby had printed in red ink "PRAK-ING MISTEAK" and signed his name "TOBY" in a childish-looking hand. He snapped the cover on his Pilot Razor Point, slipped the pen over his ear, put the pad of yellow papers in his jacket pocket. He moved down Main Street, his chin held high, his sneakers spanking white from Baby's Liquid Shoe Polish.

As Toby passed Thom McAn, he looked in the window, caught the reflection of his sneakers, looked down at them, moved his toes inside. He straightened the pen on his ear, patted the pad of yellow papers in his pocket, moved along. People stared at Toby; he kept his chin high.

Near the First National Bank two elderly ladies waited for the bus. They stood in the middle of the sidewalk away from the curb. Toby pulled out his pad, slipped the pen off his ear, held the cap with his teeth. He printed slowly, meticulously, then handed one of the ladies the slip, "TO MUSH IN WAY" signed "TOBY." He secured his instruments, walked along as before. The two ladies examined the slip of paper, moved closer to the curb.

At the intersection of Main and South the pedestrian crossing light shone bright orange, "DONT WALK." Traffic moved, people stood on the curb. A man with a pin-striped suit and briefcase stepped off the curb, was about to sneak across between cars. Toby began to reach for his pad. The cars closed together; the man stepped back to the curb. Toby brought his hand back. When the green light read "WALK," Toby and the man crossed. The man went into a shop. Toby waited for him, handed him a slip as he came out, "ALLMOST WALKD."

Patrolman McVee stood in front of Charlie's Tobacco Shop; McVee's badge number was 635. Toby's Ford stood next to him. McVee looked over.

"How's it going, Toby?" McVee said.

Toby pulled out his pad, showed it to McVee.

"Lots of business, eh Toby?"

Toby put his pad back, nodded. His eyes rolled, looked tortured.

"Yes, Toby, it's a bitch," McVee said.

Toby looked at McVee's shoes. Except for a single smudge they were shiny, black. Toby bent down, rubbed off the smudge with his hand.

"Thanks Toby," McVee said.

Toby caught McVee's eye, looked down at his own sneakers.

"Very nice, Toby. Spiffy," McVee said.

Toby raised his chin again, moved along.

Before the rain came, Toby had used up half his pad. Near Mario's Grinders there was a dog tied to a parking meter; he had wrapped his leash tightly around the pole. Toby stuck a slip under his collar, "TYED WORNG." Toby walked into the YMCA, handed the man at the desk a slip, "Y BORKEN." On a Park Square bench a man ate a candy bar; he threw his wrapper down. Toby handed him the wrapper and a slip, "PAPUR ON GARSS." The man walked away throwing both papers down. Toby caught up to him, gave him all the papers and another slip, "NOT LISSENING." The man said "Christ," put all the papers in his pocket.

The rain began to wet Toby's slips, blot his ink. He put everything away, looked up at the sky, rolled his eyes.

By the time he got back to Main and South, it was raining hard. A car moved through the intersection, splashed dirty water on his sneakers. Toby walked quickly down South, cut through the alley between Sam's Auto Supplies and Blue Arc Welding, avoided puddles on Mill, moved along the flood control wall on River, came to his bungalow, entered.

Inside there were smells of cabbages, cigarette smoke, spilt alcohol. The entry was dark, lit intermittently with a pale light from the television. He knew his mother lay on the sofa, smoking, drinking, surrounded by TV magazines. The sofa with a large hump cast a shadow on the wall.

Toby took off his sneakers, carried them up the stairs.

His mother turned her head, "Toby, is that you?" Her voice was raspy, tired. But Toby was already in his room, the door closed. Baby's Liquid Shoe Polish in front of him on the floor.

His mother moved to the bottom of the stairs. She coughed, yelled, "Toby!"

Toby opened the door, showed himself to his mother.

She held a cigarette and a drink. "Toby, you could've been a goddamn burglar sneaking around me like that!" Toby closed the door, reached under his bed.

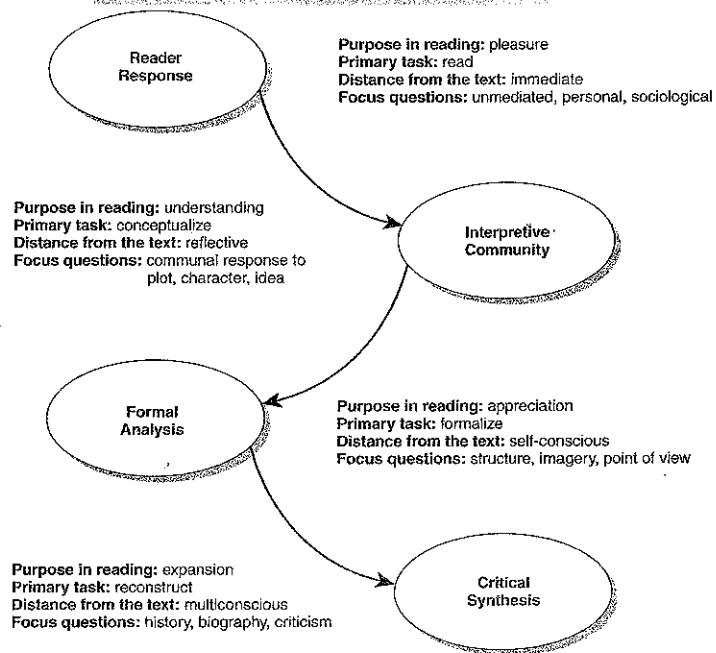
"Toby, you goddamn nut!"

Toby pulled out a shoebox. On the cover it read, "MUTHERS TICKETS."

Toby wrote three slips: "TO MUSH SOMKING," "TO MUSH DIRNKING," "TOO MUSH YELING." He placed the slips in the box. Then, before he put the box away, he wrote one more slip in his largest letters: "ERVYTHING WORNG!"

With the box safely under his bed, Toby sat on the floor, bit his tongue, went to polishing his sneakers spanking white.

Four Stages of Reading Literature



Critical Perspectives

Dr. Joseph Milner, Wake Forest University

Katherine Thompson, Wake Forest University Master Teacher Fellow

1. Historical-Biographical Criticism: A concern for the historical context of a work of literature, and for the life of the artist as it is revealed in the work of fiction. This approach understands literature as reflective of and influenced by the history and author's experiences surrounding it. This critic must know what was happening in the world, and details about the external events and interior state of a writer's life, to really know the book. The intellectual currents, artistic trends, the economic situation, and the political atmosphere all have their impact on the book, as well as the study of psycho-history for determining a writer's psychological state and motivations. The political philosophies represented by the struggle in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* would be traced by such a critic to political questions arising in Elizabethan England, as does Greenblatt's *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*.

2. Archetypal Criticism: A concern for the archetypes in literature. Freud's student, Jung, hypothesized an unconscious which was the collective inheritance transmitted from age to age, from parent to child. Anthropology validates this theory in its record of rites, myths, and customs found in all cultures separated by great periods of time and immense distances. The archetypal critic suggests that literature's power is partly derived from its appeal to the reader because of the use of primordial images. This critic would point to the journey motif in *Huck Finn* and note the emotional power of the mentor-novice relationship.

3. Rhetorical Criticism: A concern for the deep rhetoric or persuasive powers of a literary work, especially the value system and world view of a writer. This approach believes that behind the masks and deceptions of a work lies the true face of the author. A critic such as Booth thus explores the hidden meanings of the novel so as to see what ethical and spiritual stance may be revealed. *Charlotte's Web* could be understood as projecting a humanistic, naturalistic world view while *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* clearly proclaims a religious, mysterious understanding of reality.

4. Marxist Criticism: A concern for Marxist ideology as it is portrayed in realistic literature. Art for the Marxist critic must direct our attention to social matters, not act as an opiate to remove us from them. The vision of the Marxist critic is always full economic equality for the proletariat. A sense of history's unfolding theses, antitheses, and syntheses dominates. This critic can thus praise an older writer in the original time context as a fighter for the lower classes, as anti-feudal, but might see the same writer in our time as reinforcing the capitalist state. The Marxist critic would attack Twain in *Huck Finn* because he eventually sides with the aristocrat against the common man whom he sees as a mob.

5. Formalist / New Criticism: A concern for the structural and technical dimensions of a literary work. The critic is more interested in the form or HOW of a work than its content, or WHAT. The critic will see how the parts work together to make an organic whole. The concern for tension, ambiguity, and irony is strong because these features do not admit to simple thematic directions in fiction or didactical statements about good and evil. The critic thus addresses the text itself and avoids the historical or biographical context. The formalist motto for poetry is "Trust the poem, not the poet." The formalist critic would look at the narrative alteration from John to Lorraine in *The Pigman* as reflecting the tension between closeness and distance in a story.

6. Developmental Criticism: A concern for the understanding of character and theme in literature which leads to application of stage theories and growth patterns in the life stories in fiction. The critic believes that though art does not reflect life exactly, it does offer sufficient verisimilitude to allow the use of psychological concepts to help understand character definition and growth. Kohlberg's and Erikson's theories are especially suitable because they offer clear insight into character. Wilbur's moral development from a selfish shoat to a self-sacrificing pig in *Charlotte's Web* would be important to this critical perspective.

7. Feminist Criticism: A concern for women's perspective on life. This viewpoint intends to raise our consciousness about sexual exploitation and alienation. The desire to locate unrecognized female artists who offered vital and authentic pictures of women is a central hope of these critics. Feminist critics would find abhorrent the picture of the genteel ladies of *Huck Finn* and would be more appreciative of Twain's self-sufficient women. The book, however, would be judged as male dominated and totally lacking a balanced male and female perspective.

8. Freudian Criticism: A concern for the psycho-sexual dimensions of literature as explored by Freud. In this approach, art is believed to be produced because of the artist's neurosis. The artist, according to Freud, knew the unconscious better than he did. Art is a substitute gratification that serves as a tension-reducing narcotic. This critic would note Freudian stages or complexes found in characters or in the writers themselves, as has been seen in Jones' interpretation of *Hamlet*. The critic is also aware of symbols which, like those in dreams, represent sexual urges which must be repressed, cannot be expressed directly. The critic may see characters and even whole works in terms of the tensions expressed in Freud's theory of the id-ego-superego.

9. Reader Response Criticism: A concern for the reader as artist. This multi-layered approach derives in part from contemporary philosophy and psychology in urging upon us the notion that the known is created by the knower. Perception is creation. The critic finds meaning residing in the reader, and thus reader response theory looks beyond the "efferent" level of understanding to a deeper, more personal and subjective "aesthetic" understanding of the text. *Five Readers Reading* shows how each reader projects his or her life-scripts into the text to make a unique new story: "The work of art thus becomes a vessel into which the reader pours himself, a Rorschach test."

10. Deconstruction Criticism: An awareness of the slippery nature of language and its disconnect with meaning lead new structuralists to admire the beauty of literary works but deny their meaning. *Paradise Lost* for such critics has no religious meaning but is a fabrication created for its own sake without reference to any external truth. Umberto Eco, a leading structuralist, has written a telling novel, *The Name of the Rose*, that deals with all the trappings of monastery life but has no interest in religious meaning.

The year was 2081, and everybody was finally equal. They weren't only equal before God and the law. They were equal every which way. Nobody was smarter than anybody else. Nobody was better looking than anybody else. Nobody was stronger or quicker than anybody else. All this equality was due to the 211th, 212th, and 213th Amendments to the Constitution, and to the unceasing vigilance of agents of the United States Handicapper General.

Some things about living still weren't quite right, though. April, for instance, still drove people crazy by not being springtime. And it was in that clammy month that the H-C men took George and Hazel Bergeron's fourteen-year-old son, Harrison, away.

It was tragic, all right, but George and Hazel couldn't think about it very hard. Hazel had a perfectly average intelligence, which meant she couldn't think about anything except in short bursts. And George, while his intelligence was way above normal, had a little mental handicap radio in his ear. He was required by law to wear it at all times. It was tuned to a government transmitter. Every twenty seconds or so, the transmitter would send out some sharp noise to keep people like George from taking unfair advantage of their brains.

George and Hazel were watching television. There were tears on Hazel's cheeks, but she'd forgotten for the moment what they were about.

On the television screen were ballerinas.

A buzzer sounded in George's head. His thoughts fled in panic, like bandits from a burglar alarm.

"That was a real pretty dance, that dance they just did," said Hazel.

"Huh?" said George.

"That dance — it was nice," said Hazel.

"Yup," said George. He tried to think a little about the ballerinas. They weren't really very good — no better than anybody else would have been, anyway. They were burdened with sashweights and bags of birdshot, and their faces were masked, so that no one, seeing a free and graceful gesture or a pretty face, would feel like something the cat drug in. George was toying with the vague notion that maybe dancers shouldn't be handicapped. But he didn't get very far with it before another noise in his ear radio scattered his thoughts. George winced. So did two out of the eight ballerinas.

Hazel saw him wince. Having no mental handicap herself, she had to ask George what the latest sound had been.

"Sounded like somebody hitting a milk bottle with a ballpeen hammer," said George.

"I'd think it would be real interesting, hearing all the different sounds," said Hazel, a little envious. "All the things they think up."

"Um," said George.

"Only, if I was Handicapper General, you know what I would do?" said Hazel. Hazel, as a matter of fact, bore a strong resemblance to the Handicapper General, a woman named Diana Moon Glampers. "If I was Diana Moon Glampers," said Hazel, "I'd have chimes on Sunday — just chimes. Kind of in honor of religion."

"I could think, if it was just chimes," said George.

"Well — maybe make 'em real loud," said Hazel. "I think I'd make

good Handicapper General."

"Good as anybody else," said George.

"Who knows better'n I do what normal is?" said Hazel.

"Right," said George. He began to think glimmeringly about his ab normal son who was now in jail, about Harrison, but a twenty-one-gur salute in his head stopped that.

"Boy!" said Hazel, "that was a doozy, wasn't it?"

It was such a doozy that George was white and trembling, and tear stood on the rims of his red eyes. Two of the eight ballerinas had collapsed to the studio floor, were holding their temples.

"All of a sudden you look so tired," said Hazel. "Why don't you stretch out on the sofa, so's you can rest your handicap bag on the pillows, honey bunch." She was referring to the forty-seven pounds of birdshot in a canvas bag, which was padlocked around George's neck. "Go on and rest the bag for a little while," she said. "I don't care if you're not equal to me for a while.

George weighed the bag with his hands. "I don't mind it," he said. "I don't notice it any more. It's just a part of me."

"You been so tired lately — kind of wore out," said Hazel. "If there was just some way we could make a little hole in the bottom of the bag, and just take out a few of them lead balls. Just a few."

"Two years in prison and two thousand dollars fine for every ball I too out," said George. "I don't call that a bargain."

"If you could just take a few out when you came home from work," said Hazel. "I mean — you don't compete with anybody around here. You just set around."

"If I tried to get away with it," said George, "then other people'd get away with it — and pretty soon we'd be right back to the dark ages again, with everybody competing against everybody else. You wouldn't like that, would you?"

"I'd hate it," said Hazel.

"There you are," said George. "The minute people start cheating on law what do you think happens to society?"

"If it hadn't been able to come up with an answer to this question, George would have supplied one. A siren was going off in his head.

"Reckon it'd fall all apart," said Hazel.

"What would?" said George blankly.

"Society," said Hazel uncertainly. "Wasn't that what you just said?"

"Who knows?" said George.

The television program was suddenly interrupted for a news bulletin. It wasn't clear at first as to what the bulletin was about, since the announcer, like all announcers, had a serious speech impediment. For about half a minute, and in a state of high excitement, the announcer tried to say, "Ladies and gentlemen —"

He finally gave up, handed the bulletin to a ballerina to read.

"That's all right —" Hazel said of the announcer, "he tried. That's the big thing. He tried to do the best he could with what God gave him. He should get a nice raise for trying so hard."

"Ladies and gentlemen —" said the ballerina, reading the bulletin. She must have been extraordinarily beautiful, because the mask she wore was hideous. And it was easy to see that she was the strongest and most graceful of all the dancers, for her handicap bags were as big as those worn by two-hundred-pound men.

And she had to apologize at once for her voice, which was a very unfair voice for a woman to use. Her voice was a warm, luminous, timeless melody. "Excuse me —" she said, and she began again, making her voice absolutely uncompetitive.

"Harrison Bergeron, age fourteen," she said in a grackle squawk, "has just escaped from jail, where he was held on suspicion of plotting to overthrow the government. He is a genius and an athlete, is under-handicapped, and should be regarded as extremely dangerous."

A police photograph of Harrison Bergeron was flashed on the screen upside down, then sideways, upside down again, then right side up. The picture showed the full length of Harrison against a background calibrated in feet and inches. He was exactly seven feet tall.

The rest of Harrison's appearance was Halloween and hardware. Nobody had ever borne heavier handicaps. He had outgrown hindrances faster than the H-G men could think them up. Instead of a little ear radio for a mental handicap, he wore a tremendous pair of earphones, and spectacles with thick wavy lenses. The spectacles were intended to make him not only half blind, but to give him whanging headaches besides.

Scrap metal was hung all over him. Ordinarily, there was a certain symmetry, a military neatness to the handicaps issued to strong people, but Harrison looked like a walking junkyard. In the race of life, Harrison carried three hundred pounds.

And to offset his good looks, the H-G men required that he wear at all times a red rubber ball for a nose, keep his eyebrows shaved off, and cover his even white teeth with black caps at snagle-tooth random.

"If you see this boy," said the ballerina, "do not — I repeat, do not — try to reason with him."

There was the shriek of a door being torn from its hinges.

Screams and barking cries of consternation came from the television set. The photograph of Harrison Bergeron on the screen repeated again and again, as though dancing to the tune of an earthquake.

George Bergeron correctly identified the earthquake, and well he might have — for many was the time his own home had danced to the same crashing tune. "My God —" said George, "that must be Harrison!"

The realization was blasted from his mind instantly by the sound of an automobile collision in his head.

When George could open his eyes again, the photograph of Harrison was gone. A living, breathing Harrison filled the screen.

Clanking, clownish, and huge, Harrison stood in the center of the studio. The knob of the uprooted studio door was still in his hand. Ballerinas, technicians, musicians, and announcers cowered on their knees before him, expecting to die.

"I am the Emperor!" cried Harrison. "Do you hear? I am the Emperor! Everybody must do what I say at once!" He stamped his foot and the studio shook.

"Even as I stand here —" he bellowed, "crippled, hobbled, sickened — I am a greater ruler than any man who ever lived! Now watch me become what I can become!"

Harrison tore the straps of his handicap harness like wet tissue paper, tore straps guaranteed to support five thousand pounds.

Harrison's scrap-iron handicaps crashed to the floor.

Harrison thrust his thumbs under the bar of the padlock that secured his head harness. The bar snapped like celery. Harrison smashed his headphones and spectacles against the wall.

He flung away his rubber-ball nose, revealed a man that would have awed Thor, the god of thunder.

"I shall now select my Empress!" he said, looking down on the cowering people. "Let the first woman who dares rise to her feet claim her mate and her throne!"

A moment passed, and then a ballerina arose, swaying like a willow. Harrison plucked the mental handicap from her ear, snapped off her physical handicaps with marvelous delicacy. Last of all, he removed her mask.

She was blindingly beautiful.

"Now —" said Harrison, taking her hand, "shall we show the people the meaning of the word dance? Music!" he commanded.

The musicians scrambled back into their chairs, and Harrison stripped them of their handicaps, too. "Play your best," he told them, "and I'll make you barons and dukes and earls."

The music began. It was normal at first — cheap, silly, false. But Harrison snatched two musicians from their chairs, waved them like batons as he sang the music as he wanted it played. He slammed them back into their chairs. The music began again and was much improved.

Harrison and his Empress merely listened to the music for a while — listened gravely, as though synchronizing their heartbeats with it.

They shifted their weights to their toes.

Harrison placed his big hands on the girl's tiny waist, letting her sense the weightlessness that would soon be hers.

And then, in an explosion of joy and grace, into the air they sprang!

Not only were the laws of the land abandoned, but the law of gravity and the laws of motion as well.

They reeled, whirled, swiveled, flounced, capered, gamboled, and spun.

They leaped like deer on the moon.

The studio ceiling was thirty feet high, but each leap brought the dancers nearer to it.

It became their obvious intention to kiss the ceiling.

They kissed it.

And then, neutralizing gravity with love and pure will, they remained suspended in air inches below the ceiling, and they kissed each other for a long, long time.

It was then that Diana Moon Glampers, the Handicapper General, came into the studio with a double-barreled ten-gauge shotgun. She fired twice, and the Emperor and the Empress were dead before they hit the floor.

Diana Moon Glampers loaded the gun again. She aimed it at the musicians and told them they had ten seconds to get their handicaps back on.

It was then that the Bergerons' television tube burned out.

Hazel turned to comment about the blackout to George. But George had gone out into the kitchen for a can of beer.

George came back in with the beer, paused while a handicap signal shook him up. And then he sat down again. "You been crying?" he said to Hazel.

"Yup," she said.

"What about?" he said.

"I forget," she said. "Something real sad on television."

"What was it?" he said.

"It's all kind of mixed up in my mind," said Hazel.

"Forget sad things," said George.

"I always do," said Hazel.

"That's my girl," said George. He winced. There was the sound of a rivetting gun in his head.

"Gee — I could tell that one was a doozy," said Hazel.

"You can say that again," said George.

"Gee —" said Hazel, "I could tell that one was doozy."