



Scene from 2010 Mull Theatre (Glasgow) production of Andrew Dallmeyer's play, *Opium Eater* (2005).

Remarks on the first term Sight Analysis Examination for English & Cultural Studies 3M06

Let me begin by saying that Roshaya and I were very impressed by the thoughtfulness and imaginative power of many of your sight analysis examination answers. It's clear to us that a significant number of students in this course are reading the materials with enormous insight, and attending to the arguments that have been made in class and supplemented on the Study Questions document. Each of the sight passages was in fact discussed in class, and given strong emphasis there, and several of the passages were not only evoked in different classes but also addressed on the Study Questions document. To be sure, some of you ran into difficulties, and in some cases found it difficult to recognize some of the passages at hand. But these are problems that can be overcome, with some focussed labour, a change in study habits, and a desire to do well. I have complete faith your abilities as students who are willing bring their full attention to the course's wonderful assigned materials. As I point out in the course outline, because this is a six-unit course, every student has a unique opportunity to strengthen his or her comprehension of the Romantic texts, and to write more robust examination answers.

There are two distinct challenges to address here:

1) --In general, ensuring that you attend class regularly, take detailed lecture notes, read the course materials with care, and bring the course materials to class. This course is in fact run on the assumption that you attend class regularly, read the course materials with care, and bring the course materials to class. Without approaching the course in this way, you will have difficulty identifying the authors and titles of the passages in the sight analysis exam. Perhaps you are a student who doesn't take notes. Isn't it worth reconsidering that decision? Or perhaps you haven't gotten around to reading or getting your hands on the assigned texts, and so can't refer to the passages that are under discussion in class and on the Study Questions document. This may be a good time to rethink how you approach the course.

2) --In terms of the examination, remembering to focus on the specific details of the passages, discussing their local significance and linking those passages to the text's larger concerns and questions.

Roshaya has more to say about the specific sorts of problems that she saw the examination answers, and she offers some tips on how to do better both in the course and for the next examination. I include her

remarks here at the bottom of this document. But first, here are the titles and authors of the sight passages, and a brief summary of the kinds of things that we were looking for in your answers. These summaries are far from exhaustive or definitive: they are meant to model ways of reading the passages with imagination and rigour. All remarks provided here, by the way, recapitulate arguments that were made in class and on the Course Blog.

Sight Passages Key

Passage #1

As a huge Stone is sometimes seen to lie
 Couch'd on the bald top of an eminence;
 Wonder to all who do the same espy
 By what means it could thither come, and whence;
 So that it seems a thing endowed with sense:
 Like a Sea-beast crawl'd forth, which on a shelf
 Of rock or sand reposes, there to sun itself.

Such seem'd this Man, not all alive nor dead...

William Wordsworth, "Resolution and Independence"

The passage revolves around the work of two similes or metaphorical comparisons that describe the leech-gatherer. Wordsworth plays the part of the motionless observer under whose masterful gaze the old man is compelled to fall. Note that the similes come before the leech-gatherer himself is evoked; ordinarily, "this Man" would be said to "seem" like "a Sea-beast" or like a "huge Stone," but instead Wordsworth unfurls his similes the other way around, post-postponing the subject of his comparison. That way we feel the sheer pre-emptive force of Wordsworth's imagination and his strong desire to make something or wring (or leech?) something out of the leech-gatherer...including, as the title of the poem puts to us, an abiding sense of resolution and independence, i.e., perseverance and autonomy. But what kind of autonomy relies so heavily on others? Doesn't Wordsworth signal his elemental dependence on others even as he claims to have discovered the principle of independence? The dehumanizing and immobilizing qualities of the comparisons or similes in this passage are worth remarking, especially insofar as they hint at something darker and more troublingly appropriative or colonizing about the Wordsworthian imagination. Moreover, the leech-gatherer is a figure for Wordsworth himself (one of several such autobiographical figures haunting his work, including the addressee of *Tintern Abbey*, Dorothy Wordsworth), and the old man's deliberate labour—even in the most difficult times—is a metaphor for the both the problems and the possibilities of the work of the struggling poet. The leech-gatherer's work demands extraordinary labour, and yet for all of that artisanal effort, the results can be meagre and chancy: and what has come of that work, finally? The leech-gatherer is barely life, less than human, "a thing endowed with sense." Wordsworth concludes the poem by saying that he sees the old man as an exemplar of strength and perseverance, and yet passages like this one paint a somewhat different picture. Like Coleridge, Wordsworth hopes that poems--like leeches--can have healing-effects, and yet comparing the work of the poet to the work of the old man feels forced...a bit like the extended similes Wordsworth uses to describe him, similes that distance us from the old man's life rather than make its elemental features legible. And yet Wordsworth claims that he compels the old man to make himself legible, inviting him to explain who he is and what he does. In asking these questions of him, Wordsworth is also asking a question of himself, now, on the threshold of his career as a poet: what am I to become, what sort of poetry am I to write? The leech-gatherer teaches Wordsworth a lesson in autonomy and steadfastness, a lesson upon which—he tells us--he will draw in later years. Or has the old man been commanded to yield up such a lesson, against, as it were, his will? One thing is certain: the moralizing pronouncements about the leech-gatherer's resolution and independence with which the poem concludes remain at odds with the figure of the leech-gatherer himself, a figure mostly of desolation, isolation, injury, thingification and animalization, as the similes attest. The old man is also as a figure for the deracinating effects of modern capitalism, whose inhuman forces transform human beings into spectres and things. The great 18th-century political theorist, Adam Smith, had argued that capitalism produces communities, but

Wordsworth isn't convinced. Like many others Wordsworth saw travelling the highways and byways of England, the leech-gatherer is part of a moving and disposable population created by the wrenching economic transformations then overtaking England. These creatures live on the threshold of a world in which consumable things become animate and human beings are rendered into mere things: exactly the kinds of transformations that Wordsworth's own similes perform. Like the leech-gatherer, these disposable populations are neither alive or dead, but instead trapped in-between...somehow both "Sea-beast" and "Stone." The allusion to the sea-beast quietly remembers Proteus, a creature from Greek mythology (Wordsworth barely calls attention to this classical reference, no doubt anxious that his poem not share any qualities with the 18th-century verse he despised, verse that was rich with classical allusions, and proud of them), but that ancient story has a much happier outcome, being a story of triumph and escape. Here in England at the end of the 18th century, the leech-gather has no means of escape. Wordsworth's strange similes make that uncanny effect palpable to the reader.

Passage # 2

But O! how oft,
 How oft, at school, with most believing mind,
 Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,
 To watch that fluttering *stranger!* And as oft
 With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt
 Of my sweet birth-place, and the old church-tower,
 Whose bells, the poor man's only music, rang
 From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,
 So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me
 With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
 Most like articulate sounds of things to come!
 So gazed I, till the soothing things, I dreamt,
 Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams!

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Frost at Midnight*

"Presageful." Such an interesting term. Among other things, it means to be in a state of suspense mixed with longing, to be "full" of this feeling of turning towards what has not happened and may never happen, all of your antennae out, exquisitely sensitive to what is coming, not only looking but also yearning for the signs or portents of the future, perhaps a better future...although a better future cannot be guaranteed, not while it remains the object of hope. The word concentrates the mood of Coleridge's conversation poem at the moment in which he is cast from his disturbingly quiet present to memories of his troubled childhood. Note here how forcefully he is propelled into that different time-frame, hence the turn of phrase "But O!," a phrase registering the pressure of sudden emotion welling up inside of him, a surge of feeling that is also captured in the repetition of the phrase that pushes these verses forward, "how oft/How oft...as oft." Conversation poems are rich with these kinds of repetitions, which capture the turning and returning of the mind of the speaker, as he circles back again and again ("oft" and "oft") to scenes in his life that capture his imagination. And as always in the conversation poems, it is the unremarkable that is made to feel remarkable and that is experienced, after the fact, as remarkable. In the present Coleridge experiences himself to be the "sole unquiet thing," but the past offers no uncomplicated respite, for there too Coleridge discovers that he was an agitated creature longing for escape, subjected to worries and enduring unmet desires as well as deeply affecting pleasures. He gazed then at a fire, just as he does in the poem's present, and then too what catches his discerning eye is the tiniest and least remarkable of details---the fluttering movement of a bit of soot caught in the updraft of the fire grate. But Coleridge identifies with that ash. As he says, it is "a companionable form," a kind of mirror that the poet holds up to himself: restless, nervous, "puny" and "fluttering." The ash---such a curious image, a figure for that which merely remains, what is left once something is burned, a kind of cast-off--is also the bridge or link that joins past and present. English folklore charmingly names bits of trembling soot *strangers*; their appearance is said to augur the arrival of a guest or friend. For the ash to be called a "stranger" is an example of "natural" poetry woven into the common stories of the British peoples, a kind of unpremeditated metaphorical thinking that Coleridge

gratefully folds into his own writing. But the figure of the stranger is important for other reasons, for it names Coleridge's relationship with himself, his disquieting alienation from himself, his condition of estrangement. In the end, all that Coleridge can do is hope and trust that his infant son, to whom the poem is addressed, will live a life of wholeness that he seems never to have had, not even when he was a child. As Coleridge casts his mind back, embracing his memories, he tenderly recalls his life as a young student in London, but this was a life of loneliness and isolation...and something else, something like longing expectation, a wish to be elsewhere, in the company of loving family, especially his sister...the sister who, by the time Coleridge writes this poem, is dead. He flinches from that early memory, and remembers dreaming of an even more archaic moment in his life. There, some of his earliest recollections are aural in nature--the church bells whose beautiful sound was a source of pleasure. The bells are a kind of natural music, simple and unadorned and unselfconscious, not unlike the poetry Coleridge would like to write and not unlike the poet he would like to be. They are the human-made equivalent to the formation of the icicles in the winter moonlight, the image with which the poem is framed. That early music filled Coleridge with "pleasure," but what a curious pleasure it is. This "sweet[ness]" is more complicated than it initially seems, for it not only "stirred" Coleridge in his earliest youth, moved him at the level of elemental feeling, but also "haunted" him. Even as a child, he heard the music as "presageful," as auguring "things to come." Coleridge seems always to be orienting himself to the future, whether his future or his son's future. These early childhood memories nevertheless soothe Coleridge's mind, although he leaves it deliberately unclear whether they calmed him then or whether they have that effect now. He recalls sleeping and dreaming: sleep is a respite from a troubled present. Eyes closed in slumber, he escapes from his anxious looking and gazing. As a child, we learn, Coleridge was a dreamer, and it was there that his subsequent life as a poet appears to have begun. But the need to dream comes from a place of loss; it is activated by an unhappiness with the present, whether that present was back in the past or today. Sleep is also a condition of insentience, i.e., unconsciousness. Sometimes unconsciousness is the only means to retreat from a difficult state of consciousness: recall Victor Frankenstein's reaction to the sight of the Creature. Coleridge remembers the soothing and salving powers of sleeping and dreaming, but in the present of the poem he is necessarily alert and awake and conscious. His beloved son is asleep, but his sleep is hopefully not an escape from an unhappy present. We know by the end of the poem that Coleridge's fondest wish is that Hartley will grow up to be a person with very different memories than his father, and living a life in a present that is free from the sadness and "abstruser musings" and self-consciousness that threaten to over-take Coleridge. But Coleridge can only wish these things for his son. The world in which his son will dwell is also "presageful," a dream for the future that of course may or may not come true. The paradox is that while Coleridge is awake on this winter night, tracing the history of his unhappiness, moving deftly and restlessly between the present and several layers of the past, remembering how, in the past, he had his eye anxiously on the chance of a better future....while the poet is doing this searching work, and putting all of his hopes in his son, he nevertheless creates something beautiful and moving. All seasons, he says, will be "sweet" to his son; but it turns out that *this* season, wintertime, has been kind to Coleridge, for it is amid those icicles and under that moon that the poem is born.

Passage #3

And sometimes in my attempts to steer homewards, upon nautical principles, by fixing my eye in the pole-star, and seeking ambitiously for a north-west passage, instead of circumnavigating all the capes and headlands I had doubled in my outward voyage, I came suddenly upon such knotty problems of alleys, such enigmatical entries, and such sphinx's riddles of streets without thoroughfares, as must, I conceive, baffle the audacity of porters, and confound the intellects of hackney-coachmen. I could almost have believed, at times, that I must be the first discoverer of some of these *terra incognitae* [unknown territories].

Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of An English Opium-Eater*

Here in "The Pleasures of Opium" section of the *Confessions*, De Quincey describes what it is like to move through the city of London, immersing himself in the crowds milling through the streets. Against those who denounce opium experiences as isolating, quietistic, and mystically withdrawing from others, he equates opium with intensifying the experience of sociability and with expanding and complicating his relationship with others. What's curious is that although he moves with others and is among others, he does so only anonymously, forming no intimate connections with those whose paths he crosses. Opium has curious effects on his imagination, inducing strange dilations of time and transformations of space. In this case, the city becomes weirdly unfamiliar, as if he had been transported to an

alien place. De Quincy expresses consternation, bordering on worry, at the sudden strangeness of the city, but also a certain rapt fascination. The city is queerly disorienting: how marvellous that it is so! He “attempts to steer homewards,” and yet he derives “pleasures” from remaining where he is, lost in a maze and negotiating the labyrinthine coils of London. And what in fact would it mean for him “to steer homewards?” We know by this point in the *Confessions* that De Quincy lives an oddly itinerant life, always on the move, always re-inventing himself in his work and through his work. He sometimes registers a desire to have a home. But when he registers these hopes, as he does in the passage in which he calls for a painter to paint a happy winter cottage scene of his life, that home feels flat and contrived—an obvious invention. De Quincy remains deeply attracted to waywardness, notwithstanding the fact that there have been moments in his life in which being abandoned has been deeply sorrowful and injurious. In an age that will increasingly put an emphasis on living life productively and economically, on getting from point A to point B, De Quincy revels instead in the value of a certain aimlessness...but aimlessness that isn't synonymous with carelessness or laziness. The city streets come alive, becoming complicated passages through which he cannot pass, problems that he cannot solve, and questions that he cannot answer. What should by rights be alarming, however, isn't. The city's new landscape is a vivid metaphor for the strange and estranging spaces he discovers inside himself. Notice how his use of language compels us to see the streets of London as the map of his mind: “alleys” are said to be “knotty problems,” and “streets” are said to be “sphinx's riddles.” Puzzles inside his own head coincide with difficulties in making his way in the world. If he experiences himself, or regions of himself, as “*terra incognitae*,” how is it possible for him to write an autobiography? About himself, he hardly knows many things. He is as unrecognizable to himself as the city suddenly feels—a powerful assertion to be making in an age that increasingly compels individuals to make themselves legible and known. But for De Quincy it is important to honour and to tarry with those unknowable parts of his life, for they too are part of what makes him who he is. Looking up into the heavens, the “pole star” seems at first to offer him a chance to orient himself, but on the ground, amid those “knotty problems of alleys,” things are much messier. In these regions of the mind, there are no guides to guide him, no “porters” or “hackney-coachmen” to steer him the right way. That's because there is no “right way,” no single way to “be” Thomas De Quincy. Wordsworth and Coleridge discover or claim to discover ways of reconciling themselves to themselves, often with the assistance of helpers or guides—Dorothy Wordsworth, the infant Hartley Coleridge, or “gentle-hearted Charles” Lamb. De Quincy isn't so lucky...and yet he doesn't exactly feel *unlucky*. There is much to be said to about being lost and about losing oneself. There are parts of oneself that simply cannot be explained, cannot be *known*, no matter how good the guide. De Quincy is uniquely suited to tarrying with those resistant nodes of human experience, and writes in ways that honour their productive rather than obstructive function in our lives.

Passage #4

The moment of desire! The moment of desire! The virgin
That pines for man shall awaken her womb to enormous joys
In the secret shadows of her chamber; the youth shut up from
The lustful joy, shall forget to generate, and create an amorous image
In the shadows of his curtains and in the folds of his silent pillow.
Are not these the places of religion? the rewards of continence?
The self-enjoying of self denial? Why dost thou seek religion?

William Blake, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*

Oothoon—Blake's complex figure for the condition of the women of England, but also a champion of other grotesquely marginalized populations, including African slaves, upon whose labour the English economy rested—is the speaker. She proclaims here that there is a strong link between social revolutionary energies and sexual desire, something that is relatively new to revolutionary thinking at the end of the 18th century. Oothoon suggests that political and social transformation will of necessity mean a more fundamental transformation, one involving a shift in human beings as desiring creatures, a change in how they experience their life as embodied beings: in other words, for her, revolution goes all the way down. Revolution still means a hope to see cultural discourses and institutions demolished and built new again. But Oothoon insists that true revolution will mean the metamorphosis of the psychological makeup of human beings, beginning with a frank and robust affirmation of sexual desire. But such an

affirmation faces many obstacles, as Oothoon experiences so tragically and directly in the poem, subjected first to sexual assault at the hands of the pitiless Bromion, and then her demonization and rejection by her lover, Theotormon. Nevertheless, in the midst of these tormenting circumstances Oothoon proclaims that the revolutionary “moment” is at hand: a brief window of opportunity for significant transformation has opened, no doubt quickened by the dissenting energies activating America (where we first encounter Oothoon) and France. It is the “moment that Satan cannot find,” as Blake says elsewhere—fragile, provisional, but deeply affecting and rich with possibility. What will a revolutionary human being look like on the other side of “the moment of desire”? Oothoon’s figures here help answer that question. She evokes the re-invention of women, particularly women trapped in the cult of purity and holiness, so that they become the seat of “enormous joys,” otherwise too often hidden from view, unexpressed and unacted upon. Oothoon condemns all those places in the culture characterized by thwarted desires, including the “youth” who has been cut off from his own passions: the boy whose sexual energies have turned inward and have become masturbatory. (But this too is a normative judgment, for who is to say with authority that masturbatory desires are any more or less virtual than other desires? The condemnation of masturbation is an old one, but during Blake’s lifetime it saw an intensification.) The youth loves a phantom “image” in the privacy of his own bed-chamber, preferring virtual lovers rather than expressing and acting upon his desires outwardly in the worlds of flesh and blood human beings. Blake holds “religion” responsible for schooling youth into containing and policing their desires in this fashion; the evidence of that education (“the places of religion”) is to be found everywhere, but never more powerfully so than in the deepest recesses of the mind, where our desires meet the censorship that we have internalized as our own. Rather than activating imaginations, as Blake hoped would be the case for a renewed Christianity, religion does the opposite: it compels human beings like the “youth” into believing that “continence”—control, repression, regulation, administration, ministering—brings rewards, not the active expression of desire. Then Blake—in the voice of Oothoon—makes a tremendously interesting observation about how the subjection of our desires works: the day comes when “self denial” *itself* becomes the object of enjoyment, i.e., that we take pleasure in denying ourselves pleasure, at which point living a repressed life no longer needs the outward influence of religious authorities: when we fall in love with our masters, we end up becoming our own jailors. We succumb to what Blake calls, in “London,” “mind-forged manacles.” We end up “nurs[ing] unacted desires,” as Blake says elsewhere—not only failing to act upon desires, but also tending lovingly to that failure. Oothoon declares that this sort of repression must come to an end in a true revolution is to occur. So the passage hints at the possibility of Oothoon’s liberation from her male captors, who are so palpably deformed by repression, and whose repressed existence has such terrible consequences for Oothoon, and for the women she symbolizes. Yet by poem’s end we see that she has not convinced either men...and, indeed, nearer the poem’s end, Oothoon’s own declarations of transformation are strongly inflected with masculinist fantasies of voyeurism. A reconciliation with Theotormon seems possible, except that the language that Oothoon uses seems weirdly to serve Theotormon’s desires rather than express her own. The “moment of desire” has indeed been momentary, and has all but passed. In the end we hear not Oothoon’s revolutionary voice, as we do here in the sight passage, but the lamentations of the daughters of Albion.

Passage #5

Once again I see
 These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
 Of sportive wood run wild; these pastoral farms
 Green to the very door; and wreathes of smoke
 Sent up, in silence, from among the trees,
 With some uncertain notice, as might seem,
 Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
 Or of some hermit’s cave, where by his fire
 The hermit sits alone.

William Wordsworth, Tintern Abbey

Drawn from the opening movement of the text, this passage captures several of the elements of conversation poems,

including: the use of simple diction and the absence of classical allusions; the decision to write in blank verse rather than rhyming couplets; the interest in making unassuming scenes, unremarkable moments, and scenes drawn from everyday life the new subject matter of poetry; and the desire to write in a way that captures the mind in motion, improvising, feeling its way towards the truth. Wordsworth returns to a place where he had once been, remarking how he sees and feels some of the things that he had seen and felt “once before.” Sorting out the difference between, on the one hand, what he feels “once again,” and, on the other hand, what was felt once, when he was younger, but now replaced with new and different feelings and understandings, takes up most of this poem of memory. Wordsworth notes in particular how the scene before him mixes a nature and culture, almost to the point that they are indistinguishable: the hedge-rows are there to organize the land, “charter” it, as it were, but they are also on the brink of “run[ning] wild.” The landscape is dotted with farms, but he notes how the greenery goes right up to the doors of the farmhouses. The hedge-rows and woods form part of the extraordinarily verdant natural world that preoccupies Wordsworth here and throughout the poem, a world whose underlying connections evoke similarly elemental feelings in the poet. The intimacy of human beings and the landscape registers his desire to rekindle an analogously close relationship with the forms and forces of nature, even if in adulthood that relationship cannot be the same as it had been only five years earlier. Looking out over the forest, there are signs of the presence of human beings, but just barely—as if the woods had absorbed all evidence of human life. Yet trails of smoke rise amid the trees, giving “uncertain notice” of the presence of human beings, an uncertainty for which Wordsworth instantly compensates by imagining what he cannot actually see. It “might” be the case, he says tentatively (“might,” like “deemed” in Coleridge’s *This Lime-Tree Bower*, qualifies the poet’s claims, and acknowledges that they *are* claims, not sureties) that amid those trees there are “vagrant dwellers,” homeless people, a possibility that is just as quickly overwritten with another, more pleasing image: perhaps that smoke reveals the presence of a “hermit” sitting alone in his cave, tending to his fire. In some sense the hermit is a figure for Wordsworth himself, dwelling or wanting to dwell amid the landscape, immersed in its life, yet also “alone” with his memories and imaginings, tending to the “fire” of his imagination. This may be a point in the poem where the pressure of history makes itself felt. (Other points include the curious use of negatives in the language of the poem, as Roshaya points out in her recent entry in the Study Questions and Course Blog.) For the area around Tintern Abbey was the site of a large encampment of displaced and homeless workers and families, a fact that the poem otherwise seems reluctant to admit, notwithstanding its exquisitely detailed rendering of the area. Notice how Wordsworth shifts his language, moving unobtrusively from “vagrant dwellers” to the “hermit.” Does the “hermit” idealize those “vagrant dwellers” in a way analogous to how the story of Mary Poppins idealizes the brutal life chimney sweepers in the streets of London? “Vagrancy” was a crime in late 18th century Britain, a way of criminalizing poverty and thus blaming economic catastrophe on those who had suffered it. A “hermit” is someone who chooses poverty, but the same might not easily be said of the homeless poor, notwithstanding the vagrancy laws that did just that. Does Wordsworth’s poem smooth over the wrenching economic dislocations that life around Tintern Abbey makes legible? Or is this passage an example of one of the ways in which Wordsworth admits history into his poem, albeit history filtered through his imagination? In other words, Britain’s homeless haunt the poem, transmuted into the form of the hermit.

Exam Remarks

Sight analysis exams are an excellent opportunity to work closely and carefully with the texts and to show how fastidiously and imaginatively you can engage with the “minute particulars” of the material. By assigning relatively little reading for a third-year course, Dr. Clark and I believe in the importance of being able to discuss few texts in depth, rather than many texts in general. The sight analysis exam tests your attention to detail and the strength with which you can draw conclusions about very dense and complex writings. Many students did quite well, some scoring several grade points higher than on the midterm. Many of you also had difficulties, and in this note I will address the most common problems students faced and offer some suggestions for future work. To some of you, the readings and lectures might at first seem like Wordsworth’s leech-gatherer: a strange, scary, and off-putting creature that is neither alive nor dead, and is yet thrust powerfully into your lives making you wonder about your various dependencies on others and the value of the work you undertake. Remember that the leech-gatherer is a teacher to Wordsworth, and one who suggests that teaching and learning can be difficult and life-changing. You might choose to see the course materials like Coleridge’s “stranger,” a little remnant that

connects you to the Other. This course is an opportunity to let that Other in and to let it to help you grow as a student.

Details

Success on the sight analysis depends on a close consideration of the details in the passages. If you cannot identify the source of the passage you will be unable to interpret it adequately. Students often neglected to discuss important details from the passages that we discussed extensively in class, or made arguments about the texts without grounding their conclusions in the details. For instance, one cannot adequately describe Coleridge's vertiginous journey into his memories without discussing the "fluttering *stranger*" that activates it, and if one notes that "Tintern Abbey" is a conversation poem, one must explain the conventions of the conversation poem and what details from the passage express them.

While keeping track of these details may seem like a daunting task, there are a couple things you can do to make it easier: 1. Read the texts several times to familiarize yourself with them and become more comfortable with the authors' styles, language, and themes 2. Attend the lectures and read the course blog to give you a "launch pad" to begin thinking about the important details and their significances 3. Take detailed notes in lecture and signal important details in your textbooks (underlining and highlighting). Writing down the lecture material will facilitate your memory of important details and help you connect them to your own ideas.

Stay Focused

Some students discussed the historical context of the poems or confessions without grounding the discussion in details from the passage. As I note below, considering the historical context of the passage is important and both Dr. Clark and I encourage you to do so. However, it is important to use these resources in the service of closely analysing the passage. If you do not demonstrate why the historical context is important for analysing them poem, your response becomes vague and unfocused. Always remember to "tether" your analyses in the passages themselves.

Contextualize

It is important to talk about the informing context for the passage that you are analyzing. Remember that the passages you are discussing are situated within particular works of literature, and that this context should inform your interpretation of the passage. Consider the speaker, where in the text the passage is situated (what comes before and after), and the historical context that we discuss in class. When you contextualize your responses you demonstrate your familiarity with the material. For example, if you note that Blake encourages his readers to seize "the moment of desire," name the character that embodies this summons. Explain what the "moment" describes and why it is called for in this particular poem. What were some of the conditions in Britain that provoked this response from Blake? Remember, as I noted above, to ground your contextual resources in the details from the passage.

Attending lectures and reading the course blog are excellent ways to familiarize yourself with important contextual information. Employing all the resources at hand will only strengthen your work!

Draw Conclusions

When you make an argument about the text, state the implications of your remarks. Explain how your remarks engage with the larger issues and concerns of the text. If you note, for example, that "Tintern Abbey" is written in a conversational style, explain why this formal feature is important. How does it contradict or confirm the content of the poem? What does Wordsworth "get" by choosing to write—and indeed perfect—the conversation poem? How does it satisfy or challenge our expectations of what poetry should be? Always ask yourself, each time you identify an important aspect of a text: "Why does

this matter? How does this change things? In what way is this detail significant, both locally and in the text as a whole?"

It was a pleasure reviewing your work and I look forward to seeing you in lecture.

Roshaya Rodness