LANGUAGE
in Thought and Action

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Foreword

This book began as a revision of Language in Action, published in 1941. Events since that date have naturally caused me to re-examine the whole of that earlier book. Some statements to be found there, unhappily, have been given a sharper, tragic significance by ensuing events; some statements, on the other hand, especially those in which it was asserted that the semantic discipline could be applied to the solution of many social and individual problems, now appear to me to have been somewhat oversimplified. I still believe that such application is possible; but it is not quite so easy as I am afraid I made it sound. The deeper I got into the task of revision, the graver the deficiencies and omissions seemed to be. The attempt to repair these deficiencies has resulted in something more than a revised Language in Action. So much has been changed and so much has been added that more than half the material in the present volume is new.

Two tasks confront the student of semantics. The first is the refinement of the basic formulations of the science. This task is, naturally, highly technical and of deep concern to specialists. The second task, no less urgent, is that of translating what is already known in semantics into usable terms. Today, the public is aware, perhaps to an unprecedented degree, of the role of verbal communication in human affairs. This awareness arises partly, of course, out of the urgency of the tensions everywhere existing between nation and nation, class and class, individual and individual, in a world that is changing with fantastic rapidity. It arises, too, out of the knowledge on the part even of the least reflective elements of the population that enormous powers for good or evil lie in the media of mass communication. Thoughtful people in all walks of life feel, therefore, the need of systematic help in the huge task that confronts all of us today, namely, that of interpreting
AFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

9. Art and Tension

But my position is this: that if we try to discover what the poem is doing for the poet, we may discover a set of generalizations as to what poems do for everybody.

KENNETH BURKE

A well-chosen anthology [of verse] is a complete dispensary of medicine for the more common mental disorders, and may be used as much for prevention as cure.

ROBERT GRAVES

Bearing the Unbearable

Animals know their environment by direct experience only; man crystallizes his knowledge and his feelings in phonetic symbolic representations; by written symbols he accumulates knowledge and passes it on to further generations of men. Animals feed themselves where they find food, but man, co-ordinating his efforts with the efforts of others by linguistic means, feeds himself abundantly and with food prepared by a hundred hands and brought from great distances. Animals exercise but limited control over each other, but man, again by employing symbols, establishes laws and ethical systems, which are linguistic means of establishing order and predictability upon human conduct. Acquiring knowledge, securing food, establishing social order, these are activities which the biologist finds explainable as having a bearing upon survival. For human beings, each of these activities involves a symbolic dimension.

Let us attempt to state the functions of literature in scientifically verifiable terms—in other words, in terms of biological “survival value.” Granted that this is a difficult task in the present state of psychological knowledge, it is necessary that we try to do so, since most explanations of the value or necessity of literature (or the other arts) take the form of purr-words—which are really no explanations at all. For example, Wordsworth speaks of poetry as
the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge”; Coleridge speaks of it as “the best words in the best order.” The explanations of literature given by most teachers and critics follow a similar purr-word pattern, usually reducible to “You should read great literature because it is very, very great.” If we are to give a scientific account of the functions of literature, we shall have to do better than that.

Having included under the term “literature” all the affective uses of language, we find not only as the result of the insights of students of literature and critics but also from recent psychological and psychiatric investigations that, from the point of view of the organism, one of the most important functions of the utterance is the relieving of tensions. We have all known the relief that comes from uttering a long and resounding series of impolite vocables under the stress of great irritation. The same releasing of psychological tensions appears to be effected at all levels of affective utterance, if we are to believe what writers themselves have said about the creative process. The novel, the drama, the poem, like the oath or the expletive, appears to be effected at all levels of affective utterance, if our symbolizations are adequate and sufficient. The novel, the drama, the poem, like the oath or the expletive, is to a greater or less degree and perhaps only momentarily, mitigated.

A frustrated or unhappy animal can do relatively little about its tensions. A human being, however, with an extra dimension (the world of symbols) to move around in, not only undergoes experience, but he also symbolizes his experience to himself. Our states of tension—especially the unhappy tensions—become tolerable as we manage to state what is wrong—to get it said—whether to a sympathetic friend, or on paper to a hypothetical sympathetic reader, or even to oneself. If our symbolizations are adequate and sufficiently skillful, our tensions are brought symbolically under control. To achieve this control, one may employ what Kenneth Burke has called “symbolic strategies”—that is, ways of reclassifying our experiences so that they are “encompassed” and easier to bear. Whether by processes of “pouring out one’s heart” or by “symbolic strategies” or by other means, we may employ symbolizations as mechanisms of relief when the pressures of a situation become intolerable.

As we all know, language is social, and for every speaker there may be hearers. The result is that an utterance that relieves a tension for the speaker can relieve a similar tension, should one happen to exist, in the hearer. There is enough similarity in human experience in different times and cultures, apparently, so that the symbolic manipulation by which John Donne, for example, “encompassed” his feelings of guilt in one of his Holy Sonnets enables us too, at another time and under another set of circumstances, to encompass our feelings of guilt about, in all probability, a different set of sins.

William Ernest Henley confronted the fact of his chronic invalidism—he had been ill since childhood and had spent long periods of his life in hospitals—by stating, in his well-known poem “Invictus,” his refusal to be defeated:

Out of the night that covers me,
    Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
    For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
    I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
    My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
    Looms but the horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
    Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.

1 See the account of “substitutive, or symbolic” behavior among cats under conditions of experimentally induced neurosis in Jules Masserman’s Behavior and Neurosis (1943). It can hardly be denied, in the face of Dr. Masserman’s evidence, that an extremely rudimentary form of what might be called “pre-poetic” behavior, analogous to the treasuring of a lock of a loved one’s hair, is to be found even among cats. The cats, when hungry, fondle the push-button that used to trip a mechanism that brought them food, although they appear to know (since they no longer move to the food box after touching the button) that it no longer works.

2 See Kenneth Burke, Philosophy of Literary Form (1941). An infielder for the Chicago White Sox some years ago made four errors in four consecutive chances. Naturally, he found his performance difficult to face. His “symbolic strategy” was reported by a Chicago Times writer who quoted the infielder as saying, “Anyway, I bet it’s a record!”
Some "Symbolic Strategies"

First of all, of course, there is what is called literary "escape"—a tremendous source of literature, poetry, drama, comic strips, and other forms of affective communication. Edgar Rice Burroughs, confined to a sickbed, symbolically tramped through the jungle, in the person of Tarzan, in a series of breath-taking and triumphant adventures—and by means of this symbolic compensation made his sickbed endurable. At the same time he made life endurable for millions of undersized, frustrated, and feeble people. Whatever one may think of the author and the readers of the Tarzan stories, it is to be emphasized that in order to derive what shabby relief they offer from pain or boredom, it takes, both in the telling and in the reading of such stories, the symbolic process, and hence a human nervous system.

Let us take another example of symbolic strategy. When an angry or disgruntled employee calls his employer a "half-pint Hitler," is he not, in crude fashion, using a "strategy" which, by means of introducing his employer (a petty tyrant) into a perspective which includes Hitler (a great tyrant), symbolically reduces his employer to, as Kenneth Burke would say, manageable proportions? And did not Dante likewise, unable to punish his enemies as they deserved to be punished, symbolically put them in their places in the most uncomfortable quarters in Hell? There is a world of difference between the completeness and adequacy of such a simple epithet as "half-pint Hitler" and Dante’s way of disposing of his enemies—and Dante accomplished many more things in his poem besides symbolically punishing his enemies—but are they not both symbolic manipulations by means of which the utterers derive a measure of relief, or relaxation of psychological tensions?

Let us take another example. Upton Sinclair was deeply disturbed by the stockyards as they were in 1906. One thing he could have done would have been to try to forget it; he could have buried himself in reading or writing about other things, such as idyllic lands long ago and far away or entirely nonexistent—as do the readers and writers of escape literature. Another thing he could have done would have been, by a different symbolic manipulation, to show that present evil was part of greater good "in God’s omniscient plan." This has been the strategy of many religions as well as of many authors. Still another possibility would have been actually to reform conditions at the stockyards so that he could contemplate them with equanimity—but he would have had to be an important official in a packing company or in the government to initiate a change in conditions. What he did, therefore, was to socialize his discontent—pass it on to others—on the very good theory that if enough people felt angry or disgusted with the situation, they could collectively change the stockyards in such a way that one could adjust oneself to them. Sinclair’s novel, The Jungle,
upset so many people that it led to a federal investigation of the meat industry and to the enactment of legislation controlling some of its practices.

As is now well known, when anyone continues to experience many tensions, and these tensions are permitted to accumulate, they may lead to more or less serious psychological maladjustment. Adjustment, as modern psychology sees the process, is no static condition of unreflective bliss that comes from neither knowing nor caring what is wrong with the world. It is a dynamic, day-to-day, moment-to-moment process, and it involves changing the environment to suit one's personality as much as it involves adapting one's feelings to existing conditions. The greater resources one has for achieving and maintaining adjustment, the more successful will the process be. Literature appears to be one of the available resources.

Both the enjoyment and the production of poetry and literature, then, being human symbolic devices employed in the day-to-day process of maintaining adjustment and equipping ourselves for living, appear to be extensions of our adjustment mechanism beyond those provided for us by that part of our biological equipment which we have in common with lower animals. If a man were to spend years of his life trying to discover the chemical constituency of salt water without bothering to find out what has already been said on the subject in any elementary chemistry book, we should say that he was making very imperfect use of the resources which our symbolic systems have made available to us. Similarly, can it not be said that people, worrying themselves sick over their individual frustrations, constantly suffering from petty irritations and hypertensions, are making extremely imperfect use of the available human resources of adjustment when they fail to strengthen and quiet themselves through contact with literature and the other arts?

What all this boils down to, then, is that poetry (along with the other arts), whether it be good or bad and at whatever level or crudity or refinement, exists to fulfill a necessary biological function for a symbol-using class of life, that of helping us to maintain psychological health and equilibrium.

“Equipment for Living”

Psychiatrists recognize no distinct classes of the “sane” and the “unsane.” Sanity is a matter of degree, and “sane” people are all capable of becoming more sane, or less, according to the experiences they encounter and the strength and flexibility of the internal equipment with which they meet them. Even as one's physical health has to be maintained by food and exercise, it would appear that one's psychological health too has to be maintained in the very course of living by “nourishment” at the level of affective symbols: literature that introduces us to new sources of delight; literature that makes us feel that we are not alone in our misery; literature that shows us our own problems in a new light; literature that suggests new possibilities for oneself and opens new areas of possible experience; literature that offers us a variety of “symbolic strategies” by means of which we can “encompass” our situations.

From such a point of view, certain kinds of literature, like certain kinds of processed and manufactured food, can be said to look very much like nourishment, but to contain none of the essential vitamin ingredients, so that great quantities can be consumed without affecting one's spiritual undernourishment. (One could mean by “essential vitamin ingredients” in this context, “maps” of actual “territories” of human experience, directives that are both realistic and helpful, and so on.) Certain kinds of popular fiction claim to throw light upon given problems in life—stories with such titles as “The Office Wife—Was She Playing Fair?”—but, like patent medicines, these offer apparent soothing to surface symptoms, and leave underlying causes untouched, so that the more of them you take the more you need. Fantasy-living—which is one of the important characteristics of schizophrenia—can be aggravated by the consumption of too much of this narcotic literature. Still other kinds of fiction, movies, radio stories, and the like, give a false, prettified picture of the world—a world that can be adjusted to without effort. But readers...
who adjust themselves to this unreal world naturally become progressively less adjusted to the world as it is.

These are admittedly oversimplified examples, and it would be a disaster to apply too crudely the principle of literature as an aid to sanity. An immediate temptation that some might see in this principle would be to say that, if literature is an instrument for maintaining sanity, the writings of many not-too-sane geniuses will have to be thrown out as unhealthy. It would seem, on the contrary, that the symbolic strategies devised by extremely tortured people like Dostoevski or Donne or Shelley for the encompassing of their situations are valuable in the extreme. They mixed themselves powerful medicines against their ills, and their medicines not only help us to encompass whatever similar tortures we may be suffering from, but may serve also as antitoxins lest we in future have occasion so to suffer.

Furthermore, when a work of literature is said to be "permanent," "lasting," or "great," does it not mean that the symbolic strategy by which the author encompassed his disturbance (achieved his equilibrium) works for other people troubled by other disturbances at other times and places? Is it possible, for example, to read Sinclair's strategic handling of the Chicago stockyards without awareness that it applies more or less adequately to other disturbances about factory workers in Turin, or Manchester, or Kobe, or Montreal? And if it applies especially well to, say, Detroit, does not the Detroiter regard Sinclair's book as having lasting value? And if, under changing conditions, there are no longer social situations which arouse similar tensions, or if the strategies seem no longer adequate, do we not consider the author to be "dead," if not "dead"? But if an author has adequately dealt with tensions that people under all times and conditions appear to experience, do we not call his writings "universal" and "undying"?

The relationship between literature and life is a subject about which little is known scientifically at the present time. Nevertheless, in an unorganized way, we all feel that we know something about that relationship, since we have all felt the effects of some kind of literature at some time in our lives. Most of us have felt, even if we have not been able to prove, that harmful consequences can arise from the consumption of such literary fare as is offered in the movies, in soap operas, in popular magazines, and in the so-called comic books. But the imperfection of our scientific knowledge is revealed by the fact that, when there is widespread argument as to whether or not comic books should be banned, equally imposing authorities on both sides are able to "prove" their cases; some say that comic books stimulate the child's imagination in unhealthy ways and lead them into crime, while others say that the crimes are committed by psychopathic children who would have committed them anyway, and that comic books, by offering to normal children a symbolic release of their aggressive tendencies, actually help to calm them down. It appears to be anybody's guess.

Nevertheless, is it not possible that if students of literature and psychology approach the problem of the relationship between imaginative representations and human behavior from a mental hygiene point of view, they will some day be able to state, in the interests of everyday sanity, what kinds of literature contribute to maturity and what kinds help to keep us permanently infantile and immature in our evaluations?

Art as Order

At least one other important element enters into our pleasure both in the writing and reading of literature—but about this there is still less available scientific knowledge. It pertains to what are called the artistic or esthetic values of a work of the imagination.

In Chapter 8, we spoke of the relationships, for example in a novel, of the incidents and characters to each other—that is, the

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*The Jungle* is, in the writer's opinion, very much "dated" in some respects and in other respects still powerful. Translated into many languages, it was been widely read by working classes all over the world. The symbolic strategies of works of great literary art are usually, unlike those of *The Jungle*, too complex and subtle for such a rough analysis as has been attempted here. *The Jungle* has been chosen for discussion because books like this, which are far from being great masterpieces and yet give a great deal of profoundly felt insight into segments of human experience, are especially helpful in the understanding of the theories of literature proposed in this chapter. The strategies, being not too subtle, can be clearly seen and described.
meaningful arrangement of experiences that make a novel different from a jumbled narrative. Before we speak of a narrative as a "novel" and therefore as a "work of art," we must be satisfied that, regardless of whether or not we could "live the story" through imaginative identification with the characters, the incidents are arranged in some kind of order. Even if we don't happen to like the story, if we find a complex, but discernible and interesting, order to the incidents in a novel, we are able to say, "It certainly is beautifully put together." Indeed, sometimes the internal order and neat relationships of the parts to each other in a novel may be so impressive that we enjoy it in spite of a lack of sympathy with the kinds of incidents or people portrayed. Why is order interesting almost of itself?

The writer would suggest that if an answer is found to this question, it will have to be found in terms of human symbolic processes and the fact that symbols of symbols, symbols of symbols of symbols, and so on, can be manufactured indefinitely by the human nervous system. This fact, already explained in Chapter 2 (and to be explained further in Chapter 10), can be given a special application that may enable us to understand the functions of literature.

Animals, as we have remarked, live in the extensional world—they have no symbolic world to speak of. There would seem to be no more "order" in an animal's existence than the order of physical events as they impinge on its life. Man, however, both lives (at the extensional level) and talks about his life to himself (at the symbolic level, either with words, or in the case of painters and musicians and dancers, with nonverbal symbols). A human being is not satisfied simply to know his way around extensionally; he can hardly help talking to himself about what he has seen and felt and done.

The data of experience, when talked about, are full of contradictions. Mrs. Robinson loves her children, but ruins them through misdirected love; the illiterate peasants of a Chinese village show greater social and personal wisdom than the educated people of great cities; people say crime doesn't pay, but in some cases it pays extremely well; a young man by temperament a scholar and a poet feels compelled to commit a political murder; a faithful wife of twenty years deserts her husband for no apparent reason; a ne'er-do-well acts courageously in a dangerous situation—these and a thousand other contradictions confront us in the course of our lives. Unordered, and bearing no relationship to each other, our statements about experience are not only disconnected, but they are difficult to use.

Insofar as we are aware of these contradictions, this disorder among our statements is itself a source of tension. Such contradictions provide us with no guide to action; hence they leave us with the tensions of indecision and bewilderment. These tensions are not resolved until we have, by talking to ourselves about our talking (symbolizing our symbols), "fitted things together," so that, as we say, things don't seem to be "meaningless" any more. Religions, philosophies, science, and art are equally, and through different methods, ways of resolving the tensions produced by the contradictory data of experience by talking about our talking; then talking about our talking about our talking, and so on, until some kind of order has been established among the data.

Talking about things, talking about talking, talking about talking about talking, etc., represent what we shall call talking at different levels of abstraction. The imposition of order upon our pictures of the world is, it appears, what we mean by "understanding." When we say that a scientist "understands" something, does it not mean that he has ordered his observations at the objective, descriptive, and higher inferential levels of abstraction into a workable system in which all levels are related to other levels in terms of a few powerful generalizations? When a great religious leader or philosopher is said to "understand" life, does it not mean that he has also ordered his observations into a set of attitudes, often crystallized into exceedingly general and powerful directives? And when a novelist is said to "understand" the life of any segment of humanity (or humanity as a whole), has he not also ordered his observations at many different levels of abstraction—the particular and concrete, the general, and the more general? (Fuller explanation of "levels of abstraction" will be found in Chapter 10, to follow.) But the novelist presents that order not in a scientific, ethical, or philosophical system of highly abstract generalizations, but in a set of symbolic experiences.
at the descriptive level of affective reports, involving the reader's feelings through the mechanism of identification. And these symbolic experiences, in the work of any competent novelist, are woven together to frame a consistent set of attitudes, whether of scorn, or compassion, or admiration of courage, or sympathy with the downtrodden, or a sense of futility, depending on his outlook.

Some of the ways of organizing a set of experiences for literary purposes are purely mechanical and external: these are the "rules" governing the proper construction of the novel, the play, the short story, the sonnet, and so on. But more important are the ways of organization suggested by the materials of the literary work—the experiences which the writer wishes to organize. When the materials of a story do not fit into the conventional pattern of a novel, the novelist may create a new organization altogether, more suited to the presentation of his experiences than the conventional patterns. In such a case, critics speak of the materials as "creating their own form." The reason a poem, novel, or play assumes the shape it ultimately does is the concern of the technical literary critic. He studies the interplay of external and internal demands which finally shape the materials into a "work of art."

To symbolize adequately and then to order into a coherent whole one's experiences constitute an integrative act. The great novelist or dramatist or poet is one who has successfully integrated and made coherent vast areas of human experience. Literary greatness requires, therefore, great extensional awareness of the range of human experience as well as great powers of ordering that experience meaningfully. This is why the discipline of the creative artist is endless: there is always more to learn, both about human experience (which is the material to be ordered) and about the techniques of his craft (which are the means of ordering). From the point of view of the reader, the fact that language is social is again of central importance. The ordering of experiences and attitudes accomplished linguistically by the writer produces, in the reader, some ordering of his own experiences and attitudes. The reader becomes, as a result of this ordering, somewhat better organized himself. That's what art is for.

Applications

1. Compare the following excerpts with the point of view expressed in this chapter:

   1. "The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing."
      —SAMUEL JOHNSON, Preface to Shakespeare

   2. "A classic is a work which gives pleasure to the minority which is intensely and permanently interested in literature. It lives on because the minority, eager to renew the sensation of pleasure, is eternally curious and is therefore engaged in an eternal process of rediscovery. A classic does not survive for any ethical reason. It does not survive because it conforms to certain canons, or because neglect would kill it. It survives because it is a source of pleasure and because the passionate few can no more neglect it than a bee can neglect a flower. The passionate few do not read 'the right things' because they are right. That is to put the cart before the horse. 'The right things' are the right things solely because the passionate few like reading them. . . ."

   "Nobody at all is quite in a position to choose with certainty among modern works. To sift the wheat from the chaff is a process that takes an exceedingly long time. Modern works have to pass before the bar of the taste of successive generations; whereas, with classics, which have been through the ordeal, almost the reverse is the case. Your taste has to pass before the bar of the classics. That is the point. If you differ with a classic, it is you who are wrong, and not the book. If you differ with a modern work, you may be wrong or you may be right, but no judge is authoritative to decide. Your taste is unformed. It needs guidance and it needs authoritative guidance."
      —ARNOLD BENNETT, Literary Taste: How to Form It

   3. "The view that the mental experience of the reader is the poem itself leads to the absurd conclusion that a poem is non-existent unless experienced and that it is re-created in every experience. There thus would not be one Divine Comedy but as many Divine Comedies as there are and were and will be readers. We end in complete skepticism and anarchy and arrive at the vicious maxim of De gustibus non est disputandum. If we should take this view seriously, it would be impossible to explain why one experience of a poem by one reader should be better than the experience of any other reader and why it is possible
to correct the interpretation of another reader. It would mean the definite end of all teaching of literature which aims at enhancing the understanding and appreciation of a text.

"The psychology of the reader, however interesting in itself or useful for pedagogical purposes, will always remain outside the object of literary study—the concrete work of art—and is unable to deal with the question of the structure and value of the work of art."

—RENE WELLEK and AUSTIN WARREN, Theory of Literature

4. "The business of art is to reveal the relation between man and his circumambient universe, at the living moment. As mankind is always struggling in the toils of old relationships, art is always ahead of the 'times,' which themselves are always far in the rear of the living moment.

“When van Gogh paints sunflowers, he reveals, or achieves, the vivid relation between himself, as man, and the sunflower, as sunflower, at that quick moment of time. His painting does not represent the sunflower itself. We shall never know what the sunflower is. And the camera will visualize the sunflower far more perfectly than van Gogh can.

“The vision on the canvas is a third thing, utterly intangible and inexplicable, the offspring of the sunflower itself and van Gogh himself. The vision on the canvas is for ever incommensurable with the canvas, or the paint, or van Gogh as a human organism, or the sunflower as a botanical organism. You cannot weigh nor measure nor even describe the vision on the canvas. . . .

“It is a revelation of the perfected relation, at a certain moment, between a man and a sunflower. . . . And this perfected relation between man and his circumambient universe is life itself, for mankind. . . . Man and the sunflower both pass away from the moment, in the process of forming a new relationship. The relation between all things changes from day to day, in a subtle stealth of change. Hence art, which reveals or attains to another perfect relationship, will be for ever new.

“If we think about it, we find that our life consists in this achieving of a pure relationship between ourselves and the living universe about us. This is how I 'save my soul' by accomplishing a pure relationship between me and another person, me and other people, me and a nation, me and a race of men, me and animals, me and the trees or flowers, me and the earth, me and the skies and sun and stars, me and the moon: an infinity of pure relations, big and little. . . . This, if we knew it, is our life and our eternity: the subtle, perfected relation between me and my whole circumambient universe. . . .

APPLECATIONS

"Now here we see the beauty and the great value of the novel. Philosophy, religion, science, they are all of them busy nailing things down, to get a stable equilibrium. Religion, with its nailed down One God . . .; philosophy, with its fixed ideas; science with its 'laws': they, all of them, all the time, want to nail us on some tree or other.

“But the novel, no. The novel is the highest example of subtle interrelatedness that man has discovered. . . .”


II. In the light of what has been said in this chapter, study the following poems to see:
a. What tensions of his own the author seems to be trying to resolve.
b. What symbolic strategies he employs.
c. Whether these strategies might be applicable to other people and other situations.
d. To what extent the author has succeeded in ordering his experiences into a coherent, meaningful whole.

In what particular ways, if any, is each of these poems likely to serve as "equipment for living"?

Ozymandias

I met a traveler 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 hand that mocked them and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings;
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.

—PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Salutation

O generation of the thoroughly smug
And thoroughly uncomfortable,
I have seen fishermen picnicking in the sun,
ART AND TENSION

I have seen them with untidy families,
I have seen their smiles full of teeth
and heard ungainly laughter.
And I am happier than you are,
And they were happier than I am;
And the fish swim in the lake
and do not even own clothing.

—Ezra Pound

Lessons of the War

Today we have naming of parts. Yesterday,
We had daily cleaning. And tomorrow morning
We shall have what to do after firing. But today,
Today we have naming of parts. Japonica
Glistens like coral in all of the neighboring gardens,
And today we have naming of parts.

This is the lower sling swivel. And this
Is the upper sling swivel, whose use you will see
When you are given your slings. And this is the piling swivel,
Which in your case you have not got. The branches
Hold in the gardens their silent, eloquent gestures,
Which in our case we have not got.

This is the safety-catch, which is always released
With an easy flick of the thumb. And please do not let me
See anyone using his finger. You can do it quite easy
If you have any strength in your thumb. The blossoms
Are fragile and motionless, never letting anyone see
Any of them using their finger.

And this you can see is the bolt. The purpose of this
Is to open the breech, as you see. We can slide it
Rapidly backwards and forwards; we call this
Easing the spring. And rapidly backwards and forwards
The early bees are assaulting and fumbling the flowers:
They call it easing the Spring.

They call it easing the Spring: it is perfectly easy
If you have any strength in your thumb: like the bolt,
And the breech, and the cocking-piece, and the point of balance,

APPLICATIONS

Which in our case we have not got; and the almond-blossom
Silent in all of the gardens and the bees going backwards and forwards,
For today we have naming of parts.

—Henry Reed

III. Read, ponder, and digest:

"Terence, this is stupid stuff:
You eat your victuals fast enough;
There can't be much amiss, 'tis clear,
To see the rate you drink your beer.
But oh, good Lord, the verse you make,
It gives a chap the belly-ache.
The cow, the old cow, she is dead;
It sleeps well, the horned head:
We poor lads, 'tis our turn now
To hear such tunes as killed the cow.
Pretty friendship 'tis to rhyme
Your friends to death before their time
Moping melancholy mad:
Cone, pipe a tune to dance to, lad.'

Why, if 'tis dancing you would be,
There's brisker pipes than poetry.
Say, for what were hop-yards meant,
Or why was Burton built on Trent?
Oh many a peer of England brews
Livelier liquor than the Muse,
And malt does more than Milton can
To justify God's ways to man.
Ale, man, ale's the stuff to drink
For fellows whom it hurts to think:
Look into the pewter pot
To see the world as the world's not.
And faith, 'tis pleasant till 'tis past:
The mischief is that 'twill not last.
Oh I have been to Ludlow fair
And left my necktie God knows where,
And carried half way home, or near,
Pints and quarts of Ludlow beer:
Then the world seemed none so bad,
And I myself a sterling lad;
And down in lovely muck I've lain,
Happy till I woke again.
Then I saw the morning sky:
Heigho, the tale was all a lie;
The world, it was the old world yet,
I was I, my things were wet,
And nothing now remained to do
But begin the game anew.

Therefore, since the world has still
Much good, but much less good than ill,
And while the sun and moon endure
Luck's a chance, but trouble's sure,
I'd face it as a wise man would,
And train for ill and not for good.
'Tis true, the stuff I bring for sale
Is not so brisk a brew as ale:
Out of a stem that scored the hand
I wrung it in a weary land.
But take it: if the smack is sour,
The better for the embittered hour;
It should do good to heart and head
When your soul is in my soul's stead;
And I will friend you, if I may
In the dark and cloudy day.

There was a king reigned in the East:
There, when kings will sit to feast,
They get their fill before they think
With poisoned meat and poisoned drink.
He gathered all that springs to birth
From the many-venomed earth;
First a little, thence to more,
He sampled all her killing store;
And easy, smiling, seasoned sound,
Sate the king when healths went round.
They put arsenic in his meat
And stared aghast to watch him eat;
They poured strychnine in his cup
And shook to see him drink it up:

They shook, they stared as white's their shirt:
Them it was their poison hurt.
—I tell the tale that I heard told.
Mithridates, he died old.

—A. E. HOUSMAN
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