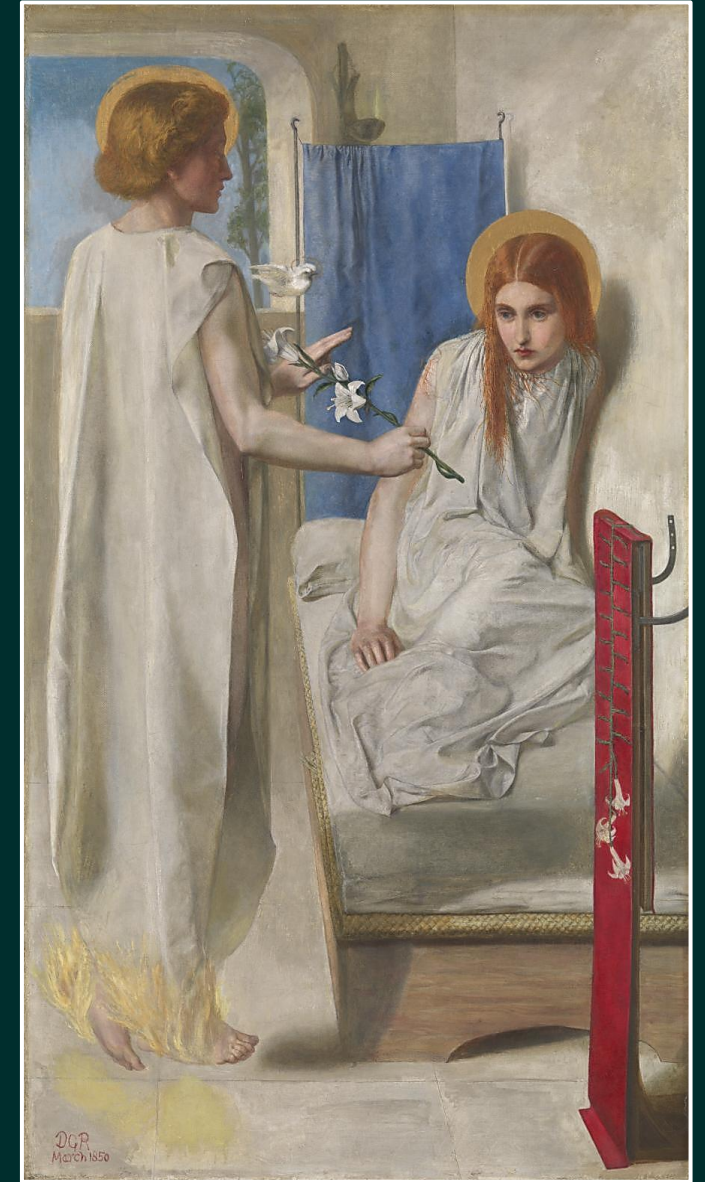


# THE VICTORIANS, IMPERIALISM & THE ROLE OF THE MEDIEVAL



Sir Edwin Landseer , *Windsor Castle  
in modern times*, (1841-43)



Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Ecce  
Ancilla Domini!* (1849-50)

# LEGACY OF ENLIGHTENMENT ORDER

1. The Crescent, Bath 1775-7



2. Somerset House London, 1836

# ASPIRATION & THE INEXPLICABLE: THE NEO GOTHIC



St Pancras Railway station, 1868



Palace of Westminster. Including Big Ben, 1870

# MODULE THEMES

1. the history of empires and their social, cultural, political, literary, artistic, religious and material legacies;
2. the manner in which European imperialism has shaped (for better and worse) humanities subject disciplines as practiced in the western academy.

# THE NATURE & PURPOSE OF HISTORY

all rulers are the heirs of those who conquered before them. Hence, empathy with the victor invariably benefits the rulers. Historical materialists know what that means. Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who have created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. **There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another.** A historical materialist therefore dissociates himself from it as far as possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.

Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Concept of History* VII

# LITERATURE & THE COLONIAL PROJECT: THREE CLASSES

1. Victorian imagery of empire and its critics: the rise of the Gothic , Pre-Raphaelites, challenging ideals of classical order; refer back to the national heritage; gender and voice
2. The colonial race for Africa: Conrad's critique in *Heart of Darkness*
3. Postcolonialism: appropriating the voice of power in the Anglophone African novel - *Things Fall Apart/A Grain of Wheat*

# 19<sup>TH</sup> C LITERATURE & THE BRITISH EMPIRE

- Clearly Rome and Virgil – challenges of satire Ovid ( other epics such as *Beowulf* or *Paradise Lost* – less about political empire more transitoriness)
- Significance of literature in relation to promoting the language and literature of the dominant power - to what extent is literature transparent storytelling? Lord McCaulay and the minute on Indian Education 1854)
- End of 19<sup>th</sup> C – questions of the value of empire
  - o Marlow, “and this also has been one of the dark places of the Earth “
  - o Conquest of the Earth passage
  - o Starting point for discussion – to what extent has Britain been a colony? And how has that impacted on its literature?

## MINUTE BY THE HON'BLE T. B. MACAULAY, 2 FEB 1835

[10] I have no knowledge of either Sanscrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanscrit works. I have conversed, both here and at home, with men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the oriental learning at the valuation of the orientalists themselves. *I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.* The intrinsic superiority of the Western literature is indeed fully admitted by those members of the committee who support the oriental plan of education.

[11] It will hardly be disputed, I suppose, that the department of literature in which the Eastern writers stand highest is poetry. And I certainly never met with any orientalist who ventured to maintain that the Arabic and Sanscrit poetry could be compared to that of the great European nations. But when we pass from works of imagination to works in which facts are recorded and general principles investigated, the superiority of the Europeans becomes absolutely immeasurable. It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanscrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England. In every branch of physical or moral philosophy, the relative position of the two nations is nearly the same.

# BRITAIN'S EXPERIENCE OF COLONIALISATION:

‘and this also has been one of the dark places of the Earth’

Three stages of colonisation of Britain. Core importance of language

- ONE: Romans in Settler/administration the results of this in two ways
  - o the strong legacy of Latin in the Welsh language
  - o the architecture left behind after the Romans Empire broke up.
- TWO: invasion of the Germanic tribes including Angles and Saxons from which we get England/English and the Welsh word for the English Saes/Saesneg
  - o Welsh lament – the *Gododdin* Later *Beowulf* in old English
- THREE: 1066 and the arrival of the Normans – influence on the English language
  - o Compare alliterative verse and chaucer - A new kind of English establishing a new political identity

## BEOWULF (Old English version)

Hwæt. We Gardena in geardagum,  
þeodcyninga, þrym gefrunon,  
hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.  
Oft Scyld Scefing sceapena þreatum,  
monegum mægþum, meodosetla ofteah,  
egsode eorlas. Syððan ærest wearð  
feasceaft funden, he þæs frofre gebad,  
weox under wolcnum, weorðmyndum þah,  
oðþæt him æghwylc þara ymbsittendra  
ofer hronrade hyran scolde,  
gomban gylðan. þæt wæs god cyning.  
ðæm eafera wæs æfter cenned,  
geong in geardum, þone god sende  
folce to frofre; fyrenðearfe ongeat  
þe hie ær drugon aldorlease  
lange hwile. Him þæs liffrea,  
wuldres wealdend, woroldare forgeaf;

Beowulf wæs breme blæd wide sprang,  
Scyldes eafera Scedelandum in.  
Swa sceal geong guma gode gewyrcean,  
fromum feohgiftum on fæder bearme,  
þæt hine on ylde eft gewunigen  
wilgesipas, þonne wig cume,  
leode gelæsten; lofdædum sceal  
in mægþa gehwære man geþeon.  
Him ða Scyld gewat to gescæphwile  
felahror feran on frean wære.  
Hi hyne þa ætbæron to brimes faroðe,  
swæse gesipas, swa he selfa bæd,  
þenden wordum weold wine Scyldinga;  
leof landfruma lange ahte.  
þær æt hyðe stod hringedstefna,  
isig ond utfus, æþelinges fær.

## GEOFFREY CHAUCER 'The General Prologue'

Here bygynneth the Book of the tales of  
Caunterbury

Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote,  
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,  
And bathed every veyne in swich licóur  
Of which vertú engendred is the flour;  
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth  
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth  
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne  
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne,  
And smale foweles maken melodye,  
That slepen al the nyght with open ye,  
So priketh hem Natúre in hir corages,  
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,  
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes,  
To ferne halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;

And specially, from every shires ende  
Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,  
The hooly blisful martir for to seke,  
That hem hath holpen whan that they were  
seeke.

Bifil that in that seson on a day,  
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay,  
Redy to wenden on my pilgrymage  
To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,  
At nyght were come into that hostelrye  
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye  
Of sondry folk, by áventure y-falle  
In felawshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle,  
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.  
The chambres and the stables weren wyde,  
And wel we weren esed atte beste.  
And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,

*The Canterbury Tales*

# THE NOVEL & THE ENLIGHTENMENT

There are still no wholly satisfactory answers to many of the general questions which anyone interested in the early eighteenth-century novelists and their works is likely to ask: Is the novel a new literary form? And if we assume, as is commonly done, that it is, and that it was begun by Defoe, Richardson and Fielding, how does it differ from the prose fiction of the past, from that of Greece, for example, or that of the Middle Ages, or of seventeenth-century France? And is there any reason why these differences appeared when and where they did?

Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 1957 p.3.

The "new" novel of the earlier eighteenth century may be described an institution of the Enlightenment [it partook ] in what Webster's dictionary calls "a philosophic movement ... marked by questioning of traditional doctrines and values, a tendency toward individualism, and an emphasis on the idea of universal human progress, the empirical method in science, and the free use of reason" [and] operated within the Enlightenment model of critical communication.

John Bender, 'Enlightenment Fiction and the Scientific Hypothesis', *Representations* Vol. 60 (Winter 1997): 1-23

BREAK



## King Cophetua and The Beggar Maid.

Her arms across her breast she laid;  
She was more fair than words can say;  
Barefooted came the beggar maid  
Before the king Cophetua.  
In robe and crown the king stept down,  
To meet and greet her on her way;  
'It is no wonder,' said the lords,  
'She is more beautiful than day.'

As shines the moon in clouded skies,  
She in her poor attire was seen;  
One praised her ankles, one her eyes,  
One her dark hair and lovesome mien.  
So sweet a face, such angel grace,  
In all that land had never been.  
Cophetua sware a royal oath:  
'This beggar maid shall be my queen!' (Alfred Tennyson)

# ‘ENGLISH LITERATURE’: THE EMPIRE OF THE LITERARY DISCIPLINE

It should not be possible to read nineteenth-century British literature without remembering that imperialism, understood as England's social mission, was a crucial part of the cultural representation of England to the English. **The role of literature in the production of cultural representation should not be ignored.** These two obvious "facts" continue to be disregarded in the reading of nineteenth-century British literature. This itself attests to the continuing success of the imperialist project, displaced and dispersed into more modern forms.

If these "facts" were remembered, not only in **the study of British literature but in the study of the literatures of the European colonizing cultures of the great age of imperialism, we would produce a narrative, in literary history, of the "worlding" of what is now called "the Third World."** To consider the Third World as distant cultures, exploited but with rich intact literary heritages waiting to be recovered, interpreted, and curricularized in English translation fosters the emergence of "the Third World" as a signifier that allows us to forget that "worlding," even as it expands the empire of the literary discipline.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism,' *Critical Inquiry* 12:1 (Autumn, 1985) "Race," *Writing, and Difference*

## MINUTE BY THE HON'BLE T. B. MACAULAY, 2 FEB 1835 (2)

[34] In one point I fully agree with the gentlemen to whose general views I am opposed. I feel with them that it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, -- a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.

# RELATION OF LITERATURE TO EMPIRE

- Impact of the classics until arrival of meritocratic narrative in 18th c novel Spread through dissemination of versions of e.g. *Robinson Crusoe*
- 19th-century, reignition of interest in the idea of a folk, a nation. Grimms fairytales in Germany, the mediaeval as the national classics– Early English text society. Last translation of Chaucer 1850 to which both Wordsworth and Elizabeth Barrett Browning contribute
- One of the key issues becomes important in a colonial state is the focus on the smaller unit of the nuclear family within that state. Marriage changes together with the status of children from the 19 century with the rise of companionate marriage as an ideal; stricter separation of two gendered spheres
- However the idea of marriage remains one of establishing and accumulating property – as Tony Tanner says the key plots of the 19 century novel are the marriage plot and its frustrations and dangers indicated by bigamy, adultery and illegitimacy. These are most easily seen in Jane Austen but also in many of the other novels of the time. *Wuthering Heights* being a particularly tortuous example

# DRACULA: ENCOUNTERING DIFFERENCE

“ “But, Count,” I said, “you know and speak English thoroughly!” He bowed gravely.

“I thank you, my friend, for your all too-flattering estimate, but yet I fear that I am but a little way on the road I would travel. True, I know the grammar and the words, but yet I know not how to speak them.”

“Indeed,” I said, “you speak excellently.”

“Not so,” he answered. “Well, I know that, did I move and speak in your London, none there are who would not know me for a stranger. That is not enough for me. Here I am noble; I am boyar; the common people know me, and I am master. But a stranger in a strange land, he is no one; men know him not—and to know not is to care not for. I am content if I am like the rest, so that no man stops if he see me, or pause in his speaking if he hear my words, ‘Ha, ha! a stranger!’ I have been so long master that I would be# master still—or at least that none other should be master of me. ” ...

“I am glad that it is old and big. I myself am of an old family, and to live in a new house would kill me. A house cannot be made habitable in a day; and, after all, how few days go to make up a century. I rejoice also that there is a chapel of old times. We Transylvanian nobles love not to think that our bones may lie amongst the common dead. I seek not gaiety nor mirth, not the bright voluptuousness of much sunshine and sparkling waters which please the young and gay. I am no longer young; and my heart, through weary years of mourning over the dead, is not attuned to mirth. Moreover, the walls of my castle are broken; the shadows are many, and the wind breathes cold through the broken battlements and casements. I love the shade and the shadow, and would be alone with my thoughts when I may.”

# CASE STUDY

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 'Hector in the Garden'

Gendering Power and the literary past(s)

# HECTOR IN THE GARDEN (*domesticating the classics*)

I

Nine years old! The first of any  
Seem the happiest years that come.  
Yet when I was nine, I said  
No such word!—I thought instead  
That the Greeks had used as many  
In besieging Ilium.

II

Nine green years had scarcely brought me  
To my childhood's haunted spring.  
I had life, like flowers and bees  
In betwixt the country trees,  
And the sun the pleasure taught me  
Which he teacheth every thing.

III

If the rain fell, there was sorrow,  
Little head leant on the pane,  
Little finger drawing down it  
The long trailing drops upon it,  
And the "Rain, rain, come to-morrow,"  
Said for charm against the rain.

IV

Such a charm was right Canidian  
Though you meet it with a jeer!  
If I said it long enough,  
Then the rain hummed dimly off,  
And the thrush with his pure Lydian  
Was left only to the ear;

V

And the sun and I together  
Went a-rushing out of doors!  
We, our tender spirits, drew  
Over hill and dale in view,  
Glimmering hither, glimmering thither,  
In the footsteps of the showers.

VI

Underneath the chesnuts dripping,  
Through the grasses wet and fair,  
Straight I sought my garden-ground,  
With the laurel on the mound,  
And the pear-tree oversweeping  
A side-shadow of green air.

VII

In the garden lay supinely  
A huge giant wrought of spade!  
Arms and legs were stretched at length  
In a passive giant strength, —  
The fine meadow turf, cut finely,  
Round them laid and interlaid.

VIII

Call him Hector, son of Priam!  
Such his title and degree.  
With my rake I smoothed his brow,  
Both his cheeks I weeded through,  
But a rhymersuch as I am,  
Scarce can sing his dignity.

IX

Eyes of gentianellas azure,  
Staring, winking at the skies,  
Nose of gillyflowers and box.  
Scented grasses put for locks,  
Which a little breeze, at pleasure,  
Set a-waving round his eyes.

X

Brazen helm of daffodillies,  
With a glitter toward the light.  
Purple violets for the mouth,  
Breathing perfumes west and south;  
And a sword of flashing lilies,  
Holden 60 ready for the fight.

XI

And a breastplate made of daisies,  
Closely fitting, leaf on leaf.  
Periwinkles 63 interlaced  
Drawn for belt about the waist;  
While the brown bees, humming praises,  
Shot their arrows round the chief.

XII

And who knows, (I sometimes wondered,)  
If the disembodied soul  
Of old Hector, once of Troy,  
Might not take a dreary joy  
Here to enter—if it thundered,  
Rolling up the thunder-roll?

XIII

Rolling this way from Troy-ruin,  
In this body rude and rife  
Just to enter, and take rest  
'Neath the daisies of the breast—  
They, with tender roots, renewing  
His heroic heart to life?

XIV

Who could know? I sometimes started  
At a motion or a sound!  
Did his mouth speak—naming Troy,  
With an *οτοτοτοτοι*?  
Did the pulse of the Strong-hearted  
Make the daisies tremble round?

XV

It was hard to answer, often:  
But the birds sang in the tree—  
But the little birds sang bold  
In the pear-tree green and old,  
And my terror seemed to soften  
Through the courage of their glee.

XVI

Oh, the birds, the tree, the ruddy  
And white blossoms, sleek with rain!  
Oh, my garden, rich with pansies!  
Oh, my childhood's bright romances!  
All revive, like Hector's body,  
And I see them stir again!

## XVII

And despite life's changes—chances,  
And despite the deathbell's toll,  
They press on me in full seeming!  
Help, some angel! stay this dreaming!  
As the birds sang in the branches,  
Sing God's patience through my soul!

## XVIII

That no dreamer, no neglecter  
Of the present's work unsped,  
I may wake up and be doing,  
Life's heroic ends pursuing,  
Though my past is dead as Hector,  
And though Hector is twice dead.

# Dreams & Awakenings

The dream vision typically employs a three part structure: a waking frame or 'prologue' establishing the poem's tone and general subject matter; the central dream 'core' or 'dream report' (in which the poet may 'bring forth any material at all... to restructure it as he likes, and to give it what meaning he will'), and a final waking frame or 'epilogue' where the dreamer will wake and reflect on their experience. The dreamer is sometimes accompanied by a guide, such as Morpheus (the god of sleep), and the general purpose is to enlighten by way of a progression from ignorance to a heightened state of emotional or intellectual awareness. The poem usually concludes with the dreamer's pledge to put his or her experience into verse.

Judith M. Davidoff, *Beginning Well: Framing Fictions in Late Middle English Poetry* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Ass. University Presses, 1988).

# THE DREAM VISION

## INVESTIGATING THE POET'S ROLE & INCREASINGLY GENDERED

Occasioned by great religious and political change, the works of these [16<sup>th</sup> C] poets also share a concern with the role and status of the vernacular poet, whether courtly maker, *vates* or laureate.

Yet despite this interest, the early sixteenth century was also when the dream vision genre was believed to meet its demise.

...Alongside a frequent emphasis on the genre's 'gendered' qualities, a critical tendency has also prevailed in which women are assumed to be the primary audience for works on or relating to dreams. For Patricia Crawford, dreams were 'of more *use* to women than they were to men' in their ability to 'present themselves as a medium for a message, a prophetic voice or a visionary.'

Emily Buffey, *The Early Modern Dream Vision (1558-1625): Genre, Authorship and Tradition*, PhD e-thesis Birmingham University, 2016

# DISCUSSION:

## VICTORIAN MEDIEVALISM VERSUS CLASSICAL REASON

1. Classical epic struggle
2. Medieval Dream Vision
3. Pagan versus Christian
4. Gender roles
5. Childhood freedom versus adult female passivity

## OTHER POEMS BY EBB: CONTEXT

1. 'The Cry Of The Children' [factory conditions]
2. 'The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point' [slavery, gang rape & infanticide]
3. *Aurora Leigh* [the right of a woman to be a poet; the role of poetry as a challenge to social injustice]

# POSSIBILITIES FOR WRITING ??

Proving both understanding of colonialism and the interwoven ideas of writing, form and power