

ENGL 300 Introduction to Theory of Literature
Professor Paul H. Fry

Second Paper Topics, 5-7 pp., due April 23

This second paper will have the same format as the first, and options for approaches to the material are essentially the same as those I outlined for the first. This time around I guess I'd be more interested in the comparison and contrast of more than one text, and also more open to the "application" of some bit of theory to some literary text, but these options are by no means mandatory. Papers should address material we've read starting on Feb. 19, up to the end of the course. What follows is only the scantiest handful of suggestions. Try to find your own topic, and discuss it if you wish with your tf or with me.

--Although Bakhtin claims, in a text you haven't read, that such pre-novelistic genres as lyric and epic are "monoglossal," reflecting subjectively personal and closed aristocratic viewpoints, respectively, could one do a Bakhtinian reading of *The Iliad* or "Tintern Abbey" or *The Aeneid*—showing that in fact, contra Bakhtin, they're "many-voiced"?

--Develop a reading of any literary passage of your choice, a reading modeled on De Man's reading of Marcel reading in Proust.

--Discuss points of overlap and agreement between Eliot and Bloom.

--Peter Brooks argues that "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" is itself plotted in a way that accords with a Freudian understanding of narrative in general. Is Peter Brooks's essay itself in turn plotted that way?

--Write a paper in which you thoroughly explain Lacan's reading of the line from Victor Hugo's poem *Booz endormi*. Why is Lacan interested in this line? How does it illustrate the argument of his essay?

--What does Judith Butler teach us about Shakespeare's *As You Like It*?

--In thinking about Stanley Fish's notion of "interpretive community," are we tempted to say that ultimately there may be "communities" of only one person? If so, how would that affect his claim that there's no such thing as an interpretation that doesn't make sense?

--Should the argument of Knapp and Michaels change the way we interpret?

--Can we infer from Benjamin's "Work of Art" essay what he considers the progressive role of literature to be?

--You don't agree with Guillory's contention that literature as assigned in the "schools" is just cultural capital. How can you prove it?

--Between them, Showalter and Gates claim that theory is a white male preserve. Statistically, this is of course largely true. But does it follow that it needs to be transformed in order to avoid colonizing its "others"? Perhaps. It's for you to decide.