

Week 1: Intro

Mary Elizabeth Coleridge poems

<https://allpoetry.com/The-Other-Side-Of-A-Mirror>

<https://poets.org/poem/witch>

Judy : To what extent do we apply our ethical understanding of history (such as those histories silenced) in the present as we grapple with the history available in the past?

Trey: Is historical authenticity the same as historical accuracy?

Lauren: How do “heritage industry” conventions affect our national identity, particularly in an election cycle like the one we are currently facing?

Kayelynn: Moore mentions that oppressed people are drawn to the Victorian literature and often find “ventriloquism”, what are some examples of this?

Kendra: So I know we brought it up and one of the readings mentions this, but I'm really curious about how memory functions as a type of history. So I guess my question is, is memory actually considered a type of history, or is it more of a tool to get to historical "truth?"

Ian: This has to do with what I DON'T remember about Victorian literature: Mitchell mentions that Victorians trusted metanarratives, like the modernists, and distrusted them, like the postmodernists. What are some examples of each attitude in fiction or historiography in the Victorian era?

Jenaya: When thinking about the images/history that was left out were children often left out in historical rendering of the Victorian era. I imagine that would also include POC, and impoverished people. This is in reference to when you were talking about women being excluded in history.

Meghan: How can present day ideals and movements be used to provide new insight into the hidden aspects of the past eras and how do we avoid judging the outdated social norms and ideals from a modern view?

Preston: To what extent might the definition of neo-Victorian, or even our idea/assumptions/stereotypes/etc. of what the time period and its literature, change/grow/etc. as we move further away from this time period in time?

Judy: Considering it [photography] would be the latest technology, I assume questions of privilege would affect accessibility to that technology.

Jenaya: It's interesting because there were black upper class citizens. We just don't typically see/hear about those people.

Kayelynn: Hamilton 2.0

Preston: Yes! I just finished season 4 of The Crown and in it Thatcher says, “Make Britain great again”

Trey: Flags [as example of heritage industry]

Meghan : Has anyone seen that video of conservatives asked when they thought America was great and the responses generally focused on the 50s (minus the segregation) the post civil war era (minus slavery) and every time named had to have a minus something terrible

Judy: Also interesting how some think that we have reckoned with our past simply by erecting a statue, without addressing the systemic corruptions

Meghan: I think that’s true for the most part but like my grandparents grew up in the great depression so they think that the present is AMAZING compared to their childhood and that technology is so cool to them, so if you grow up in the worst time any other time is better

Jenaya: It comes back to propaganda around that time, I imagine.

Trey: Blade Runner 2049 is a great movie that revolves around the accuracy of memories.

Lauren: Kendra, to your mention of memoir: Mary Karr, a contemporary memoirist and poet, teaches a seminar on memoir writing, and her first exercise is asking students to write down a play-by-play of a staged fight between Karr and a colleague...Karr says no one has ever accurately depicted the interaction lol

Week 2: A.S. Byatt, Possession (Ch. 1-14)

Judy: So much of this novel considers Roland and Maud’s exploration of the relationship between Ash and Cristabel. Based on Byatt’s representation of the pursuit of knowledge in this novel, to what extent do scholars seem to expose the subject’s private life for personal scholarship gain (knowledge and acclaim as we see with Copper), versus comprehensive understanding of the artist behind the art? How does the blossoming connection between Roland and Maud complicate this pursuit of knowledge within the narrative?

Kayelynn: Early on, page 10, we see Roland stealing something that may lead to a huge breakthrough. He could have copied the letters but didn’t. The implications on his character of taking the letter and keeping that from others are clear, though his character in this is not isolated to this incident. How is this reflected in his relationship with Val? What can be made of his self-insertion?

Meghan: How has Cristabel’s identification as an independent, female poet been influenced by her Breton heritage, specifically by the stories and strong female icons such as Anne de Bretagne (who worked to retain Bretagne’s independence as a nation from the French) and

Marie de France, also believed to be from Bretagne (the first known female French poet who worked specifically with Breton mythology and knights and fairies)?

Lauren: It seems as though Maud both reinforces and complicates the stereotypes about women's lib and scholarship in the 70s and 80s (obtaining traditionally "masculine" power as a form of resistance, for example). How does everyone see Maud interrogating or participating in these sometimes misguided gendered pursuits?

Kendra: So I didn't even really connect that Christabel refers to Coleridge's poem until Ash actually brings it up in one of the letters. That being said, I looked over Coleridge's poem Christabel. I think it's safe to say Byatt's Christabel alludes back to Coleridge's Christabel in her innocence and purity, but what I'm interested in is why Byatt would name her character after an UNFINISHED poem. Just like how Byatt's characters keep calling letters as a beginning, I'm just not quite sure if this allusion to an unfinished poem also leads to this idea of mystery (since we will never have the ending to the poem)

Preston: How might we think of the letter as an especially Victorian mode of communication? Do privacy and excavation factor into this? How might we think of Maud/Roland's work as Victorian even outside of working with Victorian texts?

Trey: What is the significance of Byatt's metaphor of a "clean empty bed in a clean empty room, where nothing is asked or to be asked" (290)? In relation to Roland and Maud specifically?

Ian: Does postmodernist technique exist in Victorian literature in the forms of Christabel using ancient fairy tales in a feminist manner, Ash using some fragmentary technique in his poetry, and Ash mentioning in his letters that the world is "palimpsest upon palimpsest"?

Jenaya: I'm really interested in the idea of legacy and how it is recorded and treated in this novel. For example, how the older Bailey and his wife being hesitant to give over the letter to Roland and Maude and why that would be? Would that have precedent?

Kayelynn: To quote Eliza from Hamilton, "Let future historians wonder how Eliza reacted..."
Jenaya: Hamilton is always welcome.

[Tone of last two letters on p. 220]

Meghan: Very abrupt she switches from dearest sir to simply dear sir

Judy: What is FIAT – [decree]

Kayelynn: The mention of the proposition she is facing makes it like a very unfair request has been asked of her.

Meghan: Sometimes, I think that to discover the inspiration for the work can change the perspective of the work once the subject has been discovered. I've been working on Baudelaire

this week in my poetry class and we focused a lot on his three loves and how the three types of love he professed to have inspired different themes in his love poetry

Preston: As a fairy tale lover myself, I also loved the reference to Hans Christian Andersen earlier in today's reading

Ian: Tennyson wrote a poem called Maud (I just found out on Wikipedia)

Ian: Is the pregnant servant's name Bertha? – [Yes, possible reference to Jane Eyre?]

Ian: La Belle dame sans merci – [by Keats—read this alongside Coleridge's Christabel]

Week 3: A.S. Byatt, Possession (Ch. 15-Postscript)

Kayelynn: Throughout the novel, LaMotte and Roland offer insight to their beliefs of what comes after life or what drives it. LaMotte expresses his concerns around the afterlife on page 420, while Roland's fears are illustrated on page 456. LaMotte's crumbs of dust and displeasure with the religious duty of "eternal progression" are echoed in Roland's "dread in self-[reflection]". How do these discussions line up with the supernatural beliefs of the women in the novel?

Meghan: Why does Christabel seem to be so connected to the water? She mentions la Fontaine several times both within her own work and as inspiration and that translates of course to fountain, but she also has a fascination with selfies and Melusine, both that live a sort of half aquatic life, but seem happier/freer within the water, unable to be entrapped by man stealing their pelt or chained to a man without a voice and a way back to the sea as in the Little Mermaid, both are stuck between their dual nature and don't do well in the land of men, much like Christabel functions better in her tiny all-female home. I also think it is interesting that her apparent gift from Randolph (I'm assuming, it wasn't explicitly stated but assumptions) was the jet brooch with the mermaid on it, that could be seen as a nod to her work, but also as a representation of the way she inhabits no real space not as Breton or English or wife or mother.

Preston: On page 451, Val says, "Look, Euan, I'm no good at being happy, I shall mess you up." Do we think that Val is representing the home and a stereotype for women, as she is restricted to the home in a lot of the novel, or might we see her discontent as a rejection of the home, a want for more? Maybe both?

Kendra: I have a simple question: why is Val in the story?

Lauren: Since none of the scholars knew that Ash had met Maia, their finding the revelatory letter from Christabel seems like a bit of a red herring that would engender speculative scholarship about Ash's despair over thinking his child was dead. What do you all think Byatt was trying to do by having the scholars find the letter that couldn't account for its recipient's prior knowledge and experiences?

Judy: With page numbers like a good grad student: Though Cristabel's letter is written as if Ash were to read, Ellen is the ultimate recipient—the one who determined the fate of the letter's

audience to Ash's grave. Cristabel admits to writing Ellen "under cover," (544) thus giving Ellen such agency to choose whether to read it, or even open it, or not. Keeping this in mind, what do we think may have driven Cristabel to write this letter? Does she do so to share with Ellen in hopes of Ash's reception? Beatrice laments that Cristabel "wrote all that for no one," (547) but what evidence do we have that despite the letter's ultimate fate, Cristabel wrote that letter for someone? For anyone?

Trey: How much does plot matter as it relates to an author's intended meanings throughout the novel? Does this reflect history as being narrativized (new word)?

Ian: In totality, what is *Possession* suggesting about the overlap of the arts, history, science, and spirituality?

Kayelynn: *Quick Edit to my question, had some things backwards: Throughout the novel, LaMotte and Roland offer insight to their beliefs of what comes after life or what drives it. LaMotte expresses her concerns around the afterlife on page 420, while Roland's fears are illustrated on page 456. LaMotte's crumbs of dust and displeasure with the religious duty of "eternal progression" are echoed in Roland's "dread in self-[reflection]". How do these discussions line up with the supernatural beliefs of others in the novel?

Meghan: Okay I really loved the dichotomy between Leonora and Blackadder though. Such a fun pairing

Lauren: Agreed, Meghan! She brought out some of his humor.

Kendra: Apparently Val is boring even to my dog lol

Kendra: wait...studying old things isn't romantic???

Lauren: She was SIGHING all NIGHT

Meghan: I mean it depends on the old things

Meghan: Their fingers didn't even brush gently as they reached for the same book (or insert another romantic trope) like it was a very unwritten romance, their idea of romance is an all white room, like that is the description of a hospital room. Aim higher guys

Lauren: Weird.

Kayelynn: I think that Byatt supports the genre of Romance through some literary moves, like the use of letters and also allusions to ancient things/using Latin phrases. "Hoc opus, hic labor est."

Preston: Cropper's line (531) "The value is partly the value *I* set on it" [when talking about the box] stuck with me, too. I can see Byatt in this line, with her value of what a romance is and can be. And with Val too with her differing values from Roland

Meghan: Couldn't spiritualism also be seen as a fascination with the past and the deceased in particular? The geology interest could be seen as the Victorian version of crystals

Kayelynn: With Ian's question, I think of what we talked about last week as far as the interpretation of all of these things and how they're interpreted/delivered.

Meghan: I think she wants us to be Beatrice [as readers]

Kayelynn: Just a general idea comes to mind of women and fertility being represented by water.

Week 4: Margaret Atwood, Alias Grace (Part I-VII)

Related Atwood poem

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47789/marrying-the-hangman>

Kayelynn: On page 99, the question of the proper name of a quilt pattern arises. "Tree" or "Trees" of Paradise is in question. Grace insists that you can have more than one tree on the quilt, but the name is still "Tree of Paradise". Is it not possible that Grace is more than one person? Is it not possible that more than one identity is inside of her?

Lauren: To what extent do we think Grace might be positioning other characters as suspect or surreptitious? Namely, McDermott and Nancy. Grace describes Nancy as two-faced and McDermott as a dishonest braggart, while Grace maintains that she herself was a comparatively virtuous observer, always. Why might Grace be doing this? And if we, as readers, are skeptical, why might we be inclined to question Grace's account in the first place? I suppose I'm thinking about Grace's account and Jordan's letters, along with the historical memorabilia, as memory texts; why do we find some credible and others questionable?

Kendra: One thing that has caught my attention is how Grace addresses/talks about people. Here are some examples: she refers to her friend usually as Mary Whitney (first and last name), refers to Dr. Jordan as Sir during memory narration, Mr. Kinneer, Jamie Walsh (first and last name usually), and Miss Lydia. Now all those seem like proper addresses for the time period. However, one that stands out is how she addresses McDermott. More often than not she simply refers to his last name with no first name and no Mr. So my question is why?

Judy: To what does Grace serve as a public spectacle, a figure of fascination from both the guilty and innocent lenses? In what ways does Grace contribute to her external perception, and in what ways is she removed from those judgements of character? How might the inherent propinquity of guilt and innocence as a characterization correlate to the similarly aligned, alternating accounts of Grace and Dr. Jordan?

Meghan: On pages 22-23 Grace says, "...Murderess is a strong word to have attached to you. It has a smell to it, that word - musky and oppressive, like dead flowers in a vase. Sometimes at night I whisper it over to myself: Murderess, Murderess. It rustles, like a taffeta skirt across the flower. Murderer is merely brutal. It's like a hammer, or a lump of metal." Looking at that excerpt we can see that there is an interesting bit of synesthesia going on with the associations she makes and I want to go back through the novel to see if there are any other examples like that, but this also really sums up the connections between femininity and death within the novel. The first time we see Nancy she's surrounded by flowers and her dress is described, both symbols of the feminine. Mary Whitney died due to pregnancy complications in a bed with a quilt which is described to be a warning created by women earlier on. And then Grace's mother died in an attempt to better support her children possibly due to some sort of complication from her many pregnancies (idk it wasn't clear) and the implication is that her spirit broke her fancy floral teapot which is another symbol of femininity. I think that the

connections between death and femininity are interesting particularly since much of the book hinges on murder being a predominately male action, but the deaths themselves are all women and all connected to very feminine objects.

Preston: When talking to Simon, Mr. Dupont says, "It is not the tune played by the musical box, but the little cogs and the wheels within it, that concern you" (85), which, in addition to its psychological implications, makes me think of movement. How might we see movement working in the novel, whether physically/mentally/etc.

Trey: Short, and simple question: Where are the quotation marks (ha) when Grace is narrating the story? I realize that this is probably purposeful in order to insinuate against Grace's authenticity.

Ian: On page 31 (6th paragraph of chapter 4 of "Puss in the Corner"), Grace describes some of her fellow inmates as "not pretending" about their madness. One woman wanders about, calling the names of her dead family members; another is followed by the child that she killed; and then there's Grace - all women who are "haunted" by the past, at least two of whom Grace decides are "mad." What implications does this have for the way characters, and even readers, construct the past?

Week 5: Margaret Atwood, Alias Grace (Part VIII-XV)

Meghan: I keep being drawn back to the flowers in Grace's dreams about Nancy. I know the red is meant to symbolize blood in the image and death, but why peonies? Red peonies typically symbolize love, honor, and respect but artificial flowers mean false ideas so they would symbolize false love and false respect. The love in a mist flower embroidered on the handkerchief from Mary Whitney is a symbol of a bond between two people and is wrapped around Nancy's neck. Did Margaret Atwood really tell us the whole story in the first chapter using typically feminine symbolism? Could this be taken as a metaphor for the way that women's work is typically overlooked by men but is actually super useful?

Kayelynn: Grace's marriage to a man who once accused her of murder interests me quite a lot. What motive could she have in this? Is this a continuation of false innocence or insanity? What about the constant need for forgiveness and connections to intimacy?

Judy: What do you make of Grace's Tree of Paradise design? How could the subtle snakes around the border enhance our understanding of her story to Dr. Jordan? Why does she use fabric to connect Nancy, Mary, and herself within this quilt pattern, beyond her reasoning to keep them together (460)? Why might she feel drawn to mention this decision to Dr. Jordan?

Kendra: Throughout the novel, Atwood includes a lot of dreams/dream scenarios. For example: the main one is one Grace "dream" kills Nancy. But there are other examples of dreams/dream-like states. Like Dr. Jordan having sex with his landlady when he thought she was Grace. My

question is, why does Atwood include these dreams? I can understand why she does for Grace's story, since we don't know if she did it or not, but why all the other inclusions of dreams?

Preston: As the reader, we understand that Grace is an unreliable narrator. However, as the novel progresses and Simon grows closer to/works more closely with Grace, he is led to build an increasingly manipulated mental picture of Grace and her past because of Grace's unreliable narration. Does this, then, make Simon an unreliable narrator as well, whether intentionally or not?

Lauren: What do we make of Dr. Jordan's trip to the "threshold of the unconscious" (412)? Jordan seems to think that he came close to having "fallen in" and "drowned" (412). What does this say about various claims against firm and so-called "feeble" minds, and how does Jordan's near-descent complicate the Victorian/Neo-Victorian view of mental illness?

Trey: Is Mary Whitney real? I know that the whole point of this novel is that we don't know much of anything about Grace, but based off of the hypnosis scene with Dr. DuPont/Jeremiah, it could be argued that the two of them were working together to (sort of) fool everyone.

Jenaya: I know that at the end of the novel Grace is married to Jamie, and she refers to the apple scene where her and Mary Whitney tried to find out who they would be married to - and it divined a J. But could it also be referring to 'Jordan' - because of his feelings towards her towards the end, and his want to be with her?

Ian: I'm having trouble putting this in question form, but: I'm intrigued by Mrs. Jordan's correspondence to Mrs. Humphrey: "not spreading one's misery abroad where it may become the subject of malicious gossip; and to that end, it is wise to avoid the expression of one's feelings in letters, which must run the gauntlet of the public posts, and may fall into the hands of persons who may be tempted to read them." Grace has secrets that have condemned her and secrets that have saved her (everyone else, too). So much of this novel seems to be about the uses and importance of storytelling. Mrs. Jordan seems annoying for most of the novel, but this also seems like good advice in the time period. So yeah. Storytelling.

Jenaya: I think also a really important tie in is the peddler, and how he appears throughout the story and the chances of him being real or not? Or, I suppose, what I mean is Grace /transposing/ the peddler onto various people in her life?

Meghan: Also more floral imagery when Grace and Jamie made daisy chains on her birthday which symbolize true love so the floral predictions continue throughout the novel

Meghan: If Mary Whitney is her alter ego Mary does mean bitter while Grace is of course a virtue so even the names are opposites. Also if Grace really is Mary Whitney then Grace was actually 19 at the time of the murder meaning that she lied about her age in order to get a more lenient sentence and avoid hanging

Jenaya: It's easy to believe something if you are looking for any sort of evidence of innocence.

Ian: Jordan does mention that he wants to believe something Mesmeric is happening and has to remind himself to be objective

Jenaya: Oh, yeah. He wants something to happen at the end with the hypnotism. Unless we're buying into the idea that was her past life, I guess, and this is the only way of talking about it.

Kayelynnne: Also, she mentioned God giving her a child for what she's been through.

Week 6: Julian Barnes, *Arthur & George* (Parts I-II)

Lauren: Chivalry and honor are of utmost importance to Arthur. Indeed, they seem to be the driving forces in his life, which is evident all over the novel. For example, on page 295, Arthur wrestles with the notion of moving his bride-to-be into the home he shared with his late first wife, claiming that the idea is not only “dishonourable, but positively indecent” (295). Where else do we see Arthur falling short of his honorable ideals? What does Barnes seem to be doing by placing such an emphasis on Arthur's unattainable notions of chivalry and “saving” or taking care of others?

Kayelynnne: Is there a difference between Arthur's desire to prove George's innocence and Jordan's approach with Grace? Did Jordan ever actually want to prove Grace's innocence? What does Arthur have to gain?

Meghan: I'm super interested in the parallels between George's case (1903-1906) and the widely publicized Dreyfus Affair several years earlier (1894-1906). From research I've found that Julian Barnes was aware of the case (and took inspiration from it) so I'm interested in how Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1906) and Emile Zola's (1898) roles compare and the societal opinions on the cases compare.

Preston: How is masculinity represented in the book? Or rather, is it upheld or questioned—and in what ways? For example, Arthur sees himself, or at least wants to see himself, as a knight. Barnes writes, “What did a knight errant do when he came home to a wife and two children in South Norwood?” (69). How might this factor into our view of masculinity in the book?

Judy: On page 44, we see a false advertisement for a wife, as though published by the Vicar for George, in the newspaper. Assuming this is consistent in all editions, this advertisement is formatted in the book, showing the scalloped border that the narrator describes and includes the text in italics. On the following page, we see the apology printed (regarding the letters), bolded but not structured in the “black box” as described in the narration. What do you make of this formatting decision? What could the narrator (or Barnes) be doing here by including a more visual component to one but not the other?

Kendra: "And then there is his fourth life, the one where he is neither Arthur, nor Sir Arthur, nor D Conan Doyle; the life in which name is irrelevant..." (276). So here we have Arthur who has many names, and then we have poor George who just wants people to get his only name pronounced correctly. So, my question is, what really is in a name?

Ian: Arthur holds the chivalrous knight errant figure whose unrequited love of a noblewoman proves his pure-hearted nature in high esteem. He even feels as though he still needs to do something heroic still in his life. But halfway through the novel, Jean seems to fit this description best. What does that say about gender relations in the period (or ours)?

Jenaya: I'm really interested how George sees himself in terms of a citizen and how 'British' he feels. He really hides himself behind rules and regulations of the law and then the law fails him - it reminds me a little of a book we read that includes a father that prides himself in being really attached to Britain - I think it's called Home Fire.

Meghan: Oh I almost forgot! Zola was murdered several years later in a sketchy conspiracy against him for being too political ~1907ish

Jenaya: BUT my question being how does that extreme negotiation/ association with his identity being seen as 'British' how does that play against him, I suppose?

Trey: Question: Is George's more passive nature vs Arthur's more "driven" attitude significant in what Barnes is suggesting along lines of race? Edalji ultimately wants a quiet life as a solicitor. He's also very riven by what his parents do and say (until his trial).

Lauren: Yeah, Judy! I think that's right. I'm also thinking about how Arthur had so much upward mobility. George does not, and that is clear in the way Barnes chooses to organize the novel from the men's childhoods.

Judy: Yes, Lauren!

Week 7: Julian Barnes, *Arthur & George* (Parts III-IV)

Kayelynnne: Faced with yet another novel that has to do with perception, what do we make of Arthur's name seeming like a play on the word "author", and his place in this novel/role as an author?

Meghan: How does the fictionality of Sherlock Holmes overshadow the realities of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle as a person/character/investigator?

Preston: On pages 240-241, Arthur tells Connie that he believes Jesus and Joan of Arc were psychic mediums, getting into revisionist history. How might this serve as an example of Arthur as a person and character, and/or how might this passage represent Barnes himself in the novel?

Trey: What makes a text a postcolonial text, the author's ethnic background or the story itself?

Judy: What do we make of Barnes' structure of Arthur & George? Why do we begin the novel with Arthur's perspective, and why do we end with George's? How does Barnes use the alternating perspectives to guide the readers' understanding of these characters? What does Barnes suggest about George's innocence for the reader when she begins and ends his narrative sections of the novel asserting his clear alignment with truth over lies? Why does this matter?

Kendra: Barnes seems to focus on this idea of endings- how Arthur writes from the end, clearing George's name, what happens after you die. So why does Barnes write his novel starting with their childhood?

Lauren: On page 389, Barnes' narrator wonders whether the verdicts of Conan Doyle and George's colleagues in the legal profession will "come to outweigh the official [verdict]" (289). In a metafictional sense, how can we gauge Barnes' own contribution to that unofficial verdict? Can we gauge it at all? I'm thinking of Kate Mitchell's article from Week 1, and her concept of "memory texts" simultaneously referencing and constructing historical perceptions.

Ian: Arthur, Anson, and, well, everyone else each has a fairly logical explanation of who commits the crimes, how, and why. These explanations are based on logic and predetermined ideas based on personal experience. What does this show us about the relationships among logic, faith, and knowledge?

Jenaya: I think there is something interesting about Jean and the way she sees herself in comparison to Arthur's late wife. She keeps saying she wants to be involved in all his tasks and what he does - but is completely against his 'spiritism'. So - that comparison being how Jean butts up against so much of what Arthur believes but wants to come along with him, and his late wife was content to let him do what he wanted and let him go off where he wanted. What significance could there be to that contrast?

Meghan: I think it's ironic how each of the characters is super short-sighted regarding everything (investigating~Arthur, George~the law, racism, the police~racial bias) and how the reader looking back on the story embodies the hindsight is 20/20 saying.

Jenaya: I agree, Meghan. As I was reading it was really frustrating to keep seeing the characters assert they 'know' anything about the case because - besides the fact that truth is just...hard to obtain because what is the 'truth' but they legitimately don't know ANYTHING - none of the characters have any 'proof' beyond speculation and their belief. Barnes is playing with the idea of 'truth' and how someone can know the truth which is fascinating.

Lauren: Yeah, I feel like Arthur is a great example of that, Trey. He's pushing back against racial bias but reinforcing gender bias throughout a lot of the novel. Barnes does an awesome job illustrating that no one is impervious to the pitfalls of those harmful stereotypes.

Trey: Right, Lauren

Ian: He does seem to have great admiration for Kipling

Judy: Within George's perspective that often denies imagination, Barnes seems to be considering the intangibility of racism, entirely constructed by perception and fabricated rules of superiority (as a concept) though racism can have very tangible consequences

Preston: If anyone is interested, Natalie Diaz has a really good poetry book called Postcolonial Love Poem

Weeks 9 & 10: Alasdair Gray, *Poor Things*

Lauren: Alasdair Gray sets up several layers of metatextual material in *Poor Things*: Gray's intro, Archie's manuscript, Bella's letter, Victoria's addendum, the historical appendix. Some of these elements seem more satirical than others, within the mainframe of Gray's novel. In what ways does Gray's decision to employ satire work to illuminate the book's themes? Would a more earnest novel have been inadequate? In what ways?

Meghan: In Duncan Wedderburn's letter he refers to Bella as the white demon and likens theirs to the following relationships:

King Louis- Madame de Maintenon

Prince Charlie- Clementina Walkinshaw

Robert Burns- Jean Armour

I know at this point he is "mad" but I'm not quite sure what his point is as based on my knowledge and research all of these relationships were fairly different.

Kendra: One thing that bothers me in this novel is the fact that Bella has a name. In Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Victor's creature is not named (though many people think it does have the name of Frankenstein...) So why does Bella have a name? Is it just because Gray wants to make Scotland beautiful (since that's what bella means?) Or is there another reason why she has a name whereas Frankenstein's monster does not?

Kayelynn: What do we make of Bella being brought back to life by men after she was assumed to kill herself after being abandoned by a man (33), only for her to assume the role of a wife in her new life?

Judy: Already kind of answered, but it was my question so I will post it anyway, haha: What do you make of the novel's narrative structure, particularly considering the "Introduction"? Why

does the editor as a character exist (or why do we think at this point in our reading)? How does his claims of (unverified) fact inform the reading of McCandle's narrative thus far?

Ian: Does anyone else think Godwin is a Frankenstein's creature-ish creation, made by his father? Maybe this is addressed in the second half of the book. All the creature wanted in Frankenstein was to have a lady creature to keep him company, and Godwin's descriptions and history are fairly mysterious.

Trey: Why is fiction the mode of storytelling used to disseminate information, in this case historical? Is it that way because it's easier to sell as entertainment, and with that people are more inclined to read/buy/watch?

Jenaya: I also think that the metatextual layer of fiction in the book is really interesting. I think that it's a great way to tell/educate the readers. However because it is given as meta could it water down the information for some readers? I am also interested in the autonomy of Bella as a character and how it may have grown/diminished throughout the book. I haven't read to the end so I can't comment on how that works out.

Kayelynn: Victoria's letter to her (great) grandchild ends with her hoping that two countries will go to war so that the working class may stop the war "peacefully" (276). How does this go along with her idea to be a Socialist from earlier on (164)?

Meghan: Part 1

When Bella was in Paris learning and developing her worldview and beliefs she was in the Latin Quarter also known as the Student Quarter of Paris because it is home to a number of universities including la Sorbonne, Université de Paris (and its medical school), and numerous scientific institutes such as the Curie Institute who Bella is later compared to. In addition it is also home to numerous specialized bookstores and salons, which is where Bella went to have her philosophical conversations and began to formulate her ideas on women's rights and sexual liberties.

Meghan: Part 2

They were also one of the first places where women began to have a place to voice their opinions on politics, literature, philosophy, and their role in society and many salons were in fact led by women. In many ways in a novel focused on Scotland Bella appears to have many ideals and thoughts that are influenced by her global travels and in particular the French (which I just immediately focus on due to my own knowledge and experience), what does this say about Gray's thoughts on the importance of globalization and independence in regards to Scotland?

Judy: What do you make of McCandle's representation of Bella's sexuality? How do her origins (of her "new life") contribute to her relationship with sex? What might be the implications of Baxter as God within this feminist lens?

Zoom Chat: Neo-Victorian Novel

Trey: This book made me feel like I was doing the run around. My question sort of piggybacks on my question from last week except this one is a bit more blunt. Was this book a waste of time? Alasdair Gray is able to weave together a lot in this book, deep ideas, humor, meta narrative, historical ideologies, etc, but couldn't those items have been delivered.. more directly through nonfictional means? The notes section also makes me wonder about this? To sound like a broken record, why fiction?

Lauren: How do we read Victoria's addendum in terms of metatextual authority/reliable narration? Do we think she is more reliable than Gray, the narrator? Why?

Kendra: There is one picture I noticed which repeats: the lady coming out of the mouth of the skull. She appears at the beginning and the end of McCandless' novel. My question is why does this image repeat? What does it symbolize? Does Gray add this, or was it original to McCandless' manuscript?

Preston: One thing I immediately picked up on in the novel is class issues. McCandless, for example, is looked down upon at school for his upbringing on a farm. However, on page 266, Victoria recounts, "Next day over breakfast God explained things fully, for he never made unnecessary mysteries." Despite this claim, class issues (among other issues like colonialism) appear to be unnecessary. What, then, makes any issues in the novel necessary or unnecessary? Is this idea specific to the Victorian era/genre?

Ian : By the end of the novel, with Victoria's A Loving Economy, her work emulating Baxter's animal clinic, and her socialist advocacy, is there an implication that improvements could be made to the world if we emphasize traditionally feminine, nurturing characteristics?