

# Papers in Anglophone Literary and Cultural Studies: The Manual

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Susan Sontag photographed in New York City by Jill Krementz

The Literary and Cultural Studies Staff

## **Picture Source and Acknowledgments**

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# 1. General Remarks

This manual is meant for students of Anglophone literary and cultural studies who are about to write a paper of any length, up to and including the MA Thesis. It gives advice on how to choose a topic, how to formulate a good thesis, how to do research, and how to go about writing and structuring your paper. The manual also gives advice on how to tackle some of the technical aspects of literature papers.<sup>1</sup> Please note already at this point that the teaching staff of the Department of English feels strongly about and severely sanctions any kind of plagiarism (see section 7). This manual is also meant to help you avoid plagiarizing other people's work.

## 2. Differences between Linguistics and Literature Papers

Literature and linguistics papers have different functions and therefore require different approaches, styles, and formats.

Literature Paper	Linguistics Paper
The literature paper presents a focused interpretation of a text or texts in a step-by-step argument. It has to convince the reader that your particular claim is valid.	The linguistics paper usually attempts to answer a research question by analyzing a set of data with the help of a specific methodology.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that we are using 'literature papers' as an abbreviation of 'papers in Anglophone literary and cultural studies.' Similarly, we are using 'texts' or 'literary texts' as a shorthand for 'literary texts and other cultural artifacts.' In other words, you may also choose to include cultural artifacts other than literary texts in your discussion: films, photographs, advertisements, paintings, and so on.

## First Principles of a Literature Paper

1) **The Argument.** A literature paper must first and foremost present an argument. In other words, it must make a convincing case for your own, specific interpretation of one or several texts. A purely descriptive, summarizing or comparative paper is therefore inadequate. For instance, it is not sufficient to describe the versification in a poem, nor to paraphrase information from secondary sources, nor to compare two literary texts just for the sake of comparison. Descriptions, paraphrases, and comparisons are analytical tools that help you make your overall argument; they cannot replace the argument.

2) **Structure.** All papers consist of

- **A thesis statement:** Your paper should not start with the phrase "In this paper, I argue that ..." but its first paragraph should contain a thesis statement that could logically *follow* these six words. For example: "Readings of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* that interpret its protagonist Hester Prynne as a proto-feminist have three fundamental limitations: x, y, and z." Literature papers do not simply 'discuss' or 'compare' something; they make one specific argument that concerns the topic at hand. Thus, in literary and cultural studies, a thesis is not something you can 'prove'; it is a claim that you make, an argument others may well disagree with. Often, the final version of your thesis only emerges once you have almost completed your paper. Nevertheless, *it needs to be stated in the first paragraph of the paper you hand in.*
- **Paragraphs which correspond to the steps of your argument:** In writing your paper, your goal should be to develop your thesis into a fully-fledged argument that takes you from the beginning of the paper to its end. 'Well-structured' and 'step by step' mean that you develop one single step/idea of your

argument in each paragraph. *Anything* that does not help you make your argument (e.g., isolated biographical, historical, literary-historical contextualizations; unwarranted generalizations) must be omitted.

- **Paragraph transitions:** Provide argumentative transitions between your paragraphs. Do not list isolated points; develop a good, coherent argument instead.

- 1) **Begin writing early.** This leaves you time to revise your paper before turning it in. The first draft will require not just correction (fixing mistakes), but also revision (rewriting according to the logical and structural needs of your argument). Give yourself enough time so that you can put the first draft aside and let it rest for a day or two; when you return to it, you will be able better to see – and fix – any flaws in its argument and structure.

### 3. Length of Papers

BA	MA
Critical Paper: 1,500 words	MA Seminar Paper: 7,000 words
BA Proseminar Paper: 4,000 words	MA Thesis: 30,000-35,000 words (80 pages)
BA Seminar Paper: 6,000 words	

The figures are not arbitrary requirements; they reflect the specific expectations for each type of paper. The word counts include *everything*: title page, body part, footnotes, and list of works cited. Please make sure you stick to these word counts +/- 10%. Papers that are too short do not fulfill the minimal requirements; papers that are too long often testify to a student's inability to pull things together and come to the point. You will not be rewarded for writing too much.

## 4. Dos and Don'ts

### Dos

What your instructors will value highly in your paper is...

- an original and convincing thesis
- a well-structured, focused, and convincing argument that develops your thesis step by step in paragraphs
- a sound theoretical foundation and in-depth, critical engagement with pre-existing scholarship on your topic
- a precise use of concepts (e.g., 'space,' 'power,' 'agency,' 'romanticism,' 'modernism'), which have acquired highly specific meanings in literary theory and criticism
- literary-historical and historical contextualizations that help you make your own argument
- close readings, i.e., detailed interpretations of specific passages
- an awareness that characters are literary creations rather than real-life human beings
- adherence to the Style Sheet for Anglophone Literary and Cultural Studies, which is based on the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of the *MLA Handbook* (also known as 'MLA Style'; see section 6)
- correct English: Use dictionaries and reference works to make sure your English is fine; before you turn in your completed paper, run a spell check and have it read by a fellow student with a good command of English.

### Don'ts

What your instructors will *not* value in your paper is...

- plagiarism (see section 7)
- biographies of authors
- unwarranted generalizations about the state of the world then or now
- vague philosophical speculations

- impressionistic personal responses
- psychological readings of characters as if they were real life people
- historical and literary-historical contextualizations that do not help you discuss the texts themselves
- mechanical applications of theories to literary texts
- use of low-quality scholarship from sources such as Wikipedia, online essays written by other students, CliffsNotes, Sparknotes – almost anything available via a quick Google search
- a long list of critical or theoretical texts in the list of works cited that have obviously not been digested or even consulted
- wrong use of 'therefore' (which should be used only if B *necessarily* follows from A)
- one-sentence paragraphs
- paragraphs of more than 300 words
- pseudo-academic mannerisms such as
  - excessive signposting ("I will argue that," "As I have already pointed out," "Later on, I will")
  - overuse of it-clefting, i.e., sentences such as "It was Shakespeare who truly revolutionized the structure of plays" instead of "Shakespeare truly revolutionized the structure of plays"
  - listing, i.e., overuse of words such as "firstly," "moreover," "furthermore"
  - unnecessarily long sentences
  - overuse of expressions such as "it is clear that," "it is obvious that," "it must be assumed that"
- excessive hedging ("I think," "probably," "maybe," "one could possibly argue that," "in my opinion"). (Note: everything you write is your opinion, even if it is only your opinion of what someone else's opinion is)
- more than 1-2 exclamation marks per paper, except in quotations
- rhetorical questions
- pronoun shifts, e.g., from 'one' to 'you'
- slang words and colloquialisms

- contractions ('don't,' 'it's,' 'wouldn't')
- abbreviations.

## 5. How to Go about It

What is the aim of your paper? The aim of any paper you write is to develop *one* original argument that is based on a clearly formulated thesis (see section 5.2). *Everything* you write must contribute to the development of that one argument. Anything else is superfluous and must be omitted. In finding your thesis and in developing your argument, you need to enter into a critical dialogue with pre-existing high-quality scholarship on your topic (see section 5.4.), which you need to acknowledge to avoid plagiarism: give full credit not only for direct quotations but also for ideas from others (see section 7).

Note that concepts such as 'space,' 'agency,' 'power,' 'romanticism,' or 'modernism' require particularly careful use, as they have acquired very precise and (sometimes heavily disputed) meanings in literary and cultural studies. Make sure you define your concepts and terms clearly and with reference to theoretical and critical texts that are relevant to your thesis and argument. You can only make concepts mean exactly what *you* want them to mean if you know what *other* people (i.e., the academic community) have made the words mean *before* you. Never adopt terminology intuitively and uncritically. If you are unsure about what a term means, look it up. That is what reference works are for (see section 8.2). Also, be aware that terminology is not always easily recognizable as such. For example, depending on the context, the term 'judgment' may designate a specific Kantian usage. The terms literary critics and theorists use often refer to a specific theoretical framework. Sometimes, that framework is explicitly mentioned, more often it is not. This is why you cannot do without a sound knowledge of literary history and literary and cultural theory.

As you work on your paper, use as many dictionaries (especially the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* and the online version of the *Oxford English Dictionary* [<http://www.oed.com/>])

and reference works (encyclopedias, literary histories, introductions to literary and cultural theory) as you need to polish your English. See the PG section in our departmental library and section 8 in this manual for a good selection of such books. Remember that even native speakers do not write papers without occasionally checking spellings, punctuation rules, the meanings of words, and their correct use in specific contexts.

Note that the proposed sequence of the present section (5.1-5.8) is a suggestion which by no means constitutes the only correct way of finding a thesis and developing an original argument. As you work on your paper, you may well find that doing things in a different order works better for you. You will also find that the sequence is not as neat as our separation into different subsections suggests. For instance, "Doing Research" (5.4) is something that you will also engage in while you are writing your paper (5.6). Writing a paper involves a constant back and forth between reading literary texts, reading theoretical and critical texts, taking notes, and writing. And of course, all papers need to follow the formal conventions outlined in the Style Sheet for Anglophone Literary and Cultural Studies, which is based on the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of the *MLA Handbook* (also known as 'MLA Style'; see section 6).

## **5.1. Choosing Texts & First Steps in Working with Them**

How else can one write but of those things which one doesn't know, or knows badly? [...] We write only at the frontiers of our knowledge, at the border which separates our knowledge from our ignorance and transforms the one into the other. (Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*)

Choose a literary text or texts that you find interesting, challenging or irritating. Do not choose a 'safe' or 'easy' text – in most cases, that leads to uninteresting work that will bore both you and your instructor. Of course, this also goes for choosing your topic (see section 5.2). Read your texts very closely and not just once. While reading them, take notes, mark passages, and write down your ideas concerning those passages. *Always* take a note of

the page numbers.

Grouping together passages that are related to one another, be it in terms of form or content, may help you decide on a general topic for your paper. Ask yourself: Under which heading could I discuss all those related passages? Your answer to that question may well be the topic of your paper.

## 5.2. Finding a Topic, Thesis, and Title

### The Topic

First of all, it is crucial to distinguish between the topic and the thesis of a paper. A **topic** is the subject matter your paper is about, such as this one:

Fatherhood in Hemingway's *In Our Time*

It is important to decide on a topic for your paper early on because this will help you focus clearly on one set of issues. In writing your paper, you are not expected to write about everything you find interesting in or know about a given literary work. Instead, you are expected to focus on one topic that fascinates you, and which the literary work you write about engages in interesting, challenging or irritating ways. However, finding a topic for your paper is not the same as formulating your thesis.

### The Thesis

A thesis is not something you can 'prove' or 'disprove,' but an original, convincing, and arguable claim you make concerning your topic. It is an argument that you can argue for and other people can agree or disagree with; it is the kind of statement that *could* complete a sentence that begins with "In this paper, I argue that ..." In our example, the following thesis would work well:

In its depiction of fatherhood as frightening and threatening to the male protagonists, Hemingway's *In Our Time* (1925) paradoxically both affirms and challenges hegemonic notions of masculinity.

This is a sound thesis because a) it makes a clear claim, b) it does

justice to the complexity of Hemingway's representations of men and manhood, and c) it shows that you will draw on pre-existing theories of 'hegemony,' 'masculinity,' and 'hegemonic masculinity.'

One way of working your way toward a thesis is to formulate a number of research questions, i.e., questions that you would like to answer in the course of your paper.

Here are four examples of such questions:

How are fatherhood and masculinity portrayed in *In Our Time*?  
Positively, negatively, ambivalently?

What are dominant notions of masculinity around 1925?

How does Hemingway's portrayal of fatherhood and masculinity relate to those notions?

How does Hemingway's portrayal of fatherhood and masculinity relate to that of other modernist writers?

Note that in many cases, your thesis will change while you are working on your paper. In all likelihood, the final version of your thesis emerges only once you have almost completed it. This is why the introduction is frequently the last part of the paper to take its final form. Nevertheless, you need to state your thesis in the first paragraph of the paper you hand in.

### **Test for a Good Thesis**

Imagine showing your thesis to someone who is knowledgeable about your topic (e.g., an instructor or more advanced student). Based on this statement alone, the two of you should be able to have a lively debate. If you cannot challenge and debate it, then it is not a thesis.

### **The Title**

Your title should reflect both your topic and your thesis and awaken the reader's interest. The title should contain basic information about your literary text(s) (i.e., author, title), as well as one or more keywords to describe the focus of your essay.

In all likelihood, the first title you come up with will not be

the one that will end up on the title page of the paper you hand in. Still, it makes a lot of sense to come up with a provisional **working title** early on. While you are working on your paper, you may need to adapt that title to reflect changes of direction that will come about as you read more and write more. This should help you focus clearly on your thesis and on the argument you develop based on your thesis.

In our example, the following titles would look good on the title page:

Fatherhood in Hemingway's *In Our Time*: Affirmations of and Challenges to Hegemonic Masculinity

or

"I'm going down and get that kitty": Fatherhood and Masculinity in Hemingway's *In Our Time*

Note that, like most titles in contemporary literary and cultural studies, these titles consist of two parts: the title proper and a subtitle after the colon. In the second case, a quotation from the literary text was chosen as the first part. Often, the first part of a title is designed to awaken the reader's interest and stake a claim in a provocative or eye-catching way, while the subtitle is more sober and informative. One-part titles are also acceptable, but do make sure that they still fully reflect your thesis and argument.

Here are some further examples of topics, theses, and titles:

<b>topic</b>	<b>thesis</b>	<b>title</b>
Female Education in Jane Austen's <i>Mansfield Park</i> and <i>Northanger Abbey</i>	In <i>Mansfield Park</i> and <i>Northanger Abbey</i> , Jane Austen engages with contemporaneous discourses on female education, but <i>Mansfield Park</i> is more radical in its depiction of the debilitating consequences of some of those discourses.	"I could not preach but to the educated": The Dangers of Female Education in Jane Austen's <i>Mansfield Park</i> and <i>Northanger Abbey</i>

<p>The Meanings of Property in William Faulkner's <i>The Sound and the Fury</i></p>	<p>In William Faulkner's <i>The Sound and the Fury</i>, not only Jason's cynical pursuit of wealth but also Quentin's obsession with Southern ideals of chivalry is grounded in quests to regain possession of lost or stolen property that are firmly embedded in early-twentieth-century economic discourses.</p>	<p>The Search for Lost Property: Economic Obsessions in William Faulkner's <i>The Sound and the Fury</i></p>
<p>True Love in Shakespeare's <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i></p>	<p><i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> undermines viewers' faith in the notion of true love by rewarding Demetrius with the most sympathetic character as his wife, by undermining Lysander as a Romeo figure, by making Hermia appear foolish for believing Lysander loves her, and by humiliating the mechanicals rather than reasserting the idea of conjugal love.</p>	<p>Shakespeare's <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> and the Ends of True Love</p>

### 5.3. How to Work with Literary Texts

Unlike in linguistics, there are no widely agreed upon sets of methodologies for tackling literary texts. There are, however, a wide variety of approaches to working with literary texts, any combination of which could prove useful to you. What is most important to remember is that no given approach to a literary text is an end in itself. They are there to help you develop your argument (which is based on your thesis). Thus, it is not enough to describe or paraphrase a text, and it is not enough to compare two

texts. But descriptions, paraphrases, and comparisons can help you make your argument. Here are some approaches to literary texts that will be useful to you:

- **Literary and Cultural Theories** are indispensable resources because they give you a deeper understanding of both the nature of literary texts and the social and cultural issues these texts address. What is literature? Where is the meaning of a literary text located – in the author's mind, the text itself, or the reader's individual reading experience? How does a given text position itself with regard to issues of gender, sexuality, race or class? What is the relationship between literary texts from the past and historical documents of the same time? Not only does theory help you give more intelligent answers to such questions – answers that often challenge what you think you already know. Theory also keeps you from clinging to received, common sense ideas and opinions – 'bad' theory if you will. Your job is to let theory make you think about your texts in new ways. There are a multitude of theories which address a wide range of issues, including Hermeneutics, Structuralism, Deconstruction, Discourse Analysis, Feminism, Gender Studies, Marxism, New Historicism, Cultural Materialism, and Ecocriticism. The latest edition of Peter Barry's *Beginning Theory* – which is available on the PG shelf in our departmental library – can give you a first glimpse of the range of theories out there.
- **Close Readings**, i.e., detailed analyses and interpretations of specific passages from the literary texts you discuss. Close readings are a crucial part of any paper. They are neither plot paraphrases nor lay psychological character analyses. In a close reading, you discuss how the writer uses words to achieve specific effects, tease out the complexity of the linguistic structures before you, and think hard about the meanings of the words and sentences you read. Of course, this also applies to your interpretations of other cultural artifacts, such as films and photographs: It is absolutely crucial that you analyze what forms are used for what effect. *As a rule of*

*thumb, your discussion of any quotation, be it from a literary text, a scholarly text, or any other kind of text, should take up at the very least as much space as the quotation itself.*

Here is an important word of advice: Never forget that characters in a book are not real people, so do not treat them as such. They never existed, and there is no 'reality' to discover about them. The question is not how or why Bolingbroke became pompous after coronation. Instead, the question is *how and to what effect* Shakespeare creates such a character. Close reading helps you describe precisely how Shakespeare's words achieve that effect. *You are not writing a psychological, historical or theological study, but a literary one.*

- **Genre-Related Analytical Terminology** helps you analyze how poems, prose texts, and plays work. It gives you the necessary terms to write about your literary texts in more precise ways. For the analysis of all kinds of literary texts, but especially poetry, **rhetoric** ('chiasmus,' 'anaphora,' 'metaphor,' 'symbol,' 'synecdoche') and **prosody** ('end rhyme,' 'iamb,' 'trochee,' 'blank verse') are very helpful. For the analysis of narrative texts, which are most often in prose, **narratology** ('homodiegetic narrator,' 'internal focalization,' 'prolepsis') is particularly useful. For the analysis of plays, **drama terminology** ('tragedy,' 'epic drama,' 'dramatic irony,' 'Freytag's pyramid') is of great importance. For an overview of terms relating to all three genres, see the latest edition of M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham's excellent *A Glossary of Literary Terms* and Manfred Jahn's superb online resource *Poems, Plays, and Prose: A Guide to the Theory of Literary Genres* (<http://www.uni-koeln.de/~ame02/ppp.htm>).
- **Comparisons** between different literary texts can help you tease out the specificity of each text. A comparison can, for instance, help you clarify how two writers' uses of literary forms (e.g., rhyme schemes, narrative perspectives, tropes) position their literary texts differently vis-à-vis pressing social and political issues of their time. However, while a comparison can help you make your argument, it is neither a

thesis nor an argument. Just like all other approaches to literary texts discussed in this section, *comparisons are not ends in themselves*.

- **Literary-Historical Contextualizations** help you relate the literary text you discuss to other literary and cultural texts of the same time. What features of a literary text make it typical of a specific literary and cultural period (such as the colonial period, realism, romanticism, modernism, and post-modernism) and to what extent does it conform to or challenge the (literary) conventions of its time? A good starting point for such an analysis is one of the standard literary histories recommended in section 8.2.
- **Historical Contextualizations** help you relate the literary text that you discuss to contemporaneous social and political events and debates. How does a given literary text negotiate, intervene in, negate or affirm contemporaneous social, cultural, moral, economic, and other discourses? A good starting point for such an analysis is one of the standard histories recommended in section 8.2.

Do not forget: None of the above approaches are ends in themselves. Their function is to help you make your own argument about the literary text(s) you write about. In almost all cases, you need to combine several approaches rather than rely on only one (e.g., 'historical contextualization'). Note also that the above list is not exhaustive.

## 5.4. Doing Research

Research is something you should do on a regular basis while working on your paper: Writing a paper entails a constant back and forth between reading literary texts, reading theoretical and critical texts, taking notes, and writing. What we mean by research is a critical engagement with two forms of high-quality scholarship on your topic: **theoretical texts** (texts that raise fundamental questions about a wide range of issues, including

subjectivity, textuality, historicity, race, gender, and class) and **critical texts** (texts that discuss the literary texts you are also discussing). By 'high quality,' we mean scholarship that is accessible in books written by scholars and articles published in academic journals such as *American Literature*, *New Literary History*, and *Modern Fiction Studies*. Hardly any of these texts are available freely on the World Wide Web. They can be located via the major online bibliography in our field (MLA Bibliography) and the online university catalogue (swisscovery Basel), and they can be accessed via the university library (UB), the departmental library, and special e-journal and literature databases (e.g., Project Muse, JSTOR, and ProQuest One Literature) that are accessible only via university computers or eduroam/VPN. For more on university holdings, online research tools, and eduroam/VPN, see section 8.1.

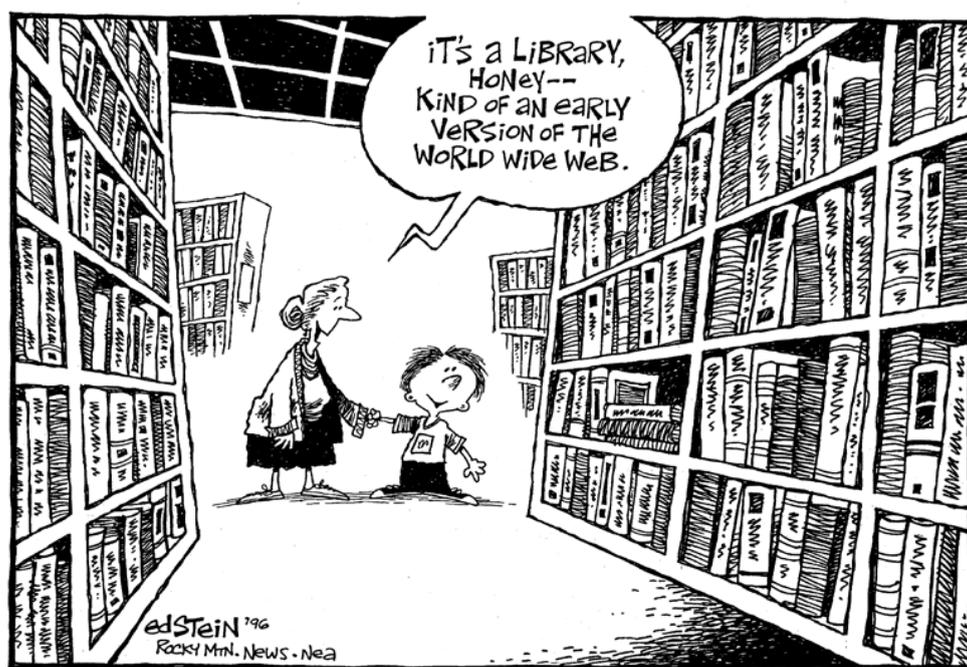


Fig.1. "It's a Library, Honey." Ed Stein, reprinted with permission.

Even though you should conduct research on an ongoing basis while you are working on your paper, there are two distinct phases of research.

## The Preliminary Research Phase

During the preliminary research phase, you scan the MLA Bibliography and the bibliographies of standard essay collections such as the Cambridge Companions (e.g., Walter Kalaidjian's *The Cambridge Companion to Modern American Poetry*), and the Handbook and Casebook series of major publishers such as Palgrave, Routledge, and Oxford University Press (e.g., Lisa Rodensky's *The Oxford Handbook of the Victorian Novel* or James Acheson's *Virginia Woolf* published in Palgrave's "New Casebooks" series), to find out what has already been published on your topic. Thus, you discover what is available, what may be useful for you, and what you can dismiss at once. Your preliminary research may already lead you to narrow down your topic and formulate a more precise thesis.

Based on titles and keywords, make a first selection of relevant scholarship and note down where that scholarship is available, including shelf marks and URLs (UB? Departmental library? Online databases? Other Swiss or foreign university libraries?).

## The In-Depth Research Phase

During the in-depth research phase, you read (parts of) the critical and theoretical texts you have selected in the preliminary phase. In doing this, do not underestimate the usefulness of tables of contents, introductions, and indexes of books as well as the abstracts and keyword lists of articles – they can help you decide which parts (if any) of a given text are relevant to your own topic. The same goes for reviews of books whose titles sound promising; they are readily available via e-journal databases such as Project Muse or JSTOR (see section 8.1.) and will help you decide quickly whether those books will be useful to you or not. The lists of works cited of any texts you read will very probably lead you to further texts. Also, our departmental library holdings are structured around writers and topics, so the books standing to the left and to the right of the one you want to borrow may also be useful.

Many of the texts you find will be difficult to read. Do not let that discourage you; use reference works and dictionaries to

look up unfamiliar terms and concepts instead (see section 8.2 and the PG section in our departmental library). Before you start on a book or article, take down the full bibliographical reference, preferably in a separate document (see section 6). As you read the text, it is crucial that you do this with a pen or pencil in your hand and a sheet of paper next to you (or a keyboard at your fingertips and your word processing program open). Take notes and write short summaries of your most important texts. Extract quotes. Always indicate the page(s) these notes and summaries are referring to. If you transcribe quotations, do this very precisely and *always* with page numbers. This may sound fussy, but if you want to use a quotation you have copied out without a page reference and the book is already back at the library or borrowed by someone else, you can get yourself in a mess. You never know in advance what you will really need and what you will not. Do not forget that taking down bibliographical references will also help you distinguish between your own ideas and those of other people. Thus, it will also help you avoid plagiarizing without being aware of it (if there is such a thing – see section 7).

How can you make all that research fruitful for your own work? Consider yourself as someone who enters into a conversation with the authors of these texts. They will suggest ways of reading your literary text(s) that you agree with, and others which you disagree with. Both can be eminently useful: If you agree with them, you can use their texts to refine your thesis and support your own argument; if you disagree with them, you can use them to sharpen your own argument. After all, it may well turn out that your thesis stages a counter-argument to an argument found in a critical or theoretical text. In any case, what is crucial to remember is that you use what others have written not as unquestionable sources of truth but *in order to make your own argument*. Thus, you should enter into a *critical dialogue* with these texts: Let them help you gain a deeper understanding of the issues you discuss, let them unsettle you, let them challenge you to reconsider whether your argument is strong enough, but do not hesitate to disagree with them if you believe their argument is lacking in strength. In other words, develop your own argument both with the help of *and* against these texts, and make sure you integrate the ideas of others into your own argument rather than

just repeating what they wrote. Further, do not assume that quotations are self-explanatory: Always explain and discuss them (again, your discussion of any quotation should take up at least as much space as the quotation itself). Otherwise you risk producing an incoherent textual patchwork. This is *your* text, so do make sure it looks like your text and not just like a collection of other people's ideas. That is what we mean when we encourage you to 'engage critically' or 'enter into a critical dialogue' with previous scholarship.

## 5.5. Preparing a Prospectus

Preparing a prospectus is useful because it helps you structure both your working process and your thoughts. It is also useful because it allows your instructor to give you focused feedback. Below we provide the template of our prospectus and an example of a completed prospectus. A digital version of the template is available for download on our website.

### Prospectus

**I. Student's Name / Instructor's Name / Type and "Title of Class" (Semester):**

**II. Topic:**

**III. Working Title:**

#### **IV. Research Questions**

List three questions you would like to answer in your paper.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## V. Approaches

List **at least three approaches** that will help you answer your research questions and develop your argument.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## VI. Thesis: [In this paper I argue that...]

## VII. Tentative Annotated Table of Contents

Please give each section a provisional title *and briefly outline the argument you would like to stage in each*. Note: For any papers shorter than the MA thesis, you do not need more than three sections, and you can also omit them. But thinking about your paper in terms of sections should help you structure your argument.

### Introduction

(Title:)

(Title:)

(Title:)

### Conclusion

### Works Cited

## VIII. Works Cited

List at least four books or articles you have consulted and which are of use to you (no online sources except for academic e-books or e-journals).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

## An Example of a Completed Prospectus

**I. Student's Name / Instructor's Name / Type and "Title of Class" (Semester):** John Doe / Prof. Jane Doe / Seminar "Modernist Fiction" (ST18)

**II. Topic:** Fatherhood in Hemingway's *In Our Time*

**III. Working Title:** "I'm going down and get that kitty": Fatherhood and Masculinity in Hemingway's *In Our Time*

### IV. Research Questions

List at least three questions you would like to answer in your paper.

1. How are fatherhood and masculinity portrayed in *In Our Time*? Positively, negatively, ambivalently?
2. How does Hemingway's portrayal of fatherhood and masculinity relate to dominant notions of masculinity around 1925?
3. How does Hemingway's portrayal of fatherhood and masculinity relate to that of other modernist writers?

How does Hemingway's notion of masculinity conform to what R. W. Connell calls "hegemonic masculinity," and to what extent does it contest it?

### V. Approaches

List at least three approaches that will help you answer your research questions and develop your argument.

- gender studies, especially masculinity studies (Connell), Judith Butler's notion of performativity, and Michael S. Kimmel's cultural history of manhood in the U.S.
- feminist critiques of Hemingway
- literary-historical: modernism and masculinity
- historical: discourses on masculinity around 1925

**VI. Thesis:** [In this paper I argue that...]

In its depiction of fatherhood as frightening and threatening to the male protagonists, Hemingway's *In Our Time* paradoxically both affirms and challenges hegemonic notions of masculinity.

## **VII. Tentative Annotated Table of Contents**

Please give each section a provisional title and indicate which parts of your argument you want to develop in each. Note: For any paper shorter than the MA Thesis, you do not need more than three sections, and you can also omit them. But thinking about your paper in terms of sections should help you structure your argument.

### **Introduction**

thesis; outline of the structure of the argument on the basis of a close reading of one key passage on fatherhood in *In Our Time*

### **1. (Title:) Masculinities and Fatherhood**

presentation of R. W. Connell's theory of masculinity in general and 'hegemonic masculinity' in particular; critique of Connell via Judith Butler's theory of the performativity of gender and Michael S. Kimmel's cultural history of manhood in the U.S.; role of fatherhood in the construction of masculinity

### **2. (Title:) Modernist Masculinities**

placing Hemingway's representations of fatherhood and masculinity in their historical context (1920s) and their literary-historical context (modernism); compared to other modernist writers, how does Hemingway position himself vis-à-vis hegemonic notions of masculinity?; close readings of exemplary passages

### **3. (Title:) Sexist Hemingway?**

discussion of both the validity and the limitations of feminist dismissals of Hemingway as a sexist

### **Conclusion**

tying up argument and assessing results; outlook: issue of the validity of findings for other texts by Hemingway and/or other modernist writers

### **Works Cited**

### VIII. Works Cited

List at least four books or articles you have consulted and which are of use to you (no online sources except for academic e-books or e-journals).

1. Connell, R.W. *Masculinities*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., University of California Press, 2005.
2. Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1999.
3. Bradbury, Malcolm, and James McFarlane. "The Name and Nature of Modernism." *Modernism 1890-1930*, edited by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, Penguin, 1976, pp. 19-55.
4. Vernon, Alex. "War, Gender, and Ernest Hemingway." *Hemingway Review*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2002, pp. 34-55.
5. Kimmel, Michael S. *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Oxford University Press, 2011.

## 5.6. Writing Your Paper

While we include this subsection at a fairly late stage of "5. How to Go about It," let us emphasize that, like research, writing is something you do throughout as you take notes, write summaries, and prepare the prospectus. What this subsection focuses on is a specific kind of writing, the writing of your paper in the more narrow sense: the typing of those words and sentences that will end up as the paper you hand in.

### 5.6.1. Types of Writers

As far as the writing process in the narrower sense is concerned, there are at least two types of writers. Some students (and scholars) agonize over perfect sentences that, once written, will remain in the completed paper more or less as they are. Others quickly write a first draft that pays little attention to style issues and then do several thorough revisions. Both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages, but unless you are passionately committed to the first one, we recommend the second approach (rough

draft, then several thorough revisions) as more effective. Most importantly, it should help you avoid succumbing to something fairly nasty that everyone risks experiencing at some point (well, Jack Kerouac may have been an exception): writer's block.

Whichever approach you choose, your paper will go through several versions. In the course of writing, you may discover that the whole structure of your paper needs to be changed because your reading of literary, critical, and theoretical texts has led you to new insights. Although it is important to stick to one argument throughout your paper, you must not hesitate to revise the overall structure if you see that your argument no longer works. In most cases, this will involve adapting the original outline and moving sections around.

### **5.6.2. The Parts of Your Paper**

Each paper follows the formal conventions outlined in the Style Sheet for Anglophone Literary and Cultural Studies (see section 6) and contains the following eight parts:

#### **a. Separate Title Page**

The title page has no page number. It lists...

- your name
- your home address, email address, and phone number
- the number of semesters you have been studying English
- the university you are studying at
- (if applicable:) the title of the course in which you have written your paper
- the name of your supervisor
- the semester in which you hand in your paper
- the title of the paper
- the type of paper it is (Critical Paper, BA Proseminar Paper, BA Seminar Paper, MA Seminar Paper, or MA Thesis)
- word count
- date of submission

### **b. Table of Contents**

The table of contents corresponds to the sections of your text and includes page numbers.

### **c. Acknowledgments**

If you have received help from others (e.g., help with your English), this is the place to acknowledge that help. If you are in doubt about how to do this, choose the more explicit version. Those who have helped you will appreciate your generosity. Here, you also need to mention if you are using ideas or texts that you have used before, for instance in another paper.

### **d. Introduction**

The introduction serves to get the reader's attention, to state your thesis, to outline how you approach your text(s), to give definitions of key concepts (though that can also be done in your first section), and to give a brief preview of your argument. (One difficult but elegant way of doing several of these things at once would be to outline the structure of your argument on the basis of a close reading of *one* key passage of your text.)

In the introduction, you may also give brief historical or literary-historical background information, but *only insofar as it is relevant to your thesis and argument*. While you should not provide an extensive 'shopping list' of everything you discuss in your paper ("After a definition of ...," "I will then discuss ...,"), at the end of the introduction, the reader should know what is in store. In any case, do *not* provide a lengthy plot summary or a biographical sketch of the author here or anywhere in your paper! *Please note that, in literary papers, the introduction is not numbered: it is "Introduction," not "1. Introduction."*

#### **The 'Necessity Test' for Background Information**

Include whatever information the reader needs in order to accept the premise of your thesis, and no more.

### **e. The Body Part**

This is the main part of your paper where you develop the argument that is based on the thesis stated in the introduction.

### *Sections or No Sections?*

The body part can be divided into numbered sections (e.g., "1. Masculinities and Fatherhood," "2. Modernist Masculinities," "3. Sexist Hemingway?"). These section titles should be thematic rather than functional (i.e., do *not* use "1. Theory," "2. Analysis" or similar). For any paper shorter than the MA Thesis, three sections are usually enough. In fact, you can also dispense with sections altogether (in which case you do have introductory and concluding paragraphs but no separate headings for those parts of your paper either). *In any case, dividing your paper into sections can never replace making a well-structured argument that takes you across all sections, from the first to the final page.* However, thinking about your paper in terms of sections should help you structure your argument, i.e., it should help you think about *what* you want to say *where*. In that way, sections can be a highly useful organizational tool.

### *Paragraphing*

It is crucial to structure your argument very clearly within and across sections. To do this, you need to divide your argument into paragraphs, each of which develops exactly one step of your argument. *Every* paragraph you write must support your argument in one way or another and is logically related to the preceding and following paragraphs (i.e., you should provide transitions between paragraphs). State your points clearly and link them with a logic that will be immediately apparent to your reader. Paragraphs are shorter than one page (ideally below 300 words) but should contain several sentences. Avoid mini-paragraphs of one or two sentences.

### *Sentence Structure*

Each sentence in a paragraph must follow logically from the previous sentence.

## **f. Conclusion**

Your concluding paragraphs remain consistent with your argument and round off your paper. Do not merely repeat or

summarize what you have already said. Instead, tie up your whole argument and assess your results. You can also give your argument a final twist here. One useful way of doing this can be to return to the first passage you discussed from a literary text and consider it again in the light of the rest of your argument, especially if you discussed a key passage from a literary text in your introduction.

If your argument has been completed by the end of its development (i.e., if you do not know what to conclude because you've already said 'it'), then broaden your argument: That is, say something about the larger context of the thesis or provide a broader outlook. In any case, do not introduce any new points that are unrelated to the rest of your paper. Note also that it is dangerous to end with a quotation because it tends to leave your reader without guidance (quotations are never self-explanatory). Ideally, since this is your essay, the take-home-message should come in your own words. *Please note that, like the introduction, the conclusion is not numbered: it is "Conclusion," not "4. Conclusion."*

### **g. Works Cited**

This is where you list all the works, both literary and critical-theoretical, that you have quoted from or referred to. Make sure your list of works cited follows the Style Sheet for Anglophone Literary and Cultural Studies (see section 6). Please note that the list of works cited is also not numbered.

### **h. Plagiarism Declaration**

Here, you need to insert, date, and sign, the following declaration:

Hiermit bestätige ich, dass ich vertraut bin mit den von der Philosophisch-Historischen Fakultät der Universität Basel herausgegebenen 'Regeln zur Sicherung wissenschaftlicher Redlichkeit' und diese gewissenhaft befolgt habe.

Place/Date/Signature

(This declaration can be downloaded from <https://philhist.unibas.ch/de/studium/studierende/plagiat/>. The relevant rules concerning plagiarism are also available there. See section 7 in this

manual for advice on how to avoid plagiarism.)

## 5.7. Revising Your Paper

We devote a separate subsection to the final revision of papers because people tend to forget about it, be it because they completed their paper right on the deadline or because they were so happy to have gotten the job done. Let us emphasize that sloppiness that results from careless revisions will affect any instructor's evaluation negatively. It is crucial that you set time aside for revising your paper.

A good revision makes sure that ...

- the argument actually works, i.e., that it is convincing, coherent, precise, and well-structured → let your paper sit for a day or two, print it, and read it once more with a pen in your hand; also ask a reliable fellow student to read it critically, and take the feedback you get seriously.
- you have discussed your texts as precisely and accurately as possible → re-read your interpretations of specific passages and think hard about whether you do justice to the complexity of those passages.
- the paper actually does what you promise in the introduction → read the introduction and conclusion directly one after the other: have you developed the issues you announced?
- the table of contents (including the page numbers) actually corresponds to the contents of your paper.
- the titles for your sections (if you have any) make sense → now that you have a clear overview of where your argument leads, revise these titles where appropriate so that they reveal the development of your argument or the steps leading to the verification of your hypothesis.

- the title of your paper still makes sense → make sure it reflects your topic, thesis, and argument.
- all the texts you quote from or refer to are in the list of works cited → revise your list of works cited and cut out or add items depending on the final version of your paper.
- the paper, including the list of works cited, fully conforms to the Style Sheet for Anglophone Literary and Cultural Studies (see section 6).
- you do not commit any deadly sins of bad paper writing → check your paper against the "Dos and Don'ts" in section 4.
- there are no typos, grammatical mistakes or stylistic infelicities → this is the final step: run the spell check as well as the grammar check of your word processing program, and ask a fellow student to check the text not for content but just for typos, grammar, and style issues. This is essential, and all professional academics do it, too. After working intensely on a text, you get so used to it that you no longer see errors in grammar, style, and spelling. If you cannot get anyone reliable to read through your paper, you might be able to detect quite a few mistakes yourself by reading the paper backwards, i.e., you start with the last word, then the second to last, and so on. Finally, though this may seem old-fashioned, you might want to do the proofreading with a printout of your text, which facilitates the detection of typos and formatting errors.

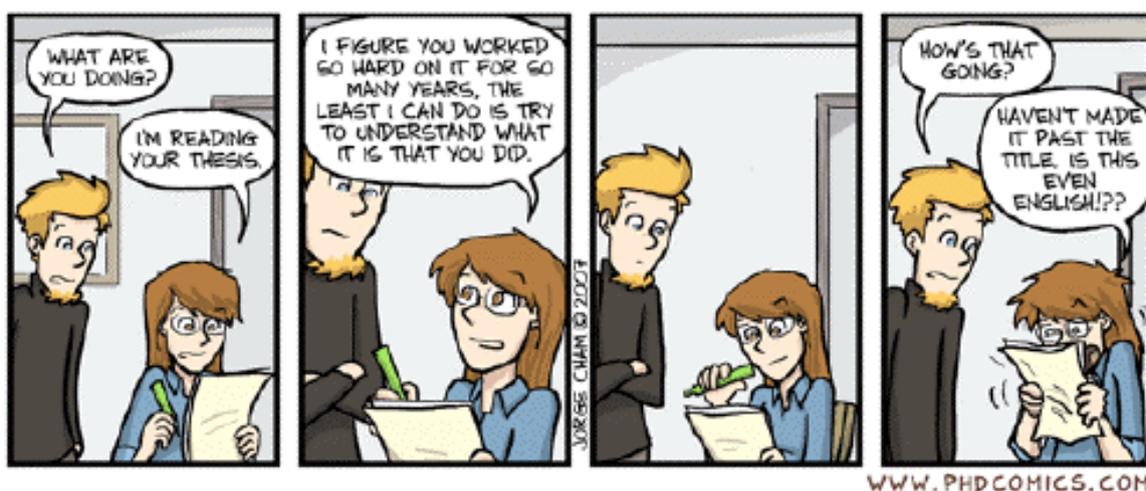


Fig. 2. "Is This Even English?" Reprinted with permission by Jorge Cham, [www.phdcomics.com](http://www.phdcomics.com)

## 5.8. Handing in Your Paper

You turn in

- one printout of your completed paper to your instructor
- a digital version (.doc or .docx, *not* .pdf) to both your instructor and to our secretary Alex Van Lierde ([alex.van-lierde@unibas.ch](mailto:alex.van-lierde@unibas.ch)), who will run it through the plagiarism detection software.

## 6. Style Sheet for Anglophone Literary and Cultural Studies

There are common conventions regarding the style of academic papers. To write a formally acceptable paper, you need to adhere to those conventions. Our style sheet follows the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of the *MLA Handbook* (also known as 'MLA Style'), which is the most widely used system in our field.<sup>2</sup> If you encounter any style issues that are not dealt with here, please consult the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of the *MLA Handbook*, which is available in the PG section of our departmental library.

### A. General Style Issues

#### Title Page

Place the title of your paper and your name on a separate title page, together with your home address, email address, phone number, and the number of semesters you have been studying English. You also need to add the university, the title of the course and the name of the course instructor. In addition, please indicate what kind of paper it is (e.g., Critical Paper, BA Prosem-

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<sup>2</sup> Note that there are also other academic styles. You may also adhere to those, but if you do, you need to stick to them as closely and consistently as you would to this Style Sheet.

inar Paper, BA Seminar Paper, MA Seminar Paper, MA Thesis), the word count (which includes *everything*: body text, footnotes, list of works cited), and the date of completion.

## General Layout

You may or may not divide your paper into numbered sections. But you need to divide it into paragraphs. Paragraphs should be less than a page in length, but should contain several sentences. Indent the first line of each new paragraph (except the first, and paragraphs after indented quotations) a half-inch from the left margin, thus:

Situated in one of the oldest buildings in the city's historical centre, the Department of English at the University of Basel conducts research and teaching in English linguistics and Anglophone literary and cultural studies at a high level of excellence.

As is indicated here, use one and-a-half or double line spacing (but not single spacing) throughout and leave generous margins (at least 2.5cm) both to the left and to the right; all pages must be numbered.

## Single and Double Quotation Marks

Use single quotation marks (') if you refer to a concept *as* concept:

Viktor Shklovsky's central notion is 'enstrangement.'

While 'taste' relates to the reception of art, 'genius' relates to its production.

Also use single quotation marks if you are using a word in an unusual sense or to suggest that you are using this word critically (this is the so-called 'scare quote,' which you should use sparingly):

Columbus 'discovered' America in 1492.

Use double quotation marks (") if you are quoting from another text.

## Authors' First Names

Upon mentioning an author's name for the first time in the body text, indicate the first and the last name(s), thus:

Viktor Shklovsky's central notion is 'enstrangement.' In outlining his theory of enstrangement, Shklovsky explicitly defines himself against Alexander Potebnya's claim that "[a]rt is thinking in images" (qtd. in Shklovsky 1).

## B. How to Quote (In-text Citations)

Titles of books, paintings, and films are given in italics; titles of poems, songs, essays, short stories, and book sections are given in double quotation marks ("):

*King Lear* *Mona Lisa*

*12 Years a Slave*

*No Place Else: Explorations in Utopian and Dystopian Fiction*

"Song of Myself"

"The Case for Academic Autonomy"

"Hills Like White Elephants"

Use footnotes sparingly and exclusively for additional information, never for mere bibliographical references. Double quotation marks (") are used for direct quotations and single quotation marks (') for quotations within a quotation. Here is an example of an in-text citation (which includes a quotation within a quotation):

As Wallace points out, "He admits that he is not a printmaker, that it is not his medium. For him, 'The excitement is in the creating, making, doing – all in one rhapsodic thing'" (26).

Quotations of *more than four lines of prose or three lines of verse*

must be given without quotation marks on separate lines and must be indented, i.e., the left margin should be larger. Such indented quotations or block quotes should be introduced by colons or commas, and they should not be part of the grammar of your own sentences:

Maps let them see in a way never before possible the country – both country and nation – to which they belonged and at the same time showed royal authority – or at least its insignia – to be a merely ornamental adjunct to that country. Maps thus opened a conceptual gap between the land and its ruler, a gap that would eventually span battlefields. (Helgerson 114)

Your own additions or comments within a quotation are put into square brackets: [ ]. For cuts within a cited text, use square brackets and three full stops ([...]), as shown here:

Richard Helgerson argues that "[m]aps let [the Elizabethans] see in a way never before possible the country [...] to which they belonged and at the same time showed royal authority [...] to be a merely ornamental adjunct to that country" (114).

How else to explain the fact that it is Arthur's repeated protestations of his *inexperience* that serve him to assert his innocence? When he asserts that he "pretend[s] not to the wisdom of experience and age; to the praise of forethought or subtlety" (*Arthur Mervyn* 323), he protests his lack of guile.

Whenever possible, quote directly from the original, i.e., quote literary critic A rather than quoting literary critic B quoting literary critic A. If you do the latter, though, do it like this:

Early American writers knew how to distinguish aesthetics from poetics, and they knew the truth of Barnett Newman's famous quip that "[a]esthetics is for the artist as ornithology is for the birds" (qtd. in Eldridge 3).

Reproduce the punctuation and orthography of the original precisely. Note that in indented (longer) quotations, the full stop goes *before* the parenthetical reference, whereas in shorter quotes within quotation marks, the full stop goes *after* the parenthetical reference, like this:

Shelley held a bold view: "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the World" (794).

Here is a second example:

In Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the doctor wonders, "How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how can I delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pain and care I had endeavoured to form!" (42).

Replace the closing punctuation by a comma within the quotation marks (in American English) or outside the quotation marks (in British English) if your own sentence is continued:

*AmE*: In these poems "life cannot be [...] comprehended without an understanding of death," says Martin (625).

*BrE*: In these poems "life cannot be [...] comprehended without an understanding of death", says Martin (625).

If the quotation is interrupted by your sentence, put a comma within the quotation marks (American English) or outside the quotation marks (in British English):

*AmE*: "Poets," according to Shelley, "are the unacknowledged legislators of the World" (794).

*BrE*: "Poets", according to Shelley, "are the unacknowledged legislators of the World" (794).

You can choose *either* the British *or* the American version, but do not mix them.

If a word is italicized, make sure that you leave it italicized and add "emphasis in original" to the source information. If you italicize a word in a quotation in order to give it special emphasis, add "emphasis added", like this: (Helgerson 114; emphasis added).

### **A. Critical or Theoretical Texts**

Refer to critical or theoretical texts (books, essays) by means of the author's surname and a page reference in parentheses (round brackets), thus: (Butler 26). If you already use the author's name in the body text and the reference is clear, you can give only the page number in the parentheses, thus: (26). If you are referring to several texts by the same author, add a short version of the title to disambiguate, thus: (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 26) and (Butler, "Imitation" 309). Give the full bibliographic details only in the list of works cited at the end of your paper.

### **B. Literary Prose**

Refer to literary prose texts (novels, short stories) by means of a short version of the title and a page reference in parentheses (round brackets), thus: (*Scarlet* 14) or ("Hills" 35). If you already use the author's name and the title of the literary work in the body text and the reference is clear, you can give only the page number in the parentheses, thus: (14) or (35). Give the full bibliographic details only in the list of works cited at the end of your paper.

### **C. Plays**

Refer to plays by indicating the act, the scene, and the line numbers with Arabic numerals, thus: (1.1.151). When quoting parts of a play, you may either integrate short excerpts in quotation marks

in your text or use the format of the block quote if you want to render dialogues or soliloquies.

After the ghost's disappearance from the battlements of Elsinore, Hamlet lapses into a meta-theatrical discourse. The question "you hear this fellow in the cellarage" (1.1.151) refers to the staging convention at the Globe theater where the ghost disappeared through a trap-door into the hollow space beneath the planks. By addressing the ghost as "truepenny" (1.1.150) and "old mole" (1.5.162), Hamlet actually jibes at his fellow-actor impersonating the ghost rather than speaking to a semblance of his deceased father.

When quoting several lines of versified drama in your text, indicate the line breaks by a slash (/), leaving a space on either side of the slash:

Hamlet famously chides Horatio's rationalism by saying, "There are more things in Heaven and earth, Horatio / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (1.5.161-167).

When quoting dialogues, write the name of the character in all caps (e.g., HAMLET) and indent the quotation from the left margin (like a block quote).

GHOST: [Beneath] Swear.

HAMLET: Well said, old mole! Canst work i' the earth so fast?

HORATIO: Oh, day and night, but this is wondrous strange!

HAMLET: And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.

There are more things in Heaven and earth, Horatio

Than are dreamt of in your philosophy. (1.5. 161-167)

## **D. Poems**

When quoting parts of a poem, you may either integrate short excerpts in quotation marks in your text or use the format of the indented quote if you want to render longer passages. In both cases,

you need to acknowledge the source by indicating the *line number(s) of the poem itself, not the number of the page(s) on which the poem appears* in a printed text:

It was winter. It got dark  
early. The waiting room  
was full of grown-up people,  
arctics and overcoats,  
lamps and magazines. (Bishop 6-10)

When quoting several lines of poems in your text, indicate line breaks by a slash (/) and stanza breaks by a double slash (//), leaving a space on either side of the slash:

Elizabeth Bishop's "In the Waiting Room" conveys the starkness of winter in brief sentences: "It was winter. It got dark / early" (6-7).

## C. The List of Works Cited

A complete list of works cited entitled "Works Cited" has to be added to every paper. It is sorted alphabetically by author (and, if there is more than one entry for one author, by title). You need to indicate all the sources you have quoted from or referred to. For quick reference, see the section "An Example of a List of Works Cited" below.

### How to cite books or articles:

Author's name, first name(s).	<i>Full Title of Work.</i>	Publisher, date.
Eagleton, Terry.	<i>Literary Theory: An Introduction.</i>	Blackwell, 1983.
comma	full stop	full stop
comma	full stop	comma
full stop	title in italics	full stop
comma	full stop	comma
full stop	full stop	full stop

If more details are required (e.g., original date of publication or number of edition), arrange the information in the following order (using punctuation as indicated for each element):

- 1) Author(s).
- 2) "Title of Source." (e.g., essays in collections) or *Title of Source*. (e.g., monographs)
- 3) Original publication date.
- 4) *Title of Container* (e.g., collection of essays),
- 5) Name(s) of the editor(s) or translator(s), prefaced by "edited by" or "translated by",
- 6) Number of edition used,
- 7) Number of volume(s),
- 8) Name of the series,
- 9) City of publication (only for books published before 1900),
- 10) Publisher,
- 11) Publication date,
- 12) Location. (e.g., page numbers for parts of books or the DOI for online sources)

### **Common abbreviations in lists of works cited:**

2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.	=	Second edition
n.p.	=	No publisher given
n.p.	=	No place given
n.d.	=	No date given
n.pag.	=	No pagination given
pars.	=	Paragraphs (for online resources)

If a bibliographical entry takes more than one line, indent the following lines, i.e., use hanging indent:

Porter, Katherine Ann. "Pale Horse, Pale Rider." *Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces*, edited by Maynard Mack et al., 4<sup>th</sup> ed., vol. 2, Norton, 1979, pp. 1606-47.

If you are citing later editions or reprints of *literary* works, always also indicate the original date of publication right after the title:

Dos Passos, John. *Manhattan Transfer*. 1925. Penguin, 1987.

### **How to cite books by several authors:**

[First author's surname], [first author's first names], [second author's first names and surname], and [third author's first names and surname].

If there are more than three authors, mention the first one only and add "et al." [= and others].

Montgomery, Martin, et al. *Ways of Reading: Advanced Reading Skills for Students of English Literature*. Routledge, 1992.

### **How to cite anonymous books, handbooks, and dictionaries:**

If there is no author's name on the title page, alphabetize the title ignoring any initial (*A*, *An*, or *The*).

*Collins Cobuild English Dictionary*. Harper Collins, 1995.

### **How to cite editions:**

Begin with the author if you refer to the text; begin with the editors if you refer to their comments.

Shakespeare, William. *Troilus and Cressida – Troilus und Cressida*. Edited by Werner Brönnimann-Egger, englisch-deutsche Studienausgabe, Stauffenburg, 1986.

Brönnimann-Egger, Werner, editor. *Troilus and Cressida – Troilus und Cressida*, by William Shakespeare, englisch-deutsche Studienausgabe, Stauffenburg, 1986.

### **How to cite texts in anthologies or essay collections:**

Author. "Title of Work." *Title of Anthology/Essay Collection*, edited by Editor(s), publication information, page numbers.

O' Connor, Flannery. "The Life You Save May Be Your Own." *The Realm of Fiction: Seventy-Four Stories*, edited by James B. Hall

and Elizabeth C. Hall, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., McGraw, 1977, pp. 479-88.

### **How to cite journal articles:**

Author. "Title of Work." *Title of Journal*, Volume number, Issue number, Year of publication, Page numbers.

Fessenden, Tracy. "Religion, Literature, and Method." *Early American Literature*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2010, pp. 183-92.

### **How to cite online resources:**

Author. "Title of Work." *Title of Container* (e.g., complete work, web site, project or book). Any version numbers available, including revisions, posting dates, volumes, or issue numbers, publisher information, date of creation (if available), page or paragraph numbers if applicable, URL or DOI (digital object identifier – many scholarly articles online have a DOI; if such a number is available, use the DOI instead of the URL). Date of access.

Reuben, Paul P. "Appendix G: Elements of Fiction – A Brief Introduction." *PAL: Perspectives in American Literature: An Ongoing Research and Reference Guide*. The Paul Reuben Website, 2016, [www.paulreuben.website/pal/append/axg.html](http://www.paulreuben.website/pal/append/axg.html). Accessed 4 September 2018.

*Purdue Online Writing Lab*. Purdue University, 2008, [owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue\\_owl.html](http://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html). Accessed 4 September 2018.

### **For more complicated cases:**

Look up the relevant sections in the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of the *MLA Handbook* (see the PG section in our departmental library). You may also consult *The Purdue OWL* web site cited just above.

## D. An Example of a List of Works Cited

### Works Cited

- American Medical Association. *The American Medical Association Encyclopedia of Medicine*. Random House, 1989.
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## 7. On Good Academic Practice / Plagiarism

(Pro)seminar papers are there to show you and those who teach you what kind of progress you have made. The research you have done will turn up material that is of interest to those who read your (pro)seminar paper. For these reasons, full documentation is essential.



Fig. 3: "Report Card." Larry Wright, reprinted with permission.

Failure to offer full documentation constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism results in the lowest grade (1.0 or 'fail' if the paper is graded on a pass/fail basis); further, you will be barred from writing another paper in the context of the same course (i.e., you have to at-

tend a different course in a later semester). Your case will be reported to the Dean of Studies. In repeated cases, you will be exmatriculated for one or several semesters. For the University of Basel's official rules on plagiarism, consult <https://philhist.uni-bas.ch/de/studium/studierende/plagiat/>.

## **What Is Plagiarism?**

Plagiarism is **copying or paraphrasing texts that are not your own and using other people's ideas without giving due credit** (i.e., giving the impression that they are your own). **Using material for which you have already received credit points, failing to acknowledge assistance you have received, and copying parts of papers by fellow students who write on similar topics also constitute plagiarism.**

## **How to Avoid Plagiarism**

Appropriately document your source whenever you use somebody else's apt phrase, text or idea. Make sure that you do this fully and consistently. When taking notes, carefully distinguish between your own ideas and material you have found somewhere. Always take down the exact source. Use the Style Sheet for Anglophone Literary and Cultural Studies even at this point. This may seem to be a bit petty, but it will make things easier when you actually write your paper. In your paper, indicate the sources of ideas that are not your own both in the body text (with in-text citations) and in the list of works cited. In addition, include an "Acknowledgments" section after the table of contents (see section 5.6.2.). There, you acknowledge all help you have received from others and mention if you are using ideas or texts that you have used before.

## **The Declaration Concerning Plagiarism**

You must add and sign the following declaration at the very end of your paper:

Hiermit bestätige ich, dass ich vertraut bin mit den von der Philosophisch-Historischen Fakultät der Universität Basel herausgegebenen 'Regeln zur Sicherung wissenschaftlicher Redlichkeit' und diese gewissenhaft befolgt habe.

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## Examples

**Original Passage** (from Albert Gelpi, "Emily Dickinson and the Deerslayer: The Dilemma of the Woman Poet in America")

The poem requires our close attention and, if possible, our unriddling because it is a powerful symbolic enactment of the psychological dilemma facing the intelligent and aware woman, and particularly the woman artist, in patriarchal America.

### Student Version 1

The poem is a powerful symbolic enactment of the psychological dilemma facing the intelligent and aware woman, and particularly the woman artist, in patriarchal America.

*Comment:* Obvious plagiarism. Word-for-word repetition without acknowledgment.

## **Student Version 2**

The poem requires our close attention and, if possible, our unriddling because it is a powerful symbolic enactment of the psychological dilemma facing the intelligent and aware woman, and particularly the woman artist, in patriarchal America (Gelpi 124).

*Comment:* Still plagiarism. Indicating the source from which you have taken the idea is not enough. The language is the original author's, and only quotation marks around the whole passage plus the reference in brackets would be correct (see "Student Version 4" below).

## **Student Version 3**

Emily Dickinson's poem enacts the psychological dilemma facing the intelligent female writer in patriarchal America.

*Comment:* Still plagiarism. A few words have been changed or omitted, but the student is not using their own language and does not cite the source.

## **Student Version 4**

"The poem requires our close attention and, if possible, our unriddling because it is a powerful symbolic enactment of the psychological dilemma facing the intelligent and aware woman, and particularly the woman artist, in patriarchal America" (Gelpi 124).

*Comment:* Correct. The quotation marks acknowledge the words of the original writer and the information in bracket tells us the source of the quote. (The complete bibliographical reference must be given in the list of works cited).

**Student Version 5**

Emily Dickinson's poem must be read in a figurative way. According to Albert Gelpi, the poet uses symbolic language in order to metaphorically express "the psychological dilemma" female artists like herself experienced in nineteenth-century "patriarchal America" when the writing of poetry was regarded as a male prerogative (124).

*Comment:* Correct. The student uses their own language in order to paraphrase Gelpi's opinion, puts the original words in quotation marks, and indicates the source. They use Gelpi's opinion for the development of their own argument. (The complete bibliographical reference must be given in the list of works cited).

**Student version 6**

Emily Dickinson's poem must be read in a figurative way. The poet uses symbolic language in order to express the quandary of female artists as they experienced it in nineteenth-century American culture, which regarded the writing of poetry as a male prerogative (Gelpi 124).

*Comment:* Correct. The student uses their own language in order to paraphrase Gelpi's statement and indicates the source. Gelpi's opinion is used to develop the student's own argument. (The complete bibliographical reference must be given in the list of works cited).

## 8. Research Tools & Reference Works for Anglophone Literary and Cultural Studies

### 8.1. Research Tools

As a student of Anglophone literary and cultural studies, you should be intimately familiar with at least four resources: the MLA Bibliography (which should be your first stop), the holdings of the UB, the holdings of our departmental library, and the relevant full-text online databases the university library (UB) subscribes to (especially Project Muse, JSTOR, and ProQuest One Literature). For a more detailed and periodically updated guide to these and other research tools, please see the *Research Tips and Tricks for Students of English* compiled by our subject librarian and available from the department website: <https://english.philhist.unibas.ch/en/research/library-167/> ("Handout for UB Workshop").

#### Online Databases I: MLA Bibliography

- You can access the MLA Bibliography and other specialized online databases either from university computers or from home. If you want to access them from home, you need to do this while logged in to the eduroam network with your email address and password. If you are logged into a different network, you need to install VPN first. This site tells you how to do work with eduroam and VPN: <https://its.unibas.ch/de/anleitungen/netzwerkzugang/>. Once you have done this, you should start your search with the **MLA Bibliography**. This supremely useful research tool is available at <https://www.proquest.com/mlaib/advanced?accountid=14616>. It is also accessible through the UB's dedicated page for Anglophone Linguistics and Literary Studies, which hosts a valuable pre-selection of the most useful resources: <https://ub.unibas.ch/de/fachgebiete/englisch/>. The **MLA Bibliography** lists all articles and books published in the fields of modern languages, literatures, folklore, and linguistics since 1926. Thus, it allows you to see what has

already been published on your topic. While the bibliography does not contain the texts themselves, it does provide links to those full-text journals and books that are available at the UB (either directly or via the 'Get full text' button). For other texts, you need to use the online swisscovery Basel catalogue for the UB and the departmental library. If you want to include all Swiss university libraries in your search, set your search to swisscovery rather than swisscovery Basel.

### **UB Holdings**

- To search the holdings of both the university libraries and the departmental libraries at Basel, use **swisscovery Basel** (<https://basel.swisscovery.org>). **swisscovery** also allows you to search the catalogues of *all* Swiss university libraries. These online catalogues give you the shelf marks of printed books and journals available at these libraries. For a fee, you can order books and copies from other libraries. Make sure you are always logged in to your library account when searching on **swisscovery** as otherwise you might not see all available resources.

### **Holdings of Our Departmental Library (Nadelberg 6)**

- These can also be accessed via **swisscovery** by applying the respective filter ("Basel – Uni Anglistik") to your search results. In every room of our library, there is a guide that explains where shelf marks can be found. Books need to be checked out by using the barcode readers and your library or student card. A sheet with instructions is provided at each library computer station.

### **Online Databases II: Project Muse, JSTOR, ProQuest One Literature**

- The UB also subscribes to and pays for a number of highly important full-text databases. All of them are available either from university computers or from home via eduroam/VPN. In general, all e-resources relevant to our field are listed here: <https://ub.unibas.ch/de/fachgebiete/englisch/>. Let us single out three of the most important full-text databases that you need to know and work with.

- **Project Muse:** This is a full-text database of academic e-journals in Anglophone literary and cultural studies and related fields. It is fully searchable and gives you access to the full texts of recent issues of a great number of the major journals. It is accessible via <http://muse.jhu.edu/search?searchtype=advanced>.
- **JSTOR:** This is very similar to Project Muse, but it gives you full-text access to the *older* issues of much the same journals as in Project Muse. It is accessible via <http://www.jstor.org/action/showAdvancedSearch>.
- **ProQuest One Literature:** This is a database of scholarly articles from more than 1200 journals and a full-text library of more than 500,000 works of English and American literature, numerous reference works, and other key criticism and scholarly resources. It is accessible via <https://search.proquest.com/pq1lit>.

## 8.2. Reference Works

As you work on your paper, you will find it essential to consult as many dictionaries and reference works as you can. They not only help you understand difficult critical and theoretical texts; they also help you write a paper with a more sophisticated argument and better English. Please see the PG section in our departmental library for a good choice. Below, we single out some of the most useful titles. In all cases, it makes sense to look for the latest edition.

### A. Dictionaries

*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (OALD)*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed., Oxford University Press, 2015.

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## B. Grammars

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## **F. Literary Theory I: Introductions**

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Manchester University Press, 2017.

Bertens, Hans. *Literary Theory: The Basics*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Routledge, 2014.

Culler, Jonathan D. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. New ed., Oxford University Press, 2011.

## **G. Literary Theory II: Encyclopedias**

Groden, Michael, Martin Kreiswirth, and Imre Szeman, editors. *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*. Ver. 20121. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012, <https://lit-guide.press.jhu.edu/>. Accessed 11 September 2018.

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Wolfreys, Julian, general editor. *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Modern Criticism and Theory*. Continuum, 2006.

## **H. Literary Theory III: Traditional Genres**

For a great online resource, see Jahn, Manfred. *Poems, Plays, and Prose: A Guide to the Theory of Literary Genres*. English Department, University of Cologne, 2002, <http://www.uni-koeln.de/~ame02/ppp.htm>. Accessed 4 September 2018.

### **Narrative**

Herman, David, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan, editors. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. Routledge, 2005, <https://www.proquest.com/publication/2049844?OpenUrlRefId=info:xri/sid:primo>. Accessed 27 May 2021

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Hollander, John. *Rhyme's Reason: A Guide to English Verse*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Yale University Press, 2014.

## Drama

Pfister, Manfred. *The Theory and Analysis of Drama*. Translated by John Halliday. Cambridge University Press, 1988, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/theory-and-analysis-of-drama/723E96561A9333B04AD9D092FB8238E5>. Accessed 27 May 2021.

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Jenkins, Philip. *A History of the United States*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed., Palgrave, 2017.

Lepore, Jill. *These Truths: A History of the United States*. Norton, 2018.

## J. Style Manuals

Modern Language Association of America. *MLA Handbook*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed., MLA, 2016.

## 8.3. Software Tools for Managing Bibliographies

To manage the bibliographical information on all the texts you use and to create lists of works cited automatically, you may find free tools such as **Citavi** (<http://citavi.com/uni-basel>), **Zotero** (<http://www.zotero.org/>), or **Noodlebib** (<http://noodletools.com>)

useful. Commercial products such as Endnote and RefWorks have additional functionality. IT Services host a software shop for students: <https://its.unibas.ch/de/aktuelles/softwareangebot-service-news/softwareangebot-fuer-studierende/>. The UB offers video tutorials for EndNote and Zotero: <https://ub.unibas.ch/de/tutorials/>.

## **9. Appendix: An Example**

This is but one example of a paper that works very well. It uses one kind of approach (historical contextualization), and there are numerous other approaches that may have worked just as well (see section 5.3). So do not try to emulate it; instead, use it to see what a very well-structured, convincing, and original paper might look like. Note also that this paper contains all required eight parts (see section 5.6.2) and follows the Style Sheet for Anglophone Literary and Cultural Studies consistently (see section 6).

Your name

Your home address

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Number of semesters of English

University of Basel

Title of course (if applicable)

Supervisor's name

Semester you hand the paper in

# **Melancholy, Religiousness, and Spectres: A Historical Reading of Hamlet's Delayed Revenge**

Type of Paper

Word count

Date of completion

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## **Acknowledgments**

I thank Jane Doe for useful advice on Elizabethan religiousness and John Doe for proofreading an early version of this paper.

## Introduction

Reading *Hamlet* or seeing it performed on stage, we may be forgiven for wishing that its protagonist would stop lingering and "sweep to [his] revenge" (1.5.30). Hamlet himself repeatedly agonizes over his inability to act:

Oh what a rogue and peasant slave am I! (2.2.502)

Am I a coward? (2.2.523)

Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave  
That I, the son of the dear murder'd,  
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,  
Must like a whore unpack my heart with words. (2.2.534-38)

Yet while only few critics doubt that Hamlet's revenge is overly delayed, the causes for the delay are as obscure to the audience as they are to the protagonist himself.<sup>1</sup> Why does Hamlet procrastinate? So far, no critic has been able to give a fully satisfactory answer to that question. All their answers are based on assumptions outside the play, which may well be a necessity given that

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<sup>1</sup> G. B. Harrison and Eleanor Prosser are two prominent exceptions. While Harrison is convinced that "in the play which Shakespeare wrote there was no delay" (109), Prosser maintains that "[o]nly when acts became separated by extended intermissions did delay theories evolve" (141).

the dramatic text itself provides no unequivocal explanations. We may only speculate as to why Shakespeare refuses to give such explanations, but one possible answer is that he considered Hamlet's actions perfectly intelligible to Elizabethan theatre-goers. As Prosser puts it, "the need to make the [...] issue explicit [...] simply would not have occurred to him" (155). In portraying Hamlet's hesitations, Shakespeare could rely on a number of self-evident meanings and assumptions that he shared with his contemporary audience. Unlike many twenty-first-century critics, Elizabethan theatre-goers could readily fill what Wolfgang Iser calls "the gaps of indeterminacy" that characterize all literary texts with recourse to their "own world of experience" (9). The purpose of this paper is to explore three realms of discursive knowledge that allowed Shakespeare's contemporaries to fill those gaps. It is by way of a historical analysis of three specific epistemological frameworks – melancholy, religiousness, and spectres – that the reasons for Hamlet's delayed revenge become as evident and logical to us as they were to the Elizabethan spectators in the Globe theatre.

## **1. Hamlet's Melancholy**

Already in 1904, A.C. Bradley proposed a simple but convincing theory: Hamlet is unable to kill his uncle due to a melancholic disposition that results from his father's death and his mother's betrayal. That disposition, Bradley argues, is aggravated by the

ghost's revelation that he was murdered. Indeed, Hamlet expresses a distinct disgust for life:

O that this too too solid flesh would melt,  
 Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,  
 Or that the Everlasting had not fixed  
 His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. [...]  
 How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable  
 Seem to me all the uses of this world! (1.2.128-34)

this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile  
 promontory; this most excellent canopy the air [...]  
 it appeareth no other thing to me but a foul and pestilent  
 congregation of vapours. (2.2.282-86)

As Shakespeare portrays him in these lines, Hamlet is suffering from a melancholic disposition with decidedly suicidal tendencies. Bradley rightly points out that "[s]uch a state of feeling is inevitably adverse to any kind of decided action" (122).

Since the Middle Ages, 'melancholy' has been a common notion (Anglicus; La Primaudaye). Reading Renaissance texts, we find that their characterizations of melancholy very closely resemble the mental disposition Hamlet suffers from. One fine example is Timothy Bright's *Treatise of Melancholie* (1586), where we learn that "[s]ometimes it falleth out that melancholie men are found verie wittie, and quickly discern" (130). Bright

adds, "[m]elancholy breedeth a ielousie of doubt in that they take in deliberation and causeth them to be the more exact and curious in pondering the very moments of things" (130). Bright's treatise not only helps us identify Hamlet as a melancholic, but also confirms that melancholy can be a cause of procrastination. As J. Dover Wilson notes, Shakespeare not only knew Bright's *Treatise* but based his characterization of Hamlet as a man who prefers obsessive contemplation over decisive action directly on it (*What Happens* 309-20). Shakespeare, then, chose his medical subject matter deliberately, and he knew that his audience could not fail to perceive Hamlet as the prototype of a melancholic.

Yet even though Shakespeare creates a classic Elizabethan melancholic type, we could argue that Hamlet's melancholy is not sufficiently pathological to prevent him from doing what he feels he has to do: to take murderous revenge. His depressive state is unlikely to be the sole cause of his delay. Still, it is a major obstruction that aggravates his task: "All obstacles would not suffice to prevent Hamlet from acting, if his state were normal [...]. But the retarding motives acquire an unnatural strength because they have an ally [...], the melancholic disgust and apathy" (Bradley 38). Clearly, Hamlet's mental health significantly impacts his ability to act.

## **2. Religiousness**

If we consider how the act of vengeance was evaluated in

Shakespeare's time, it becomes evident that "Elizabethan moralists condemned revenge as illegal, blasphemous, immoral, irrational, [and] unnatural" (Prosser 10). Prosser reminds us that religion played a central role in the Renaissance and that divine law laid the ground for notions of justice and legality. In a related vein, David Daniell emphasizes that, for Shakespeare's contemporaries, "the Bible [...] was not, as it can be in modern times, a file to be called up: it was the life-blood, the daily, even hourly, nourishment of the nation and of ordinary men and women. It was known with a thoroughness that is, simply, astonishing" (170). The vast majority of Elizabethans took very seriously the Bible's strictures against human vengeance: "Do not take revenge [...], but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord" (Romans, 12:19). Thus, it comes as no surprise that "[t]hroughout the last half of the sixteenth century, Church, State, and conventional morality fulminated against private revenge in any form and under any circumstances" (Prosser 5). The conviction that human vengeance is wrong was an integral part of Elizabethan discourse, and Shakespeare creates in Hamlet a character who shares that discursive knowledge. Apart from his melancholic state, then, a second reason for Hamlet's procrastination is his understanding that murderous vengeance is inexcusable and only "duplicates the [original] crime" (Kastan 199). In fact, by killing Claudius, Hamlet risks eternal damnation: "No matter how righteous a man might think his motives, the act of revenge would inevitably

make him as evil as his injurer in the eyes of God" (Prosser, 7).

Already in the first act, Shakespeare makes it perfectly clear that Christian morality is crucial to the play's action. Having indicated that he comes from Purgatory (1.5.9-13), Hamlet's father's ghost admonishes his son not to exact revenge on his treacherous mother: "Leave her to heaven" (1.5.86). By framing the classical revenge pattern within a Christian context early on, Shakespeare creates a tension between religious condemnations of vengeance and its secular justifications. Hamlet is caught in a double bind: should he obey the ghost and risk eternal damnation, or should he obey divine law, renounce revenge, and bear the unbearable (murder, incest, and his own failure to act)? Choosing the first option would allow him to fulfill his filial obligations and satisfy his desire for justice. At the same time, it would leave him open to divine retribution – a possibility that Hamlet fears deeply. As he acknowledges, it is the fear of eternal damnation that "does make cowards of us all" (3.1.83). Choosing the second option would allow him to save his soul, but undermine his self-respect and peace of mind once and for all: "What is a man / If his chief good and market of his time / Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more" (4.4.33-35). Shakespeare brilliantly sets up this ethical dilemma, in which Hamlet remains caught for the greatest part of the play.

### 3. Suspicious Spectres

Yet another context helped Shakespeare's original audience make sense of Hamlet's delayed revenge. Even to Hamlet himself, his father's ghost seems a dubious figure that acts more like an evil seducer than a (once) loving father. Why else should he urge his son to take revenge and thus commit what Elizabethans considered the "eighth Deadly Sin" (Prosser 6)? The ghost seems to expect his son willingly to pay the price of eternal damnation. If the ghost really had to "fast in fires" (1.5.11) in Purgatory in order to have his own soul "purged" (1.5.13) and his "foul crimes" (1.5.12) "burnt [...] away" (1.5.13), how dare he persuade Hamlet to sin against God and thus jeopardize his very soul? Hamlet reasons whether a "good spirit" would really make that sort of demand and wonders whether the spectre he faces is not much rather a "damned ghost" (3.2.72) who cares as little about his own soul as he does about Hamlet's:

The spirit that I have seen  
 May be a devil – and the devil hath power  
 T'assume a pleasing shape. (3.1.551-53)

Hamlet is certainly not ready to go to hell for actions imposed on him by a ghost who may well be diabolical in nature. Keenly aware that he has to consider his actions carefully so as to "have grounds / More relative than this" (3.1.556-57), he eventually

organises the Mousetrap Play to test both his uncle's guilt and the veracity of the ghost's words. To Elizabethan audiences, this must have made perfect sense, for they believed that spectres who appeared to melancholics were especially likely to come from below. Pierre de La Primaudaye confirmed this in 1577 when he wrote that evil spirits are likely to possess melancholics in order to terrorize others (145).

## Conclusion

A historical approach to *Hamlet* can teach us that its protagonist has at least three good reasons to procrastinate. While especially psychoanalytic readings of *Hamlet* often seem based on far-fetched assumptions (Freud; Jones; Lacan), a historical approach to Hamlet's character allows us to give well-founded answers to a number of problems the play raises. When Wilson writes that "[a]part from the play, apart from its actions, from what he tells us about himself and what other characters tell us about him, there is no Hamlet" (*Shakespeare's Histories* 3), he is, of course, right in so far as Hamlet is a textual construct, not a flesh-and-blood human being. But in order to understand how Shakespeare created this literary figure, it makes eminent sense to look beyond the text itself. Historical approaches allow us to do that in ways that help us bridge the gaps between Elizabethans' and our own understandings of the world so as to gauge what *Hamlet* may have meant to its author and his audience. With regard to Hamlet's

motivations, a close look at Elizabethan discourses surrounding melancholy, religion, and ghosts helps us understand why Shakespeare has his most famous character more readily contemplate than act.

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