

We Real Cool

The Pool Players Seven at the Golden Shovel

Gwendolyn Brooks

We real cool. We
Left school. We
Lurk late. We
Strike straight. We
Sing sin. We
Thin gin. We
Jazz June. We
Die soon.

LITERARY SELECTION 58

Jews in the Land of Israel

Yehuda Amichai, b. 1924

Perhaps the best known contemporary Israeli poet, Amichai was born in Germany and emigrated to Israel in 1936. He has long struggled with the horrendous Jewish past and the problems of identity in what remains a strange and sunlit land. The translation here is by Assia Gutmann and Harold Schimmer.

We forget where we came from. Our Jewish
Names from the exile reveal us,
Bring up the memory of flower and fruit, medieval cities,
Metals, knights that became stone, roses mostly,
Spices whose smells dispersed, precious stones, much red,
Trades gone from the world.
(The hands, gone too.)

The circumcision does it to us,
Like in the Bible story of Shechem and the sons of Jacob,
With pain all our life. 10

What are we doing here on our return with this pain?
The longings dried up with the swampland,
The desert flowers for us and our children are lovely.
Even fragments of ships, that sunk on the way,
Reached this shore,
Even winds reached. Not all the sails.

What are we doing
In this dark land that casts
Yellow shadows, cutting at the eyes?
(Sometimes, one says even after forty
Years or fifty: "The sun is killing me.") 20

What are we doing with souls of mist, with the names,
With forest eyes, with our lovely children, with swift blood?
Spilt blood isn't roots of trees,
But it's the closest to them
That man has.

THE LITERATURE OF MOVING IMAGES

Motion pictures were developed long before anyone realized their artistic or commercial possibilities. In 1824 Peter Mark Roget, an English scholar, published a paper entitled "The Persistence of Vision with Regard to Moving Objects." The thesis is that the human eye retains an image slightly longer than the image is actually present. Specifically, if sixteen pictures are made of one second of movement, the persistence of vision puts them together to give the illusion of movement. This is the basis of all motion pictures.

Generally considered the dominant medium of the 20th century, motion pictures display interesting paradoxes inherent in the medium. Film uses machines to record images of reality and it combines still photographs to give the illusion of continuous motion. It therefore seems to present images of life itself but it is also used to portray unrealities unapproached even by anyone's wildest dreams.

Film can and should be studied as an art form, but it is a medium that must be experienced, preferably in a theatre with an audience. With very few exceptions movies are made to make money in public showings before a mass audience. "Motion picture industry" is the term generally used to describe corporate enterprises that use a large number of highly skilled people: screenwriter, director, actors, cinematographer, film editor, film scorer, set and costume designers, and many others. Unlike a novel, a film cannot be credited to a single creator. Critics tend to lavish credit on the director as the person in charge but this is only a convention that tends to slight everyone else. One cannot, for example, think of director Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront* without recalling Marlon Brando's masterful performance. In the final analysis no film is better than its literary base, the screenplay itself, for this is where virtually all movies begin.

Movies are a prime mass-entertainment medium the world over and, as commercial enterprises, about 99 percent of them are eminently forgettable. But from the beginning of motion pictures, there have been exceptions, movies that have made an artistic impact and that have withstood the test of time. Usually referred to as film classics, these are works of art that effectively synthesized the efforts of many creators. Following is a list of movies that are generally regarded as true classics. Some, perhaps, are not to everyone's taste, but all are notable works of art and all should be seen, preferably more than once. They are among the best of a new literature that began in this century. Following the standard procedure, credit for the movies is assigned to the directors but, in every case, the viewer should give due credit to all participants, both on and off camera.

Antonioni, Michelangelo. *L'Avventura*. Italy, 1959.
 Bergman, Ingmar. *The Seventh Seal*. Sweden, 1956.
 ——. *Wild Strawberries*. Sweden, 1957.
 ——. *Fanny and Alexander*. Sweden, 1985.
 Buñuel, Luis. *Belle de Jour*. France, 1968.
 Chaplin, Charles. *The Gold Rush*. U.S., 1925.
 Cocteau, Jean. *Beauty and the Beast*. France, 1947.
 DeSica, Vittorio. *The Bicycle Thief*. Italy, 1948.
 Eisenstein, Serge. *Potemkin*. Russia, 1925.
 Fellini, Federico. *La Strada*. Italy, 1954.
 ——. *La Dolce Vita*. Italy, 1959.
 Gance, Abel. *Napoleon*. France, 1925, 1982.
 Griffith, David W. *Intolerance*. U.S., 1916.
 Hitchcock, Alfred. *Vertigo*. U.S., 1958.
 Kazan, Elia. *On the Waterfront*. U.S., 1954.
 Kurosawa, Akira. *Roshomon*. Japan, 1950.
 ——. *Ikiru*. Japan, 1952.
 ——. *Seven Samurai*. Japan, 1954.
 ——. *Ran*. Japan, 1986.
 Lang, Fritz. *M*. Germany, 1931.
 Penn, Arthur. *Bonnie and Clyde*. U.S., 1967.
 Renoir, Jean. *La Grande Illusion*. France, 1938.
 ——. *Rules of the Game*. France, 1939, 1965.
 Truffaut, François. *The 400 Blows*. France, 1959.
 ——. *Jules and Jim*. France, 1961.
 Welles, Orson. *Citizen Kane*. U.S., 1941.
 Wiene, Robert. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. Germany, 1919.
 Wilder, Billy. *Some Like It Hot*. U.S., 1959.

SUMMARY

The time chart for the twentieth century on page 454 provides an overview of our bewildering century of violence and invention. The century has been one of interminable warfare, including the two most destructive wars in human history, but there have also been remarkable technological developments. The Wright brothers flew the first heavier-than-air flying machine in 1903. Thirty-one years later the jet engine was invented and, eighteen years after that, commercial jets were making the world much smaller. Goddard invented the liquid-fuel rocket in 1926, the Russians put Sputnik into orbit thirty-one years later and, twelve years after that, an American astronaut walked on the moon, just sixty-six years after the Wright brothers' flying machine.

Communications technology also developed in a rush. Twelve years after the beginning of commercial television transcontinental television became a reality; a decade later communication satellites were starting to beam television to the entire world. We began to live in a Global Community and hope to evolve into a peaceful community in which human values will be more important than material possessions and national rivalries. High-tech makes this possible, but only human beings can make it a reality.

CULTURE AND HUMAN VALUES

Does literature really matter? Further, are those who read and write morally or ethically superior to those who neither read nor write?

Literature has been manifestly important in every literate culture known to humankind; but whether or not literature makes anyone superior in any way seems to be an arbitrary, even artificial, issue. Non-literate societies are not necessarily morally or ethically inferior to any other culture regardless of the literacy rate.

If literature does not make us better human beings, then what does it do? Does it, as so often stated, conserve the past? The literature of past cultures is, of course, our heritage; but, as is amply demonstrated in this chapter, literature consumes the past as it seeks its own ways to expose and confront the foibles, vanities, and shenanigans of humankind.

The plays of Shakespeare, for example, were subversive; in effect they were dangerous to every aspect of English civilization that had a formal existence: government, religion, societal conventions, and so on. *Waiting for Godot*, in turn, is clearly hostile to every Shakespearean dramatic convention: chronology, character development, and logical plot construction. *Godot* is absurd because it violates all accepted dramatic conventions and, most importantly, because it directly confronts the absurdities seemingly inherent in the human condition.

Catch-22 attacks traditional attitudes about the necessity of warfare. Those who see war as insane can logically refuse to become involved. Anyone, however, who recognizes the insanity of war can still be ordered to fight because he is sane enough to know that warfare is madness—and *that* is *Catch-22*. Joseph Heller's novel is subversive literature; it challenges the whole concept of war as a necessary and proper instrument of national policy.

Most of the literary selections in this unit have targeted war, bigotry, and chauvinism, but what of the rest? Consider again the remarks on page 519 about modern art reflecting the twentieth century. The same statement can be made about modern literature and, to one extent or another, about all the arts.

Artists seem to be more sensitive and articulate (in their medium) than the average person and, one way or another, their era is reflected in their creative output. Though all art is concerned with truth as perceived by the artist, that truth is not always nor necessarily the ugliness of bigotry or war. Literature—and the other arts—can be concerned with such themes as beauty, love, faith, and justice. Our society may be neither better nor worse than a non-literate culture, but our literature certainly helps make it more articulate and much more interesting.



UNIT 10

*Into the
Twenty-First
Century*

The Dawning Second Millennium

People and Events

- 1990 Apartheid ends in South Africa
- 1990 Reunification of Germany
- 1990–1991 The Gulf War follows Iraqi invasion of Kuwait
- 1992 Collapse of communism in former USSR; end of Cold War
- 1992 William J. Clinton elected U.S. president
- 1993 First World Trade Center Bombing (Feb 26)
- 1993 IRA bombing of Hong Kong Bank, London, kills 30 people
- 1993 Waco, Texas standoff between Branch Davidians and FBI
- 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement
- 1994 Mandela elected president of South Africa
- 1995 Bombing of Oklahoma City federal building kills 168
- 1998 Terror attack against U.S. embassies in Tanzania, Kenya
- 1998 Unabomber Theodore Kaczynski sentenced to life in prison
- 1999 Killing spree, Columbine High School, Littleton, Colorado
- 2000 October 12, Al-Qaeda suicide attack on USS Cole; 17 US military killed
- 2000 George W. Bush elected U.S. president over Al Gore
- 2001 Timothy McVeigh executed for Oklahoma City bombing
- 2001 Sept 11 Al-Qaeda attacks against World Trade Center and Pentagon
- 2003 Space Shuttle Columbia explodes on reentry
- 2003 US and Britain led war in Iraq

Literature and Film

- Joy Harjo** 1951– (“Eagle Poem,” 1990)
- August Wilson** 1945– (*Two Trains Running*, 1990)
- Wendy Wasserstein** 1950– (*The Heidi Chronicles*, 1990)
- Thomas Pynchon** 1937– (*Vineland*, 1990)
- Jonathan Demme** 1944– (director, *Silence of the Lambs*, 1991)
- David Mamet** 1947– (*Oleanna*, 1992)
- Tony Kushner** 1956– (*Angels in America*, 1992)
- Jose Rivera** 1955– (*Marisol*, 1992)
- Steven Spielberg** 1946– (director, *Schindler’s List*, 1992)
- Jane Campion** 1954– (director, *The Piano*, 1993)
- Quentin Tarantino** 1963– (director, *Pulp Fiction*, 1994)
- Wislaw Szymborska** 1923– (*View with a Grain of Sand*, 1995)
- Salmon Rushdie** 1947– (*The Moor’s Last Sigh*, 1995)
- Julia Alvarez** 1950– (“Bilingual Sestina,” 1995)
- Eve Ensler** 1953– (*The Vagina Monologues*, 1996)
- Anthony Minghella** 1954– (director, *The English Patient*, 1996)
- Joel Coen** 1954– (director, *Fargo*, 1996)
- David Gewanter** 1954– (“Goya’s ‘The Third of May’, 1808,” 1997)
- Tom Stoppard** 1937– (*The Invention of Love*, 1997)
- Toni Morrison** 1931– (*Paradise*, 1998)
- Isabel Allende** 1942– (*Daughter of Fortune*, 1999)
- Vikram Seth** 1952– (*An Equal Music*, 1999)
- Nadine Gordimer** 1923– (*The Pick Up*, 2000)
- Charles Baxter** 1947– (“Music for Airports,” 2001)
- Billy Collins** 1941– (“The Names,” 2002)

Art, Music, and Dance

- The Guerrilla Girls** (*Do Women have to be Naked to get into the Met Museum?* 1989)
- Lucien Freud** 1922– (*Naked Man, Back View*, 1991–1992)
- Philip Glass** 1937– (*The Voyage*, 1992)
- John Zorn** 1953– (*Masada*, 1994)
- Kiki Smith** 1954– (*Mary Magdalene*, 1994)
- Duane Hanson** 1925–1996 (*The Cowboy*, 1995)
- Nam June Paik** 1932– (*Megatron*, 1995)
- Laurie Anderson** 1947– (*Nerve Bible Tour*, 1995)
- Matthew Bourne** 1960– (choreographer, all male “*Swan Lake*,” 1995)
- Christian Marclay** 1955– (*Amplifications*, 1995)
- Robert Wilson** 1941– (*Monsters of Grace* [with Philip Glass], 1998)
- Ellen Taaffe Zwilch** 1939– (*Millennium Fantasy*, 1998)
- Wynton Marsalis** 1961– (*All Rise*, 1999)
- Twyla Tharp** 1941– (choreographer, *Movin’ Out*, 2002)
- Billy Joel** 1949– (composer, *Movin’ Out*, 2002)

Invention and Science

- 1990 Hubble Telescope launched into space
- 1997 Dolly the sheep is cloned after advances in DNA research
- 1998 Mapping of Human Genome project reaches midpoint
- 1998 Over 150 million people worldwide use the Internet
- 2000 Groundless fears of major computer disruption due to Y2K bug
- 2001 U.N. Kyoto Treaty on global warming (US does not sign)

CHAPTER 31

Crossing Borders: Historical Overview, 1990–2003

The 1990s were years characterized by border crossings. Most obviously, and significantly, they led us into the twenty-first century, crossing the border from one millennium to the next. In addition, the traditional borders between genres—music, film, art, dance, literature, and music—became increasingly blurred, with each discipline increasingly contributing to and becoming part of the others. The continued expansion of travel in the interests of business, politics, and leisure contributed to the sense of a shrinking global village, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union (December 1991) permitted free exploration of parts of the globe formerly forbidden to those living in Western nations. The development and astonishing growth of the World Wide Web allowed easy crossing of cyber-borders to visit intriguing new cultures and worlds of new possibilities, and provided immediate access to information that was formerly difficult or impossible for most people to find.

Of all the themes that emerged to characterize the tenor of the 1990s and beyond, however, one of the most significant seems to be the increasing incidence and impact of terrorism throughout the world.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TERRORISM

Some historians point to the roots of terrorism in such events as the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BC by a group of his former political supporters, or the 1605 Gunpowder Plot to blow up the English parliament and kill the king as a reprisal for the persecution of Roman Catholics. Many, however, point to the Reign of Terror, which was brought on by the French Revolution (1789), as the first example of modern terrorism. Revolutionaries in Russia in 1878–81 were the first group actually to call themselves terrorists. They espoused the idea that they could defeat the Czarist regime through various acts of violence that they hoped would lead to revolution. In 1881, they were successful in killing Czar Alexander II. In the early twentieth century, the best-known and most wide-reaching act of terrorism was the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of

Austria in 1914, which led to the devastation of World War I (1914–18). These examples all suggest assassination as the principal act committed by terrorists. During the second part of the century, terrorism was increasingly used by colonized peoples trying to induce occupying nations, such as Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands, to leave their countries. While terrorism was rarely the main reason for the overthrow of colonial regimes, the era of colonialism was essentially over by the 1960s.

Terrorism, however, did not stop there. South America, Europe, Africa, the Philippines, the Middle East, and the United States all saw an increase of politically motivated bombing, hostage-taking, and kidnappings. For example, between 1974 and 1977, forty-nine bombings were attributed to the Puerto Rican National Liberation Army. A bomb in New York City in 1975 killed four people and injured many others. In addition, in the 1970s, hijacking of planes became a new method for dissidents to express their anger, and during the 1980s the IRA (Irish Republican Army) claimed responsibility for a number of bombings in Great Britain intended to draw attention to their cause.

THE GROWING SIGNIFICANCE OF TERRORISM, 1990–2003

The 1990s saw an escalation in terror events, including the first World Trade Center bombing on February 26, 1993, resulting in six deaths and more than a thousand injuries. Although the man convicted of being behind this plot, Ramzi Yousef, was not then connected with the al-Qaeda terror organization, he was later convicted of conspiring in other plots against the United States with suspected links to al-Qaeda. The leader of al-Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden, who had fought in Afghanistan against the Soviet occupation in the late 1980s and then established a power base there, promoted a policy of terrorism toward any country he believed threatened the way of life of Muslim countries. In October of 1993, he supplied weapons and troops to Somalia, leading to an attack that left eighteen

soldiers dead. In June of 1996, Bin Laden-inspired terrorists exploded a truck bomb at the Khobar Towers Apartments, a billet for U.S. Air Force personnel, killing nineteen and wounding hundreds of others. Again, in August of 1998, truck bombs were used in a terrorist attack against U.S. embassies in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, killing 224. Bin Laden and twenty of his men were indicted for this attack. Of course, the most well-known terrorist event, the one that changed the lives of all United States residents and of many other people around the globe, is the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, carried out by men believed to be al-Qaeda operatives using hijacked passenger planes as weapons of mass destruction.

In addition to threats from international terrorists, during the 1990s the United States suffered attacks from its citizens at home. Most notable were the bombings carried out by Theodore Kaczynski, the so-called Unabomber, and the Oklahoma City bombing, planned and executed by Timothy McVeigh. Kaczynski began his relentless campaign against what he believed to be the evils of modern business, technology, and government in 1978. In the 1990s, his attacks grew in frequency, until he was finally arrested in 1996 and sentenced to life imprisonment. McVeigh, a member of an anarchist group strongly opposed to the United States government, exploded a car bomb outside a federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995, killing 168 people. He was executed in 2001.

Terrorism in the 1990s played a significant role in many countries. In Great Britain, for instance, the IRA bombing of the Hong Kong Bank in London in 1993 wounded more than thirty people; what was termed the “IRA London Bombing Blitz” in 1996 destroyed an office block in a London financial district and left one hundred people wounded. The increasing hostility between Palestinians and Israel has also been marked by acts of terror, particularly the suicide bombings by members of Hamas, which have greatly escalated in the first years of the twenty-first century. These bombings and the subsequent reprisals by the Israeli army have left thousands of Israelis and Palestinians dead or wounded.

RELIGION, 1990–2003

The years of the turning century saw contrasting extremes in the fortunes of the world’s religions. The Roman Catholic Church, already facing pressure to ordain women, was confronted with the scandal of sexual abuse perpetrated by members of its clergy on children and young adults. At the same time, the church also worked tirelessly to carry out its agenda of peace and social justice, particularly in South America. While mainstream denominations saw declining congregations, fundamentalist organizations saw vast growth. Groups such as the Branch Davidians, led by David Koresh, raised heated controversy,

which sometimes led to violent action. It was also often fundamentalist religious groups, through their missionary programs, who worked to bring modern medical care and literacy to Third World nations.

While many mainstream Muslim leaders spoke out against the increasingly violent interpretation of the Koran by fundamentalists, some Middle Eastern nations experienced the imposition of extremely repressive religious laws, a tendency most dramatically represented by the treatment of the citizens of Afghanistan—and particularly of Afghan women—under the rule of the Taliban.

SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENTS: CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES

Global Warming

Controversial environmental issues, especially the threat of global warming, were debated even more vigorously in the period. In 1990, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), set up by the United Nations in 1988, published its first report, strongly urging the reduction of emissions of such substances as carbon dioxide and chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), which they believed contributed to the “greenhouse effect,” the name given to the disturbance of the protective layer of gases that protects the earth from the effects of solar radiation. At the Earth Summit in Brazil, in 1992, 142 nations, including the United States, signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, pledging adherence to a voluntary program intended to stabilize greenhouse-gas emissions at 1990 levels.

By 1995, when the commission released its second report, the member scientists issued an ominous warning that human action was having a “discernible” negative influence on the global climate. In 1997, at a conference in Japan, members of the United Nations Framework Convention began work on the Kyoto Protocol, a treaty requiring signatory nations to reduce air pollution. In 2001 it was completed, with the Convention noting that the Third Assessment Report from the IPCC (2000) documented even more fully the deleterious impact of human behavior on global warming. To date, the United States has not signed this treaty, although the government is under considerable pressure from other nations to do so.

The Human Genome Project and Cloning

Some of the most controversial scientific developments in the past decade related to the Human Genome Project. A major goal of the project was DNA sequencing, that is, mapping the precise order of chemicals that comprise the

DNA in the twenty-four distinct human chromosomes. Scientists working on the project believed that enormous benefits could come from their research. Examples include:

- Earlier detection of genetic conditions such as Alzheimer’s disease and familial breast and colon cancer.
- Learning more about risks to humans from such experiences as exposure to radiation or suspected carcinogenic agents.
- Developing more fully forensic applications such as the identification of criminals and the exoneration of those wrongly accused of crimes.
- Breeding healthier and more productive livestock.

Of course, these positive applications also raise moral and ethical questions, such as the following:

- Confidentiality: There are fears, for example, that if genetic predisposition to a fatal illness were known, individuals might be discriminated against by employers and insurance companies.
- Psychological impact: Researchers cannot know what the effect of learning of predisposition to a fatal illness might be on an individual.
- Education: Medical professionals will need to be trained so that they fully understand the complexity of DNA research and its applications.
- Reproductive issues: DNA research may lead to the demand for children with “designer genes,” specially created to suit prospective parents’ wishes.
- Health and safety concerns: We cannot be sure that genetically modified plants and livestock will be safe for human consumption or how their cultivation will affect the environment.

Cloning, which has been made possible through the Human Genome Project, is a complex process that involves copying genes, as well as other pieces of chromosomes, so that identical material can be produced. In some cases, cloning can actually produce genetically identical animals which contain DNA from both a mother and a father. However, the most famous example to date, Dolly the Sheep (fig. 31.1), who was created in 1997, came from a type of cloning that uses the DNA of only one parent.

Since the creation of Dolly, scientists have used the same technique to produce other animals. Many hope that what is learned from this process will some day promote understanding of how individual organs are produced not only in animals, but also in humans. Some scientists think that the production of new organs to replace damaged ones may become possible in the future. In addition, some believe that an understanding of how cells work in the cloning process may lead to a greater understanding of the behavior of cancer cells and to the ability to prevent or cure certain cancers.

The ethical issues raised by cloning include questions relating to the possibility of cloning humans. What might be the implications of producing identical humans? Should the cloning of humans be permitted for the purpose of “organ harvesting”? Would personality and character qualities be the same in clones as in the original? What about the various religions who oppose human



31.1 Dolly the sheep

cloning on the moral ground that such creation should be the province of God alone?

Stem-Cell Research

Stem cells are unspecialized cells that do not, in their original form, have a particular function in the body of an animal or human. However, through certain processes that have been discovered during the past decade, they can be “directed” to take on the functions of other cells such as those in the heart muscle or the pancreas. Because of this capability, scientists believe that in the future they could be used to treat and even to cure serious conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, Parkinson’s disease, and Alzheimer’s disease.

Although there are many ethical issues related to this kind of research, perhaps the most controversial concerns the use of embryonic stem cells. Many scientists believe that it is imperative to do research using the latter, which may be gathered from aborted fetuses or from embryos stored, but no longer wanted, by parents attempting in vitro fertilization. On the other hand, others believe that it is unethical to exploit human embryos in this way, even if significant medical and scientific advancement might result. It is argued that the embryos are full human beings and that the rights of other human subjects of medical and scientific experiments should therefore be extended to them too.

CHAPTER 32

Art: Moving into the Twenty-First Century

As we look at art in the 1990s and the first years of the twenty-first century, border-crossing continues as a dominant theme. What stands out are the great variety of artistic styles and the constantly changing definitions of genres, as well as a return by some artists to traditional genres, such as realism. Technology has had a great impact on art, raising questions about the way art is created and preserved. Some genres such as performance art are deliberately fleeting, being performed once and never again being precisely duplicated.

Another issue related to art that has become more prominent recently is censorship. For example, in 1990, an exhibit of photographs, *Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Image*, raised a huge controversy because of its inclusion



32.1 Robert Mapplethorpe, *Self-Portrait*, 1980. Unique gelatin silver print, 30 × 30". Collection, Howard and Suzanne Feldman. © 1980 Estate of Robert Mapplethorpe.

of homosexual images. As a result, the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, and its director were indicted on obscenity charges. Although they were finally acquitted, the trial outlined conflicts that were to be a growing part of this decade. During the controversy, *Newsweek* magazine printed Mapplethorpe's 1980 *Self-Portrait* (fig. 32.1), a photograph that suggests the artist's interest in border-crossing in terms of sexual and gender identities.

Another example of a censorship challenge came in 1999 when the mayor of New York City attempted to close the Brooklyn Museum because one of the paintings in an exhibit by British artists showed the Virgin Mary with a small lump of elephant dung on one breast. Legal action and extensive media attention led to the revelation that the artist was descended from a culture in Africa where elephant dung was believed to hold mystical power and that no offense to Christianity was intended. This case raised not only issues of censorship, but also questions related to the increasingly multicultural nature of art and of the possible perspectives on the art experience.

NEW ARTISTS, OLD TRADITIONS

Many turn-of-the-century artists look to old traditions as they create their works. The renewed interest in figurative painting, as well as the return to realism, exemplify this trend.

Lucien Freud, b. 1922

This British artist and grandson of Sigmund Freud, father of modern-day psychoanalysis, pays homage to the tradition of working with images, particularly in the paintings of nudes for which he is best known. His works insist that the viewer take an honest look at the frailty and mortality suggested by the human body. *Naked Man, Back View* (fig. 32.2) shows a figure impressive in its bulk, yet also vulner-



32.2 Lucien Freud. *Naked Man, Back View*, 1991–92. Oil on canvas, 6' × 4'6". The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

able in its openness. Both artist and model accept the risks inherent in realism, as well as the power that can come from showing the body without artifice.

Duane Hanson, 1925–96

Hanson, an American artist who worked in the *trompe-l'oeil* tradition, created sculptures that are so realistic they are frequently mistaken by viewers for actual, living people. He combined the Photorealist tradition with the use of contemporary materials, as illustrated by his 1995 work *The Cowboy* (fig. 32.3). Hanson created this sculpture by making molds, assembling them, and filling them with polyester resin, reinforced with fiberglass. After the resin had set, the molds were removed and the sculpture was painted. The clothing is real, selected to be typical of the gear worn by a late-twentieth-century cowboy. The figure looks tired and worn. The slight growth of beard suggests that his work day may be through and that he has paused, briefly, to gather his thoughts before stowing the bridle he holds in his right hand.

ART AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES

New technologies, particularly the rapidly advancing computer technology of the past decade, have led to the crossing of ever-new boundaries. Artists can now use computers to revise old images or to create new ones. In addition, video/audio installations often fascinate viewers with their constantly changing images and sounds. Performance artists meanwhile combine such new technologies to facilitate their creations.



32.3 Duane Hanson, *The Cowboy*, 1995. Polyester resin polychromed in oil, life-sized.

**AWAIT PIC.
Reuse Fiero, 4e
Fig. 38.24, p. 973.**

32.4 Nam June Paik, *Megatron*, 1995. 215 monitors, 8-channel color video and 2-channel sound, left side 142½ × 270 × 23½"; right side 128 × 128 × 23½" Guggenheim Soho. Courtesy the artist and Holly Solomon Gallery, New York.

Nam June Paik, b. 1932

Born in Korea, Nam June Paik began shaping the medium of video art in the 1960s. His electronic installations are considered among the most impressive of this genre. For example, his 1995 piece *Megatron* (fig. 32.4) uses 215 monitor screens, programmed to show animated images that change at lightning speed. The result is a dazzling, ever-moving collage juxtaposing images of the flags of many nations interspersed with clips from rock concerts, moments from the Seoul Olympics, and nudes from popular Western magazines. Across the multiple images flies the single giant image of a graceful, mystical bird, which seems to suggest a strange connection between the apparently sharply contrasting and disconnected smaller images. Viewers are also constantly bombarded by the blaring syncopation of a two-channel audio track.

FEMINIST ART

The later years of the twentieth century have brought a great increase in art that asks the viewer not only to note the contributions of women, but also to consider controversies related to gender issues. The highly politicized genre of feminist art began in the 1970s, most notably with Judy Chicago's 1979 installation *The Dinner Party*, which comprised a large, triangular table with places

set for thirty-nine notable women ranging from Queen Hatshepsut of ancient Egypt to twentieth-century painter Georgia O'Keeffe. In the years leading into the twenty-first century, feminist art became increasingly visible, both in museums and in less traditional venues.

The Guerrilla Girls

This group first started its work in 1985 in response to an exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art where fewer than 10 percent of the artists represented were women. Rumored to consist of a number of well-known artists, performers, filmmakers, and their supporters, these women keep their identity secret by wearing gorilla masks—creating a visual pun on their name—whenever they appear in public. In their attempts to expose and attack racism and sexism, they have produced more than eighty posters and printed projects, and are expanding their membership and visibility as we move into the twenty-first century. Though the traditional art world has often come under attack in their work, Guerrilla Girls posters are now found in many museums and their projects have been funded by art councils. One of their best-



32.5 The Guerrilla Girls, Poster, "Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?"



32.6 Christian Marclay, *Amplifications*, 1995. Ink-jet prints on cotton scrim, found photographs, as installed at S. Stae Church, Venice. Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

known posters (fig. 32.5) challenges the Metropolitan Museum in New York, asking humorously whether the only way women can be recognized in the work exhibited there is through the traditional genre of the painted female

nude. Using street theatre and billboards as well as posters and installations to project their messages, this group of artists crosses many borders.

ART OF TRANSCENDENCE

While the art of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries often challenges tradition, the eternal questions still remain vital. A stunning example of the way art can suggest and explore the transcendent dimension of life can be found in Christian Marclay's work. In *Amplifications* (fig. 32.6), he uses photographs that had been discarded or abandoned by their original owners, and sold at rummage sales or second-hand stores for a few dollars. Marclay has enlarged and printed the images of the people in these photographs on translucent fabric; the figures are distinguished there not by their individual identities, but rather by the connection Marclay has discovered between them: each is playing an instrument, and Marclay has joined them together so that they create a music we cannot hear, except in the heart. It is fitting that this work is displayed at S. Stae church in Venice, serving the function of a traditional stained-glass window, where light shines through sacred figures to illuminate worshipers in contemplation.

STUDY QUESTION

Do research, including web searches, to see other works by artists named in this section and to find further information about one particular artist of your choice. Then explain why you think the work of this particular artist, more than that of the others in this section, should be chosen for a display of contemporary art at a museum in your city or town.

CHAPTER 33

Music and Dance in the Twenty-First Century

The composer John Adams, who began writing music in the 1970s, commented in 1996: “I think we’re in an interesting *fin-de-siècle* situation right now, in that we’re all intuitively aware that we’re coming to the end of a century and also a millennium . . . composers are looking forward, but also very much looking backward, sort of summing up many of the developments of the past sixty to one hundred years.” Adams’ comment suggests that borders were crossed and clear lines of demarcation in style and genre blurred in the 1990s and the first years of the twenty-first century. Composers and choreographers looked back to what had gone before, and moved ahead into new territory by integrating earlier forms into their work and discovering new ways of creating sound and movement. Musicians and composers used unconventional instruments, even creating compositions with objects found in nature, such as pebbles, drops of water, and dried leaves. The music of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries also crossed borders through increased integration of non-Western elements, such as rhythms from African, Malaysian, and Caribbean music, and aspects of Asian micro-tonal music (which uses intervals that are smaller than those traditional to Western music).

MUSIC

The composers whose work is described in this section are only a small sample of the musicians who are shaping contemporary music.

Ellen Taaffee Zwilch, b. 1939

Considered one of the leading composers in the United States, Ellen Taaffee Zwilch was the first woman to be awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Music (1983). She has composed in nearly all musical genres, with the exception of opera. Her work is particularly noted for its spirit of optimism. While always looking to the future, Zwilch’s com-

positions often draw on older periods and styles such as the Baroque. In 1995, she was appointed to Carnegie Hall’s first Composer’s Chair, and was named Composer of the Year in 1999 by *Musical America*. In 1998, she was commissioned by twenty-seven orchestras throughout the United States to compose *Millennium Fantasy*, a twenty-minute, two-movement piece for piano and orchestra which she based on a folksong learned from her grandmother. Zwilch said of the work: “I was thinking about how different the world was at the end of the nineteenth century as compared to the twentieth century,” noting that the composition did not have sharply defined beginnings and endings, but is rather “a continuous work.”

John Zorn, b. 1953

Zorn, a composer and saxophone player, embodies the spirit of the new millennium, in part because his work encompasses so many genres, often blurring the boundaries between them. He has composed for symphony orchestras, as well as for jazz ensembles, rock bands, and film scores. His music has often been characterized as aggressive, confronting the listener with new, challenging, and insistent sounds. His work includes performance art that emphasizes the visual as well as the audio: for example, in each performance of “Game Piece,” musicians play a kind of game whereby the composition is created through improvised movements and sounds; there is no set score for this 1980s work. Zorn’s earlier work was exemplified by pieces such as “Snagglepuss” (composed in 1989), a two-minute-fifteen-second juxtaposition of sharply contrasting sounds. It moves in a fast-paced, fragmented way, so that, while it demonstrates jazz influence, it consciously avoids the unity of most jazz compositions. The following sound description by Garth Alper, Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Louisiana, of the first forty-six seconds of “Snagglepuss” suggests both its playful qualities and its rapid, sharp transitions:

Seconds into work	Description
1–2	loud, honking free jazz
3–10	syncopated funk with synthesized clarinet
10–14	group anarchy
15	guitar slide
15.5	piano chord
16	saxophone mouthpiece squawk
17–18	fast swing (drums only)
18–19	electric bass solo
19–23	fast free jazz
23–27	atonal solo piano
28–29	blues shuffle
40–41	drum solo
42	strummed bass guitar
43	“wolf whistle” on guitar
44	piano glissando
45–46	NBC audio logo

From “Making Sense Out of Postmodern Music?”, *Popular Music and Society*, Winter 2000, Vol. 24, Issue 4, p. 12.

In 1994, Zorn began work on a prodigious musical project. Called “Masada,” it comprises more than two hundred short compositions and it represents Zorn’s exploration of Jewish tradition. In this work, he combines elements of jazz with Eastern and Middle Eastern music, Klezmer with Mahler’s symphonies and pop music to evoke the Jewish heritage and spirit. Zorn is also increasingly recognized for his compositions for classical performers such as the Kronos Quartet and the New York Philharmonic.

Wynton Marsalis, b. 1961

Recognized as one of the most outstanding artists and composers of the past decade, Marsalis is serving as Artistic Director of Jazz at the Lincoln Center in Manhattan. His early training emphasized classical music as much as jazz, and he is the only artist ever to be given Grammy awards for both jazz and classical work in the same year. In 1995 Marsalis won the Pulitzer Prize for Music for his epic oratorio *Blood on the Fields*. His powerful and highly acclaimed symphony, *All Rise*, had its premiere by the New York Philharmonic in 1999. Here, Marsalis met the challenge of writing for classical players, who work together in an orchestra very differently from the way jazz instrumentalists do. Marsalis integrated into the composition such disparate elements as standard twelve-bar blues and Chinese parade music. Intended by its composer to celebrate the new century, *All Rise* had its Los Angeles premiere only two days after the tragedy of September 11, 2001, when the composition’s themes of unity and spiritual ascendance seemed appropriate to honor the courage, sorrow, and hope which were so much a part of that event.

DANCE

Dance at the close of the old century and the beginning of the new shows elements of both the traditional and the experimental, sometimes in intriguing juxtaposition. The following examples only begin to suggest the amazing variety of contemporary dance.

“Swan Lake”

Using Tchaikovsky’s (see p. 422) original score, in 1995 choreographer Matthew Bourne produced a radical version of the nineteenth-century ballet “Swan Lake.” Rather than ethereal ballerinas in delicate costumes, Bourne’s version featured an all-male *corps de ballet*, muscular, bare-chested dancers dressed only in feathered trousers. Rather than a romantic dream, the ballet features the homoerotic seduction of a young prince, and the Black Swan pas de deux takes place between two men, not a man and a woman. Elements of satire, some directed at the British royal family, others at the clichés of nineteenth-century romantic ballet, are interwoven with a serious, dark vision that evokes nightmarish images of brutality. While clearly taking great risks, Bourne was widely praised for his creative vision, and this work is already regarded as a watershed moment in the history of dance.

“Movin’ Out”

Twyla Tharp’s choreography to accompany Billy Joel’s “Uptown Girl” suggests multiple border crossings. Tharp has always been noted for her irreverence toward genre boundaries and such classifications as “pop” and “classical.” Working with the movements and rhythms of social dance, as well as ballet, tap, jazz, and modern, she has become a seminal figure of the late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century dance world. When she choreographed “Push Comes to Shove” (1975) for Mikhail Baryshnikov, she integrated the music of Mozart with the jazz rhythms of Scott Joplin, and her 2002 work with the music of pop composer Joel once again blurs boundaries between high and popular art. “Movin’ Out” has no scenes or dialogue, but it does have a narrative, following a group of young men and women through the 1960s and early 1970s, the turbulent years of Vietnam and of the counter-culture of that time. It includes a wide variety of kinds of dance, from soft ballet, with slow, sensuous moves, to quirky shrugs and twitches that build to powerful, even violent, lunges and leaps.

CHAPTER 34

Literature For The New Century

The concept of crossing borders certainly applies to contemporary literature. In fiction, poetry, drama, and film, challenges to traditional forms and subjects, begun during the earlier decades of the twentieth century, have continued to flourish. In addition, however, strong elegiac notes have become increasingly audible, as did a sense of looking back. In his 1922 essay “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” T.S. Eliot calls for the valuing of what has gone before: “We need an eye which can see the past in its place with its defined differences from the present, and yet so lively that it shall be as present to us as the present.” While perhaps not in the exact ways Eliot imagined, late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century writers, directors, and actors have connected to literary traditions, while at the same time breaking new ground, always staying aware of the stunning changes and exigencies that comprise modern life.

FICTION, POETRY, DRAMA, AND FILM

Taboos, such as restrictions on language related to sexuality or on the exploration of painful topics such as slavery and the oppression of minorities, have received increasing attention. Many works written by authors who are not part of white American culture or by women are finding their way into print and onto the stage and screen far more often than in the past and are even becoming part of the accepted literary canon. Structure in the novel, drama, film, and poetry may take many non-traditional forms. However, it is important to note that in the last years of the century, there was also a movement toward the revival of metrical poetry and of forms such as the sonnet, sestina, and villanelle. In fiction, in short stories and novels as well as drama and film, time sequence is increasingly non-chronological. For example, flashbacks to different times and places, often occurring many times within a short section or chapter, suggest disjunction and confusion, which are typical themes of recent works. While there are still many novels, plays, and films that follow more traditional formats, a lot of works now purposely create a lack of coherence, challenging readers’ expectations, and leading

not toward a resolved ending, but rather toward ambiguity and uncertainty.

Novels that reflect the diversity of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries include—but are certainly not limited to—the following:

Vineland by Thomas Pynchon, 1990
The Moor’s Last Sigh by Salman Rushdie, 1995
Paradise by Toni Morrison, 1998
Daughter of Fortune by Isabella Allende, 1999
An Equal Music by Vikram Seth, 1999
The Pick Up by Nadine Gordimer, 2000

In the world of theater, small venues, such as the off-Broadway or off-off-Broadway theaters in New York and the regional theaters that are coming to life at an encouraging rate, often present the works of new playwrights. The directors of these theaters are often willing to take risks that larger, more well-established theaters may be unwilling—or unable, for financial reasons—to take. In the world of film, the independent filmmakers, now aided by the advent of relatively inexpensive digital video, play an equivalent role to that of the little theaters. They are able to pursue edgy themes and topical subjects, and use unexpected, sometimes startling, staging or camera work. In addition, such innovations as non-traditional casting often bring new perspective to classics. For instance, in 1998, the Shakespeare Theater in Washington, D.C. cast the white actor Patrick Stewart as Othello, while all other cast members were African American, thus putting the racial issues in the play into a startling, new framework (fig. 34.1).

Plays that reflect the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries include—but are certainly not limited to—the following:

The Heidi Chronicles by Wendy Wasserstein, 1990
Angels in America by Tony Kushner, 1992
Oleanna by David Mamet, 1992
Marisol by Jose Rivera, 1992
The Invention of Love by Tom Stoppard, 1997
Two Trains Running by August Wilson, 1990
The Vagina Monologues by Eve Ensler, 1996
Ballad of Yachiyo by Philip Kan Gotanda, 1998



34.1 Patrick Stewart as Othello. © Carol Rosegg.

Films that reflect the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries include—but are certainly not limited to—the following:

- Silence of the Lambs*, directed by Jonathan Demme, 1991
- Schindler's List*, directed by Steven Spielberg, 1992
- The Piano*, directed by Jane Campion, 1993
- Pulp Fiction*, directed by Quentin Tarantino, 1994
- The English Patient*, directed by Anthony Minghella, 1996
- Fargo*, directed by Joel Coen, 1996
- Chicago*, directed by Rob Marshall, 2002

While many editorials and essays have appeared recently decrying the demise of reading in general and the loss of an audience for poetry especially, there are signs that challenge that perception. For instance, shortly after Robert Pinsky was named Poet Laureate of the United States in 1997, he instituted the “Favorite Poem Project,” which, during the one-year call for submissions, generated responses from more than eighteen thousand Americans. From this project have come two anthologies, a video, an award-winning website, and a database, all of which have

been greeted with widespread enthusiasm and have encouraged schools, libraries, and community centers—as well as private individuals—to read, think about, and discuss poetry.

Another innovative project that has brought poetry into the lives of many is the Poetry in Motion Program, started in 1992 by the Poetry Society of America and the MTA of New York City. This program, inspired by a similar one in London, places poems in subway cars and buses in spaces usually filled by advertising. The program, which has now spread to fourteen cities, is estimated to reach more than thirteen million people daily.

The poetry itself is incredibly diverse and cannot, of course, be adequately represented by the few samples here. However, the strongly multicultural nature of current poetry, as well as the range of forms, is suggested by the selections that follow.

SUMMARY

The last decade of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first century have witnessed dramatic changes in Western culture. From the affluent and deceptively peaceful 1990s, we moved into the economic disarray and escalating terrorism of the 2000s. The events of September 11, 2001 left their mark not only on the political and economic spectrum, but also on the arts and humanities.

Art, music, dance, and literature have all been strongly impacted by the dazzling advances in technology. In addition, growing awareness of the contributions made by many diverse cultures to Western civilization has resulted in the increased recognition of new artists, composers, dancers, and writers and in greater appreciation of their work.

Most of all, these years have been times of border crossings, when the demarcation between “high” and “low” culture and the boundaries between genres have been challenged and questioned.

LITERARY SELECTION 59

The Names

Billy Collins

On September 5, 2002, Billy Collins, Poet Laureate of the United States, read this poem before a joint session of Congress, held in New York City to honor the victims and heroes of the 9/11 plane bombing of the World Trade Center Towers. The poem is modern in its subject matter, yet uses the traditional pattern of alphabetical order to give structure to the images.

Yesterday, I lay awake in the palm of the night.
 A fine rain stole in, unhelped by any breeze,
 And when I saw the silver glaze on the windows,
 I started with A, with Ackerman, as it happened,
 Then Baxter and Calabro,
 Davis and Eberling, names falling into place
 As droplets fell through the dark.

Names printed on the ceiling of the night.
 Names slipping around a watery bend.
 Twenty-six willows on the banks of a stream.

In the morning, I walked out barefoot
 Among thousands of flowers
 Heavy with dew like the eyes of tears,
 And each had a name—
 Fiori inscribed on a yellow petal
 Then Gonzalez and Han, Ishikawa and Jenkins.
 Names written in the air
 And stitched into the cloth of the day.
 A name under a photograph taped to a mailbox.
 Monogram on a torn shirt,
 I see you spelled out on storefront windows
 And on the bright unfurled awnings of this city.
 I say the syllables as I turn a corner—
 Kelly and Lee,
 Medina, Nardella, and O'Connor.

When I peer into the woods,
 I see a thick tangle where letters are hidden
 As in a puzzle concocted for children.
 Parker and Quigley in the twigs of an ash,
 Rizzo, Schubert, Torres, and Upton,
 Secrets in the boughs of an ancient maple.

Names written in the pale sky.
 Names rising in the updraft amid buildings.
 Names silent in stone
 Or cried out behind a door.
 Names blown over the earth and out to sea.

In the evening—weakening light, the last swallows.
 A boy on a lake lifts his oars.
 A woman by a window puts a match to a candle,
 And the names are outlined on the rose clouds—
 Vanacore and Wallace,
 (let X stand, if it can, for the ones unfound)
 Then Young and Ziminsky, the final jolt of Z.

Names etched on the head of a pin.
 One name spanning a bridge, another undergoing a tunnel.
 A blue name needled into the skin.
 Names of citizens, workers, mothers and fathers,
 The bright-eyed daughter, the quick son.
 Alphabet of names in green rows in a field.
 Names in the small tracks of birds.
 Names lifted from a hat
 Or balanced on the tip of the tongue.
 Names wheeled into the dim warehouse of memory.
 So many names, there is barely room on the walls of the heart.

LITERARY SELECTION 60

Goya's "The Third of May, 1808"

David Gewanter, b. 1954

This poem, which reflects on a painting by Francisco de Goya (1746–1828) depicting the artist's response to Napoleon's invasion and conquest of Spain (see p. 429), suggests how a work that appears to focus on the past can, in fact, contain images and themes that are frighteningly applicable to the world today.

I'll show you:
 onto the dirt-grey
 canvas he's smeared—
 jam on bread—
 a sticky red for blood
 oozed from the broken
 heads and shot-up bodies
 heaped near the cowering group
 agape at soldiers hunched above
 their knived rifles.
 The air is oil-black,
 smokeless, the whole scene
 painted right before the guns
 report, and more killed;
 see the soldiers bend
 in careful aim, bent
 like mothers nursing—
 one geometry of care:
 exact angle for Madonna,
 for men aiming murder—
 and yet suspended,
 'the crisis held up for us
 to observe at leisure—
 in "The Resurrection" by
 Grünewald, think how Christ
 has bolted from his tomb,
 rising, splendid,
 while blinded soldiers
 hurl themselves down,
 never landing—
 all are trapped in place:
 one can't reach heaven,
 the others never fall—
 and here, before the dull wedge
 representing *hill*,
 one of Goya's victims
 raises his arms up,
 waiting always—
 you know him, his shirt
 blank as a page—
 here, hand me a butterknife
 to scrape with, I'll show you how
 he painted bullets
 inside the painted guns.

LITERARY SELECTION 61
The Power of Language
Toni Morrison, b. 1931

Both the challenges to taboos and the building on traditional forms that characterize recent literature suggest the growing attention given to the nuances and significance of language. In this final selection representing the 1990s and beyond, Toni Morrison, in the lecture she gave after being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1992, offers her views on the power of language, both for good and for evil.

The vitality of language lies in its ability to limn the actual, imagined and possible lives of its speakers, readers, writers. Although its poise is sometimes in displacing experience, it is not a substitute for it. It arcs toward the place where meaning may lie. When a President of the United States thought about the graveyard his country had become, and said, “The world will little note nor long remember what we say here. But it will never forget what they did here,” his simple words are exhilarating in their life-sustaining properties because they refused to encapsulate the reality of 600,000 dead men in a cataclysmic race war. Refusing to monumentalize, disdaining the “final word,” the precise “summing up,” acknowledging their “poor power to add or detract,” his words signal deference to the uncapturability of the life it mourns. ... Language can never “pin down” slavery, genocide, war. Nor should it yearn for the arrogance to be able to do so. Its force, its felicity is in its reach toward the ineffable.

Be it grand or slender, burrowing, blasting, or refusing to sanctify; whether it laughs out loud or is a cry without an alphabet, the choice word, the chosen silence, unmolested language surges toward knowledge, not its destruction. But who does not know of literature banned because it is interrogative; discredited because it is critical; erased because

alternate? And how many are outraged by the thought of a self-ravaged tongue? ...

The systematic looting of language can be recognized by the tendency of its users to forgo its nuanced, complex, mid-wifery properties for menace and subjugation. Oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence; does more than represent the limits of knowledge; it limits knowledge. Whether it is obscuring state language or the faux-language of mindless media; whether it is the proud but calcified language of the academy or the commodity driven language of science; whether it is the malign language of law-without-ethics, or language designed for the estrangement of minorities, hiding its racist plunder in its literary cheek—it must be rejected, altered and exposed. It is the language that drinks blood, laps vulnerabilities, tucks its fascist boots under crinolines of respectability and patriotism as it moves relentlessly toward the bottom line and the bottomed-out mind. Sexist language, racist language, theistic language—all are typical of the policing languages of mastery, and cannot, do not permit new knowledge or encourage the mutual exchange of ideas.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. In the second paragraph, Morrison states that both “the choice word” or “the chosen silence” can lead to knowledge. What do you think she means by “the chosen silence”? Do you agree that it can be as powerful as choosing to speak? Explain.
 2. In the third paragraph, Morrison gives many examples of what she calls “oppressive language.” Choose one of her examples and explain why you agree or disagree with her that this language leads to “menace and subjugation.” Provide examples from your own experiences, observations, and reading to support the points you are making.
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