

# GLBT Literature



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## glbt literature: words of wisdom from glbt authors

These quotations are culled from 4,000 years of GLBT writing. They are **organized alphabetically by author**; the date given below each quotation on the right-hand side indicates when it appeared on the Website (and previously in the [Reading Group](#) newsletter). PLEASE NOTE that I am now adding quotations on an occasional basis, and not by month/year. Enjoy!

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### ***allison on categorization***



Class, race, sexuality, gender — and all other categories by which we categorize and dismiss each other — need to be excavated from the inside.

**Dorothy Allison** (b. 1949), US author and lesbian feminist. From *Skin* (1994).

*February 2003*

### ***auden on melville***



**"Herman Melville"**  
**(written in March 1939)**  
**– complete poem**

Towards the end he sailed into an extraordinary mildness.

And anchored in his home and reached his  
wife  
And rode within the harbour of her hand,  
And went across each morning to an office  
As though his occupation were another  
island.

Goodness existed: that was the new  
knowledge.  
His terror had to blow itself quite out  
To let him see it; but it was the gale had  
blown him  
Past the Cape Horn of sensible success  
Which cries: 'This rock is Eden. Shipwreck  
here.'

But deafened him with thunder and  
confused with lightning:  
– The maniac hero hunting like a jewel  
The rare ambiguous monster that had  
maimed his sex.  
Hatred for hatred ending in a scream,  
The unexplained survivor breaking off the  
nightmare -  
All that was intricate and false; the truth  
was simple.

Evil is unspectacular and always human,  
And shares our bed and eats at our own  
table,  
And we are introduced to Goodness every  
day,  
Even in drawing-rooms among a crowd of  
faults;  
He has a name like Billy and is almost  
perfect,  
But wears a stammer like a decoration:  
And every time they meet the same thing  
has to happen;  
It is the Evil that is helpless like a lover  
And has to pick a quarrel and succeeds,  
And both are openly destroyed before our  
eyes.

For now he was awake and knew  
No one is ever spared except in dreams;  
But there was something else the nightmare  
had distorted –  
Even the punishment was human and a  
form of love:  
The howling storm had been his father's  
presence

And all the time he had been carried on his father's breast.

Who now had set him gently down and left him.

He stood upon the narrow balcony and listened:

And all the stars above him sang as in his childhood

'All, all is vanity,' but it was not the same;  
For now the words descended like the calm of mountains –

– Nathaniel had been shy because his love was selfish –

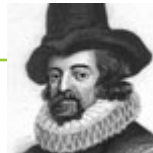
Reborn, he cried in exultation and surrender  
'The Godhead is broken like bread. We are the pieces.'

And sat down at his desk and wrote a story.

**W.H. Auden** (1907–1973), UK/US poet, playwright, and critic.

*March 2002 (1 of 2 selections)*

### ***bacon on friendship***



"[I]t is a mere and miserable solitude to want true friends, without which the world is but a wilderness; and even in this scene also of solitude, whosoever in the frame of his nature and affections is unfit for friendship, he taketh it of the beast, and not from humanity. A principal fruit of friendship is the ease and discharge of the fulness of the heart, which passions of all kinds do cause and induce. We know diseases of stoppings and suffocations are the most dangerous in the body; and it is not much otherwise in the mind: you may take sarza to open the liver, steel to open the spleen, flower of sulphur for the lungs, castoreum for the brain; but no receipt openeth the heart but a true friend, to whom you may impart griefs, joys, fears, hopes, suspicions, counsels, and whatsoever lieth upon the heart to oppress it, in a kind of civil shrift or confession.... Certainly if a man would give it a hard phrase, those that want friends to open themselves unto, are cannibals of their own

hearts; but one thing is most admirable (wherewith I will conclude this first fruit of friendship) which is, that this communicating of a man's self to his friend worketh two contrary effects, for it redoubleth joys, and cutteth griefs in halves; for there is no man that imparteth his joys to his friend, but he joyeth the more, and no man that imparteth his griefs to his friend, but he grieveth the less."

**Francis Bacon** (Viscount Saint Alban, Baron of Verulam) (1561–1626), English philosopher, statesman, jurist; helped develop the scientific method of problem solving. From *Essay 27, Of Friendship* (c. 1597).

May 2004

### ***baldwin on expatriates***



Voyagers discover that the world can never be larger than the person that is in the world; but it is impossible to foresee this, it is impossible to be warned.

**James Baldwin** (1924–1987), US novelist, playwright, essayist. From "The New Lost Generation," in *Esquire* (New York, July 1961); referring to his self-imposed "exile" in Paris.

November 2002

### ***barthes on passion***



To hide a passion totally (or even to hide, more simply, its excess) is inconceivable: not because the human subject is too weak, but because passion is in essence made to be seen: the hiding must be seen: I want you to know that I am hiding something from you, that is the active paradox I must resolve: at one and the same time it must be known and not known: I want you to know that I don't want to show my feelings: that is the

message I address to the other.

**Roland Barthes** (1915–1980), French literary theorist. From ***A Lover's Discourse*** (1977).

*September 2002*

### ***barthes on writing love***

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To try to write love is to confront the muck of language: that region of hysteria where language is both too much and too little, excessive...and impoverished.

**Roland Barthes** (1915–1980), French literary theorist. From "Inexpressible Love" in ***A Lover's Discourse*** (1977).

*August 2000*

### ***bashô on understanding***

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Go to the pine if you want to learn about the pine, or to the bamboo if you want to learn about the bamboo. And in doing so, you must leave your subjective preoccupation with yourself. Otherwise you impose yourself on the object and do not learn. Your poetry issues of its own accord when you and the object have become one – when you have plunged deep enough into the object to see something like a hidden glimmering there. However well-phrased your poetry may be, if your feeling is not natural – if the object and yourself are separate – then your poetry is not true poetry but merely your subjective counterfeit.

**Matsuo Bashô** (1644–1694), Japanese poet and philosopher. From his ***Journals*** (1694).

*October 2004*

### ***benson on autocrats***



Though [Lucia was] essentially an autocrat, her subjects were allowed and even encouraged to develop their own minds on their own lines, provided always that those lines met at the junction where she was stationmaster.

**Edward Frederic Benson** (1867–1940), British novelist. From ***Queen Lucia*** (1920), Chapter 1 – part of the popular ***Lucia and Mapp*** series.

*August 2005*

### ***bergman on the gay novel***

If the conclusions of so many gay novels seem inadequate, the reason may be that gay writers have not yet created a myth which is not tragic, which does not follow the received heterosexual conception of gay man's fate. Without some integrating myths that will help bring together the sexual world and the familial world, the gay novel would be forever fractured, divided against itself, without a satisfactory resolution.

**David Bergman** (?– ), US literary critic. From ***Gaiety Transfigured: Gay Self-Representation in American Literature*** (1991).

*April 1999*

### ***blake on particulars***



He who would do good to another must do it in Minute Particulars:  
General Good is the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite, and flatterer,  
For Art and Science cannot exist but in minutely organized Particulars.

**William Blake** (1757–1827), English poet,

painter, engraver, and visionary. From illustrated epic poem **Jerusalem**, Chapter 3, Plate 55 (1804–20).

*July 2000*

### ***blake on repression***

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#### **"The Garden of Love" (complete poem)**

I went to the Garden of Love,  
And saw what I never had seen:  
A Chapel was built in the midst,  
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,  
And Thou shalt not. writ over the door;  
So I turn'd to the Garden of Love,  
That so many sweet flowers bore.

And I saw it was filled with graves,  
And tomb-stones where flowers should be:  
And Priests in black gowns, were walking  
their rounds,  
And binding with briars, my joys & desires.

**William Blake** (1757–1827), English poet, painter, engraver, and visionary. From **Songs of Experience** (1789).

*May 2001*

### ***borges on literature***

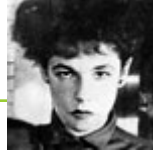
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Literature is not exhaustible, for the sufficient and simple reason that a single book is not. A book is not an isolated entity: it is a narration, an axis of innumerable narrations. One literature differs from another, either before or after it, not so much because of the text as for the manner in which it is read.

**Jorge Luis Borges** (1899–1986), Argentinian philosopher, short story writer, poet, critic. From "For Bernard Shaw" (1952).

October 2001

## ***jane auer bowles on identity***



### **"My Sister's Hand In Mine" (complete poem)**

I dreamed I climbed upon a cliff,  
My sister's hand in mine.  
Then searched the valley for my house,  
But only sunny fields could see  
And the church spire shining.

I searched until my heart was cold,  
But only sunny fields could see,  
And the church spire shining.

A girl ran down the mountainside  
With bluebells in her hat  
I asked the valley for her name.  
But only wind and rain could hear.  
And the church bell tolling.

I asked until my lips were cold  
But wakened not yet knowing  
If the name she bore was my sister's name  
or if it was my own.

**Jane Auer Bowles** (1917–1973), US  
lesbian novelist, playwright, poet; married  
to Paul Bowles.

July 2002

## ***addie brown & rebecca primus: "no kisses is like yours"***



Rebecca Primus  
only known photo

From ***The Pink and the Blue: Lesbian  
and Gay Life at Yale and in Connecticut,  
1642–2004***, curated by **Prof. Jonathan  
Ned Katz**

**Exhibit section 5 (of 60 sections) —  
1859–1868**



About a hundred and fifty letters from Addie Brown, a domestic servant, to Rebecca Primus, a teacher, provide extremely rare documentation of a loving, sensual intimacy between two African-American women in the nineteenth century. Brown's letters were written from Hartford, Farmington, and Waterbury, Connecticut, and from New York City.

Almost every one of Brown's letters to Primus provides new evidence about their love for each other, and about their complex intimacy.

On October 20, 1867, Brown, a domestic at Miss Porter's School, in Farmington, wrote Primus about a female coworker,

"sometime just one of them wants to sleep with me. Perhaps I will give my consent some of these nights. I am not very fond of White I can assure you."

Brown's flirtation with her female coworker evidently caused Primus to express some concern. On November 17, Brown responded,

"If you think that is my bosom that captivated the girl that made her want to sleep with me she got sorely disappointed enjoying [it] for I had my back towards her all night and my night dress was button up so she could not get to my bosom. I shall try to keep you favorite one always for you. Should in my excitement forget you will pardon me I know."

Numbers of letters from Brown to Primus indicate that when visiting they shared a bed along with hugs and kisses. In one letter, Brown told Primus:

"No kisses is like youres."

In April 1868, in her late twenties, Addie Brown married Joseph Tines, seemingly for economic security; Brown's letters suggest that Rebecca Primus remained the love of her life. Sometime between 1872 and 1874, when she was in her thirties, Rebecca

Primus married Charles Thomas.

On the back of an envelope of a letter to Brown, Rebecca Primus wrote, "Addie died at home, January 11, 1870." Brown was twenty-eight.

**Jonathan Ned Katz**, who wrote the above article, is the pioneering historian of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered American history. He is the author of ***Love Stories: Sex Between Men Before Homosexuality, The Invention of Heterosexuality***, and ***Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.*** He has won national and international prizes for these and other works.

*April 2004*

### ***cather on neighbors***



Sometimes a neighbor whom we have disliked a lifetime for his arrogance and conceit lets fall a single commonplace remark that shows us another side, another man, really; a man uncertain, and puzzled, and in the dark like ourselves.

**Willa Cather** (1873–1947), US novelist. From ***Shadows on the Rock*** (1931).

*August 2003*

### ***cocteau on priorities***



An interviewer once asked Jean Cocteau, "If your home were on fire and you could save only one thing from it, what would it be?"

Cocteau replied, "I would save the fire!"

**Jean Cocteau** (1889–1963), French filmmaker, screenwriter, playwright, stage designer, painter, novelist, and poet.

*June 1999*

## ***cocteau on realism***

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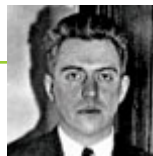
True realism consists in revealing the surprising things which habit keeps covered and prevents us from seeing.

**Jean Cocteau** (1889–1963), French filmmaker, screenwriter, playwright, stage designer, painter, novelist, and poet. From ***Le Mystère Laïc*** (1928).

July 2004

## ***crane on melville***

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### **"at melville's tomb" (written in 1925 – complete poem)**

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Often beneath the wave, wide from this ledge  
The dice of drowned men's bones he saw bequeath  
An embassy. Their numbers as he watched,  
Beat on the dusty shore and were obscured.

And wrecks passed without sound of bells  
The calyx of death's bounty giving back  
A scattered chapter, livid hieroglyph,  
The portent wound in corridors of shells.

Then in the circuit calm of one vast coil,  
Its lashings charmed and malice reconciled,  
Frosted eyes there were that lifted altars;  
And silent answers crept across the stars.

Compass, quadrant and sextant contrive  
No farther tides ... High in the azure steeps  
Monody shall not wake the mariner.  
This fabulous shadow only the sea keeps.

**Hart Crane** (1899–1932) is the influential, and enigmatic, gay American poet whose works include ***The Bridge*** (1930). For trivia buffs, he was the only child of the man who invented "Life Savers" candy. NOTE: Three lines from the bottom, the ellipsis at "tides

... High" is from Crane's original text, and is not an abridgement.

*March 2002 (1 of 2 selections)*

## ***dickinson on childhood***

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### **"Through lane it lay – thro' bramble" (complete poem)**

Through lane it lay – thro' bramble –  
Through clearing and thro' wood –  
Banditti often passed us  
Upon the lonely road.

The wolf came peering curious –  
The owl looked puzzled down –  
The serpent's satin figure  
Glid stealthily along –

The tempests touched our garments –  
The lightning's poinards gleamed –  
Fierce from the Crag above us  
The hungry Vulture screamed –

The satyrs fingers beckoned –  
The valley murmured "Come" –  
These were the mates –  
This was the road  
These children fluttered home.

**Emily Dickinson** (1830–1886), American poet. This complete poem (No. 9 in her collected works) was written circa 1858 and addressed to "Sue –" [Gilbert Dickinson], her sister-in-law. The idiosyncratic punctuation, capitalization, and spellings are reproduced verbatim.

*April 2002*

## ***dickinson on grief***

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### **"This is the Hour of Lead" (complete poem)**

This is the Hour of Lead –

Remembered, if outlived,  
 As Freezing persons, recollect the Snow \_  
 First - Chill - then Stupor - then the letting  
 go -.

**Emily Dickinson** (1830-1886), American poet. From *Complete Poems*, no. 341, edited by Thomas H. Johnson.

September 2001

### ***dickinson on love***

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*Written about 1852, this is one of many extraordinary letters Emily Dickinson (then age 22) wrote to the young Sue Gilbert, who later married her brother Austin. The unusual spellings, punctuation, and emphases are Dickinson's.*

Thank the dear little snow flakes, because they fall today rather than some vain weekday, when the world and the cares of the world try so hard to keep me from my departed [i.e., absent] friend - and thank you, too, dear Susie, that you never weary of me, or never tell me so, and that when the world is cold, and the storm sighs e'er so piteously, I am sure of one sweet shelter, one covert from the storm! The bells are ringing, Susie, north, and east, and south, and your own village bell, and the people who love God, are expecting to go to meeting [i.e., church service]; dont you go Susie, not to their meeting, but come with me this morning to the church within our hearts, where the bells are always ringing, and the preacher whose name is Love - shall intercede there for us!

They will all go but me, to the usual meetinghouse, to hear the usual sermon; the inclemency of the storm so kindly detaining me; and as I sit here Susie, alone with the winds and you... And thank you for my dear letter, which came on Saturday night, when all the world was still; thank you for the love it bore me, and for it's golden thoughts, and feelings so like gems, that I was sure I gathered them in whole baskets of pearls! I mourn this morning,

Susie, that I have no sweet sunset to gild a page for you, nor any bay so blue - not even a little chamber way up in the sky, as your's is, to give me thoughts of heaven which I would give to you. You know how I must write you, down, down, in the terrestrial; no sunset here, no stars; not even a bit of twilight which I may poetize - and send you! Yet Susie, there will be romance in the letter's ride to you - think of the hills and the dales, and the rivers it will pass over, and the drivers and conductors who will hurry it on to you; and wont that make a poem such as can ne'er be written?...

**Emily Dickinson** (1830-1886), US poet.  
From *Letters of Emily Dickinson*, edited by Thomas H. Johnson.

*September 1999*

### ***dickinson on possibility***

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#### **"I dwell in Possibility" (complete poem)**

I dwell in Possibility -  
A fairer House than Prose -  
More numerous of Windows -  
Superior - for Doors -

**Emily Dickinson** (1830-1886), US poet.  
From *Complete Poems*, no. 657, edited by Thomas H. Johnson.

*July 1999*

### ***flaubert on expression***

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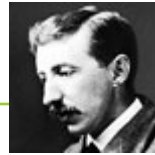
Because lips libertine and venal had murmured such words to him, he believed but little in the candor of hers; exaggerated speeches hiding mediocre affections must be discounted; as if the fullness of the soul did not sometimes overflow in the emptiest metaphors, since

no one can ever give the exact measure of his needs, nor of his conceptions, nor of his sorrows; and since human speech is like a cracked tin kettle, on which we hammer out tunes to make bears dance when we long to move the stars.

**Gustave Flaubert** (1821–1880), French novelist. From ***Madame Bovary*** (1857), Chapter 12 (translated by Eleanor Marx-Aveling).

*September 2005*

### ***forster on connection***



Only connect! That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer. Only connect, and the beast and the monk, robbed of the isolation that is life to either, will die.

E.M. Forster (1879–1970), British novelist, essayist. From ***Howards End***, Chapter 22 (1910).

*August 1999*

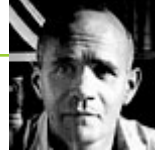
### ***forster on truth***

The business man who assumes that his life is everything, and the mystic who asserts that it is nothing, fail, on this side and on that, to hit the truth.... No; truth, being alive ... was only to be found by continuous excursions into either realm, and though proportion is the final secret, to espouse it at the outset is to ensure sterility.

**E.M. Forster** (1879–1970), British novelist, essayist. From ***Howards End***, Chapter 23 (1910).

*November 2001*

## ***genet on exile***

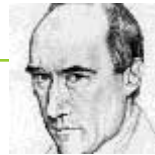


Excluded by my birth and tastes from the social order, I was not aware of its diversity.... Nothing in the world was irrelevant: the stars on a general's sleeve, the stock-market quotations, the olive harvest, the style of the judiciary, the wheat exchange, flower-beds.... Nothing. This order, fearful and feared, whose details were all interrelated, had a meaning: my exile.

**Jean Genet** (1910–1986), French novelist and playwright. From *The Thief's Journal* (1949).

*January 2000*

## ***gide on courage***



People cannot discover new lands until they have the courage to lose sight of the shore.

**André Gide** (1869–1951), French novelist, essayist, and diarist.

*December 2002*

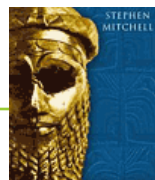
## ***gide on kindness***

True kindness presupposes the faculty of imagining as one's own the suffering and joys of others.

**André Gide** (1869–1951), French author and Nobel laureate. From "Portraits and Aphorisms" in *Pretexts* (1903).

*November 2000*

## ***gilgamesh poet on balance***



"Now go and create



a double for Gilgamesh, his second self,  
 a man who equals his strength and courage,  
 a man who equals his stormy heart.  
 Create a new hero, let them balance each other  
 perfectly, so that Uruk\* has peace."



\**Note:* Uruk was a kingdom in what is now Iraq.

**The Gilgamesh Poet** (c. 2,000 BCE), Sumerian author; ***Gilgamesh*** is the oldest surviving work of world literature. Quotation from ***Gilgamesh: A New English Version*** translated by scholar, translator and poet Stephen Mitchell (2004). Here are links to:

[more information on this edition of \*\*\*Gilgamesh\*\*\*](#) (Amazon.com – order a new or used copy through this link and help support this site);  
[Stephen Mitchell's introduction](#) to this edition of ***Gilgamesh*** (wnyc.org);  
[Mitchel discusses \*\*\*Gilgamesh\*\*\*](#) as the first known instance of a same-sex union (advocate.com);  
[Gilgamesh article](#) (glbtq.com).

December 2004

## ***grimke on love***



### **"You" (complete poem)**

I love your throat, so fragrant, fair,  
 The little pulses beating there;  
 Your eye-brows' shy and questioning air;  
 I love your shadowed hair.

I love your flame-touched ivory skin;  
 Your little fingers frail and thin;  
 Your dimple creeping out and in;  
 I love your pointed chin.

I love the way you move, you rise;  
 Your fluttering gestures, just-caught cries;  
 I am not sane, I am not wise,  
 God! how I love your eyes!

**Angelina Weld Grimke** (1880–1958),

African-American lesbian poet, playwright,  
and short story-writer.

*September 2000*

### ***hall on glbt authors writing on 'straight' subjects***



Yet as everything comes as grist to the mill of those who are destined from birth to be writers - poverty or riches, good or evil, gladness or sorrow, all grist to the mill - so the pain of Morton\* burning down to the spirit in Stephen had kindled a bright, hot flame, and all that she had written she had written by its light, seeing exceedingly clearly. As though in a kind of self-preservation, her mind had turned to quite simple people, humble people sprung from the soil, from the same kind soil that had nurtured Morton. None of her own strange emotions had touched them, and yet they were part of her own emotions; a part of her longing for simplicity and peace, a part of her curious craving for the normal. And although at this time Stephen did not know it, their happiness had sprung from her moments of joy; their sorrows from the sorrow she had known and still knew; their frustrations from her own bitter emptiness; their fulfillments from her longing to be fulfilled. These people had drawn life and strength from their creator. Like infants they had sucked at her breasts of inspiration, and drawn from them blood, waxing wonderfully strong; demanding, compelling thereby recognition. For surely thus only are fine books written, they must somehow partake of the miracle of blood - the strange and terrible miracle of blood, the giver of life, the purifier, the great final expiation.

*\* "Morton" is the beloved family estate of Stephen Gordon, the indomitable heroine of this landmark novel. Soon before this passage, Stephen's mother had cast her out for being a lesbian.*

**Radclyffe Hall** (1880–1943), UK author.

From ***The Well of Loneliness***, Chapter 28, Section 2 (1928).

*December 1999*

### ***james on criticism***

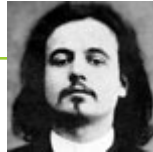


To criticize is to appreciate, to appropriate, to take intellectual possession, to establish in fine a relation with the criticized thing and to make it one's own.

**Henry James** (1843–1916), US novelist, critic, playwright. From the Preface to ***What Maisie Knew*** (1897).

*December 2003*

### ***jarry on tradition***



To keep up even a worthwhile tradition means vitiating the idea behind it which must necessarily be in a constant state of evolution: it is mad to try to express new feelings in a "mummified" form.

**Alfred Jarry** (1873–1907), French dramatist. From ***Twelve Theatrical Topics***. At the age of 23, Jarry invented Surrealism and Theatre of the Absurd with his play, ***King Ubu*** (1896).

*May 2005*

### ***jewett on literature***



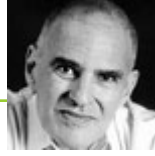
The thing that teases the mind over and over for years, and at last gets itself put down rightly on paper – whether little or great, it belongs to Literature.

**Sarah Orne Jewett** (1849–1909), US novelist. From a letter to author Willa Cather (published in 1896).

January 1999

## ***kramer on gbt culture***

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The only way we'll have real pride is when we demand recognition of a culture that isn't just sexual. It's all there – all through history we've been there; but we have to claim it, and identify who was in it, and articulate what's in our minds and hearts and all our creative contributions to this earth. And until we do that, and until we organise ourselves block by neighborhood by city by state into a united visible community that fights back, we're doomed.

**Larry Kramer** (b. 1935), US dramatist, novelist, activist. From the play, ***The Normal Heart*** (1985).

June 2003

## ***lawrence on endurance***

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Brute force crushes many plants. Yet the plants rise again. The Pyramids will not last a moment compared with the daisy. And before Buddha or Jesus spoke the nightingale sang, and long after the words of Jesus and Buddha are gone into oblivion the nightingale still will sing. Because it is neither preaching nor commanding nor urging. It is just singing. And in the beginning was not a Word, but a chirrup.

**D. H. Lawrence** (1885–1930), UK novelist, poet, and critic. From ***Etruscan Places***, Chapter 2 (1932).

August 2001

## ***lawrence on myth***

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Myth is an attempt to narrate a whole human experience, of which the purpose is too deep, going too deep in the blood and soul, for mental explanation or description.

**D.H. Lawrence** (1885–1930), UK novelist, poet, and critic. From an unpublished article included in ***Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D.H. Lawrence***, edited by E. McDonald (1936).

*January 2003*

### ***le guin on women***

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To me the "female principle" is, or at least historically has been, basically anarchic. It values order without constraint, rule by custom not by force. It has been the male who enforces order, who constructs power structures, who makes, enforces, and breaks laws.

**Ursula K. Le Guin** (b. 1929), US novelist, poet, and critic. From "Is Gender Necessary?" (1989).

*October 2002*

### ***lefroy on physical beauty***

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#### **"A Palaestral Study"\* (complete poem)**

The curves of beauty are not softly wrought;  
 These quivering limbs by strong muscle held  
 In attitudes of wonder, and compelled  
 Through shapes more sinuous than a sculptor's thought,  
 Tell of dull matter splendidly distraught,  
 Whisper of mutinies divinely quelled –  
 Weak indolence of flesh, that long rebelled,  
 The spirit's domination bravely taught.  
 And all man's loveliest works are cut with pain.  
 Beneath the perfect art we know the strain,  
 Intense, defined, how deep so'er it lies.

From each high master-piece our souls  
refrain,  
Nor tired of gazing, but with stretched eyes  
Made hot by radiant flames of sacrifice.

Edward Cracroft Lefroy (1855–1891), British poet. From ***Echoes from Theocritus and Other Sonnets*** (1885)

\* "*Palaestra*" – in the Classical world the "*palaestra*" was a training school for wrestling and athletics.

January 2001

### ***leonardo da vinci on reflections***



When you are painting you should take a flat mirror and often look at your work within it, and it will then be seen in reverse, and will appear to be by the hand of some other master, and you will be better able to judge of its faults than in any other way.

**Leonardo da Vinci** (1452–1519), Italian artist, architect, and engineer. From his notebooks. Leonardo wrote his private journals using a special form of "mirror writing" which he invented himself, starting at the right side of the page and moving to the left. Only when writing for other people did he print in the normal direction.

March 2003

### ***lowell on art***



#### **"The Artist" (complete poem)**

Why do you subdue yourself in golds and purples?  
Why do you dim yourself with folded silks?  
Do you not see that I can buy brocades in any draper's shop,  
And that I am choked in the twilight of all

these colours?  
 How pale you would be, and startling,  
 How quiet;  
 But your curves would spring upward  
 Like a clear jet of flung water,  
 You would quiver like a shot-up spray of  
 water,  
 You would waver, and relapse, and tremble.  
 And I too should tremble,  
 Watching.

Murex-dyes and tinsel –  
 And yet I think I could bear your beauty  
 unshaded.

**Amy Lowell** (1874–1925), US poet.

*October 2000*

### ***lucas on hypocrisy***

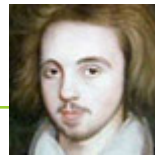


You can do anything you want  
 as long as you don't call it  
 what it is.

**Craig Lucas** (1951– ), US playwright,  
 librettist, screenwriter, director. From the  
 film ***The Dying Gaul*** (2005), written and  
 directed by Lucas.

*November 2005*

### ***marlowe on gay history***



The mightiest kings have had  
 their minions:  
 Great Alexander loved Hephestion;  
 The conquering Hercules for Hylas wept;  
 And for Patroclus stern Achilles drooped  
 And not kings only, but the wisest men:  
 The Roman Tully\* lov'd Octavius;  
 Grave Socrates, wild Alcibiades....

*\*Note:* "Tully" was another name for Cicero.

**Christopher Marlowe** (1564–1593),  
 British poet, and spy. From ***Edward II***  
 (1591), Act I, Scene 4. His highly-influential  
 plays, also including ***Dr. Faustus***, set the

course of modern drama.

*July 2005*

## ***marlowe on love***

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### **"The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" (complete poem)**

Come live with me and be my love,  
And we will all the pleasures prove  
That valleys, groves, hills, and fields,  
Woods, or steepy mountain yields.

And we will sit upon rocks,  
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,  
By shallow rivers to whose falls  
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses,  
And a thousand fragrant posies,  
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle  
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;

A gown made of the finest wool  
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;  
Fair lined slippers for the cold,  
With buckles of the purest gold;

A belt of straw and ivy buds,  
With coral clasps and amber studs;  
And if these pleasures may thee move,  
Come live with me, and be my love.

The shepherds's swains shall dance and sing  
For thy delight each May morning:  
If these delights thy mind may move,  
Then live with me and be my love.

**Christopher Marlowe** (1564–1593),  
British poet, and spy, whose highly-  
influential plays, including **Edward II** and  
**Dr. Faustus**, set the course of modern  
drama.

*February 2001*

## ***maugham on***





## **writing**



There are three rules for writing a novel. Unfortunately, no one knows what they are.

**W. Somerset Maugham** (1874–1965), British novelist, short story writer, and playwright.

*March 1999*

## **mead on civilization**

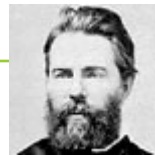


When human beings have been fascinated by the contemplation of their own hearts, the more intricate biological pattern of the female has become a model for the artist, the mystic, and the saint. When mankind turns instead to what can be done, altered, built, invented, in the outer world, all natural properties of men, animals, or metals become handicaps to be altered rather than clues to be followed.

**Margaret Mead** (1901–1978), US anthropologist. From *Male and Female* (1949).

*November 2003*

## **melville on speech**



Let us speak, though we show all our faults and weaknesses, – for it is a sign of strength to be weak, to know it, and out with it, – not in a set way and ostentatiously, though, but incidentally and without premeditation.

**Herman Melville** (1819–1891), US novelist and poet. From a June 29, 1851 letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne.

*January 2002*

## **michelangelo on vision**



Make my whole body nothing  
but an eye.



**Michelangelo Buonarroti** (1475–1564),  
Italian sculptor, painter, architect, and poet.

*April 2000*

### ***millay on loss***

"When the Year Grows Old"  
(complete poem)



I cannot but remember  
    When the year grows old —  
October — November —  
    How she disliked the cold!

She used to watch the swallows  
    Go down across the sky,  
And turn from the window  
    With a little sharp sigh.

And often when the brown leaves  
    Were brittle on the ground,  
And the wind in the chimney  
    Made a melancholy sound.

She had a look about her  
    That I wish I could forget —  
The look of a scared thing  
    Sitting in a net!

Oh, beautiful at nightfall  
    The soft spitting snow!  
And beautiful the bare boughs  
    Rubbing to and fro!

But the roaring of the fire,  
    And the warmth of fur,  
And the boiling of the kettle  
    Were beautiful to her!

I cannot but remember  
    When the year grows old —  
October — November —  
    How she disliked the cold!

**Edna St. Vincent Millay** (1892–1950), US  
poet. From ***Renascence and Other Poems***

(1917).

October 2005

### ***monette on taking leave***



for hours at the end I kissed  
 your temple stroked  
 your hair and sniffed it it smelled so clean  
 we'd  
 washed it Saturday night when the fever  
 broke  
 as if there was always the perfect thing to  
 do  
 to be alive for years I'd breathe your hair  
 when I came to bed late it was such pure  
 you  
 why I nuzzle your brush every morning  
 because  
 you're in there just like the dog the night  
 we unpacked the hospital bag and he  
 skipped  
 and whimpered when Dad put on the red  
 sweater Cover my bald spot will you  
 you'd say and tilt your head like a parrot  
 so I could fix you up always always  
 till this one night when I was reduced to  
 I love you little friend here I am my  
 sweetest pea over and over spending all our  
 endearments like stray coins at a border  
 but wouldn't cry then no choked it because  
 they all said hearing was the last to go  
 the ear is like a wolf's till the very end  
 straining to hear a whole forest and I  
 wanted you loping off whatever you could  
 still dream to the sound of me at 3 P.M.  
 you were stable still our favorite word  
 at 4 you took the turn WAIT WAIT I AM  
 THE SENTRY HERE nothing passes as long  
 as  
 I'm where I am we go on death is  
 a lonely hole two can leap it or else  
 or else there is nothing this man is mine  
 he's an ancient Greek like me I do  
 all the negotiating while he does battle  
 we are war and peace in a single bed  
 we wear the same size shirt it can't it can't  
 be yet not this just let me brush his hair  
 it's only Tuesday there's chicken in the

fridge  
 from Sunday night he ate he slept oh why  
 don't all these kisses rouse you I won't  
 won't  
 say it all I will say is goodnight patting  
 a few last strands in place you're covered  
 now  
 my darling one last graze in the meadow  
 of you and please let your final dream be  
 a man not quite your size losing the whole  
 world but still here combing combing  
 singing your secret names till the night's  
 gone

**Paul Monette** (1945–1995), US poet,  
 novelist, and memoirist. From "No  
 Goodbyes" in ***Love Alone: 18 Elegies for  
 Rog.***

*May 1999*

### ***o'neill on glbt tradition***



Help these boys build a nation  
 of their own. Ransack the histories for clues  
 to their past. Plunder the literatures for  
 words they can speak. And should you  
 encounter an ancient tribe whose customs,  
 however dimly, cast light on their hearts,  
 tell them that tale; and you shall name the  
 unspeakable names of your kind, and in  
 that naming, in each such telling, they will  
 falter a step to the light. For only with pride  
 may a man prosper. With pride, all things  
 follow.

**Jamie O'Neill** (?– ), Irish novelist. From ***At  
 Swim, Two Boys*** (2001).

*September 2003*

### ***philips on love***



**"To My Excellent  
 Lucasia, On Our  
 Friendship" (complete poem)**

I did not live until this time  
Crown'd my felicity,  
When I could say without a crime,  
I am not thine, but thee.

This carcass breath'd, and walkt, and slept,  
So that the world believ'd  
There was a soul the motions kept;  
But they were all deceiv'd.

For as a watch by art is wound  
To motion, such was mine:  
But never had Orinda found  
A soul till she found thine;

Which now inspires, cures and supplies,  
And guides my darkened breast:  
For thou art all that I can prize,  
My joy, my life, my rest.

No bridegroom's nor crown-conqueror's  
mirth  
To mine compar'd can be:  
They have but pieces of the earth,  
I've all the world in thee.

Then let our flames still light and shine,  
And no false fear controul,  
As innocent as our design,  
Immortal as our soul.

**Katherine Fowler Philips** (1631–1664),  
English poet and founder of the all-women  
*Society of Friendship*, whose members  
adopted classical names: "Orinda" was  
Philips and "Lucasia" was Anne Owen.

March 2004

### ***pico della mirandola on free will***



Other species are confined to a  
prescribed nature. No limits have been  
imposed on you, however; you determine  
your nature by your own free will, so that,  
like a free and able sculptor and painter of  
yourself, you may mold yourself wholly in  
the form of your choice.

**Giovanni Pico della Mirandola**  
(1463–1494), Italian Neo-Platonist  
philosopher.

May 2000

### ***plato on tyrants***

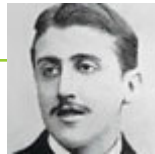


The people have always some champion whom they set over them and nurse into greatness.... This and no other is the root from which a tyrant springs; when he first appears he is a protector.

**Plato** (c. 427–347 B.C.), Greek philosopher. From ***The Republic***, Book 8, section 565.

January 2004

### ***proust on theory***



A work of art that contains theories is like an object on which the price tag has been left.

**Marcel Proust** (1871–1922), French novelist. From the final volume of ***Remembrance of Things Past*** (aka ***In Search of Lost Time***): ***Time Regained***, Chapter 3 (1922).

December 2001

### ***rich on the body***



In order to live a fully human life we require not only control of our bodies (though control is a prerequisite); we must touch the unity and resonance of our physicality, our bond with the natural order, the corporeal grounds of our intelligence.

**Adrienne Rich** (b. 1929), US poet and essayist. From ***Of Woman Born*** (1976).

December 2000

### ***rich on children***

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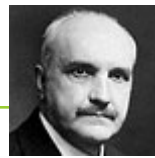
My children cause me the most exquisite suffering of which I have any experience. It is the suffering of ambivalence: the murderous alternation between bitter resentment and raw-edged nerves, and blissful gratification and tenderness. Sometimes I seem to myself, in my feelings toward these tiny guiltless beings, a monster of selfishness and intolerance.

**Adrienne Rich** (b. 1929), US poet and essayist. From ***Of Woman Born*** (1976).

February 2004

### ***santayana on history***

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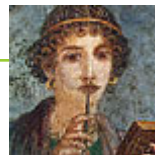
Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

**George Santayana** (1863–1952), US philosopher, poet. From ***Life of Reason*** (1905).

July 2003

### ***sappho on love***

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#### **"Hymn to Aphrodite" (complete poem)**

I  
Shimmering-throned immortal Aphrodite,  
Daughter of Zeus, Enchantress, I implore  
thee,  
Spare me, O Queen, this agony and  
anguish;  
Crush not my spirit.

II  
Whenever before thou hast hearkened to

me,  
To my voice calling to thee in the distance,  
And heeding, thou hast come, leaving thy  
father's  
Golden dominions,

III  
With chariot yoked to thy fleet-winged  
coursers,  
Fluttering swift pinions over earth's  
darkness,  
And bringing thee through the infinite,  
gliding  
Downwards from heaven,

IV  
Then, soon they arrived; and thou, blessed  
goddess,  
With divine countenance smiling, didst ask  
me  
What new woe had befallen me now and  
why:  
Thus I had called thee.

V  
What in my mad heart was my greatest  
desire,  
Who was it now that must feel my  
allurements,  
Who was the fair one that must be  
persuaded,  
Who wronged thee Sappho?

VI  
For if now she flees, quickly she shall follow.  
And if she spurns gifts, soon shall she offer  
them.  
Yea, if she knows not love, soon shall she  
feel it,  
Even reluctant.

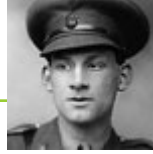
VII  
Come then, I pray, grant me an end to  
sorrow,  
Drive away care. I beseech thee, O  
goddess,  
Fulfill for me what I yearn to accomplish:  
Be thou my ally.

**Sappho** (Sixth Century BC), Lesbian poet.  
Sappho's complete works, together with an  
informative introductory essay, are at the  
[Sappho Website](#).



March 2001

## ***sassoon on world war one***



*Sassoon described in his diary details of a patrol into No Man's Land that took place on May 25, 1916:*

Twenty-seven men with faces blackened and shiny - with hatchets in their belts, bombs in pockets, knobkerries - waiting in a dug-out in the reserve line. At 10.30 they trudge up to Battalion H.Q. splashing through the mire and water in a chalk trench, while the rain comes steadily down. Then up to the front-line. In a few minutes they have gone over and disappeared into the rain and darkness.

I am sitting on the parapet listening for something to happen - five, ten, nearly fifteen minutes - not a sound - nor a shot fired - and only the usual flare-lights. Then one of the men comes crawling back; I follow him to our trench and he tells me that they can't get through. They are all going to throw a bomb and retire.

A minute or two later a rifle-shot rings out and almost simultaneously several bombs are thrown by both sides; there are blinding flashes and explosions, rifle-shots, the scurry of feet, curses and groans, and stumbling figures loom up and scramble over the parapet - some wounded. When I've counted sixteen in, I go forward to see how things are going. Other wounded men crawl in; I find one hit in the leg; he says O'Brien is somewhere down the crater badly wounded. They are still throwing bombs and firing at us: the sinister sound of clicking bolts seem to be very near; perhaps they have crawled out of their trench and are firing from behind the advanced wire.

At last I find O'Brien down a deep (about twenty-five feet) and precipitous crater. He is moaning and his right arm is either broken or almost shot off: he is also hit in

the right leg. Another man is with him; he is hit in the right arm. I leave them there and get back to the trench for help, shortly afterwards Lance-Corporal Stubbs is brought in (he has had his foot blown off). I get a rope and two more men and go back to O'Brien, who is unconscious now. With great difficulty we get him half-way up the face of the crater; it is now after one o'clock and the sky is beginning to get lighter. I make one more journey to our trench for another strong man and to see to a stretcher being ready. We get him in, and it is found that he has died, as I had feared.

### **Sassoon, "Suicide in the Trenches" (1917) (complete poem)**

I knew a simple soldier boy  
Who grinned at life in empty joy,  
Slept soundly through the lonesome dark,  
And whistled early with the lark.

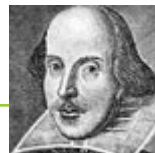
In winter trenches, cowed and glum,  
With crumps and lice and lack of rum,  
He put a bullet through his brain.  
No one spoke of him again.

You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye  
Who cheer when soldier lads march by,  
Sneak home and pray you'll never know  
The hell where youth and laughter go.

**Siegfried Sasson** (1886–1967), English poet and novelist.

*February 2000*

### **shakespeare on desire**



### **Sonnet 104 (complete poem)**

To me fair friend you never can be old,  
For as you were when first your eye I eyed,  
Such seems your beauty still: three winters

cold,  
 Have from the forests shook three  
 summers' pride,  
 Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn  
 turned,  
 In process of the seasons have I seen,  
 Three April perfumes in three hot Junes  
 burned,  
 Since first I saw you fresh which yet are  
 green.  
 Ah yet doth beauty like a dial hand,  
 Steal from his figure, and no pace  
 perceived,  
 So your sweet hue, which methinks still  
 doth stand  
 Hath motion, and mine eye may be  
 deceived.  
 For fear of which, hear this thou age  
 unbred,  
 Ere you were born was beauty's summer  
 dead.

**William Shakespeare** (1564–1616),  
 English poet and playwright. From ***Sonnets***  
[\(link to free unabridged copy\)](#).

*June 2004*

### ***shakespeare on deception***

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The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.  
 An evil soul, producing holy witness,  
 Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,  
 A goodly apple rotten at the heart.  
 O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!

**William Shakespeare** (1564–1616),  
 English poet and playwright. From ***The***  
***Merchant of Venice*** Act I, Scene iii  
 (1596–97).

*November 2004*

### ***shakespeare on love***

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#### **Sonnet 18 (complete poem)**

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
 Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of  
 May,  
 And summer's lease hath all too short a  
 date:  
 Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
 And often is his gold complexion dimm'd,  
 And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
 By chance, or nature's changing course  
 untrimm'd:  
 But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
 Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,  
 Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his  
 shade,  
 When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st,  
 So long as men can breathe, or eyes can  
 see,  
 So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

**William Shakespeare** (1564–1616),  
 English poet and playwright. From ***Sonnets***  
 ([link to free unabridged copy](#)).

*April 2003*

### ***sontag on art***



Great reflective art is not frigid. It can exalt the spectator, it can present images that appall, it can make him weep, but its emotional power is mediated. The pull toward emotional involvement is counterbalanced by elements in the work that promote distance, disinterestedness, impartiality. Emotional involvement is always, to a greater or lesser degree, postponed.

**Susan Sontag** (1933–2004), US essayist, novelist, screenwriter, filmmaker, and theatre director. From ***Against Interpretation*** (1966). Visit the [Susan Sontag Tribute](#) for a brief introduction to her life and work, with links to select resources.

*January 2005*

### ***sontag on the past***

The past itself, as historical change

continues to accelerate, has become the most surreal of subjects – making it possible... to see a new beauty in what is vanishing.

**Susan Sontag** (b. 1933), US essayist, novelist, screenwriter, filmmaker, and theatre director. From ***On Photography*** (1977). Visit the [Susan Sontag Tribute](#) for a brief introduction to her life and work, with links to select resources.

*August 2002*

### ***de staël on wit***

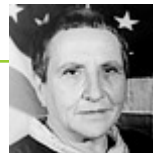


Wit lies in recognising the resemblance among things which differ and the difference between things which are alike.

**Madame de Staël** (Anne-Louise-Germaine Necker, Baroness de Staël-Holstein) (1766–1817), Swiss/French novelist and philosopher. From ***On Germany*** (1810).

*September 2004*

### ***stein on gay***



They were regular in being gay, they learned little things that are things in being gay, they learned many little things that are things in being gay, they were gay every day, they were regular, they were gay, they were gay the same length of time every day, they were gay, they were quite regularly gay.

**Gertrude Stein** (1874–1946), US poet and novelist. From the story "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene" (written in 1911; published in ***Geography and Plays*** in 1922), this tale of a lesbian couple solidified use of the term "gay" for "homosexual."

*June 2005*

## ***stein on americans***

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Americans are very friendly and very suspicious, that is what Americans are and that is what always upsets the foreigner, who deals with them, they are so friendly how can they be so suspicious they are so suspicious how can they be so friendly but they just are.

**Gertrude Stein** (1874–1946), US poet and novelist. From "The Capital and Capitals of the United States of America" in the *New York Herald Tribune* (March 9, 1935).

*August 2004*

## ***stein on identity***

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The minute you or anybody else knows what you are you are not it, you are what you or anybody else knows you are and as everything in living is made up of finding out what you are it is extraordinarily difficult really not to know what you are and yet to be that thing.

**Gertrude Stein** (1874–1946), US poet and novelist. From *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937).

*October 2003*

## ***thoreau on suspicion***

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We are paid for our suspicions by finding what we suspected.

Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), US philosopher, naturalist, poet. From "Wednesday" in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849).

*June 2002*

## **vidal on morality & ethics**



Some have deplored Lincoln's indifference to Christianity. But it was not religion, it was religiosity that put him off. Finally, as the Civil War got more and more bloody, he began to adjure Heaven and the Almighty though not any particular creed. On this point [C.A. Tripp in ***The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln***] makes much of Lincoln's preference for ethics over morality. The first word comes from the Latin for "customs" and the second from the Greek for "customs," but there is a world of difference between the two words. Morality, with which Lincoln had little to do, is religious-based, which means that in the name of religion, say, homosexuality could be proscribed as immoral — and was — while ethics tends to deal with law, cause and effect, logic, empiricism.

**Gore Vidal** (1925– ), US novelist, memoirist, essayist, playwright, screenwriter, political candidate. From "[Was Lincoln Bisexual?](#)" (*Vanity Fair*, January 3, 2005 issue). One of Vidal's acclaimed historical novels is ***Lincoln***.

*February 2005*

## **whitman on values**



Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown or to any man or number of men, go freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the young and with the mothers of families, read these leaves in the open air every season of every year of your life, re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever

insults your own soul, and your very flesh shall be a great poem and have the richest fluency not only in its words but in the silent lines of its lips and face and between the lashes of your eyes and in every motion and joint of your body....

**Walt Whitman** (1819–1892), US poet. From the [Preface to the 1855 edition](#) of ***Leaves of Grass*** (its nine distinct and sometimes radically different revisions, made between 1855 and 1892, span over half of the poet's lifetime; the 1855 edition is the only one to include a preface). Here is a link to the final edition of ***Leaves of Grass***, available free and unabridged.

*April 2005*

### ***whitman on commitment***

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Camerado, I give you my hand!  
I give you my love more precious than money,  
I give you myself before preaching or law;  
Will you give me yourself? will you come travel with me?  
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?

**Walt Whitman** (1819–1892), US poet. From "Song of the Open Road" in ***Leaves of Grass*** (its nine distinct and sometimes radically different revisions, made between 1855 and 1892, span over half of the poet's lifetime; the 1855 edition is the only one to include a preface). Here is a link to the final edition of ***Leaves of Grass***, available free and unabridged.

*December 2005*

### ***whitman on friendship***

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#### **"Come, I will make the continent indissoluble" (complete poem)**

Come, I will make the continent indissoluble,



I will make the most splendid race the sun  
ever shone upon,  
I will make divine magnetic lands,  
With the love of comrades,  
With the life-long love of comrades.

I will plant companionship thick as trees  
along all the rivers of America, and along  
the shores of the great lakes, and all over  
the prairies,  
I will make inseparable cities with their  
arms about each other's necks,  
By the love of comrades,  
By the manly love of comrades.

For you these from me, O Democracy, to  
serve you ma femme!  
For you, for you I am trilling these songs.

**Walt Whitman** (1819–1892), US poet.  
Whitman added this poem to the 1867  
(second) edition of ***Leaves of Grass*** ([link  
to free, unabridged copy](#)).

*April 2001*

### ***whitman on fulfillment***

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#### **"When I Heard at the Close of the Day" (complete poem)**

When I heard at the close of the day how  
my name had been receiv'd with plaudits in  
the capitol, still it was not a happy night for  
me that follow'd,  
And else when I carous'd, or when my plans  
were accomplish'd, still I was not happy,  
But the day when I rose at dawn from the  
bed of perfect health, refresh'd, singing,  
inhaling the ripe breath of autumn,  
When I saw the full moon in the west grow  
pale and disappear in the morning light,  
When I wander'd alone over the beach, and  
undressing bathed, laughing with the cool  
waters, and saw the sun rise,  
And when I thought how my dear friend my  
lover was on his way coming, O then I was  
happy,  
O then each breath tasted sweeter, and all  
that day my food nourish'd me more, and

the beautiful day pass'd well,  
 And the next came with equal joy, and with  
 the next at evening came my friend,  
 And that night while all was still I heard the  
 waters roll slowly continually up the shores,  
 I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid and  
 sands as directed to me whispering to  
 congratulate me,  
 For the one I love most lay sleeping by me  
 under the same cover in the cool night,  
 In the stillness in the autumn moonbeams  
 his face was inclined toward me,  
 And his arm lay lightly around my breast -  
 and that night I was happy.

**Walt Whitman** (1819–1892), US poet and  
 visionary. From [\*Leaves of Grass\*](#) ([link to  
 free, unabridged copy](#)).

*October 1999*

### ***whitman on values***

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Love the earth and sun and the animals,  
 despise riches, give alms to every one that  
 asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy,  
 devote your income and labor to others,  
 hate tyrants, argue not concerning God,  
 have patience and indulgence toward the  
 people, take off your hat to nothing known  
 or unknown or to any man or number of  
 men, go freely with powerful uneducated  
 persons and with the young and with the  
 mothers of families, read these leaves in the  
 open air every season of every year of your  
 life, re-examine all you have been told at  
 school or church or in any book, dismiss  
 whatever insults your own soul, and your  
 very flesh shall be a great poem and have  
 the richest fluency not only in its words but  
 in the silent lines of its lips and face and  
 between the lashes of your eyes and in  
 every motion and joint of your body....

**Walt Whitman** (1819–1892), US poet.  
 From the [Preface to the 1855 edition](#) of  
***Leaves of Grass*** (its nine distinct and  
 sometimes radically different revisions,  
 made between 1855 and 1892, span over  
 half of the poet's lifetime; the 1855 edition  
 is the only one to include a preface). Here is

a link to the final edition of ***Leaves of Grass***, available free and unabridged.

*April 2005*

### ***wilde on change***



The only thing that one really knows about human nature is that it changes. Change is the one quality we can predicate on it. The systems that fail are those that rely on the permanency of human nature, and not on its growth and development. The error of Louis XIV was that he thought human nature would always be the same. The result of his error was the French Revolution. It was an admirable result. All the results of the mistakes of government are quite admirable.

**Oscar Wilde** (1854–1900), Anglo-Irish playwright, novelist, critic, and poet. From "The Soul of Man Under Socialism" (1891).

*May 2002*

### ***wilder on comedy***

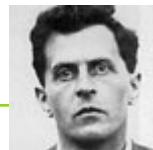


What has history to do with me? Mine is the first and only world! I want to report how I find the world. What others have told me about the world is a very small and incidental part of my experience. I have to judge the world, to measure things.

**Thornton Wilder** (1897–1975), US dramatist and novelist. From an interview in ***Writers at Work: First Series***, ed. by Malcolm Cowley (1958).

*March 2005*

### ***wittgenstein on history***



What has history to do with

me? Mine is the first and only world! I want to report how I find the world. What others have told me about the world is a very small and incidental part of my experience. I have to judge the world, to measure things.

**Ludwig Wittgenstein** (1889–1951), Austrian philosopher. From notebook entry for September 2, 1915.

*February 2002*

### ***wittgenstein on silliness***

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Never stay up on the barren heights of cleverness, but come down into the green valleys of silliness.

**Ludwig Wittgenstein** (1889-1951), Austrian philosopher. From a notebook entry for 1934.

*May 2003*

### ***wittgenstein on thought***

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In order to be able to set a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable (i.e., we should have to be able to think what cannot be thought).

**Ludwig Wittgenstein** (1889–1951), Austrian philosopher. From the preface to ***Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*** (1921).

*February 1999*

### ***woolf on conformity***

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Once conform, once do what other people do because they do it, and a lethargy steals over all the finer nerves and faculties of the soul. She becomes all outer show and inward emptiness; dull, callous, and indifferent.



**Virginia Woolf** (1882–1941), British novelist and critic. From "Montaigne" in ***The***

**Common Reader** (1925).

November 1999

### ***woolf on introspection***

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"But when the self speaks to the self, who is speaking? - the entombed soul, the spirit driven in, in, in to the central catacomb; the self that took the veil and left the world - a coward perhaps, yet somehow beautiful, as it flits with its lantern restlessly up and down the dark corridors."

**Virginia Woolf** (1882–1941), British novelist and critic. From ***Monday or Tuesday*** (1921).

June 2000

### ***woolf (age 17) on language***

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Methinks the human method of expression by sound of tongue is very elementary, & ought to be substituted for some ingenious invention which should be able to give vent to at least six coherent sentences at once.

**Virginia Woolf** (1882–1941), British novelist and critic. From ***A Terrible Tragedy in a Duckpond*** (written when Woolf was seventeen, but not published until 1990).

June 2001

### ***woolf on reality***

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What is meant by "reality"? It would seem to be something very erratic, very undependable – now to be found in a dusty road, now in a scrap of newspaper in the street, now a daffodil in the sun. It lights up a group in a room and stamps some casual saying. It overwhelms one walking home beneath the stars and makes the silent world more real than the world of speech – and then there it is again in an omnibus in

the uproar of Piccadilly. Sometimes, too, it seems to dwell in shapes too far away for us to discern what their nature is. But whatever it touches, it fixes and makes permanent. That is what remains over when the skin of the day has been cast into the hedge; that is what is left of past time and of our loves and hates.

**Virginia Woolf** (1882–1941), British novelist and critic. From ***A Room of One's Own*** (1929).

March 2000

### ***woolf on writing***

*Virginia Woolf spent the summer of 1936 revising her novel, **The Years** – work that brought her close to nervous collapse. The following brief excerpts from her diaries offer a glimpse into how she wrote, and why.*

*Thursday 11 June [1936]*

I can only, after 2 months, make this brief note, to say at last after 2 months dismal & worse, almost catastrophic illness – never been so near the precipice to my own feeling since 1913 – I'm again on top. I have to re-write, I mean interpolate & rub out most of *The Years* in proof. But I can't go into that. Can only do an hour or so. Oh but the divine joy of being mistress of my mind again! Now I am going to live like a cat stepping on eggs till my 600 pages ( of proof correcting ) are done. I think I can – I think I can – but must have immense courage & buoyancy to compass it.

*Sunday 21 June [1936]*

After a week of intense suffering – indeed mornings of torture – & I'm not exaggerating – pain in my head – a feeling of complete despair & failure – a head inside like the nostrils after hay fever – here is a cool quiet morning again, a feeling of relief; respite: hope.

Everything is planned, battened down. I do

1/2 an hour down here; go up, often in despair. lie down; walk round the square: come back do another 10 lines. Always with a feeling of having to repress; control. Sat in the square last night. Saw the dripping green leaves. Thunder & lightning. Purple sky. A very strange, most remarkable summer. New emotions: humility: impersonal joy: literary despair. I am learning my craft in the most fierce conditions. Really reading Flaubert's letters I hear my own voice cry out Oh art! Patience. Find him consoling, admonishing. I must get this book quietly strongly daringly into shape.

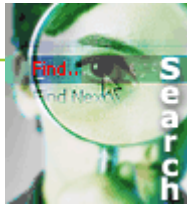
**Virginia Woolf** (1882–1941), British novelist and critic. From *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume 5*, edited by Anne Olivier Bell.

July 2001



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