JOURNAL ENTRIES

Journal entries are not labored analyses. They are free-association responses.

To write one, read the assignment, keeping track of thoughts and emotions (emotions are your personal signposts to significance). Mark passages that strike you hard—make you laugh, spit, frown, blush, levitate, cry, sneer, cheer, scratch your head, lash out, give thanks, understand, empathize, envy, snore—whatever. Copy out one of those passages. Respond to it, letting your reaction take you where it will. One to four sentences will do, and longer is not necessarily better, though if you are moved to write at length, feel free.

Depth, however, is important. Depth is the direct result of genuine involvement with a text, which comes only from figuring out how something in the text applies to you and then fearlessly unlocking some emotional reaction to it.

Forget about grammar, spelling, structure, taste, revising, polishing, and any other "should." Only I will see your journal entries. I read them all; sometimes I merely acknowledge them; other times I respond to them individually. You may miss two journal entries without penalty.

The first few are written or typed and brought to class. After the class website is up, JEs are submitted there by the deadline (just before class). Any problems with submitting to the web site should be e-mailed immediately to the site manager, Mark A. O’Neil. You are responsible for seeing that your computer is outfitted with Kerberos and whatever else is necessary to allow you to access the site by January 17, when your first online entry is due. To get credit for journal entries, they must come in on the site startingr 1/17/05. No exceptions.

The URL is www.Dartmouth.edu/~engl5sg (that is ENGL, not ENG1).

These journals keep me abreast of the class's interests and give you practice in unstressed writing. I may ask your permission to share with the rest of the class an intriguing journal entry. Feel free to withhold permission without explanation; "I'd rather not" is fine. Keep copies—the computer may hiccup, and you may want to refer to one when writing a paper.

SAMPLES FROM THE PAST

1. "He is a prodigy," he said at last. "He is an emissary of pity, and science, and progress, and devil knows what else."

   I find it interesting that this is the exact point in the book where Marlow becomes so enthralled by Kurtz. The fact that the painting captivates Marlow so much is odd. I think that the fact that Kurtz is shown to be so different from all the other europeans in Africa, lends him a god like mystique.

2. "The idleness of a passenger, my isolation amongst all these men with whom I had no point of contact, the oily and languid sea, the uniform somberness of the coast, seemed to keep me away from the truth of things within the toil of a mournful and senseless delusion." (p. 17)
This is all one sentence. Most sentences in HoD have this type of long, drawn-out, confusing structure. It seems as if every part of it refers to a different thing, so when you read it all together, it just makes no sense. Every sentence is twice as long as it has to be. Because of this structure, a sentence usually does not make much sense the first time, so then you have to read it again, making the book even longer. It seems as though nothing much as happened, although much as, because the plot gets lost in the thickness of the sentences. I could not read more than 5 pages at a time without taking a break. This has been one of the hardest books I have ever had to trudge through.

3. This text is so boring! For the entire duration of the few pages that I have read, I have been sifting my hands through my hair, picking at my scalp. The pieces of scalp, “scalpies,” as I call them, are interesting—a lot more interesting than this text! I’m surprised. Didn’t Orwell write 1984 and Animal Farm? Those were such good books! Odd that Orwell takes the time to criticize several writers on how unalive their imagery is, when he is not making whatever he is trying to say interesting and alive. Did he read what he was writing? Boring, boring . . . snzzzzz.

Wait! What’s this?! A colorful passage! I found a few vivid passages and fresh metaphors! My two favorites are “stale phrases choke [the author] like tea leaves blocking a sink,” and “like cavalry horses answering the bugle.” The tea leaves make me think of my frail Egyptian grandmother making mint tea from tea leaves and then clogging up the sink after she strains the tea and discards the leaves in the sink. the second half of Orwell’s writing is as clear and rich as those murky, brown-green mint leaves stuck in the depression of my grandmother’s sink drain. Why couldn’t Orwell make it all interesting?

5. “Well one night I walked up to tell Harpo something---and the two of them was just laying there on the bed asleep. Harpo holding his daddy in his arms.”

I was shocked at first by this and then incredibly moved by its tenderness. I don't remember such a moment in anything I have read or any movie I have seen, except maybe when Aeneas in Vergil's Aeneid straps his lame father, Anchises, to his back and takes his little son Iulus by the hand when they flee their burning home Troy. But the parallels is not incredibly strong, the culture, location, time are completely different. Aeneas would be breaking from his heroic character and fate if he abused his father, as dictated by traditions. Harpo's actions toward his father are not following as clear of a traditional formula. His culture does not dictate that it is "right" or "proper" for sons to show physical affection towards their fathers. "Big" Harpo is sleeping with his "little" father in a comforting embrace! Harpo is "mothering" his father!!! What! These men that were trying to impregnate, control, and beat their wives and women!? I am excited and surprised! I sense that this scene echoes the way Celie enjoyed the warmth of sleeping with her mother, Nettie, and in climax, Shug. But this is not a sexual reation between father and son...although for a long time Celie has experienced incest with Pa. These are the men evolving into the higher form and more human/superior conduct women seem to have in this book. Below all the violence and dominence these men are at a disadvantage, somehow deficient or weaker at purely enjoying life, having the happiness, satisfaction, patience, independence, strength, and the warmth that women have. When the husband's"fall" closer to the level of the women they must support and care for themselves and eachother. Harpo and Albert are on their way to nursing each other back to a life where they are more equal to the women in their lives, and ironically more empowered by their decrease of power.