Reading by Week

8/30-9/1  1. Stranger
9/6-8  2. Stranger
9/13-15  3. Cloister Walk
9/20-22  4. Cloister

THREE PAGES DUE SEPT 27
9/27-29  5. Dickinson (see back)
10/4-6  6. Dickinson
10/11-13  7. Melville (see back)
10/18-20  8. Melville
10/25-27  9. Melville
11/1 [3rd-No-Class]  10. Melville

FOUR PAGES DUE NOV 8
11/8-10  11. Basho
11/15-17  12. Basho
11/22 [No Class]  13. Inward Morning (see back)
11/29-12/1  14. Inward Morning
12/6-8  15. Wrap up

FIVE PAGES DUE Dec. 13 (501 HL)
Total grade: three papers (= 20%, 30%, 40%) -- plus attendance and participation (= 10%).

Reflection Papers (meditations):
AS YOU READ, be alert for what strikes you in some fashion -- make marginal notes of these moments. What triggers your imagination, heart, and mind? The papers will be three page, four page, and five page (double spaced). BEFORE YOUR FIRST SENTENCE BEGINS, set out words from the text you’re reflecting on SINGLE-SPACED IN BOLD. Each page of your paper becomes your elaboration, and clarification of the focus given in BOLD at the top.]

You want to read with an eye to collecting those passages or sentences that "make you jump" - in joy or revulsion or surprise or curiosity. Then figure out what made you take note. That sort of 'marginal commentary' should be part of your reading, and when paper-time comes you lay our before you the half dozen most memorable "jumps" and begin to reflect on them. Ask yourself which ones you can elaborate on, go somewhere with. Begin to narrow down the number until you find the 3, 4, or 5 quotes (depending on paper length, and 1-3 sentences each) that you can do best with – discarding the rest (maybe one of those discards will haunt you and you’ll see how to use it, perhaps as a contrast, in a later paper).

Use the first person. And AVOID anything that reads like a book report. The paper shows you -- your response. I should learn something about how your mind and imagination work as I read it. Let your voice and personality come out.

Art, religion, philosophy, and literature offer resources for celebration of life -- offer ways to stave off at least part of the suffering that can afflict us. They bring us meaning and knowledge. The texts we read evoke struggles between meaning and its loss. We can think of the age-old quest for Religion, Meaning, and Knowledge as humanity’s effort, individually and collectively, to shore up our often frail capacities for confidence and conviction.

Books
Camus, The Stranger, 0-679-72020-0
Dickinson, ed. Oates, 10-06-088791-5
Cloister Walk, Norris, 9781573225847
Moby Dick, Melville, 9780142000083
Basho, Narrow Road, Penguin 0-140-44185-9
Inward Morning, Bugbee 9780820320717

Music: Motherless child; Poor wayfaring stranger; Touch the hand of love; Dona Nobis
Much is an adventure story, a story of global imperialism, a story of hypocrisy (Quakers out to kill), and to that extent not exactly "relig-ious." But it might have religious strains none-the-less, a descent into a watery expanse -- like gradually falling asleep (the "ecstasy of sleep" -- the need of ecstasy when one gets depressed and angry); a trance where one dreams this adven-ture, and wakes up "the only survivor" (in a dream, only we can tell the strange tale) like visions, full of the uncanny and weird -- strange men, beasts, encounters, etc. If a "mystic vision," it's a kind of nightmare? a mystic "contact with the dark side"? Is the ocean-sky 'really' god, and Moby Dick god incarnate? Ahab is in search of god -- to destroy him, has a fanatical devotion to "get" -- not a redeeming touch, but a kill. The "book itself is as formless as the sea: drama, poetry, epic, etc End of Gilder [536] The Ocean is a mirror -looking into god's face we see ourselves. Four views of the sea: [The Gilder" 535] Ishmael (who understands other 3 views) gives us Ahab: the sea in reality in a tiger beneath the surface, but one can dream a sweet land-like dream of green vales & pastures; Ahab looking at ocean looks on God as hidden and terrible, present in death; Starbuck looks on the ocean and God as a bride at her wedding -- loveliness unimaginable; Stubb is "preconscious," surfer-dude, a fish. Journey a religious quest; Christmas [new life] in the wilderness [113] BUT also Inverted: Ahab wants revenge, not healing; Sea too ambiguous and various for a coherent faith [536]; Our attraction to the sea [4] as the infinite, the unexplored, the unknown; Land vs Sea [298] "our Tahiti within" dualism of sleep-wake-peace; DEATH "Faith, like a jackal"[42] Platonists, Phaedo, [152]; Cast into the sea [245] Last will makes every day a reprieve [249] ; The Line [306] ; Death a launch-ing into the strange [528-9]; MYSTIC UNION Ishmael wakes wedded to Queequeg [30]; monkey rope [349] & [585] ; Sperm pot, squeeze [455] ; FAMILY Circle of Nursing, Amorous Whales [422] ; Ahab's gentle family yearning [590] ; REBIRTH Ishmael, last page; Queequeg gives birth [376] ; WOE AND WEAL Catskill Eagle [465]; Doubts & faith: equal eye [409]; OUR HUMAN CONDITION: abandonment [203] [454] ; Landlessness, God, the Indefinite [117] ; True philosopher [56] ; The Line [306]; BODY: Bulkington [117]; Sperm pot, squeeze [455] ; Mystical treatise of Q's body [524]; Pip adrift [453]; Bonding weak & strong, insanity [567-8]; Goodness of gods, wickedness of mortals [567-8]; The journey from despair (NYC) to marriage [30]; Spouter Inn to rebirth [113]; Christmas in wilderness to Landlessness [117]; and to the perils, abandonment, of the hunt [203] and death. What is the whiteness of the whale? A point "beyond good and evil" of pure attraction and danger? A point "before we are born" -- "In the beginning " was the light, the blinding light, the whiteness of the whale set in the depths of the dark sea. The moment of entry into the world? Do we rejoice at birth or hate it? Ahab's attack on the whale is an attack on the Unknow-ability of Nature -- on the light that precedes any object illuminated by it. -- For Ahab, not a way to find beauty-sublime but to bring death to death. Search for whale for Ahab is a pursuit of death [42]; "Faith like a Jackal" [152]; Phaedo [306] - the line [528]. Ishmael, like Star-buck, can rejoice at birth, see whiteness as the Unknow-ability of love and marriage [30] and of sexuality [455]; not just the Unknowability of Power and Death. Mystic vision gives new eyes [465] and mystic embrace (whole body, hands, sea) gives new life. Union with others, solidarity, hedges against death's isolation: Monkey rope [349], wedding, nursing whales [422]; Story telling is solidarity. "Only I remain (to tell)"

********** BUGBEE

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