

COLT 211 Mid-term Exam - DUE WED 5/20 in class (hard copy)

Choose 3 of the 4 passages given below and provide the following information (in bulletpoint format is fine):

1. the source (author, title)
2. any historical/cultural context that is *relevant* to your reading
3. how distraction creates or makes possible the meaning of the passage

Then select and organize *details* from close reading as *evidence* to support your claim (basically, show what you are saying). This mini-essay can be one paragraph or multiple, but it should be 250-500 words.

I. Who stares into an open window never sees as many things as someone looking at a closed window. There is no object more profound, more mysterious, more fecund, more sinister, more dazzling, than a window candle lit. What can be seen by sunlight is always less interesting than what occurs behind a windowpane. In this dark or illumined gap life lives, life dreams, life suffers.

Across waves of rooftops, I catch sight of a woman, mature, already wrinkled, poor, always bent over something, who never goes out. By her face, by her clothes, by her gestures, by practically nothing, I have reconstructed the story of this woman or, rather, her legend, and sometimes I repeat it to myself, weeping.

II. But strangest of all are the incidents that take place on Nevsky Prospekt. Oh, do not trust Nevsky Prospekt! I always wrap myself more closely in my cloak when I pass along it and try not to look at objects which meet me. Everything is a cheat, everything is a dream, everything is other than it seems! You think that the gentlemen who walks along in a splendidly cut coat is very wealthy?--not at all. All his wealth lies in his coat. You think that those two stout men who stand facing the church that is being built are criticizing the architecture?--not at all: they are talking about how peculiarly two crows are sitting facing each other. You think that that enthusiast waving his arms about is describing how his wife was playing ball out of the window with an officer who was a complete stranger to him?--not so at all, he is talking of Lafayette. You imagine those ladies . . . but ladies are least of all to be trusted. Do not look into the shop windows; the trifles exhibited in them are delightful but they have an odor of money about them. But God save you from peeping under ladies' hats! However attractively in the evening a fair lady's cloak may flutter in the distance, nothing would induce me to follow her and try to get a closer view. Keep your distance, for God's sake, keep your distance from the street lamp, everything breathes deception. It deceives at all hours, the Nevsky Prospekt does, but most of all when night falls in masses of shadows on it, throwing into relief the white and dun-colored walls of the houses, when all the town is transformed into noise and brilliance, when myriads of carriages roll off bridges, postilions shout and jump up on their horses, and when the devil himself lights the street lamps to show everything in false colors.

III. "This is the greatest moment of your life," Tyler says, "and you're off somewhere missing it."

You're in Ireland.

Oh, and you're doing it. Oh yeah. Yes. And you can smell the ammonia and the daily allowance of B vitamins.

Where the soap fell into the river, Tyler says, after a thousand years of killing people and rain, the ancient people found their clothes got cleaner if they washed at the spot.

I'm pissing on the Blarney stone.

"Geez," Tyler says.

I'm pissing in my black trousers with the dried bloodstains my boss can't stomach.

You're in a rented house on Paper Street.

"This means something," Tyler says.

"This is a sign," Tyler says. Tyler is full of useful information. Cultures without soap, Tyler says, they used their urine and the urine of their dogs to wash their clothes and hair because of the uric acid and ammonia.

There's the smell of vinegar, and the fire on your hand at the end of the long road goes out.

There's the smell of lye scalding the branched shape of your sinuses, and the hospital vomit smell of piss and vinegar.

"It was right to kill all those people," Tyler says.

The back of your hand is swollen red and glossy as a pair of lips in the exact shape of Tyler's kiss. Scattered around the kiss are the cigarette burn spots of somebody crying.

IV.

The street about me roared with a deafening sound.

Tall, slender, in heavy mourning, majestic grief,

A woman passed, with a glittering hand

Raising, swinging the hem and flounces of her skirt;

Agile and graceful, her leg was like a statue's.

Tense as in a delirium, I drank

From her eyes, pale sky where tempests germinate,

The sweetness that entralls and the pleasure that kills.

A lightning flash... then night! Fleeting beauty

By whose glance I was suddenly reborn,

Will I see you no more before eternity?

Elsewhere, far, far from here! too late! *never* perhaps!

For I know not where you fled, you know not where I go,

O you whom I would have loved, O you who knew it!