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Reading Journals

Entry for *Wild Irish Girl*, Introductory Letters, Letters I-IV –

The main question to begin is what did Horatio do to get him in to this trouble. The main clue seems to be the last introductory letter from Horatio to J.D. Esq, who seems to be a friend. He mentions that he is a victim of the husband's villainy and the wife's artifice. It sounds like *Hamilton*, where Hamilton is entrapped by a man's wife. I have lots of other questions though. Horatio's last name is always redacted. Is this a redaction for some mystery as we read, or is the redaction not supposed to be read as a mystery at all and it has some benign reason for being redacted? We do not see the letters from J.D. Esq to Horatio, so I am not quite sure on their relationship. They seem to be friends. As far as the first four letters, the story reminds me of a story of an outsider coming into a place and realizing the place is a lot more civilized than he imagined. It feels like Tom Cruise in *The Last Samurai*. The last introductory letter feels like the most important of the introduction, and letter IV feels like the most important letter of the first four. We learn Horatio's descendent has murdered an old prince, and now Horatio is about to have feelings for the descendent of this prince, the Lady Glorvina. The story with Horatio's ancestor and the steward, Clendinning, and the prince of Inismore is a little hard to follow. I am uncertain how far removed they are as descendants.

Entry for *Wild Irish Girl*, Introductory Letters, Letters V-VII; XII, XV, XIX, XX –

My reading for this section is colored by our class discussion of the previous section. I was surprised at the negative views toward Horatio. From reading his first four letters, I did not have the same opinions as my classmates. It seemed to me that Horatio had dispensed his prejudices in his very first letter, and as to all the other attacks to his character, they did not seem that fair. I felt like I should go on the reddit subreddit AITA and post, "I read Horatio's first four letters, and I thought he seemed fine. AITA?" In any case, I figured I would keep an open mind, at least. Maybe I was missing it. In setting out with this mindset, I definitely focused on more troubling behavior in these letters. His spying, which did not seem creepy in the first four letters, was undeniable creepy in these letters. Then after he falls and is cared for by the prince and his family, he resolves himself to commit fully to the lie about who he is. This may be even worse than his creepy spying, him trying to form a relationship with Glorvina while having a fake identity. Perhaps there were red flags I was missing in the first four letters and I just did not see them. In any case, I think the main question going forward is how does this deceit ultimately get resolved. Because there is no way it does not get resolved. And if I go back to my previous journal entry, I think I am even more convinced of this mystery about Horatio's last name being redacted is central to the story. Horatio takes the name Henry Mortimer as his fake identity, not Henry M--. It seems like this mystery and Horatio's deceit toward Glorvina will be resolved together.

Entry for *Wild Irish Girl*, Introductory Letters, Letters XXIV, XXV, XXVII, XXIX, XXX, Conclusion –

I was very confused when I got to letter XXIX. Horatio thinks Father John wants to tell him that he is no longer welcome in Inismore. I thought that I either missed something obvious or that something crazy went down in letter XXVIII. I finished the reading, and I became more convinced that something must have went down in XXVIII, so I went back to get the missing details. Of course, we get this whole story again in the conclusion, but it is so much more satisfying reading it from Horatio's blind perspective. I have been reading this story as sort of a mystery, and I think I might have figured it out with this letter. I am not sure at which point during the conclusion that I realized that Glorvina's intended was the Earl of

M, but it was certainly before Horatio hears his voice. Maybe I give myself too much credit, but I think there is a chance that I have it clocked if I read XXVIII. As the last entry for this text, I will add some overall comments. I am an old man who is not well read, which is something that I have set out to fix by pursuing a degree bachelor's degree in English. I don't think I have ever read an epistolary novel, but I enjoyed it. Horatio, as I have at time defended in my journal entries, did not bother me. He certainly has his flaws, but I enjoyed reading his letters. I suspect we will talk about how the ultimate conclusion is Owenson's attempt to offer the ideal union between England and Ireland.

Entry for *Mo Sgéal Féin (My Own Story)* and *Lights and Shades of Ireland* –

We get two different perspectives here, and they are both quite revealing. We get the perspective of a young boy who is telling the story of the images imprinted on him at a very young age, and we get the perspective who is trying to process what she is witnessing as an adult with compassion. There is this story that unbelievably relates to the most recent presidential debate. Mrs. Nicholson receives this story second hand of a woman stealing some potatoes from her landlord's field, but when the crime is investigated, the magistrate discovers the woman is cooking the potatoes alongside their family pet. We get a completely different reaction, however, to "they're eating the dogs." It is quite illuminating how someone with a little bit of empathy reacts to this presumably true story: the judge gives the woman money to buy some food, as opposed to what we get: a man responding to this fake story and trying to get everyone to grab their pitchforks and round up all the immigrants. Mrs. Nicholson hears this story right before her trip to Ireland, so it seems to frame everything she will experience. It is quite surprising then when this story gets completely flipped around. Instead of "they're eating the dogs," it, quite darkly, becomes "the dogs are eating the men." Both of these works do a really good job of showing the horror of the famine.

Entry for *Carmilla*, Chapters 1-8 –

From the introduction we received in class, *Carmilla* is meeting all the expectations of a Gothic novel. The first expectation that caught my attention is this frame for the story that is built in the prologue. We have an unknown person discovering a correspondence between the narrator and a doctor. I would compare it to a found-footage film, like the *Blair Witch Project*. It's a found-narrative novel. As far as this vampire tale, it seems like we are meant to suspect Carmilla is a vampire and that she is really old. She is really the Countess Karstein, and that she sucks her victim's blood to retain her youth. I guess it is this weird situation where I come with these preconceived notions about what to suspect, but I think my preconceived notions are probably built from vampire stories like this one. I have not read *Dracula* or other works, but somehow a background knowledge has been diffused through popular culture and I know something about vampires. I will be interested to see in the second half if society has correctly informed my views about vampires.

Entry for *Carmilla*, Chapters 9-16 –

The ending was predictable, so my main comment will be to contrast the narrator with Horatio. People did not like how Horatio thought he was smart and better than everyone else, which I get. One of the ways this was shown was when he would randomly use a different language or quote something to make himself look smart. But I prefer this style where he thinks he is so smart and just relies on the reader to follow him. With Laura, however, she might not think she is so smart, but she gives no credit to the reader. The thing I liked least about this story is the narrator telling us that Mircalla, Carmilla, and Millarca are anagrams. Give me Horatio's nonsense any day to girl who thinks I am as lost as her father.

Entry for "Our National Language" and "The Necessity for De-Anglicising Ireland" –

While not included in the text, the dates given (presumably added by you) are helpful in understanding the context. Hyde was born 15 years after Davis had died. They both wanted to restore the Irish language, but Hyde does appear to critique Davis's approach. From context, it seems Davis main idea for

restoring the Irish language was to translate their literary works. While their goal is the same, years later Hyde seems to critique Davis's approach as ineffectual. In fact, Hyde notes, even probably during Davis's lifetime, the Irish peasantry spoke Irish. The best way to restore the language is to keep the language alive in the peasantry, Hyde argues. Instead of the scholars saving the language by translating their great literature, keeping the language alive among the peasantry will shame the educated Irish to study the language. Hyde gives two examples that relate the importance of a national language. He says imagine Greek culture being revived without their language. He says, "No shot" could you restore Greek culture with German translations. Similarly, he asks the reader to think about a Jew not knowing Hebrew. These two comparisons seem like the strongest arguments against (?) Davis's approach to restoring the language.

Entry for *The Snake's Pass*, Chapters 1-5 –

This definitely has *Wild Irish Girl* vibes. I liked *Wild Irish Girl*, but perhaps I am going to enjoy this story even more. I know, however, that I will need to come to class emotionally prepared for some Arthur hate. It may be a personal character flaw of mine, but I am rooting for our narrator, like I did Horatio. My favorite character, however, is Andy. He sees through Arthur like a window, and every time he plays along with Arthur's cover stories, he gives a big wink and lets the reader know he is in on the joke. While Arthur may warrant some criticism for his cringeworthy pursuit of some girl's voice he hears at night, I imagine everyone can rally around the wingman Adam. It is not given, but I assume we are to imagine that the second girl Arthur falls in love with is still Norah.

Entry for *The Snake's Pass*, Chapters 6-10 –

It became clear from multiple interactions that not only did we, the audience, know that Arthur's mystery love interest was Norah Joyce, but that Andy also knew the whole time. He would encourage Arthur, "Hey, forgot about that girl you met on the hill. *Begor*, go open your eyes and take a look at

Norah Joyce." I am really enjoying this romance, but I am especially intrigued by the final paragraph of this section: "Thank God for loyal and royal manhood! Thank God for the heart of a friend that can suffer and remain true! And thanks, above all, that the lessons of tolerance and forgiveness, taught of old by the son of God, are now and then remembered by the sons of men." Is this really the end of the love triangle? This feels like the origin story for Arthur's new archenemy. This feels like Edmund Dantès thanking God for Fernand blessing his marriage to Mercédès.

Entry for *The Snake's Pass*, Chapters 11-15 –

Our class discussion on Monday brought out that everyone loved Andy, as expected, and although I was fully prepared for hate toward Arthur, the class did not view him as poorly as Horatio, despite him sharing all of Horatio's faults. In any case, the views toward Arthur and Andy were as expected, so the discussion turned to the other characters, which we were perhaps guilty of not giving them enough consideration as we read through the first ten chapters. My focus for this journal entry, therefore, is all of our other characters. Let's start with Murdock. Is he a good villain? I say yes. My favorite quote from Murdock is when Dick is trying to warn him about the dangers of the bog, he says, "I'll find the treasure--an' if need be in spite iv God an' iv the Devil too!" It feels like Hattori Hanzo's quote from *Kill Bill*, "Kill whoever stands in thy way, even if that be Lord God, or Buddha himself." Now, Hattori Hanzo is not the villain of *Kill Bill*, so perhaps it reads differently coming from the villain, but I think it works. Murdock is a cunning villain, perhaps not as cunning as our hero Dick Sutherland, but this attempt to give himself an alibi in Bat's death seemed like it would have worked if not for Dick. What about Dick? I wanted a villain arc for him, but he continues to only help advance Arthur's interests. Perhaps his main purpose is to show the class difference. Clearly there is a class difference between Arthur and the Irish people, but it is not as relevant because there is this outsider versus insider dynamic as well. But with Arthur and Dick, they should be more similar but Arthur's interests always take precedence. Norah

recognizes the class difference between herself and Arthur and seeks to fix that disparity by pursuing an education. Perhaps this makes her far more compelling than Dick.

Entry for *The Snake's Pass*, Chapters 16-18 –

I liked our final work of the semester. I am a fan of romance. I think all of these attempts we have had throughout the book from Arthur trying to rizz up Norah, finally get a payoff in “The Fulfilment.” We finally get Norah rizzing up Arthur, and it makes all of Arthur’s attempts seem lame. She says, “Answer me truthfully,” and then Arthur starts to sweat. Then she hits him with, “How do I look?” We had this discussion last time on whether Norah has been playing Arthur the whole time. I do not know if this changes our opinion one way or the other. I do know, however, that I will be choosing *The Snake's Pass* as my 19th century text for exploring authentic Irishness. But who do I focus on? I think there would be plenty to work with either Norah or Joyce. But the obvious answer seems to be Andy. I think I have to consider his final speech some more.

Entry for “*The Táin* as Literature” and “Approaching *The Midnight Court*” –

We were encouraged to read these articles not looking at what they say about the specific texts but what they tell us as we think about these works in general. I took that instruction one step further, and read the articles with the thought of how could we apply these ideas to our final. One of the most instructive parts, with this in mind, was the Kelly explaining how a theme of *The Táin* was the breakdown of relationships important to Irish society. When I started thinking about writing this final, I was not focused on the different ways the text might approach authentic Irishness, but I think that is what Kelly is describing. If authentic Irishness is a focus on relationships, then *The Táin* is showing how a breakdown of that important aspect of Irishness has disastrous consequences. We are asked does the text challenge or endorse Irishness, but I did not think about endorsing through showing what happens when you do not follow the important parts of Irishness. I think this will help me a lot as I continue to

think about my essay. As far as the other article, I think the thesis was you can approach the text however you want. There were a lot of examples given: contrasting the story with the aisling, supporting the Irish language, exploring Enlightenment thinking, as a feminist tale. This article is suggesting we can take our view and use the literature to help us explore that viewpoint, which I had fully planned to do.

Entry for “Narrating Cultural Encounter: Lady Morgan and the Irish National Tale” –

This article seems like a defense of *WIG*. It shares a critique of the novel being “interrupted by many intrusive subjects,” and then it shares Lady Morgan’s defense that her bias may come from “the natural conditions of things” she has experienced. Ferris argues that these confrontations between Horatio and the Irish characters, set in Ireland, were the most practical way of conveying her message. I think the thing that we should take away from this article towards our final is thinking about the purpose of the author. We should ask ourselves does the author have a motive for creating his or her story. Ferris is making an argument for why Lady Morgan wrote *WIG*, and we should consider the same question for any of our texts.

Entry for *The Feminization of Famine*, “An Irish Carmilla,” and “The West as Metaphor” –

From Kelleher’s explanation, it sounds like the way *The Black Prophet* argues for an interventionist role in the famine is similar to how Lady Morgan advances her cultural narrative in *WIG*. Killeen’s article seems to mirror our discussion with Carmilla being a sympathetic character. I did read all of the critical essays on *SP*, but if I was going to only read one of them as suggested, I would have only read “The West as Metaphor.” In British literature last semester, we read *The Dead*, so I figured the article that would be most useful for our pursuit of authentic Irishness would be this last one. I definitely feel I was correct, at least as far as the authentic Irishness I plan to argue for in my final. I think my preconceived notions about authentic Irishness from the previous semester were largely confirmed throughout this course.