

### **Prelude: An Exhibit Re Lit.**

*It is not the job of literature to reassure anyone.* attributed to Robbe-Grillet

*Poetry is like a swoon, with this difference:  
it brings you to your senses. Yet his  
parables are not singular. The smoke from  
the boat causes the men to joke . . . .* Charles Bernstein.

*Nudists get used to nakedness. We get used to murder. . . . Naturally the artist is an enemy of the state. He[sic] cannot play politics, succumb to slogans and other simplifications, worship heroes, ally himself with any party, suck on some politician's program like a sweet. He is also the enemy of every ordinary revolution. . . . He undermines everything. Even when, convinced of the rightness of the cause, he dedicates his skills to a movement, he cannot simplify, he cannot overlook, cannot forget, omit, or falsify.* William H. Gass

*The creative writer does the same as the child at play. He creates a world of phantasy which he takes very seriously--that is, which he invests with large amounts of emotion--while separating it from reality.* Sigmund Freud

*Literature is a facet of culture. Its significance can best be understood in terms of its culture, and its purpose is meaningful only when the assumptions it is based on are understood and accepted. . . . American Indian literature is not similar to western literature because the basic assumptions about the universe and, therefore, the basic reality experienced by tribal peoples and westerners are not the same. . . . For example, the two cultures differ greatly in terms of the assumed purpose for the existence of literature. The purpose of Native American literature is never one of pure self-expression.* Paula Gunn Allen

*And as well I see that language falls,  
comes from up above,  
as if they were little  
luminous  
objects  
that fall from heaven.  
Language falls on the sacred table,  
falls on my body.  
So I catch word  
after word  
with my hands.* Maria Sabina

William Wordsworth

from Preface to the Lyrical Ballads

*. . . . all good poetry is the **spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings**; ... by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply . . . . The man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude; the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, **rejoices in the presence of truth** as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge . . . . I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from **emotion recollected in tranquillity**. . . .*

### **I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud**

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way,  
They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced: but they  
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:  
A poet could not but be gay,  
In such a jocund company:  
I gazed -- and gazed -- but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had  
brought:

For oft when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.

### **Ideas and Themes Associated with Romanticism that Continue to Inform Many attitudes Towards Art**

1. value or celebration of the individual
2. suspicion of social institutions, preference for nature
3. belief in expressive feeling, especially as a kind of authenticity
4. nostalgia for a simpler past, resistance to the modern
5. recognition of the "genius," inspiration
6. valuing of imagination and originality
7. ambivalence toward science, analytical modes of knowledge
8. downplaying of craft and high-cultural tradition