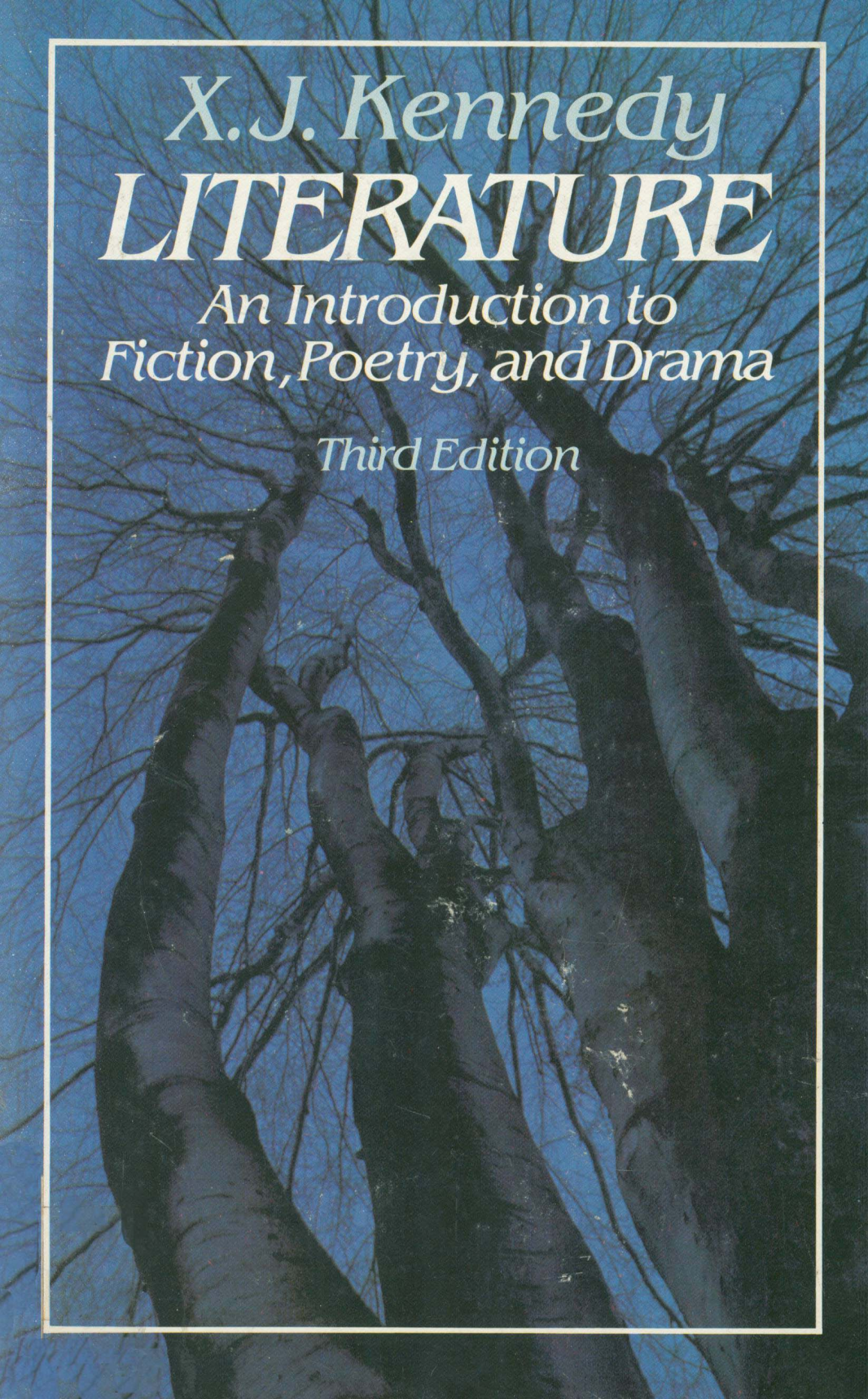
X. J. Kennedy
LITERATURE
An Introduction to
Fiction, Poetry, and Drama
Third Edition

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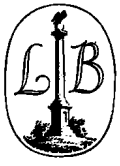
Third Edition

X. J. KENNEDY



LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY
Boston • Toronto

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Main entry under title:

Literature: an introduction to fiction, poetry, and drama.

Includes indexes.
1. Literature—Collections. I. Kennedy, X. J.
PN6014.L58 1983 808 82-18642
ISBN 0-316-48876-3

Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 82-18642

ISBN 0-316-48876-3

9 8 7

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Published simultaneously in Canada
by Little, Brown & Company (Canada) Limited

Printed in the United States of America

Acknowledgments

FICTION

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PREFACE

Literature, in the widest sense, is just about anything written. It is even what you receive in the mail if you send for free literature about a weight-reducing plan or a motorcycle. In the sense that concerns us in this book, literature is a kind of art, usually written, that offers pleasure and illumination. We say it is *usually* written, for there is oral literature, too. Few would deny the name of literature to "Bonny Barbara Allan" and certain other immortal folk ballads, though they were not set down in writing until centuries after they were originated.

Literature — the book in your hands — is really three books between two covers. Its opening third contains the whole of the text-anthology *An Introduction to Fiction, Third Edition;* its middle third, the whole of *An Introduction to Poetry, Fifth Edition;* and its closing third is a text-anthology of drama that includes ten plays. All together, the book attempts to provide the college student with a reasonably compact introduction to the study and appreciation of stories, poems, and plays.

I assume that appreciation begins in loving attention to words on a page. Speed reading has its uses; but there are times when, as Robert Frost said, the reader who reads for speed "misses the best part of what a good writer puts into it." Close reading, then, is essential. Still, I do not believe that close reading tells us everything, that it is wrong to read a literary work by any light except that of the work itself. At times this book will suggest different approaches: referring to facts of an author's life; comparing an early draft with a finished version; looking for myth; seeing the conventions (or usual elements) of a kind of writing — seeing, for instance, that an old mansion, cobwebbed and creaking, is the setting for a Gothic horror story.

Although I cannot help having a few convictions about the meanings of certain stories, poems, and plays, I have tried to step back and give you room to make up your own mind. Here and there, in the wording of a question, a conviction may stick out. If you should notice any, please ignore them. Be assured that there is no one right interpretation, laid down by authority, for any work of literature. Trust your

own interpretation — provided that, in making it, you have looked clearly and carefully at the evidence.

Reading literature often will provide you with reason to write. At the back of the book, the large supplement offers the student writer some practical advice. It will guide you, step by step, in finding a topic, planning an essay, writing, revising, and putting your paper into finished form. Further, it offers specific help in writing about fiction, poetry, and drama. There are even sections containing a few pointers for writing stories, poems, and plays of your own. (Even if you don't venture into creative writing, you will find these sections full of glimpses into the processes of literary composition.)

To help you express yourself easily and accurately, both in writing papers and in class discussion, this book will supply critical terms that may be of use to you. These words and phrases appear in **bold face** when they are first defined. If anywhere in this book you meet a critical term you don't know or don't recall — what is an *antihero?* a *carpe diem* poem? a *dramatic question?* — just look it up in the Index of Terms on the inside back cover.

A Word about Careers

Students tend to agree that to read writers such as Sophocles, Shakespeare, and Tolstoi is probably good for the spirit, and most even take some pleasure in the experience. But many, if they are not planning to teach English and are impatient to begin some other career, often wonder whether the study of literature, however enjoyable, is not a waste of time — or at least, an annoying obstacle.

This objection may seem reasonable, but it rests on a shaky assumption. It can be argued that, on the contrary, success in a career is *not* mostly a matter of learning certain information and skills that belong exclusively to a certain profession. In most careers, according to a business executive, people often fail not because they don't understand their jobs, but because they don't understand the people they work with, or their clients or customers; and so they can't imagine another person's point of view. To leap outside the walls of your self, to see through another person's eyes — this is an experience that literature abundantly offers. Although, if you are lucky, you may never meet (or have to do business with) anyone *exactly* like Mrs. Turpin in the story "Revelation," you probably will learn much about the kind of person she is from Flannery O'Connor's fictional portrait of her. Reading Tolstoi's short novel *The Death of Ivan Ilych,* you enter the mind of a petty bureaucrat, a judge. Though he is a Russian of the last century, in his habits of thought you may find him amazingly similar to many people now living in America. What is it like to be black, a white may

wonder? Perhaps Shakespeare, Langston Hughes, Ralph Ellison, John A. Williams, Gwendolyn Brooks, Sterling A. Brown, and others have knowledge to impart. What is it like to be a woman? If a man would learn, let him read (for a start) Emily Dickinson, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Adrienne Rich, Edith Wharton, Doris Lessing, Tillie Olsen, Joyce Carol Oates, and Eudora Welty. John Steinbeck, in his story "The Chrysanthemums," Henrik Ibsen, and Tennessee Williams may also tell him a thing or two.

Racing single-mindedly toward careers, some students move like horses wearing blinders. For many, the goals seem fixed and sure: competent nurses, accountants, and dental technicians seem always needed. Still, many who confine their attention to a single kind of learning eventually come to feel a sense of dissatisfaction. Recently, a highly trained and highly paid tool and die maker, asked by his instructor at a college why he had enrolled in an evening literature course, replied, "I just decided there has to be more to life than work, a few beers, and the bowling alley." Other students find that in our society some careers, like waves in the sea, may rise or fall with a speed quite unexpected. Think how many professions we now take for granted didn't even exist a few years ago — for instance, jobs in computer programming, energy conservation, and disco management. Others that had once seemed a person's security for life have been cut back and nearly ruined: cobblery, commercial fishing, railroading. In a society always in change, perhaps the most risky course is to lock oneself into a certain career, unwilling to consider any other. Maybe the opportunity of a lifetime lies in some career that, at present, does not even exist. In fact, the U.S. Department of Labor has shown that the average person changes careers three times in a working life. When for some unforeseen reason such a change has to be made, basic skills may be one's most valuable credentials, together with some knowledge (in depth) of the human heart.

Literature, as they who teach it know, has basic skills to provide. Being an art of words, it can help you become more sensitive to language — your own and other people's. Poetry especially helps you to see the difference between a word that is exactly right and a word that is merely good enough — what Mark Twain calls "the difference between the lightning and the lightning-bug." Read a fine writer alertly, with enjoyment, and some of the writer's ways with words may grow on you. Most jobs today (and even the task of making out a long-form tax return) still call for some close reading and clear writing. Indeed, habits of language can even determine one's place in a society — as Bernard Shaw, though dealing with a different society, demonstrates with humor in *Pygmalion*. (By the way, if a career you have in mind has anything to do with advertising — whether writing it or

using it or resisting it — be sure to read Chapter Fourteen, on suggestions inherent in words.)

Times change, and yet the need to think cogently and express yourself well is no less acute, though you may set down your thoughts on the green and glowing screen of a word processor. That is why most colleges see a need for general learning as well as specialized career training, and recommend basic courses in the humanities. No one can promise, of course, that your study of literature will result in cash profit; but at least the kind of wealth that literature provides is immune to fluctuations of the Dow Jones average. Besides, should you discover in yourself a fondness for great reading, then it is likely that in no season of your life will you become incurably bored or feel totally alone — even after you make good in your career, even when there is nothing on television.

At first, it might strike you that to write about stories, poems, and plays is a sterile exercise, unrelated to any kind of "real" writing you may someday do in the extracollegiate world. However, write about literature and you deepen your knowledge of the English language — and of human beings as well. Both knowledges are vital to practically all the writing you are ever likely to try.

Changes in This Edition

In striving to render this book more teachable, I listened hard to the good counsel of 178 instructors who taught from the last edition. Not every bit of this counsel could be followed without making the book too big for its stitches, but in every vital decision, the wishes of the majority prevailed. The instructors clearly called for a play by Molière. In "Stories for Further Reading," they wanted more stories, and therefore more freedom of choice. (Further reasons for the new changes will be found in the preface to the *Instructor's Manual to Accompany Literature, Third Edition.*)

Primarily, this book was conceived as an anthology of literature: some of it great, all at least valuable. This is apparently what its users want it to remain. Yet an increasing number of instructors now teach literature as part of a composition program. To serve them better, this edition further deepens the book's commitment to helping students write. I have tried not to burden the stories, poems, and plays with preachments on composition immediately before or after them. However, brief Suggestions for Writing are now provided throughout the book — at the end of every chapter where they seemed to be of use. And this time, I have gathered all the advice on how to write into a Supplement at the back of the book, so that the student can find it in one place. Short, pointed advice, I believe, helps more than a whole hatful. Still, I have added a discussion of journal-keeping, some new

examples of student prose, and three short (and necessarily oversimple) chapters on how to write a story, a poem, and a play. I claim no authority in any of these arts, but I quote testimony from celebrated writers who reveal a few of their working habits. Not all instructors care to assign creative writing, but I trust that these chapters may also serve those who would have their students glimpse the processes by which literary writers actually battle with the unspoiled page.

One other feature is an innovation. After each main section — Fiction, Poetry, and Drama — you will find a little anthology of short critical statements. Nothing need be done about them; they are here for the instructor who wants students to have a few seminal pieces of criticism at their fingertips. Besides, as the *Instructor's Manual* will indicate, these texts can be quarried for still more topics to be used in writing and discussion, if any more are desired. Is every one of these critical statements seminal? I have to admit that two or three are given merely in hopes of starting a decent fight.

A Note on Texts and Dates

Effort has been made to provide the best available texts and (when necessary) translations. In this edition, a date appears to the right of each title. This is the date of first publication in book form or, in the case of a play, first performance. Parentheses around a date indicate a date of composition — given when a work, such as a poem of Emily Dickinson, was composed much earlier than its first printing. No attempt has been made to guess at dates for medieval popular ballads. Spelling has been modernized (*rose-lipped* for *ros-lip'd*) and made American, unless to do so would alter meter or sound. But I have left the *y* in Blake's strange "Tyger" and let Walt Whitman keep his characteristic *bloom'd*. Untitled poems are identified by their first lines, unless given titles by custom ("Western Wind").

Acknowledgments

This book remains indebted to all who have corrected and improved it in the past. This edition has also learned much from the advice and comments of many more instructors, among them De Anne D. Adams, Jonathan Aldrich, Floyd A. Allen, Jr., Mark Allen, R. E. Allen, Muriel Allingham-Dale, Grace Amigone, Andrew J. Angyal, Ellen Arl, David Baker, John Barrett (of Richland Community College), John W. Barrett (of the University of South Carolina at Sumter), Marilyn G. Barrette, Michael W. Bartos, Jay Barwell, Robert Bennett, Frederick L. Berty, Edwin T. Block, Jr., Lindy Bonczek, John P. Boots, Wilson C. Boynton, Marion Brock, Van K. Brock, Maurice F. Brown, E. J. Burde, Susan M. Butler, Robert A. Byrne, Richard F. Cahill, D. Dean Cantrell, William

Cash, Susan Claiborne, Howard T. Clausen, Lawrence M. Clopper, Carol M. Cochran, Joseph J. Comprone, Steve Cook, Josh Copeland, Marion W. Copeland, Larry B. Corse, David Cowart, John W. Crawford, Virginia P. Critchlow, Carol Cunningham-Ruiz, Giles Daeger, Joan Daggrell, Sharon Dean, Robert Vernon Dees, P. Jay Delnar, Joseph DeMuro, Michael R. Dressman, Janet Eber, Nathaniel Elliott, Dean B. Farnsworth, Marie Finnegan, Lois B. Fisher, James Flynn, D. R. Fosso, Roberts W. French, Ruth Friedman, Jane Fuentes, Laura M. Gabrielsen, Rica Garcia, Jerome Garger, Diane Gillespie, Bert Glanz, Frederick Goldberg, William S. Gray, Katie Green, Richard L. Guertin, R. S. Gwynn, James Hall, Lane Hankinson, Carol T. Hayes, Nancy Yanes Hoffman, Deborah A. Holland, Clement Howton, Daniel Hughes, Linda T. Humphrey, Lyn Isbell, Jay Jacoby, Edward Jayne, Judith B. Jernigan, Ellwood Johnson, Kenneth G. Johnston, Pauline G. Jones, Thomas Kaminski, Frank S. Kastor, Mark Kelso, David Kerner, Paul Kistel, Enno Klammer, Jack Kolb, Judith J. Kollmann, Margaret Langhans, Richard Leveroni, Thomas Lisk, Arthur Lothrop, David Louie, Lawrence J. Luck, Peter Maguire, Jewel Marple, J. E. Marsh, William Matter, Richard Maxwell, Clark Mayo, Judith H. McDowell, Jerry D. McElveen, S. D. McFarland, Patricia McGowan, William M. McIlwaine, Nayan McNeill, John H. Meagher, III, Betty Ann Metz, Ellen Meyer, Walter S. Minot, Richard Moore, Christopher Morris, Leroy Mottla, David Nelson, Ronald B. Newman, Jeanne Nichols, Marsha R. Nourse, Robert Nugent, Ellen J. O'Brien, Louis Oldani, S.J., Janet Overmyer, Merriem Palitz, William A. Pasch, Louis G. Pecek, Evelyn H. Pendley, Charles Pennel, Paul Petlewski, Sarah B. Pfaffenroth, Alan Powers, Jo Radner, Willie Reader, Morton D. Rich, Chet Rogalski, Thomas A. Ryan, Jules Ryckebusch, Nicki Sahlin, Nancy G. Schrier, Thomas M. Scriver, Lore Segal, Thomas H. Seiler, John N. Serio, D. Dean Shackelford, Rhoda W. Sheehan, Katherine G. Simoneaux, Paul Smith, Ellen W. Sternberg, Ruth L. Strickland, Dabney Stuart, Thomas Swiss, Joyce Swofford, Philip A. Tetreault, Leland M. Thiel, Charles S. Tilghman, David Ned Tobin, Blagoy P. Trenev, Thomas J. Trout, Tom Trusky, Billie Varnum, A. Delaney Walker, Robert K. Wallace, Roger Weaver, David R. Webank, Robert P. Weeks, Irwin Weiser, Mary M. White, Jayne A. Widmayer, Anne Williams, Ruth Windhover, Mathew I. Winston, Blossom Wohl, Linda L. Woods, Dal F. Wooten, Clemewell Young, Melody Zatdel, and Karl Zender. Sylvan Barnet continued to give valuable criticism. Paul T. Hopper read and corrected the poetry section in manuscript. For the publisher, Carolyn Potts lent her wise guidance; Elizabeth Schaaf supplied her editorial good sense; Donna McCormick fought the battle of permissions; and Barbara Breese, Ed Dornan, David Giele, Marianne L'Abatte, Elizabeth Philipps, Millie Stevens, Gail Stewart, and Sally Stickney made valuable contributions. I remain grateful to students at Tufts, Michigan, North

Carolina (Greensboro), California (Irvine), and Leeds for helping me read literature. Dorothy M. Kennedy, co-author of the *Instructor's Manual,* contributed along with her faith and sensibility some questions to the book itself.

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