

MIDTERM EXAMINATION QUESTION

Write a clear, coherent, and (if possible) brilliantly insightful essay on ONE of the passages reproduced below. Whichever you choose, you should attend not only to the passage itself but also to as much of Paradise Lost as you have read. The idea is to give your reader an exciting ride on the hermeneutic circle -- to make the poem illuminate the passage and the passage illuminate the poem.

Hail horrors, hail  
Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell  
Receive thy new Possessor: One who brings  
A mind not to be chang'd by Place or Time.  
The mind is its own place, and in itself  
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.  
1.250-255

As when Alcides from Oechalia Crown'd  
With conquest, felt th' envenom'd robe, and tore  
Through pain up by the roots Thessalian Pines,  
And Lichas from the top of Oeta threw  
Into th' Euboic Sea.  
2.542-546

Evil into the mind of God or Man  
May come and go, so unapprov'd, and leave  
No spot or blame behind.  
5.117-119

There is a Cave  
Within the Mount of God, fast by his Throne,  
Where light and darkness in perpetual round  
Lodge and dislodge by turns, which makes through Heav'n  
Grateful vicissitude, like Day and Night;  
Light issues forth, and at the other door  
Obsequious darkness enters, till her hour  
To veil the Heav'n. . . .  
6.4-11

But Knowledge is as food, and needs no less  
Her Temperance over Appetite, to know  
In measure what the mind may well contain,  
Oppresses else with Surfeit, and soon turns  
Wisdom to Folly, as Nourishment to Wind.  
7.126-130

I to thee disclose  
What inward thence I feel, not therefore foil'd,  
Who meet with various objects, from the sense  
Variously representing; yet still free  
Approve the best, and follow what I approve.  
To Love thou blam'st me not, for Love thou say'st  
Leads up to Heav'n, is both the way and guide.  
8.607-613

Exam time: Friday, May 5, at noon. Please bring two blank bluebooks.