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BRITISH LITERATURE

THE RISE OF THE NOVEL (1700-1760): Realism

Daniel Defoe [1660-1731], *Robinson Crusoe*, 1719

The wave that came upon me again buried me at once twenty or thirty feet deep in its own body, and I could feel myself carried with a mighty force and swiftness towards the shore – a very great way; but I held my breath, and assisted myself to swim still forward with all my might. I was ready to burst with holding my breath, when, as I felt myself rising up, so, to my immediate relief, I found my head and hands shoot out above the surface of the water; and though it was not two seconds of time that I could keep myself so, yet it relieved me greatly, gave me breath, and new courage. I was covered again with water a good while, but not so long but I held it out; and finding the water had spent itself, and began to return, I struck forward against the return of the waves, and felt ground again with my feet. I stood still a few moments to recover breath, and till the waters went from me, and then took to my heels and ran with what strength I had further towards the shore. But neither would this deliver me from the fury of the sea, which came pouring in after me again; and twice more I was lifted up by the waves and carried forward as before, the shore being very flat.

The last time of these two had well-nigh been fatal to me, for the sea having hurried me along as before, landed me, or rather dashed me, against a piece of rock, and that with such force, that it left me senseless, and indeed helpless, as to my own deliverance; for the blow taking my side and breast, beat the breath as it were quite out of my body; and had it returned again immediately, I must have been strangled in the water; but I recovered a little before the return of the waves, and seeing I should be covered again with the water, I resolved to hold fast by a piece of the rock, and so to hold my breath, if possible, till the wave went back. Now, as the waves were not so high as at first, being nearer land, I held my hold till the wave abated, and then fetched another run, which brought me so near the shore that the next wave, though it went over me, yet did not so swallow me up as to carry me away; and the next run I took, I got to the mainland, where, to my great comfort, I clambered up the cliffs of the shore and sat me down upon the grass, free from danger and quite out of the reach of the water.

I was now landed and safe on shore, and began to look up and thank God that my life was saved, in a case wherein there was some minutes before scarce any room to hope. I believe it is impossible to express, to the life, what the ecstasies and transports of the soul are, when it is so saved, as I may say, out of the very grave: and I do not wonder now at the custom, when a malefactor, who has the halter about his neck, is tied up, and just going to be turned off, and has a reprieve brought to him – I say, I do not wonder that they bring a surgeon with it, to let him bleed that very moment they tell him of it, that the surprise may not drive the animal spirits from the heart and overwhelm him.

“For sudden joys, like griefs, confound at first.”

I walked about on the shore lifting up my hands, and my whole being, as I may say, wrapped up in a contemplation of my deliverance; making a thousand gestures and motions, which I cannot describe; reflecting upon all my comrades that were drowned, and

that there should not be one soul saved but myself; for, as for them, I never saw them afterwards, or any sign of them, except three of their hats, one cap, and two shoes that were not fellows.

I cast my eye to the stranded vessel, when, the breach and froth of the sea being so big, I could hardly see it, it lay so far off; and considered, Lord! how was it possible I could get on shore?

After I had solaced my mind with the comfortable part of my condition, I began to look round me, to see what kind of place I was in, and what was next to be done; and I soon found my comforts abate, and that, in a word, I had a dreadful deliverance; for I was wet, had no clothes to shift me, nor anything either to eat or drink to comfort me; neither did I see any prospect before me but that of perishing with hunger or being devoured by wild beasts; and that which was particularly afflicting to me was, that I had no weapon, either to hunt and kill any creature for my sustenance, or to defend myself against any other creature that might desire to kill me for theirs. In a word, I had nothing about me but a knife, a tobacco-pipe, and a little tobacco in a box. This was all my provisions; and this threw me into such terrible agonies of mind, that for a while I ran about like a madman. Night coming upon me, I began with a heavy heart to consider what would be my lot if there were any ravenous beasts in that country, as at night they always come abroad for their prey.

All the remedy that offered to my thoughts at that time was to get up into a thick bushy tree like a fir, but thorny, which grew near me, and where I resolved to sit all night, and consider the next day what death I should die, for as yet I saw no prospect of life. I walked about a furlong from the shore, to see if I could find any fresh water to drink, which I did, to my great joy; and having drank, and put a little tobacco into my mouth to prevent hunger, I went to the tree, and getting up into it, endeavoured to place myself so that if I should sleep I might not fall. And having cut me a short stick, like a truncheon, for my defence, I took up my lodging; and having been excessively fatigued, I fell fast asleep, and slept as comfortably as, I believe, few could have done in my condition, and found myself more refreshed with it than, I think, I ever was on such an occasion.

Jonathan Swift [1667-1745], *Gulliver's Travels*, 1725

In hopes to ingratiate myself further into his majesty's favour, I told him of "an invention, discovered between three and four hundred years ago, to make a certain powder, into a heap of which, the smallest spark of fire falling, would kindle the whole in a moment, although it were as big as a mountain, and make it all fly up in the air together, with a noise and agitation greater than thunder. That a proper quantity of this powder rammed into a hollow tube of brass or iron, according to its bigness, would drive a ball of iron or lead, with such violence and speed, as nothing was able to sustain its force. That the largest balls thus discharged, would not only destroy whole ranks of an army at once, but batter the strongest walls to the ground, sink down ships, with a thousand men in each, to the bottom of the sea, and when linked together by a chain, would cut through masts and rigging, divide hundreds of bodies in the middle, and lay all waste before them. That we often put this powder into large hollow balls of iron, and discharged them by an engine into some city we were besieging, which would rip up the pavements, tear the houses to pieces, burst and throw splinters on every side, dashing out the brains of all who came near. That I

knew the ingredients very well, which were cheap and common; I understood the manner of compounding them, and could direct his workmen how to make those tubes, of a size proportionable to all other things in his majesty's kingdom, and the largest need not be above a hundred feet long; twenty or thirty of which tubes, charged with the proper quantity of powder and balls, would batter down the walls of the strongest town in his dominions in a few hours, or destroy the whole metropolis, if ever it should pretend to dispute his absolute commands." This I humbly offered to his majesty, as a small tribute of acknowledgment, in turn for so many marks that I had received, of his royal favour and protection.

The king was struck with horror at the description I had given of those terrible engines, and the proposal I had made. "He was amazed, how so impotent and grovelling an insect as I" (these were his expressions) "could entertain such inhuman ideas, and in so familiar a manner, as to appear wholly unmoved at all the scenes of blood and desolation which I had painted as the common effects of those destructive machines; whereof," he said, "some evil genius, enemy to mankind, must have been the first contriver. As for himself, he protested, that although few things delighted him so much as new discoveries in art or in nature, yet he would rather lose half his kingdom, than be privy to such a secret; which he commanded me, as I valued any life, never to mention any more."

A strange effect of narrow principles and views! that a prince possessed of every quality which procures veneration, love, and esteem; of strong parts, great wisdom, and profound learning, endowed with admirable talents, and almost adored by his subjects, should, from a nice, unnecessary scruple, whereof in Europe we can have no conception, let slip an opportunity put into his hands that would have made him absolute master of the lives, the liberties, and the fortunes of his people! Neither do I say this, with the least intention to detract from the many virtues of that excellent king, whose character, I am sensible, will, on this account, be very much lessened in the opinion of an English reader: but I take this defect among them to have risen from their ignorance, by not having hitherto reduced politics into a science, as the more acute wits of Europe have done. For, I remember very well, in a discourse one day with the king, when I happened to say, "there were several thousand books among us written upon the art of government," it gave him (directly contrary to my intention) a very mean opinion of our understandings. He professed both to abominate and despise all mystery, refinement, and intrigue, either in a prince or a minister. He could not tell what I meant by secrets of state, where an enemy, or some rival nation, were not in the case. He confined the knowledge of governing within very narrow bounds, to common sense and reason, to justice and lenity, to the speedy determination of civil and criminal causes; with some other obvious topics, which are not worth considering. And he gave it for his opinion, "that whoever could make two ears of corn, or two blades of grass, to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country, than the whole race of politicians put together."

ROMANCE – ROMANTICISM

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVEL

Jane Austen [1775-1817], *Sense and Sensibility*, 1811

The whole country about them abounded in beautiful walks. The high downs which invited them from almost every window of the cottage to seek the exquisite enjoyment of air on their summits, were a happy alternative when the dirt of the valleys beneath shut up their superior beauties; and towards one of these hills did Marianne and Margaret one memorable morning direct their steps, attracted by the partial sunshine of a showery sky, and unable longer to bear the confinement which the settled rain of the two preceding days had occasioned. The weather was not tempting enough to draw the two others from their pencil and their book, in spite of Marianne's declaration that the day would be lastingly fair, and that every threatening cloud would be drawn off from their hills; and the two girls set off together.

They gaily ascended the downs, rejoicing in their own penetration at every glimpse of blue sky; and when they caught in their faces the animating gales of a high south-westerly wind, they pitied the fears which had prevented their mother and Elinor from sharing such delightful sensations.

“Is there a felicity in the world,” said Marianne, “superior to this? — Margaret, we will walk here at least two hours.”

Margaret agreed, and they pursued their way against the wind, resisting it with laughing delight for about twenty minutes longer, when suddenly the clouds united over their heads, and a driving rain set full in their face. — Chagrined and surprised, they were obliged, though unwillingly, to turn back, for no shelter was nearer than their own house. One consolation however remained for them, to which the exigence of the moment gave more than usual propriety; it was that of running with all possible speed down the steep side of the hill which led immediately to their garden gate.

They set off. Marianne had at first the advantage, but a false step brought her suddenly to the ground; and Margaret, unable to stop herself to assist her, was involuntarily hurried along, and reached the bottom in safety.

A gentleman carrying a gun, with two pointers playing round him, was passing up the hill and within a few yards of Marianne, when her accident happened. He put down his gun and ran to her assistance. She had raised herself from the ground, but her foot had been twisted in her fall, and she was scarcely able to stand. The gentleman offered his services; and perceiving that her modesty declined what her situation rendered necessary, took her up in his arms without farther delay, and carried her down the hill. Then passing through the garden, the gate of which had been left open by Margaret, he bore her directly into the house, whither Margaret was just arrived, and quitted not his hold till he had seated her in a chair in the parlour.

Elinor and her mother rose up in amazement at their entrance, and while the eyes of both were fixed on him with an evident wonder and a secret admiration which equally sprung from his appearance, he apologized for his intrusion by relating its cause, in a manner so frank and so graceful that his person, which was uncommonly handsome, received additional charms from his voice and expression. Had he been even old, ugly, and

vulgar, the gratitude and kindness of Mrs. Dashwood would have been secured by any act of attention to her child; but the influence of youth, beauty, and elegance, gave an interest to the action which came home to her feelings.

She thanked him again and again; and, with a sweetness of address which always attended her, invited him to be seated. But this he declined, as he was dirty and wet. Mrs. Dashwood then begged to know to whom she was obliged. His name, he replied, was Willoughby, and his present home was at Allenham, from whence he hoped she would allow him the honour of calling tomorrow to enquire after Miss Dashwood. The honour was readily granted, and he then departed, to make himself still more interesting, in the midst of a heavy rain.

His manly beauty and more than common gracefulness were instantly the theme of general admiration, and the laugh which his gallantry raised against Marianne received particular spirit from his exterior attractions. — Marianne herself had seen less of his person than the rest, for the confusion which crimsoned over her face, on his lifting her up, had robbed her of the power of regarding him after their entering the house. But she had seen enough of him to join in all the admiration of the others, and with an energy which always adorned her praise. His person and air were equal to what her fancy had ever drawn for the hero of a favourite story; and in his carrying her into the house with so little previous formality, there was a rapidity of thought which particularly recommended the action to her. Every circumstance belonging to him was interesting. His name was good, his residence was in their favourite village, and she soon found out that of all manly dresses a shooting-jacket was the most becoming. Her imagination was busy, her reflections were pleasant, and the pain of a sprained ankle was disregarded.

THE GOTHIC NOVEL (1764-1830)

Ann Radcliffe [1764-1823], *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, 1794

At that hour, the castle was perfectly still, and every inhabitant of it, except herself, seemed to have retired to rest. As she passed along the wide and lonely galleries, dusky and silent, she felt forlorn and apprehensive of—she scarcely knew what; but when, entering the corridor, she recollected the incident of the preceding night, a dread seized her, lest a subject of alarm, similar to that, which had befallen Annette, should occur to her, and which, whether real, or ideal, would, she felt, have an almost equal effect upon her weakened spirits. The chamber, to which Annette had alluded, she did not exactly know, but understood it to be one of those she must pass in the way to her own; and, sending a fearful look forward into the gloom, she stepped lightly and cautiously along, till, coming to a door, from whence issued a low sound, she hesitated and paused; and, during the delay of that moment, her fears so much increased, that she had no power to move from the spot. Believing, that she heard a human voice within, she was somewhat revived; but, in the next moment, the door was opened, and a person, whom she conceived to be Montoni, appeared, who instantly started back, and closed it, though not before she had seen, by the light that burned in the chamber, another person, sitting in a melancholy attitude by the fire. Her terror vanished, but her astonishment only began, which was now roused by the mysterious secrecy of Montoni's manner, and by the discovery of a person, whom he thus

visited at midnight, in an apartment, which had long been shut up, and of which such extraordinary reports were circulated.

While she thus continued hesitating, strongly prompted to watch Montoni's motions, yet fearing to irritate him by appearing to notice them, the door was again opened cautiously, and as instantly closed as before. She then stepped softly to her chamber, which was the next but one to this, but, having put down her lamp, returned to an obscure corner of the corridor, to observe the proceedings of this half-seen person, and to ascertain, whether it was indeed Montoni.

Having waited in silent expectation for a few minutes, with her eyes fixed on the door, it was again opened, and the same person appeared, whom she now knew to be Montoni. He looked cautiously round, without perceiving her, then, stepping forward, closed the door, and left the corridor. Soon after, Emily heard the door fastened on the inside, and she withdrew to her chamber, wondering at what she had witnessed.

It was now twelve o'clock. As she closed her casement, she heard footsteps on the terrace below, and saw imperfectly, through the gloom, several persons advancing, who passed under the casement. She then heard the clink of arms, and, in the next moment, the watch-word; when, recollecting the command she had overheard from Montoni, and the hour of the night, she understood, that these men were, for the first time, relieving guard in the castle. Having listened till all was again still, she retired to sleep.

VICTORIAN LITERATURE (1837-1901)

Emily Brontë [1818-1848], *Wuthering Heights*, 1848

Yesterday afternoon set in misty and cold. I had half a mind to spend it by my study fire, instead of wading through heath and mud to Wuthering Heights. On coming up from dinner, however, (N.B.—I dine between twelve and one o'clock; the housekeeper, a matronly lady, taken as a fixture along with the house, could not, or would not, comprehend my request that I might be served at five)—on mounting the stairs with this lazy intention, and stepping into the room, I saw a servant-girl on her knees surrounded by brushes and coal-scuttles, and raising an infernal dust as she extinguished the flames with heaps of cinders. This spectacle drove me back immediately; I took my hat, and, after a four-miles' walk, arrived at Heathcliff's garden-gate just in time to escape the first feathery flakes of a snow-shower.

On that bleak hill-top the earth was hard with a black frost, and the air made me shiver through every limb. Being unable to remove the chain, I jumped over, and, running up the flagged causeway bordered with straggling gooseberry-bushes, knocked vainly for admittance, till my knuckles tingled and the dogs howled.

'Wretched inmates!' I ejaculated, mentally, 'you deserve perpetual isolation from your species for your churlish inhospitality. At least, I would not keep my doors barred in the day-time. I don't care—I will get in!' So resolved, I grasped the latch and shook it vehemently. Vinegar-faced Joseph projected his head from a round window of the barn.

'What are ye for?' he shouted. 'T' maister's down i' t' fowld. Go round by th' end o' t' laith, if ye went to spake to him.'

'Is there nobody inside to open the door?' I hallooed, responsively.

'There's nobbut t' missis; and shoo'll not oppen 't an ye mak' yer flaysome dins till neeght.'

'Why? Cannot you tell her whom I am, eh, Joseph?'

'Nor-ne me! I'll hae no hend wi't,' muttered the head, vanishing.

The snow began to drive thickly. I seized the handle to essay another trial; when a young man without coat, and shouldering a pitchfork, appeared in the yard behind. He hailed me to follow him, and, after marching through a wash-house, and a paved area containing a coal-shed, pump, and pigeon-cot, we at length arrived in the huge, warm, cheerful apartment where I was formerly received. It glowed delightfully in the radiance of an immense fire, compounded of coal, peat, and wood; and near the table, laid for a plentiful evening meal, I was pleased to observe the 'missis,' an individual whose existence I had never previously suspected. I bowed and waited, thinking she would bid me take a seat. She looked at me, leaning back in her chair, and remained motionless and mute.

'Rough weather!' I remarked. 'I'm afraid, Mrs. Heathcliff, the door must bear the consequence of your servants' leisure attendance: I had hard work to make them hear me.'

She never opened her mouth. I stared—she stared also: at any rate, she kept her eyes on me in a cool, regardless manner, exceedingly embarrassing and disagreeable.

'Sit down,' said the young man, gruffly. 'He'll be in soon.'

I obeyed; and hemmed, and called the villain Juno, who deigned, at this second interview, to move the extreme tip of her tail, in token of owning my acquaintance.

‘A beautiful animal!’ I commenced again. ‘Do you intend parting with the little ones, madam?’

‘They are not mine,’ said the amiable hostess, more repellingly than Heathcliff himself could have replied.

‘Ah, your favourites are among these?’ I continued, turning to an obscure cushion full of something like cats.

‘A strange choice of favourites!’ she observed scornfully.

Unluckily, it was a heap of dead rabbits. I hemmed once more, and drew closer to the hearth, repeating my comment on the wildness of the evening.

‘You should not have come out,’ she said, rising and reaching from the chimney-piece two of the painted canisters.

Her position before was sheltered from the light; now, I had a distinct view of her whole figure and countenance. She was slender, and apparently scarcely past girlhood: an admirable form, and the most exquisite little face that I have ever had the pleasure of beholding; small features, very fair; flaxen ringlets, or rather golden, hanging loose on her delicate neck; and eyes, had they been agreeable in expression, that would have been irresistible: fortunately for my susceptible heart, the only sentiment they evinced hovered between scorn and a kind of desperation, singularly unnatural to be detected there. The canisters were almost out of her reach; I made a motion to aid her; she turned upon me as a miser might turn if any one attempted to assist him in counting his gold.

‘I don’t want your help,’ she snapped; ‘I can get them for myself.’

‘I beg your pardon!’ I hastened to reply.

‘Were you asked to tea?’ she demanded, tying an apron over her neat black frock, and standing with a spoonful of the leaf poised over the pot.

‘I shall be glad to have a cup,’ I answered.

‘Were you asked?’ she repeated.

‘No,’ I said, half smiling. ‘You are the proper person to ask me.’

She flung the tea back, spoon and all, and resumed her chair in a pet; her forehead corrugated, and her red under-lip pushed out, like a child’s ready to cry.

Charlotte Brontë [1816-1855], *Jane Eyre*, 1847

"I dreamt another dream, sir: that Thornfield Hall was a dreary ruin, the retreat of bats and owls. I thought that of all the stately front nothing remained but a shell-like wall, very high and very fragile-looking. I wandered, on a moonlight night, through the grass-grown enclosure within: here I stumbled over a marble hearth, and there over a fallen fragment of cornice. Wrapped up in a shawl, I still carried the unknown little child: I might not lay it down anywhere, however tired were my arms--however much its weight impeded my progress, I must retain it. I heard the gallop of a horse at a distance on the road; I was sure it was you; and you were departing for many years and for a distant country. I climbed the thin wall with frantic perilous haste, eager to catch one glimpse of you from the top: the stones rolled from under my feet, the ivy branches I grasped gave way, the child clung round my neck in terror, and almost strangled me; at last I gained the summit. I saw you like a speck on a white track, lessening every moment. The blast blew so strong I could not stand. I sat down on the narrow ledge; I hushed the scared infant in my lap: you turned

an angle of the road: I bent forward to take a last look; the wall crumbled; I was shaken; the child rolled from my knee, I lost my balance, fell, and woke."

"Now, Jane, that is all."

"All the preface, sir; the tale is yet to come. On waking, a gleam dazzled my eyes; I thought – Oh, it is daylight! But I was mistaken; it was only candlelight. Sophie, I supposed, had come in. There was a light in the dressing-table, and the door of the closet, where, before going to bed, I had hung my wedding-dress and veil, stood open; I heard a rustling there. I asked, 'Sophie, what are you doing?' No one answered; but a form emerged from the closet; it took the light, held it aloft, and surveyed the garments pendent from the portmanteau. 'Sophie! Sophie!' I again cried: and still it was silent. I had risen up in bed, I bent forward: first surprise, then bewilderment, came over me; and then my blood crept cold through my veins. Mr. Rochester, this was not Sophie, it was not Leah, it was not Mrs. Fairfax: it was not – no, I was sure of it, and am still – it was not even that strange woman, Grace Poole."

"It must have been one of them," interrupted my master.

"No, sir, I solemnly assure you to the contrary. The shape standing before me had never crossed my eyes within the precincts of Thornfield Hall before; the height, the contour were new to me."

"Describe it, Jane."

"It seemed, sir, a woman, tall and large, with thick and dark hair hanging long down her back. I know not what dress she had on: it was white and straight; but whether gown, sheet, or shroud, I cannot tell."

"Did you see her face?"

"Not at first. But presently she took my veil from its place; she held it up, gazed at it long, and then she threw it over her own head, and turned to the mirror. At that moment I saw the reflection of the visage and features quite distinctly in the dark oblong glass."

"And how were they?"

"Fearful and ghastly to me – oh, sir, I never saw a face like it! It was a discoloured face – it was a savage face. I wish I could forget the roll of the red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments!"

"Ghosts are usually pale, Jane."

"This, sir, was purple: the lips were swelled and dark; the brow furrowed: the black eyebrows widely raised over the bloodshot eyes. Shall I tell you of what it reminded me?"

"You may."

"Of the foul German spectre – the Vampyre."

"Ah! – what did it do?"

"Sir, it removed my veil from its gaunt head, rent it in two parts, and flinging both on the floor, trampled on them."

"Afterwards?"

"It drew aside the window-curtain and looked out; perhaps it saw dawn approaching, for, taking the candle, it retreated to the door. Just at my bedside, the figure stopped: the fiery eyes glared upon me – she thrust up her candle close to my face, and extinguished it under my eyes. I was aware her lurid visage flamed over mine, and I lost consciousness: for the second time in my life – only the second time – I became insensible from terror."

"Who was with you when you revived?"

"No one, sir, but the broad day. I rose, bathed my head and face in water, drank a long draught; felt that though enfeebled I was not ill, and determined that to none but you would I impart this vision. Now, sir, tell me who and what that woman was?"

"The creature of an over-stimulated brain; that is certain. I must be careful of you, my treasure: nerves like yours were not made for rough handling."

"Sir, depend on it, my nerves were not in fault; the thing was real: the transaction actually took place."

Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865), *North and South*, 1854-55

'Mr. Thornton,' said Margaret, shaking all over with her passion, 'go down this instant, if you are not a coward. Go down and face them like a man. Save these poor strangers, whom you have decoyed here. Speak to your workmen as if they were human beings. Speak to them kindly. Don't let the soldiers come in and cut down poor-creatures who are driven mad. I see one there who is. If you have any courage or noble quality in you, go out and speak to them, man to man.'

He turned and looked at her while she spoke. A dark cloud came over his face while he listened. He set his teeth as he heard her words.

'I will go. Perhaps I may ask you to accompany me downstairs, and bar the door behind me; my mother and sister will need that protection.'

'Oh! Mr. Thornton! I do not know—I may be wrong—only—'

But he was gone; he was downstairs in the hall; he had unbarred the front door; all she could do, was to follow him quickly, and fasten it behind him, and clamber up the stairs again with a sick heart and a dizzy head. Again she took her place by the farthest window. He was on the steps below; she saw that by the direction of a thousand angry eyes; but she could neither see nor hear anything save the savage satisfaction of the rolling angry murmur. She threw the window wide open. Many in the crowd were mere boys; cruel and thoughtless,—cruel because they were thoughtless; some were men, gaunt as wolves, and mad for prey. She knew how it was; they were like Boucher, with starving children at home—relying on ultimate success in their efforts to get higher wages, and enraged beyond measure at discovering that Irishmen were to be brought in to rob their little ones of bread. Margaret knew it all; she read it in Boucher's face, forlornly desperate and livid with rage. If Mr. Thornton would but say something to them—let them hear his voice only—it seemed as if it would be better than this wild beating and raging against the stony silence that vouchsafed them no word, even of anger or reproach. But perhaps he was speaking now; there was a momentary hush of their noise, inarticulate as that of a troop of animals. She tore her bonnet off; and bent forwards to hear. She could only see; for if Mr. Thornton had indeed made the attempt to speak, the momentary instinct to listen to him was past and gone, and the people were raging worse than ever. He stood with his arms folded; still as a statue; his face pale with repressed excitement. They were trying to intimidate him—to make him flinch; each was urging the other on to some immediate act of personal violence. Margaret felt intuitively, that in an instant all would be uproar; the first touch would cause an explosion, in which, among such hundreds of infuriated men and reckless boys, even Mr. Thornton's life would be unsafe,—that in another instant the stormy passions would have passed their bounds, and swept away all barriers of reason, or apprehension of consequence. Even while she looked, she saw lads in the back-ground stooping to take off

their heavy wooden clogs—the readiest missile they could find; she saw it was the spark to the gunpowder, and, with a cry, which no one heard, she rushed out of the room, down stairs,—she had lifted the great iron bar of the door with an imperious force—had thrown the door open wide—and was there, in face of that angry sea of men, her eyes smiting them with flaming arrows of reproach. The clogs were arrested in the hands that held them—the countenances, so fell not a moment before, now looked irresolute, and as if asking what this meant. For she stood between them and their enemy. She could not speak, but held out her arms towards them till she could recover breath.

'Oh, do not use violence! He is one man, and you are many; but her words died away, for there was no tone in her voice; it was but a hoarse whisper. Mr. Thornton stood a little on one side; he had moved away from behind her, as if jealous of anything that should come between him and danger.

'Go!' said she, once more (and now her voice was like a cry). 'The soldiers are sent for—are coming. Go peaceably. Go away. You shall have relief from your complaints, whatever they are.'

'Shall them Irish blackguards be packed back again?' asked one from out the crowd, with fierce threatening in his voice.

'Never, for your bidding!' exclaimed Mr. Thornton. And instantly the storm broke. The hootings rose and filled the air,—but Margaret did not hear them. Her eye was on the group of lads who had armed themselves with their clogs some time before. She saw their gesture—she knew its meaning,—she read their aim. Another moment, and Mr. Thornton might be smitten down,—he whom she had urged and goaded to come to this perilous place. She only thought how she could save him. She threw her arms around him; she made her body into a shield from the fierce people beyond. Still, with his arms folded, he shook her off.

'Go away,' said he, in his deep voice. 'This is no place for you.'

'It is!' said she. 'You did not see what I saw.' If she thought her sex would be a protection,—if, with shrinking eyes she had turned away from the terrible anger of these men, in any hope that ere she looked again they would have paused and reflected, and slunk away, and vanished,—she was wrong. Their reckless passion had carried them too far to stop—at least had carried some of them too far; for it is always the savage lads, with their love of cruel excitement, who head the riot—reckless to what bloodshed it may lead. A clog whizzed through the air. Margaret's fascinated eyes watched its progress; it missed its aim, and she turned sick with affright, but changed not her position, only hid her face on Mr. Thornton's arm. Then she turned and spoke again.'

'For God's sake! do not damage your cause by this violence. You do not know what you are doing.' She strove to make her words distinct.

A sharp pebble flew by her, grazing forehead and cheek, and drawing a blinding sheet of light before her eyes. She lay like one dead on Mr. Thornton's shoulder. Then he unfolded his arms, and held her encircled in one for an instant:

'You do well!' said he. 'You come to oust the innocent stranger. You fall—you hundreds—on one man; and when a woman comes before you, to ask you for your own sakes to be reasonable creatures, your cowardly wrath falls upon her! You do well!' They were silent while he spoke. They were watching, open-eyed and open-mouthed, the thread of dark-red blood which wakened them up from their trance of passion.

My father's family name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So, I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip.

I give Pirrip as my father's family name, on the authority of his tombstone and my sister,—Mrs. Joe Gargery, who married the blacksmith. As I never saw my father or my mother, and never saw any likeness of either of them (for their days were long before the days of photographs), my first fancies regarding what they were like were unreasonably derived from their tombstones. The shape of the letters on my father's, gave me an odd idea that he was a square, stout, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, "Also Georgiana Wife of the Above," I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly. To five little stone lozenges, each about a foot and a half long, which were arranged in a neat row beside their grave, and were sacred to the memory of five little brothers of mine,—who gave up trying to get a living, exceedingly early in that universal struggle,—I am indebted for a belief I religiously entertained that they had all been born on their backs with their hands in their trousers-pockets, and had never taken them out in this state of existence.

Ours was the marsh country, down by the river, within, as the river wound, twenty miles of the sea. My first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things seems to me to have been gained on a memorable raw afternoon towards evening. At such a time I found out for certain that this bleak place overgrown with nettles was the churchyard; and that Philip Pirrip, late of this parish, and also Georgiana wife of the above, were dead and buried; and that Alexander, Bartholomew, Abraham, Tobias, and Roger, infant children of the aforesaid, were also dead and buried; and that the dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard, intersected with dikes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that the low leaden line beyond was the river; and that the distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing was the sea; and that the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip.

"Hold your noise!" cried a terrible voice, as a man started up from among the graves at the side of the church porch. "Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat!"

A fearful man, all in coarse grey, with a great iron on his leg. A man with no hat, and with broken shoes, and with an old rag tied round his head. A man who had been soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles, and torn by briars; who limped, and shivered, and glared, and growled; and whose teeth chattered in his head as he seized me by the chin.

"Oh! Don't cut my throat, sir," I pleaded in terror. "Pray don't do it, sir."

"Tell us your name!" said the man. "Quick!"

"Pip, sir."

"Once more," said the man, staring at me. "Give it mouth!"

"Pip. Pip, sir."

"Show us where you live," said the man. "Point out the place!"

I pointed to where our village lay, on the flat in-shore among the alder-trees and pollards, a mile or more from the church.

The man, after looking at me for a moment, turned me upside down, and emptied my pockets. There was nothing in them but a piece of bread. When the church came to itself,—for he was so sudden and strong that he made it go head over heels before me, and I saw

the steeple under my feet,—when the church came to itself, I say, I was seated on a high tombstone, trembling while he ate the bread ravenously.

THE LATE VICTORIANS

Thomas Hardy [1840-1928], *Far from the Madding Crowd*, 1874

WHEN Farmer Oak smiled, the corners of his mouth spread till they were within an unimportant distance of his ears, his eyes were reduced to chinks, and diverging wrinkles appeared round them, extending upon his countenance like the rays in a rudimentary sketch of the rising sun.

His Christian name was Gabriel, and on working days he was a young man of sound judgment, easy motions, proper dress, and general good character. On Sundays he was a man of misty views, rather given to postponing, and hampered by his best clothes and umbrella: upon the whole, one who felt himself to occupy morally that vast middle space of Laodicean neutrality which lay between the Communion people of the parish and the drunken section, — that is, he went to church, but yawned privately by the time the congregation reached the Nicene creed, and thought of what there would be for dinner when he meant to be listening to the sermon.

Or, to state his character as it stood in the scale of public opinion, when his friends and critics were in tantrums, he was considered rather a bad man; when they were pleased, he was rather a good man; when they were neither, he was a man whose moral colour was a kind of pepper-and-salt mixture.

Since he lived six times as many working-days as Sundays, Oak's appearance in his old clothes was most peculiarly his own — the mental picture formed by his neighbours in imagining him being always dressed in that way. He wore a low-crowned felt hat, spread out at the base by tight jamming upon the head for security in high winds, and a coat like Dr. Johnson's; his lower extremities being encased in ordinary leather leggings and boots emphatically large, affording to each foot a roomy apartment so constructed that any wearer might stand in a river all day long and know nothing of damp — their maker being a conscientious man who endeavoured to compensate for any weakness in his cut by unstinted dimension and solidity.

Mr. Oak carried about him, by way of watch, what may be called a small silver clock; in other words, it was a watch as to shape and intention, and a small clock as to size. This instrument being several years older than Oak's grandfather, had the peculiarity of going either too fast or not at all. The smaller of its hands, too, occasionally slipped round on the pivot, and thus, though the minutes were told with precision, nobody could be quite certain of the hour they belonged to. The stopping peculiarity of his watch Oak remedied by thumps and shakes, and he escaped any evil consequences from the other two defects by constant comparisons with and observations of the sun and stars, and by pressing his face close to the glass of his neighbours' windows, till he could discern the hour marked by the green-faced timekeepers within. It may be mentioned that Oak's fob being difficult of access, by reason of its somewhat high situation in the waistband of his trousers (which

also lay at a remote height under his waistcoat), the watch was as a necessity pulled out by throwing the body to one side, compressing the mouth and face to a mere mass of ruddy flesh on account of the exertion required, and drawing up the watch by its chain, like a bucket from a well.

But some thoughtful persons, who had seen him walking across one of his fields on a certain December morning – sunny and exceedingly mild – might have regarded Gabriel Oak in other aspects than these. In his face one might notice that many of the hues and curves of youth had tarried on to manhood: there even remained in his remoter crannies some relics of the boy. His height and breadth would have been sufficient to make his presence imposing, had they been exhibited with due consideration. But there is a way some men have, rural and urban alike, for which the mind is more responsible than flesh and sinew: it is a way of curtailing their dimensions by their manner of showing them. And from a quiet modesty that would have become a vestal which seemed continually to impress upon him that he had no great claim on the world's room, Oak walked unassumingly and with a faintly perceptible bend, yet distinct from a bowing of the shoulders. This may be said to be a defect in an individual if he depends for his valuation more upon his appearance than upon his capacity to wear well, which Oak did not.

He had just reached the time of life at which "young" is ceasing to be the prefix of "man" in speaking of one. He was at the brightest period of masculine growth, for his intellect and his emotions were clearly separated: he had passed the time during which the influence of youth indiscriminately mingles them in the character of impulse, and he had not yet arrived at the stage wherein they become united again, in the character of prejudice, by the influence of a wife and family. In short, he was twenty-eight, and a bachelor. The field he was in this morning sloped to a ridge called Norcombe Hill. Through a spur of this hill ran the highway between Emminster and Chalk-Newton. Casually glancing over the hedge, Oak saw coming down the incline before him an ornamental spring waggon, painted yellow and gaily marked, drawn by two horses, a waggoner walking alongside bearing a whip perpendicularly. The waggon was laden with household goods and window plants, and on the apex of the whole sat a woman, young and attractive. Gabriel had not beheld the sight for more than half a minute, when the vehicle was brought to a standstill just beneath his eyes.

"The tailboard of the waggon is gone, Miss," said the waggoner.

"Then I heard it fall," said the girl, in a soft, though not particularly low voice. "I heard a noise I could not account for when we were coming up the hill."

"I'll run back."

"Do," she answered.

The sensible horses stood – perfectly still, and the waggoner's steps sank fainter and fainter in the distance.

The girl on the summit of the load sat motionless, surrounded by tables and chairs with their legs upwards, backed by an oak settle, and ornamented in front by pots of geraniums, myrtles, and cactuses, together with a caged canary – all probably from the windows of the house just vacated. There was also a cat in a willow basket, from the partly-opened lid of which she gazed with half-closed eyes, and affectionately-surveyed the small birds around.

The handsome girl waited for some time idly in her place, and the only sound heard in the stillness was the hopping of the canary up and down the perches of its prison. Then she looked attentively downwards. It was not at the bird, nor at the cat; it was at an oblong package tied in paper, and lying between them. She turned her head to learn if the

waggoner were coming. He was not yet in sight; and her eyes crept back to the package, her thoughts seeming to run upon what was inside it. At length she drew the article into her lap, and untied the paper covering; a small swing looking-glass was disclosed, in which she proceeded to survey herself attentively. She parted her lips and smiled.

Joseph Conrad [1857-1924], "An Outpost of Progress," 1897

There were two white men in charge of the trading station. Kayerts, the chief, was short and fat; Carlier, the assistant, was tall, with a large head and a very broad trunk perched upon a long pair of thin legs. The third man on the staff was a Sierra Leone nigger, who maintained that his name was Henry Price. However, for some reason or other, the natives down the river had given him the name of Makola, and it stuck to him through all his wanderings about the country. He spoke English and French with a warbling accent, wrote a beautiful hand, understood bookkeeping, and cherished in his innermost heart the worship of evil spirits. His wife was a negress from Loanda, very large and very noisy. Three children rolled about in sunshine before the door of his low, shed-like dwelling. Makola, taciturn and impenetrable, despised the two white men. He had charge of a small clay storehouse with a dried-grass roof, and pretended to keep a correct account of beads, cotton cloth, red kerchiefs, brass wire, and other trade goods it contained. Besides the storehouse and Makola's hut, there was only one large building in the cleared ground of the station. It was built neatly of reeds, with a verandah on all the four sides. There were three rooms in it. The one in the middle was the living-room, and had two rough tables and a few stools in it. The other two were the bedrooms for the white men. Each had a bedstead and a mosquito net for all furniture. The plank floor was littered with the belongings of the white men; open half-empty boxes, torn wearing apparel, old boots; all the things dirty, and all the things broken, that accumulate mysteriously round untidy men. There was also another dwelling-place some distance away from the buildings. In it, under a tall cross much out of the perpendicular, slept the man who had seen the beginning of all this; who had planned and had watched the construction of this outpost of progress. He had been, at home, an unsuccessful painter who, weary of pursuing fame on an empty stomach, had gone out there through high protections. He had been the first chief of that station. Makola had watched the energetic artist die off ever in the just finished house with his usual kind of "I told you so" indifference. Then, for a time, he dwelt alone with his family, his account books, and the Evil Spirit that rules the lands under the equator. He got on very well with his god. Perhaps he had propitiated him by a promise of more white men to play with, by and by. At any rate the director of the Great Trading Company, coming up in a steamer that resembled an enormous sardine box with a flat-roofed shed erected on it, found the station in good order, and Makola as usual quietly diligent. The director had the cross put up over the first agent's grave, and appointed Kayerts to the post. Carlier was told off as second in charge. The director was a man ruthless and efficient, who at times, but very imperceptibly, indulged in grim humour. He made a speech to Kayerts and Carlier, pointing out to them the promising aspect of their station. The nearest trading-post was about three hundred miles away. It was an exceptional opportunity for them to distinguish themselves and to earn percentages on the trade. This appointment was a favour done to beginners. Kayerts was moved almost to tears by his director's kindness. He would, he said, by doing his best,

try to justify the flattering confidence, &c., &c. Kayerts had been in the Administration of the Telegraphs, and knew how to express himself correctly. Carlier, an ex-non-commissioned officer of cavalry in an army guaranteed from harm by several European Powers, was less impressed. If there were commissions to get, so much the better; and, trailing a sulky glance over the river, the forests, the impenetrable bush that seemed to cut off the station from the rest of the world, he muttered between his teeth, "We shall see, very soon." Next day, some bales of cotton goods and a few cases of provisions having been thrown on shore, the sardine-box steamer went off, not to return for another six months. On the deck the director touched his cap to the two agents, who stood on the bank waving their hats, and turning to an old servant of the Company on his passage to headquarters, said, "Look at those two imbeciles. They must be mad at home to send me such specimens. I told those fellows to plant a vegetable garden, build new storehouses and fences, and construct a landing-stage. I bet nothing will be done! They won't know how to begin. I always thought the station on this river useless, and they just fit the station!"

H.G. Wells [1866-1946], *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, 1896

"AND now, Prendick, I will explain," said Doctor Moreau, so soon as we had eaten and drunk. "I must confess that you are the most dictatorial guest I ever entertained. I warn you that this is the last I shall do to oblige you. The next thing you threaten to commit suicide about, I shan't do,—even at some personal inconvenience."

He sat in my deck chair, a cigar half consumed in his white, dexterous-looking fingers. The light of the swinging lamp fell on his white hair; he stared through the little window out at the starlight. I sat as far away from him as possible, the table between us and the revolvers to hand. Montgomery was not present. I did not care to be with the two of them in such a little room.

"You admit that the vivisected human being, as you called it, is, after all, only the puma?" said Moreau. He had made me visit that horror in the inner room, to assure myself of its inhumanity.

"It is the puma," I said, "still alive, but so cut and mutilated as I pray I may never see living flesh again. Of all vile—"

"Never mind that," said Moreau; "at least, spare me those youthful horrors. Montgomery used to be just the same. You admit that it is the puma. Now be quiet, while I reel off my physiological lecture to you."

And forthwith, beginning in the tone of a man supremely bored, but presently warming a little, he explained his work to me. He was very simple and convincing. Now and then there was a touch of sarcasm in his voice. Presently I found myself hot with shame at our mutual positions.

The creatures I had seen were not men, had never been men. They were animals, humanised animals,—triumphs of vivisection.

"You forget all that a skilled vivisector can do with living things," said Moreau. "For my own part, I'm puzzled why the things I have done here have not been done before. Small efforts, of course, have been made,—amputation, tongue-cutting, excisions. Of course you know a squint may be induced or cured by surgery? Then in the case of excisions you have all kinds of secondary changes, pigmentary disturbances, modifications

of the passions, alterations in the secretion of fatty tissue. I have no doubt you have heard of these things?"

"Of course," said I. "But these foul creatures of yours—"

"All in good time," said he, waving his hand at me; "I am only beginning. Those are trivial cases of alteration. Surgery can do better things than that. There is building up as well as breaking down and changing. You have heard, perhaps, of a common surgical operation resorted to in cases where the nose has been destroyed: a flap of skin is cut from the forehead, turned down on the nose, and heals in the new position. This is a kind of grafting in a new position of part of an animal upon itself. Grafting of freshly obtained material from another animal is also possible,—the case of teeth, for example. The grafting of skin and bone is done to facilitate healing: the surgeon places in the middle of the wound pieces of skin snipped from another animal, or fragments of bone from a victim freshly killed. Hunter's cock-spur—possibly you have heard of that—flourished on the bull's neck; and the rhinoceros rats of the Algerian zouaves are also to be thought of,—monsters manufactured by transferring a slip from the tail of an ordinary rat to its snout, and allowing it to heal in that position."

"Monsters manufactured!" said I. "Then you mean to tell me—"

"Yes. These creatures you have seen are animals carven and wrought into new shapes. To that, to the study of the plasticity of living forms, my life has been devoted. I have studied for years, gaining in knowledge as I go. I see you look horrified, and yet I am telling you nothing new. It all lay in the surface of practical anatomy years ago, but no one had the temerity to touch it. It is not simply the outward form of an animal which I can change. The physiology, the chemical rhythm of the creature, may also be made to undergo an enduring modification,—of which vaccination and other methods of inoculation with living or dead matter are examples that will, no doubt, be familiar to you. A similar operation is the transfusion of blood,—with which subject, indeed, I began. These are all familiar cases. Less so, and probably far more extensive, were the operations of those mediaeval practitioners who made dwarfs and beggar-cripples, show-monsters,—some vestiges of whose art still remain in the preliminary manipulation of the young mountebank or contortionist. Victor Hugo gives an account of them in 'L'Homme qui Rit.'—But perhaps my meaning grows plain now. You begin to see that it is a possible thing to transplant tissue from one part of an animal to another, or from one animal to another; to alter its chemical reactions and methods of growth; to modify the articulations of its limbs; and, indeed, to change it in its most intimate structure.

Arnold Bennett [1867-1931], *Anna of the Five Towns*, 1902

At length, Mynors having encountered many acquaintances, they got past the bandstand and stood on the highest terrace, which was almost deserted. Beneath them, in front, stretched a maze of roofs, dominated by the gold angel of the Town Hall spire. Bursley, the ancient home of the potter, has an antiquity of a thousand years. It lies towards the north end of an extensive valley, which must have been one of the fairest spots in Alfred's England, but which is now defaced by the activities of a quarter of a million of people. Five contiguous towns—Turnhill, Bursley, Hanbridge, Knype, and Longshaw—united by a single winding thoroughfare some eight miles in length, have inundated the valley like a succession of great lakes. Of these five Bursley is the mother, but Hanbridge

is the largest. They are mean and forbidding of aspect—sombre, hard-featured, uncouth; and the vaporous poison of their ovens and chimneys has soiled and shrivelled the surrounding country till there is no village lane within a league but what offers a gaunt and ludicrous travesty of rural charms. Nothing could be more prosaic than the huddled, red-brown streets; nothing more seemingly remote from romance. Yet be it said that romance is even here—the romance which, for those who have an eye to perceive it, ever dwells amid the seats of industrial manufacture, softening the coarseness, transfiguring the squalor, of these mighty alchemic operations. Look down into the valley from this terrace-height where love is kindling, embrace the whole smoke-girt amphitheatre in a glance, and it may be that you will suddenly comprehend the secret and superb significance of the vast Doing which goes forward below. Because they seldom think, the townsmen take shame when indicted for having disfigured half a county in order to live. They have not understood that this disfigurement is merely an episode in the unending warfare of man and nature, and calls for no contrition. Here, indeed, is nature repaid for some of her notorious cruelties. She imperiously bids man sustain and reproduce himself, and this is one of the places where in the very act of obedience he wounds and maltreats her. Out beyond the municipal confines, where the subsidiary industries of coal and iron prosper amid a wreck of verdure, the struggle is grim, appalling, heroic—so ruthless is his havoc of her, so indomitable her ceaseless recuperation. On the one side is a wresting from nature's own bowels of the means to waste her; on the other, an undismayed, enduring fortitude. The grass grows; though it is not green, it grows. In the very heart of the valley, hedged about with furnaces, a farm still stands, and at harvest-time the sooty sheaves are gathered in.

Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, 1902

Mr. Sherlock Holmes, who was usually very late in the mornings, save upon those not infrequent occasions when he was up all night, was seated at the breakfast table. I stood upon the hearth-rug and picked up the stick which our visitor had left behind him the night before. It was a fine, thick piece of wood, bulbous-headed, of the sort which is known as a “Penang lawyer.” Just under the head was a broad silver band nearly an inch across. “To James Mortimer, M.R.C.S., from his friends of the C.C.H.,” was engraved upon it, with the date “1884.” It was just such a stick as the old-fashioned family practitioner used to carry—dignified, solid, and reassuring.

“Well, Watson, what do you make of it?”

Holmes was sitting with his back to me, and I had given him no sign of my occupation.

“How did you know what I was doing? I believe you have eyes in the back of your head.”

“I have, at least, a well-polished, silver-plated coffee-pot in front of me,” said he. “But, tell me, Watson, what do you make of our visitor’s stick? Since we have been so unfortunate as to miss him and have no notion of his errand, this accidental souvenir becomes of importance. Let me hear you reconstruct the man by an examination of it.”

“I think,” said I, following as far as I could the methods of my companion, “that Dr. Mortimer is a successful, elderly medical man, well-esteemed since those who know him give him this mark of their appreciation.”

“Good!” said Holmes. “Excellent!”

“I think also that the probability is in favour of his being a country practitioner who does a great deal of his visiting on foot.”

“Why so?”

“Because this stick, though originally a very handsome one has been so knocked about that I can hardly imagine a town practitioner carrying it. The thick-iron ferrule is worn down, so it is evident that he has done a great amount of walking with it.”

“Perfectly sound!” said Holmes.

“And then again, there is the ‘friends of the C.C.H.’ I should guess that to be the Something Hunt, the local hunt to whose members he has possibly given some surgical assistance, and which has made him a small presentation in return.”

“Really, Watson, you excel yourself,” said Holmes, pushing back his chair and lighting a cigarette. “I am bound to say that in all the accounts which you have been so good as to give of my own small achievements you have habitually underrated your own abilities. It may be that you are not yourself luminous, but you are a conductor of light. Some people without possessing genius have a remarkable power of stimulating it. I confess, my dear fellow, that I am very much in your debt.”

He had never said as much before, and I must admit that his words gave me keen pleasure, for I had often been piqued by his indifference to my admiration and to the attempts which I had made to give publicity to his methods. I was proud, too, to think that I had so far mastered his system as to apply it in a way which earned his approval. He now took the stick from my hands and examined it for a few minutes with his naked eyes. Then with an expression of interest he laid down his cigarette, and carrying the cane to the window, he looked over it again with a convex lens.

“Interesting, though elementary,” said he as he returned to his favourite corner of the settee. “There are certainly one or two indications upon the stick. It gives us the basis for several deductions.”

“Has anything escaped me?” I asked with some self-importance. “I trust that there is nothing of consequence which I have overlooked?”

“I am afraid, my dear Watson, that most of your conclusions were erroneous. When I said that you stimulated me I meant, to be frank, that in noting your fallacies I was occasionally guided towards the truth. Not that you are entirely wrong in this instance. The man is certainly a country practitioner. And he walks a good deal.”

“Then I was right.”

“To that extent.”

“But that was all.”

“No, no, my dear Watson, not all—by no means all. I would suggest, for example, that a presentation to a doctor is more likely to come from a hospital than from a hunt, and that when the initials ‘C.C.’ are placed before that hospital the words ‘Charing Cross’ very naturally suggest themselves.”

“You may be right.”

“The probability lies in that direction. And if we take this as a working hypothesis we have a fresh basis from which to start our construction of this unknown visitor.”

MODERNISM (1910-1945)

E. M. Forster [1879-1970], *Howards End*, 1910

Charles, to steady them further, read the enclosure out loud: “A note in my mother’s handwriting, in an envelope addressed to my father, sealed. Inside: ‘I should like Miss Schlegel (Margaret) to have Howards End.’ No date, no signature. Forwarded through the matron of that nursing home. Now, the question is—” [...] “The question is—” He had cleared a space of the breakfast-table from plates and knives, so that he could draw patterns on the tablecloth. “The question is whether Miss Schlegel, during the fortnight we were all away, whether she unduly—” He stopped.

“I don’t think that,” said his father, whose nature was nobler than his son’s.

“Don’t think what?”

“That she would have—that it is a case of undue influence. No, to my mind the question is the—the invalid’s condition at the time she wrote.”

“My dear father, consult an expert if you like, but I don’t admit it is my mother’s writing.” [...]

The two men were gradually assuming the manner of the committee-room. They were both at their best when serving on committees. They did not make the mistake of handling human affairs in the bulk, but disposed of them item by item, sharply. Calligraphy was the item before them now, and on it they turned their well-trained brains. Charles, after a little demur, accepted the writing as genuine, and they passed on to the next point. It is the best—perhaps the only—way of dodging emotion. They were the average human article, and had they considered the note as a whole it would have driven them miserable or mad. Considered item by item, the emotional content was minimised, and all went forward smoothly. The clock ticked, the coals blazed higher, and contended with the white radiance that poured in through the windows. Unnoticed, the sun occupied his sky, and the shadows of the tree stems, extraordinarily solid, fell like trenches of purple across the frosted lawn. It was a glorious winter morning. Evie’s fox terrier, who had passed for white, was only a dirty grey dog now, so intense was the purity that surrounded him. He was discredited, but the blackbirds that he was chasing glowed with Arabian darkness, for all the conventional colouring of life had been altered. Inside, the clock struck ten with a rich and confident note. Other clocks confirmed it, and the discussion moved towards its close.

To follow it is unnecessary. It is rather a moment when the commentator should step forward. Ought the Wilcoxes to have offered their home to Margaret? I think not. The appeal was too flimsy. It was not legal; it had been written in illness, and under the spell of a sudden friendship; it was contrary to the dead woman’s intentions in the past, contrary to her very nature, so far as that nature was understood by them. To them Howards End was a house: they could not know that to her it had been a spirit, for which she sought a spiritual heir. And—pushing one step farther in these mists—may they not have decided even better than they supposed? Is it credible that the possessions of the spirit can be bequeathed at all? Has the soul offspring? A wych-elm tree, a vine, a wisp of hay with dew on it—can passion for such things be transmitted where there is no bond of blood? No; the Wilcoxes are not to be blamed. The problem is too terrific, and they could not even perceive a problem. No; it is natural and fitting that after due debate they should tear the note up and throw it on to their dining-room fire. The practical moralist may acquit them absolutely. He

who strives to look deeper may acquit them—almost. For one hard fact remains. They did neglect a personal appeal. The woman who had died did say to them, “Do this,” and they answered, “We will not.”

D. H. Lawrence [1885-1930], “The White Stocking”, 1914

"You're not going to tell me everything I shall do, and everything I shan't," she broke out at last.

He lifted his head.

"I tell you this," he said, low and intense. "Have anything to do with Sam Adams, and I'll break your neck."

She laughed, shrill and false.

"How I hate your word 'break your neck'," she said, with a grimace of the mouth. "It sounds so common and beastly. Can't you say something else—"

There was a dead silence.

"And besides," she said, with a queer chirrup of mocking laughter, "what do you know about anything? He sent me an amethyst brooch and a pair of pearl ear-rings."

"He what?" said Whiston, in a suddenly normal voice. His eyes were fixed on her.

"Sent me a pair of pearl ear-rings, and an amethyst brooch," she repeated, mechanically, pale to the lips.

And her big, black, childish eyes watched him, fascinated, held in her spell.

He seemed to thrust his face and his eyes forward at her, as he rose slowly and came to her. She watched transfixed in terror. Her throat made a small sound, as she tried to scream. Then, quick as lightning, the back of his hand struck her with a crash across the mouth, and she was flung back blinded against the wall. The shock shook a queer sound out of her. And then she saw him still coming on, his eyes holding her, his fist drawn back, advancing slowly. At any instant the blow might crash into her.

Mad with terror, she raised her hands with a queer clawing movement to cover her eyes and her temples, opening her mouth in a dumb shriek. There was no sound. But the sight of her slowly arrested him. He hung before her, looking at her fixedly, as she stood crouched against the wall with open, bleeding mouth, and wide-staring eyes, and two hands clawing over her temples. And his lust to see her bleed, to break her and destroy her, rose from an old source against her. It carried him. He wanted satisfaction.

But he had seen her standing there, a piteous, horrified thing, and he turned his face aside in shame and nausea. He went and sat heavily in his chair, and a curious ease, almost like sleep, came over his brain.

James Joyce [1882-1941], “The Dead”, *Dubliners*, 1914

She was fast asleep.

Gabriel, leaning on his elbow, looked for a few moments unresentfully on her tangled hair and half-open mouth, listening to her deep-drawn breath. So she had had that romance in her life: a man had died for her sake. It hardly pained him now to think how poor a part he, her husband, had played in her life. He watched her while she slept, as though he and she had never lived together as man and wife. His curious eyes rested long upon her face

and on her hair: and, as he thought of what she must have been then, in that time of her first girlish beauty, a strange, friendly pity for her entered his soul. He did not like to say even to himself that her face was no longer beautiful, but he knew that it was no longer the face for which Michael Furey had braved death.

Perhaps she had not told him all the story. His eyes moved to the chair over which she had thrown some of her clothes. A petticoat string dangled to the floor. One boot stood upright, its limp upper fallen down: the fellow of it lay upon its side. He wondered at his riot of emotions of an hour before. From what had it proceeded? From his aunt's supper, from his own foolish speech, from the wine and dancing, the merry-making when saying good-night in the hall, the pleasure of the walk along the river in the snow. Poor Aunt Julia! She, too, would soon be a shade with the shade of Patrick Morkan and his horse. He had caught that haggard look upon her face for a moment when she was singing *Arrayed for the Bridal*. Soon, perhaps, he would be sitting in that same drawing-room, dressed in black, his silk hat on his knees. The blinds would be drawn down and Aunt Kate would be sitting beside him, crying and blowing her nose and telling him how Julia had died. He would cast about in his mind for some words that might console her, and would find only lame and useless ones. Yes, yes: that would happen very soon.

The air of the room chilled his shoulders. He stretched himself cautiously along under the sheets and lay down beside his wife. One by one, they were all becoming shades. Better pass boldly into that other world, in the full glory of some passion, than fade and wither dismally with age. He thought of how she who lay beside him had locked in her heart for so many years that image of her lover's eyes when he had told her that he did not wish to live.

Generous tears filled Gabriel's eyes. He had never felt like that himself towards any woman, but he knew that such a feeling must be love. The tears gathered more thickly in his eyes and in the partial darkness he imagined he saw the form of a young man standing under a dripping tree. Other forms were near. His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead. He was conscious of, but could not apprehend, their wayward and flickering existence. His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself, which these dead had one time reared and lived in, was dissolving and dwindling.

Virginia Woolf [1882-1941], *Jacob's Room*, 1922

The clock struck the quarter.

The frail waves of sound broke among the stiff gorse and the hawthorn twigs as the church clock divided time into quarters.

Motionless and broad-backed the moors received the statement "It is fifteen minutes past the hour," but made no answer, unless a bramble stirred.

Yet even in this light the legends on the tombstones could be read, brief voices saying, "I am Bertha Ruck," "I am Tom Gage." And they say which day of the year they died, and the New Testament says something for them, very proud, very emphatic, or consoling.

The moors accept all that too.

The moonlight falls like a pale page upon the church wall, and illumines the kneeling family in the niche, and the tablet set up in 1780 to the Squire of the parish who relieved

the poor, and believed in God—so the measured voice goes on down the marble scroll, as though it could impose itself upon time and the open air.

Now a fox steals out from behind the gorse bushes.

Often, even at night, the church seems full of people. The pews are worn and greasy, and the cassocks in place, and the hymn-books on the ledges. It is a ship with all its crew aboard. The timbers strain to hold the dead and the living, the ploughmen, the carpenters, the fox-hunting gentlemen and the farmers smelling of mud and brandy. Their tongues join together in syllabbling the sharp-cut words, which for ever slice asunder time and the broad-backed moors. Plaint and belief and elegy, despair and triumph, but for the most part good sense and jolly indifference, go trampling out of the windows any time these five hundred years.

Still, as Mrs. Jarvis said, stepping out on to the moors, "How quiet it is!" Quiet at midday, except when the hunt scatters across it; quiet in the afternoon, save for the drifting sheep; at night the moor is perfectly quiet.

A garnet brooch has dropped into its grass. A fox pads stealthily. A leaf turns on its edge. Mrs. Jarvis, who is fifty years of age, reposes in the camp in the hazy moonlight... "and," said Mrs. Flanders, straightening her back, "I never cared for Mr. Parker."

"Neither did I," said Mrs. Jarvis. They began to walk home.

But their voices floated for a little above the camp. The moonlight destroyed nothing. The moor accepted everything. Tom Gage cries aloud so long as his tombstone endures. The Roman skeletons are in safe keeping. Betty Flanders's darning needles are safe too and her garnet brooch. And sometimes at midday, in the sunshine, the moor seems to hoard these little treasures, like a nurse. But at midnight when no one speaks or gallops, and the thorn tree is perfectly still, it would be foolish to vex the moor with questions—what? and why?

The church clock, however, strikes twelve.

AFTER MODERNISM

Daphne du Maurier [1907-1989], *Rebecca*, 1938

Last night I dreamed I went to Manderley again. It seemed to me I stood by the iron gate leading to the drive, and for a while I could not enter, for the way was barred to me. There was a padlock and a chain upon the gate. I called in my dream to the lodge keeper, and had no answer, and peering closer through the rusted spokes of the gate I saw that the lodge was uninhabited.

No smoke came from the chimney, and the little lattice windows gaped forlorn. Then, like all dreamers, I was possessed of a sudden with supernatural powers and passed like a spirit through the barrier before me. The drive wound away in front of me, twisting and turning as it had always done, but as I advanced I was aware that a change had come upon it; it was narrow and unkept, not the drive that we had known. At first I was puzzled and did not understand, and it was only when I bent my head to avoid the low swinging branch of a tree that I realized what had happened. Nature had come into her own again and, little by little, in her stealthy, insidious way had encroached upon the drive with long, tenacious fingers. The woods, always a menace even in the past, had triumphed in the end. They crowded, dark and uncontrolled, to the borders of the drive. The beeches with white, naked limbs leaned close to one another, their branches intermingled in a strange embrace, making a vault above my head like the archway of a church. And there were other trees as well, trees that I did not recognize, squat oaks and tortured elms that straggled cheek by jowl with the beeches, and had thrust themselves out of the quiet earth, along with monster shrubs and plants, none of which I remembered.

The drive was a ribbon now, a thread of its former self, with gravel surface gone, and choked with grass and moss. The trees had thrown out low branches, making an impediment to progress; the gnarled roots looked like skeleton claws. Scattered here and again among this jungle growth I would recognize shrubs that had been landmarks in our time, things of culture and grace, hydrangeas whose blue heads had been famous. No hand had checked their progress, and they had gone native now, rearing to monster height without a bloom, black and ugly as the nameless parasites that grew beside them.

On and on, now east now west, wound the poor thread that once had been our drive. Sometimes I thought it lost, but it appeared again, beneath a fallen tree perhaps, or struggling on the other side of a muddied ditch created by the winter rains. I had not thought the way so long. Surely the miles had multiplied, even as the trees had done, and this path led but to a labyrinth, some choked wilderness, and not to the house at all. I came upon it suddenly; the approach masked by the unnatural growth of a vast shrub that spread in all directions, and I stood, my heart thumping in my breast, the strange prick of tears behind my eyes.

There was Manderley, our Manderley, secretive and silent as it had always been, the gray stone shining in the moonlight of my dream, the mullioned windows reflecting the green lawns and the terrace. Time could not wreck the perfect symmetry of those walls, nor the site itself, a jewel in the hollow of a hand.

The terrace sloped to the lawns, and the lawns stretched to the sea, and turning I could see the sheet of silver placid under the moon, like a lake undisturbed by wind or storm. No waves would come to ruffle this dream water, and no bulk of cloud, wind-driven from the

west, obscure the clarity of this pale sky. I turned again to the house, and though it stood inviolate, untouched, as though we ourselves had left but yesterday, I saw that the garden had obeyed the jungle law, even as the woods had done. The rhododendrons stood fifty feet high, twisted and entwined with bracken, and they had entered into alien marriage with a host of nameless shrubs, poor, bastard things that clung about their roots as though conscious of their spurious origin. A lilac had mated with a copper beech, and to bind them yet more closely to one another the malevolent ivy, always an enemy to grace, had thrown her tendrils about the pair and made them prisoners. Ivy held prior place in this lost garden, the long strands crept across the lawns, and soon would encroach upon the house itself. There was another plant too, some half-breed from the woods, whose seed had been scattered long ago beneath the trees and then forgotten, and now, marching in unison with the ivy, thrust its ugly form like a giant rhubarb towards the soft grass where the daffodils had blown.

Nettles were everywhere, the vanguard of the army. They choked the terrace, they sprawled about the paths, they leaned, vulgar and lanky, against the very windows of the house. They made indifferent sentinels, for in many places their ranks had been broken by the rhubarb plant, and they lay with crumpled heads and listless stems, making a pathway for the rabbits. I left the drive and went onto the terrace, for the nettles were no barrier to me, a dreamer. I walked enchanted, and nothing held me back.

Moonlight can play odd tricks upon the fancy, even upon a dreamer's fancy. As I stood there, hushed and still, I could swear that the house was not an empty shell but lived and breathed as it had lived before.

Light came from the windows, the curtains blew softly in the night air, and there, in the library, the door would stand half open as we had left it, with my handkerchief on the table beside the bowl of autumn roses.

POST-1945 LITERATURE

George Orwell, [1903-1950], *1984*, 1949

It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen. Winston Smith, his chin nuzzled into his breast in an effort to escape the vile wind, slipped quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions, though not quickly enough to prevent a swirl of gritty dust from entering along with him.

The hallway smelt of boiled cabbage and old rag mats. At one end of it a colored poster, too large for indoor display, had been tacked to the wall. It depicted simply an enormous face, more than a meter wide: the face of a man of about forty-five, with a heavy black mustache and ruggedly handsome features. Winston made for the stairs. It was no use trying the lift. Even at the best of times it was seldom working, and at present the electric current was cut off during daylight hours. It was part of the economy drive in preparation for Hate Week. The flat was seven flights up, and Winston, who was thirty-nine, and had a varicose ulcer above his right ankle, went slowly, resting several times on the way. On each landing, opposite the lift shaft, the poster with the enormous face gazed from the wall. It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption beneath it ran.

Inside the flat a fruity voice was reading out a list of figures which had something to do with the production of pig iron. The voice came from an oblong metal plaque like a dulled mirror which formed part of the surface of the right-hand wall. Winston turned a switch and the voice sank somewhat, though the words were still distinguishable. The instrument (the telescreen, it was called) could be dimmed, but there was no way of shutting it off completely. He moved over to the window: a smallish, frail figure, the meagerness of his body merely emphasized by the blue overalls which were the uniform of the Party. His hair was very fair, his face naturally sanguine, his skin roughened by coarse soap and blunt razor blades and the cold of the winter that had just ended.

Outside, even through the shut window pane, the world looked cold. Down in the street little eddies of wind were whirling dust and torn paper into spirals, and though the sun was shining and the sky a harsh blue, there seemed to be no color in anything except the posters that were plastered everywhere. The black-mustachio'd face gazed down from every commanding corner. There was one on the house front immediately opposite. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption said, while the dark eyes looked deep into Winston's own. Down at street level another poster, torn at one corner, flapped fitfully in the wind, alternately covering and uncovering the single word INGSOC. In the far distance a helicopter skimmed down between the roofs, hovered for an instant like a blue-bottle, and darted away again with a curving flight. It was the Police Patrol, snooping into people's windows. The patrols did not matter, however. Only the Thought Police mattered.

Doris Lessing [1919-2013], *The Grass is Singing*, 1950

Mary Turner, wife of Richard Turner, a farmer at Ngesi, Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) was found murdered on the front veranda of their homestead yesterday

morning. The houseboy, who has been arrested, has confessed to the crime. No motive has been discovered. It is thought he was in search of valuables.

One morning she went out to the fowl-runs, which she often forgot to do these days; and when she had finished a perfunctory inspection of the nesting-boxes, and her basket was filled with eggs, she was arrested by the sight of the native under the trees a few yards off. He was rubbing his thick neck with soap, and the white lather was startlingly white against the black skin. He had his back to her. As she looked, he turned, by some chance, or because he sensed her presence, and saw her. She had forgotten it was his time to wash.

A white person may look at a native, who is no better than a dog. Therefore she was annoyed when he stopped and stood upright, waiting for her to go, his body expressing his resentment of her presence there. She was furious that perhaps he believed she was there on purpose; this thought, of course, was not conscious; it would be too much presumption, such unspeakable cheek for him to imagine such a thing, that she would not allow it to enter her mind; but the attitude of his still body as he watched her across the bushes between them, the expression on his face, filled her with anger. She felt the same impulse that had once made her bring down the lash across his face. Deliberately she turned away, loitered round the chicken-runs, and threw out handfuls of grain; and then slowly stooped out through the low wire door. She did not look at him again; but knew he was standing there, a dark shape, quite motionless, seen out of the corner of her eye. She went back to the house, for the first time in many months jerked clean out of her apathy, for the first time in months seeing the ground she walked over, and feeling the pressure of the sun against the back of her bare neck, the sharp hot stones pressing up under her soles.

She heard an orange angry muttering, and realized she was talking to herself, out aloud, as she walked. She clapped her hand over her mouth, and shook her head to clear it; but, by the time that Moses had come back into the kitchen, and she heard his footsteps, she was sitting in the front room rigid with a hysterical emotion; when she remembered the dark resentful look of that native as he stood waiting for her to leave, she felt as if she had put her hand on a snake. Impelled by a violent nervous reaction she went to the kitchen, where he stood in clean clothes, putting away his washing things. Remembering that thick black neck with the lather frothing whitely on it, the powerful back stooping over the bucket, was like a goad to her. And she was beyond reflecting that her anger, her hysteria, was over nothing, nothing that she could explain. What had happened was that the formal pattern of black-and white, mistress-and-servant, had been broken by the personal relation; and when a white man in Africa by accident looks into the eyes of a native and sees the human being (which it is his chief preoccupation to avoid), his sense of guilt, which he denies, fumes up in resentment and he brings down the whip. She felt that she must do something, and at once, to restore her poise. Her eyes happened to fall on a candle-box under the table, where the scrubbing brushes and soap were kept, and she said to the boy: 'Scrub this floor.' She was shocked when she heard her own voice, for she had not known she was going to speak. As one feels when in an ordinary social conversation, kept tranquil by banalities, some person makes a remark that strikes below the surface, perhaps in error letting slip what he really thinks of you, and the shock sweeps one off one's balance, causing a nervous giggle or some stupid sentence that makes everyone present uncomfortable, so she felt: she had lost her balance-, she had no control over her actions. 'I scrubbed it this morning,' said the native slowly, looking at her, his eyes smouldering.

She said, 'I said scrub it. Do it at once.' Her voice rose on the last words. For a moment they stared at each other, exposing their hatred; then his eyes dropped, and she turned and went out, slamming the door behind her.

Soon she heard the sound of the wet brush over the floor. She collapsed on the sofa again, as weak as if she had been ill. She was familiar with her own storms of irrational anger, but she had never known one as devastating as this. She was shaking, the blood throbbed in her ears, her mouth was dry. After a while, more composed, she went to the bedroom to fetch herself some water; she did not want to face the native Moses.

Yet, later, she forced herself to rise and go to the kitchen; and, standing in the doorway, surveyed the wet streaked floor as if she had truly come to inspect it. He stood immobile just outside the door, as usual gazing out to the clump of boulders where the euphorbia tree stuck out its grey-green, fleshy arms into vivid blue sky. She made a show of peering behind cupboards, and then said, 'It is time to lay the table.'

He turned, and began laying out glass and linen, with slow and rather clumsy movements, his great black hands moving among the small instruments. Every movement he made irritated her. She sat tensed, wound up, her hands clenched. When he went out, she relaxed a little, as if a pressure had been taken off her. The table was finished. She went to inspect it; but everything was in its right place. But she picked up a glass and took it to the back room. 'Look at this glass, Moses,' she commanded. He came across and looked at it politely: it was only an appearance of looking, for he had already taken it from her to wash it. There was a trace of white fluff from the drying towel down one side. He filled the sink with water, and whisked in soapsuds, just as she had taught him, and washed the glass while she watched. When it was dry she took it from him and returned to the other room.

She imagined him again standing silent at the door in the sun, looking at nothing, and she could have screamed or thrown a glass across the room to smash on the wall. But there was nothing, absolutely nothing, that she could give him to do. She began a quiet prow through the house: everything, though shabby and faded, was clean and in its place. That bed, the great connubial bed which she had always hated, was smooth and un-crumpled, the coverlets turned back at the corners in a brave imitation of the inviting beds in modern catalogues. The sight of it gritted on her, reminding her of the hated contact in the nights with Dick's weary muscular body, to which she had never been able to accustom herself. She turned from it, clenching her hands, and saw her face suddenly in the mirror. Faded, tousled, her lips narrowed in anger, her eyes hot, her face puffed and blotched with red, she hardly recognized herself. She gazed, shocked and pitiful, and then she cried, weeping hysterically in great shuddering gasps, trying to smother the sound for fear the native at the back might hear her. She cried for some time; then, as she lifted her eyes to dry them, saw the clock. Dick would be home soon. Fear of his seeing her in this state stilled her convulsing muscles. She bathed her face, combed her hair, powdered the dark creased skin round the eyes.

William Golding [1911-1993], *Lord of the Flies*, 1954

The cries, suddenly nearer, jerked him up. He could see a striped savage moving hastily out of a green tangle, and coming toward the mat where he hid, a savage who carried a spear. Ralph gripped his fingers into the earth. Be ready now, in case.

Ralph fumbled to hold his spear so that it was point foremost; and now he saw that the stick was sharpened at both ends.

The savage stopped fifteen yards away and uttered his cry.

Perhaps he can hear my heart over the noises of the fire. Don't scream. Get ready.

The savage moved forward so that you could only see him from the waist down. That was the butt of his spear. Now you could see him from the knee down. Don't scream.

A herd of pigs came squealing out of the greenery behind the savage and rushed away into the forest. Birds were screaming, mice shrieking, and a little hopping thing came under the mat and cowered.

Five yards away the savage stopped, standing right by the thicket, and cried out. Ralph drew his feet up and crouched. The stake was in his hands, the stake sharpened at both ends, the stake that vibrated so wildly, that grew long, short, light, heavy, light again.

The ululation spread from shore to shore. The savage knelt down by the edge of the thicket, and there were lights flickering in the forest behind him. You could see a knee disturb the mold. Now the other. Two hands. A spear.

A face.

The savage peered into the obscurity beneath the thicket. You could tell that he saw light on this side and on that, but not in the middle— there. In the middle was a blob of dark and the savage wrinkled up his face, trying to decipher the darkness.

The seconds lengthened. Ralph was looking straight into the savage's eyes.

Don't scream.

You'll get back.

Now he's seen you. He's making sure. A stick sharpened.

Ralph screamed, a scream of fright and anger and desperation.

Angela Carter [1940-1992], *The Bloody Chamber*, 1979

And, ah! his castle. The faery solitude of the place; with its turrets of misty blue, its courtyard, its spiked gate, his castle that lay on the very bosom of the sea with seabirds mewing about its attics, the casements opening on to the green and purple, evanescent departures of the ocean, cut off by the tide from land for half a day ... that castle, at home neither on the land nor on the water, a mysterious, amphibious place, contravening the materiality of both earth and the waves, with the melancholy of a mermaid who perches on her rock and waits, endlessly, for a lover who had drowned far away, long ago. That lovely, sad, sea-siren of a place!

The tide was low; at this hour, so early in the morning, the causeway rose up out of the sea. As the car turned on to the wet cobbles between the slow margins of water, he reached out for my hand that had his sultry, witchy ring on it, pressed my fingers, kissed my palm with extraordinary tenderness. His face was as still as ever I'd seen it, still as a pond iced thickly over, yet his lips, that always looked so strangely red and naked between the black fringes of his beard, now curved a little. He smiled; he welcomed his bride home. No room, no corridor that did not rustle with the sound of the sea and all the ceilings, the walls on which his ancestors in the stern regalia of rank lined up with their dark eyes and white faces, were stippled with refracted light from the waves which were always in motion; that luminous, murmurous castle of which I was the chatelaine, I, the little music student whose

mother had sold all her jewellery, even her wedding ring, to pay the fees at the Conservatoire.

First of all, there was the small ordeal of my initial interview with the housekeeper, who kept this extraordinary machine, this anchored, castellated ocean liner, in smooth running order no matter who stood on the bridge; how tenuous, I thought, might be my authority here! She had a bland, pale, impassive, dislikeable face beneath the impeccably starched white linen head-dress of the region. Her greeting, correct but lifeless, chilled me; daydreaming, I dared presume too much on my status... briefly wondered how I might install my old nurse, so much loved, however cosily incompetent, in her place. Ill-considered schemings! He told me this one had been his foster mother; was bound to his family in the utmost feudal complicity, 'as much part 8 of the house as I am, my dear'. Now her thin lips offered me a proud little smile. She would be my ally as long as I was his. And with that, I must be content.

But, here, it would be easy to be content. In the turret suite he had given me for my very own, I could gaze out over the tumultuous Atlantic and imagine myself the Queen of the Sea. There was a Bechstein for me in the music room and, on the wall, another wedding present--an early Flemish primitive of Saint Cecilia at her celestial organ. In the prim charm of this saint, with her plump, sallow cheeks and crinkled brown hair, I saw myself as I could have wished to be. I warmed to a loving sensitivity I had not hitherto suspected in him. Then he led me up a delicate spiral staircase to my bedroom; before she discreetly vanished, the housekeeper set him chuckling with some, I dare say, lewd blessing for newlyweds in her native Breton. That I did not understand. That he, smiling, refused to interpret.

And there lay the grand, hereditary matrimonial bed, itself the size, almost, of my little room at home, with the gargoyles carved on its surfaces of ebony, vermilion lacquer, gold leaf; and its white gauze curtains, billowing in the sea breeze. Our bed. And surrounded by so many mirrors! Mirrors on all the walls, in stately frames of contorted gold, that reflected more white lilies than I'd ever seen in my life before. He'd filled the room with them, to greet the bride, the young bride. The young bride, who had become that multitude of girls I saw in the mirrors, identical in their chic navy blue tailor-mades, for travelling, madame, or walking. A maid had dealt with the furs. Henceforth, a maid would deal with everything.

'See,' he said, gesturing towards those elegant girls. 'I have acquired a whole harem for myself!'

I found that I was trembling. My breath came thickly. I could not meet his eye and turned my head away, out of pride, out of shyness, and watched a dozen husbands approach me in a dozen mirrors and slowly, methodically, teasingly, unfasten the buttons of my jacket and slip it from my shoulders. Enough! No; more! Off comes the skirt; and, next, the blouse of apricot linen that cost more than the dress I had for first communion. The play of the waves outside in the cold sun glittered on his monocle; his movements seemed to me deliberately coarse, vulgar. The blood rushed to my face again, and stayed there.

Margaret Drabble [1939-], "The Seven Sisters," 2002

I have just got back from my Health Club. I have switched on this modern laptop machine. And I have told myself that I must resist the temptation to start playing solitaire upon it. Instead, I am going to write some kind of diary. I haven't kept a diary since I was at

school. En effet , we all used to keep them then. Julia, Janet and I, and all the other girls. It was the fashion, at St Anne's, in the Fourth Form. Nothing much happened to us, but we all wrote about it nonetheless. We wrote about our young, trivial, daily hopes, our likes and our dislikes, our friends and our enemies, our hockey games and our blackheads and our crushes and our faith in God. We wrote about what we thought about Emily Brontë and the dissection of frogs. I don't think we were very honest in our diaries. Blackheads and acne were as far as we got in our truth-telling in those days.

Nothing much happens to me now, nor ever will again. But that should not prevent me from trying to write about it. I cannot help but feel that there is something important about this nothingness. It should represent a lack of hope, and yet I think that, somewhere, hope may yet be with me. This nothingness is significant. If I immerse myself in it, perhaps it will turn itself into something else. Into something terrible, into something transformed. I cast myself upon its waste of waters. It is not for myself alone that I do this. I hope I may discover some more general purpose as I write. I will have faith that something or someone is waiting for me on the far shore.

I sometimes have fears that my Health Club may not be very healthy after all. Since I started to swim there, one of my toenails has begun to look very odd. It has turned a bluish-yellow colour, and is developing a ridged effect that I think is new to me, though it is true that I see more of my toenails now that I swim more often. And I sometimes fancy I hear the words 'legionnaires' disease' hanging in the air, though I know they whisper only in my imagination. I mustn't get paranoid about it. It's very clean there, really. Spotlessly clean, expensively clean. A far cry from the chlorinated municipal pool we visited once a week from St Anne's. Schools, even quite good schools, didn't have their own pools in those days, as they do now.

I love my Health Club. It's saving my life. Isn't it? The water in the pool isn't chlorinated, it's ionized. I don't know what that means, but the result is that the water is pure and soft to the limbs, and odourless to the nostrils.

You do overhear some odd conversations there, though. I heard an alarming one this very evening.

I wasn't eavesdropping. There was no way I could avoid hearing it. We were all within a few feet of one another, in a small space, in varying stages of undress. I tried not to look at them, and I knew they weren't looking at me. Why should they? There is an etiquette. It's easy to avoid the eyes and bodies of others. But you can't help hearing what they say. Unless you've got your Sony Walkman plugged into your brain, or a mobile phone clamped to your ear. And I haven't got a mobile phone or a Sony Walkman yet. I don't think I want a mobile phone, but I'm thinking of getting a Sony Walkman. I never thought I'd even think of it. But then, so much of what I think of now would have been unthinkable to me ten years ago, five years ago. Some of it would have been unthinkable to anyone, I suppose. Some of the things most people seem to have now hadn't even been invented ten years ago.

Actually, I'm not sure I mean 'Sony Walkman' – 'Sony Walkman' is just a phrase to me. I may mean something else. I haven't dared yet to ask what it is that I do mean. Perhaps I mean a 'headset'. Nor do I know what kind of shop I'd get this thing in, even if I knew what it was that I was getting. Out of my depth, that's what I am. Though the pool isn't very deep. No diving. No children. No running. No outdoor shoes. We keep the rules.

They were not hungry. It was, in theory, open to them to abandon their plates, seize the wine bottle by the neck, and run down to the shore and kick their shoes off and exult in their liberty. There was no one in the hotel who would have wanted to stop them. They were adults at last, on holiday, free to do as they chose. In just a few years' time, that would be the kind of thing that quite ordinary young people would do. But, for now, the times held them. Even when Edward and Florence were alone, a thousand unacknowledged rules still applied. It was precisely because they were adults that they did not do childish things like walk away from a meal that others had taken pains to prepare. It was dinnertime, after all. And being childlike was not yet honorable, or in fashion.

Their courtship had been a pavane, a stately unfolding, bound by protocols never agreed upon or voiced but generally observed. Nothing was ever discussed—nor did they feel the lack of intimate talk. These were matters beyond words, beyond definition. The language and practice of therapy, the currency of feelings diligently shared, mutually analyzed, were not yet in general circulation. While one heard of wealthier people going in for psychoanalysis, it was not customary to regard oneself in everyday terms as an enigma, as an exercise in narrative history, or as a problem waiting to be solved.

They were alone then, and theoretically free to do whatever they wanted, but they went on eating the dinner they had no appetite for. Florence set down her knife and reached for Edward's hand and squeezed. From downstairs they heard the wireless, and the chimes of Big Ben that preceded the ten-o'clock news. Along this stretch of coast, television reception was poor because of the hills just inland. The older guests would be down there in the sitting room, taking the measure of the world with their nightcaps—the hotel had a good selection of single malts—and some of the men would be filling their pipes for one last time that day. Gathering around the wireless for the main bulletin was a wartime habit they would never break. Edward and Florence heard the muffled headlines and caught the name of the Prime Minister, and then, a minute or two later, his familiar voice, raised in a speech. Harold Macmillan had been addressing a conference about the arms race and the need for a test-ban treaty. Who could disagree that it was folly to go on testing H-bombs in the atmosphere and irradiating the whole planet? But no one under thirty—certainly not Edward and Florence—believed that a British Prime Minister held much sway in global affairs. Every year the Empire shrank as another few countries took their rightful independence. Now there was almost nothing left, and the world belonged to the Americans and the Russians. Britain, England, was a minor power—saying this gave a certain blasphemous pleasure. Downstairs, of course, they took a different view. Anyone over forty would have fought, or suffered, in the war and known death on an unusual scale, and would not have been able to believe that a drift into irrelevance was the reward for all the sacrifice.

Edward and Florence would be voting for the first time in the next general election and were keen on the idea of a Labour landslide as great as the famous victory of 1945. In a year or two, the older generation who still dreamed of the Empire must surely give way to politicians like Gaitskell, Wilson, Crosland—new men with a vision of a modern country where there was equality and things actually got done. If America could have an exuberant and handsome President Kennedy, then Britain could have something similar—at least in spirit, for there was no one quite so glamorous in the Labour Party. The blimps, still fighting the last war, still nostalgic for its discipline and privations—their time was up.

Edward and Florence's shared sense that one day soon the country would be transformed for the better, that youthful energies were pushing to escape, like steam under pressure, merged with the excitement of their own adventure together. The sixties was their first decade of adult life, and it surely belonged to them. The pipe-smokers downstairs in their silver-buttoned blazers, with their double measures of Caol Ila, with their memories of campaigns in North Africa and Normandy, and their cultivated remnants of Army slang—they could have no claim on the future. Time, gentlemen, please!

Jonathan Coe [1961-], *Middle England*, 2018

'I can say what I want to say in two words.' He paused and looked around the table at the circle of expectant faces. Then, in a tone of belligerent triumph, he said, 'Fuck Brexit!', and sat down to a round of applause.

'Really?' said Stefano, after a moment's reflection. 'There are six English people here, and not a single person who voted to leave? Not a very representative selection.'

'I almost did,' said Charlie, sitting next to him. 'I was such in a bad place round about then that I almost did it just to give Cameron a kick in the nuts. Benjamin saw me that week. He knows how low I was. Broke and sleeping in my car. Him and his fucking austerity. But I decided it would be a stupid way of making my point. Not nearly as satisfying as punching him in the face, if I ever got the chance.' Stefano was starting to give Charlie a wary look, and to lean away from him slightly in his seat. 'Oh, no — don't get me wrong,' he said. 'I'm not a violent person. I mean, I used to be, but prison knocked that out of me.'

Looking less than reassured, Stefano merely said, 'Of course. I understand.'

'Cameron's only part of the story anyway,' Charlie continued. 'The way I see it, everything changed in Britain in May 1979. Forty years on, we're still dealing with that. You see — me and Benjamin, we're children of the seventies. We may have been only kids then, but that was the world we grew up in. Welfare state, NHS. Everything that was put in place after the war. Well, all that's been unravelling since '79. It's still being unravelled. That's the real story. I don't know if Brexit's a symptom of that, or just a distraction. But the process is pretty much complete now. It'll all be gone soon.'

From the other side of the table, Aneeqa said: 'I don't want to go back to the 1970's, thank you very much.'

'Fair enough,' Charlie agreed. 'It would have been a shit decade for someone like you. But try to think of what was good about it. Something's been lost, since then. Something huge.'

Claire intervened, at this point, to challenge Charlie's interpretation of history, and to point out that the decade he was seeking to idealize had also seen record inflation, economic instability and industrial unrest. The conversation among the four middle-aged English diners became heated, and then broadened out to include Brexit, Donald Trump, Syria, North Korea, Vladimir Putin, Facebook, immigration, Emmanuel Macron, the 5-star movement and the contentious result of the Eurovision song contest in 1968. Everybody around the table had something to say (at least that was Benjamin's memory afterwards) but also, one by one, people started to drift away and go to bed. Those who lingered drank more wine and lost track of how late it was until, finally, the only two left were Benjamin and Charlie. And Charlie was almost falling asleep.

‘Listen,’ said Benjamin, ‘I want to play you a song.’

‘Uh?’ said Charlie, opening his eyes slowly.

‘What you were saying before — about the world we lived in when we were kids, and how it’s all gone. I’ve got a song to play you. It sums it all up.’

‘All right. Bring it on.’

Adieu to old England, adieu

And adieu to some hundreds of pounds

If the world had been ended when I had been young

My sorrows I’d never have known

He took a final sip of wine, but knew that he’d drunk far too much tonight, and that it was time to sober up.

AMERICAN LITERATURE

THE FIRST AMERICANS (1620-1800)

Benjamin Franklin [1706-1790], Autobiography, 1793

I have been the more particular in this description of my journey, and shall be so of my first entry into that city, that you may in your mind compare such unlikely beginnings with the figure I have since made there. I was in my working-dress, my best clothes being to come round by sea. I was dirty from my journey, my pockets were stuffed out with shirts and stockings, and I knew no soul nor where to look for lodging. I was fatigued with traveling, rowing, and want of rest; I was very hungry; and my whole stock of cash consisted of a Dutch dollar and about a shilling in copper. The latter I gave the people of the boat for my passage, who at first refused it on account of my rowing; but I insisted on their taking it, a man being sometimes more generous when he has but a little money than when he has plenty, perhaps thro' fear of being thought to have but little.

Then I walked up the street, gazing about till near the market-house I met a boy with bread. I had made many a meal on bread, and in inquiring where he got it, I went immediately to the baker's he directed me to, in Second Street, and asked for biscuit, intending such as we had in Boston; but they, it seems, were not made in Philadelphia. Then I asked for a threepenny loaf, and was told they had none such. So, not considering or knowing the difference of money, and the greater cheapness nor the names of his bread, I bade him give me threepenny worth of any sort. He gave me, accordingly, three great puffy rolls. I was surprised at the quantity, but took it, and having no room in my pockets, walked off with a roll under each arm, and eating the other. Thus I went up Market Street as far as Fourth Street, passing by the door of Mr. Reed, my future wife's father, when she, standing at the door, saw me and thought I made, as I certainly did, a most awkward, ridiculous appearance. Then I turned and went down Chestnut Street and part of Walnut Street, eating my roll all the way, and coming round, found myself again at Market Street wharf, near the boat I came in, to which I went for a draught of the river water, and being filled with one of my rolls, gave the other two to a woman and her child that came down the river in the boat with us, and were waiting to go farther.

Thus refreshed, I walked again up the street, which by this time had many clean dressed people in it, who were all walking the same way. I joined them, and thereby was led into the great meeting-house of the Quakers near the market. I sat down among them, and after looking round awhile and hearing nothing said, being very drowsy thro' labor and want of rest the preceding night, I fell fast asleep, and continued so till the meeting broke up, when one was kind enough to rouse me. This was, therefore, the first house I was in, or slept in, in Philadelphia.

Walking down again toward the river, and looking in the faces of people, I met a young Quaker man, whose countenance I liked, and accosting him, requested he would tell me where a stranger could get lodging. We were then near the sign of the Three Mariners. "Here," says he, "is one place that entertains strangers, but it is not a reputable house; if thee a wilt walk with me, I'll show thee a better." He brought me to the Crooked Billet in Water Street. Here I got a dinner; and, while I was eating it, several sly questions were

asked me, as it seemed to be suspected from my youth and appearance that I might be some runaway.

THE MAKING OF AMERICAN LITERATURE (1800-1865)

Edgar Allan Poe [1809-1849], "The Oval Portrait," *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, 1840

The château into which my valet had ventured to make forcible entrance, rather than permit me, in my desperately wounded condition, to pass a night in the open air, was one of those piles of commingled gloom and grandeur which have so long frowned among the Appennines, not less in fact than in the fancy of Mrs. Radcliffe. To all appearance it had been temporarily and very lately abandoned. We established ourselves in one of the smallest and least sumptuously furnished apartments. It lay in a remote turret of the building. Its decorations were rich, yet tattered and antique. Its walls were hung with tapestry and bedecked with manifold and multiform armorial trophies, together with an unusually great number of very spirited modern paintings in frames of rich golden arabesque. In these paintings, which depended from the walls not only in their main surfaces, but in very many nooks which the bizarre architecture of the chateau rendered necessary- in these paintings my incipient delirium, perhaps, had caused me to take deep interest; so that I bade Pedro to close the heavy shutters of the room- since it was already night- to light the tongues of a tall candelabrum which stood by the head of my bed- and to throw open far and wide the fringed curtains of black velvet which enveloped the bed itself. I wished all this done that I might resign myself, if not to sleep, at least alternately to the contemplation of these pictures, and the perusal of a small volume which had been found upon the pillow, and which purported to criticise and describe them.

Long- long I read- and devoutly, devotedly I gazed. Rapidly and gloriously the hours flew by and the deep midnight came. The position of the candelabrum displeased me, and outreaching my hand with difficulty, rather than disturb my slumbering valet, I placed it so as to throw its rays more fully upon the book.

But the action produced an effect altogether unanticipated. The rays of the numerous candles (for there were many) now fell within a niche of the room which had hitherto been thrown into deep shade by one of the bed-posts. I thus saw in vivid light a picture all unnoticed before. It was the portrait of a young girl just ripening into womanhood. I glanced at the painting hurriedly, and then closed my eyes. Why I did this was not at first apparent even to my own perception. But while my lids remained thus shut, I ran over in my mind my reason for so shutting them. It was an impulsive movement to gain time for thought- to make sure that my vision had not deceived me- to calm and subdue my fancy for a more sober and more certain gaze. In a very few moments I again looked fixedly at the painting.

That I now saw aright I could not and would not doubt; for the first flashing of the candles upon that canvas had seemed to dissipate the dreamy stupor which was stealing over my senses, and to startle me at once into waking life.

The portrait, I have already said, was that of a young girl. It was a mere head and shoulders, done in what is technically termed a vignette manner; much in the style of the favorite heads of Sully. The arms, the bosom, and even the ends of the radiant hair melted imperceptibly into the vague yet deep shadow which formed the back-ground of the whole. The frame was oval, richly gilded and filigreed in Moresque. As a thing of art nothing could be more admirable than the painting itself. But it could have been neither the

execution of the work, nor the immortal beauty of the countenance, which had so suddenly and so vehemently moved me. Least of all, could it have been that my fancy, shaken from its half slumber, had mistaken the head for that of a living person. I saw at once that the peculiarities of the design, of the vignetting, and of the frame, must have instantly dispelled such idea- must have prevented even its momentary entertainment. Thinking earnestly upon these points, I remained, for an hour perhaps, half sitting, half reclining, with my vision riveted upon the portrait. At length, satisfied with the true secret of its effect, I fell back within the bed. I had found the spell of the picture in an absolute life-likeness of expression, which, at first startling, finally confounded, subdued, and appalled me. With deep and reverent awe I replaced the candelabrum in its former position. The cause of my deep agitation being thus shut from view, I sought eagerly the volume which discussed the paintings and their histories. Turning to the number which designated the oval portrait, I there read the vague and quaint words which follow:

"She was a maiden of rarest beauty, and not more lovely than full of glee. And evil was the hour when she saw, and loved, and wedded the painter. He, passionate, studious, austere, and having already a bride in his Art; she a maiden of rarest beauty, and not more lovely than full of glee; all light and smiles, and frolicsome as the young fawn; loving and cherishing all things; hating only the Art which was her rival; dreading only the pallet and brushes and other untoward instruments which deprived her of the countenance of her lover. It was thus a terrible thing for this lady to hear the painter speak of his desire to pourtray even his young bride. But she was humble and obedient, and sat meekly for many weeks in the dark, high turret-chamber where the light dripped upon the pale canvas only from overhead. But he, the painter, took glory in his work, which went on from hour to hour, and from day to day. And he was a passionate, and wild, and moody man, who became lost in reveries; so that he would not see that the light which fell so ghastly in that lone turret withered the health and the spirits of his bride, who pined visibly to all but him. Yet she smiled on and still on, uncomplainingly, because she saw that the painter (who had high renown) took a fervid and burning pleasure in his task, and wrought day and night to depict her who so loved him, yet who grew daily more dispirited and weak. And in sooth some who beheld the portrait spoke of its resemblance in low words, as of a mighty marvel, and a proof not less of the power of the painter than of his deep love for her whom he depicted so surpassingly well. But at length, as the labor drew nearer to its conclusion, there were admitted none into the turret; for the painter had grown wild with the ardor of his work, and turned his eyes from canvas merely, even to regard the countenance of his wife. And he would not see that the tints which he spread upon the canvas were drawn from the cheeks of her who sate beside him. And when many weeks had passed, and but little remained to do, save one brush upon the mouth and one tint upon the eye, the spirit of the lady again flickered up as the flame within the socket of the lamp. And then the brush was given, and then the tint was placed; and, for one moment, the painter stood entranced before the work which he had wrought; but in the next, while he yet gazed, he grew tremulous and very pallid, and aghast, and crying with a loud voice, 'This is indeed Life itself!' turned suddenly to regard his beloved:- She was dead!"

The motion of the canoe had been attended with little or no noise, the frontiersmen habitually getting accustomed to caution in most of their movements, and it now lay on the glassy water appearing to float in air, partaking of the breathing stillness that seemed to pervade the entire scene. At this instant a dry stick was heard cracking on the narrow strip of land that concealed the bay from the open lake. Both the adventurers started, and each extended a hand towards his rifle, the weapon never being out of reach of the arm.

“‘Twas too heavy for any light creatur’,” whispered Hurry, “and it sounded like the tread of a man!”

“Not so--not so,” returned Deerslayer; “‘t was, as you say, too heavy for one, but it was too light for the other. Put your paddle in the water, and send the canoe in, to that log; I’ll land and cut off the creatur’s retreat up the p’int, be it a Mingo, or be it a muskrat.”

As Hurry complied, Deerslayer was soon on the shore, advancing into the thicket with a moccasined foot, and a caution that prevented the least noise. In a minute he was in the centre of the narrow strip of land, and moving slowly down towards its end, the bushes rendering extreme watchfulness necessary. Just as he reached the centre of the thicket the dried twigs cracked again, and the noise was repeated at short intervals, as if some creature having life walked slowly towards the point. Hurry heard these sounds also, and pushing the canoe off into the bay, he seized his rifle to watch the result. A breathless minute succeeded, after which a noble buck walked out of the thicket, proceeded with a stately step to the sandy extremity of the point, and began to slake his thirst from the water of the lake. Hurry hesitated an instant; then raising his rifle hastily to his shoulder, he took sight and fired. The effect of this sudden interruption of the solemn stillness of such a scene was not its least striking peculiarity. The report of the weapon had the usual sharp, short sound of the rifle: but when a few moments of silence had succeeded the sudden crack, during which the noise was floating in air across the water, it reached the rocks of the opposite mountain, where the vibrations accumulated, and were rolled from cavity to cavity for miles along the hills, seeming to awaken the sleeping thunders of the woods. The buck merely shook his head at the report of the rifle and the whistling of the bullet, for never before had he come in contact with man; but the echoes of the hills awakened his distrust, and leaping forward, with his four legs drawn under his body, he fell at once into deep water, and began to swim towards the foot of the lake. Hurry shouted and dashed forward in chase, and for one or two minutes the water foamed around the pursuer and the pursued. The former was dashing past the point, when Deerslayer appeared on the sand and signed to him to return.

“‘Twas inconsiderate to pull a trigger, afore we had reconn’itred the shore, and made sartain that no inimies harbored near it,” said the latter, as his companion slowly and reluctantly complied. “This much I have l’arned from the Delawares, in the way of schooling and traditions, even though I’ve never yet been on a war-path. And, moreover, venison can hardly be called in season now, and we do not want for food. They call me Deerslayer, I’ll own, and perhaps I deserve the name, in the way of understanding the creatur’s habits, as well as for some sartainty in the aim, but they can’t accuse me of killing an animal when there is no occasion for the meat, or the skin. I may be a slayer, it’s true, but I’m no slaughterer.”

“Twas an awful mistake to miss that buck!” exclaimed Hurry, doffing his cap and running his fingers through his handsome but matted curls, as if he would loosen his tangled ideas by the process. “I’ve not done so onhandy a thing since I was fifteen.”

“Never lament it, as the creatur’s death could have done neither of us any good, and might have done us harm. Them echoes are more awful in my ears, than your mistake, Hurry, for they sound like the voice of natur’ calling out ag’in a wasteful and onthinking action.”

“You’ll hear plenty of such calls, if you tarry long in this quarter of the world, lad,” returned the other laughing. “The echoes repeat pretty much all that is said or done on the Glimmerglass, in this calm summer weather. If a paddle falls you hear of it sometimes, ag’in and ag’in, as if the hills were mocking your clumsiness, and a laugh, or a whistle, comes out of them pines, when they’re in the humour to speak, in a way to make you believe they can r’ally converse.”

“So much the more reason for being prudent and silent. I do not think the inimy can have found their way into these hills yet, for I don’t know what they are to gain by it, but all the Delawares tell me that, as courage is a warrior’s first vartue, so is prudence his second. One such call from the mountains, is enough to let a whole tribe into the secret of our arrival.”

“If it does no other good, it will warn old Tom to put the pot over, and let him know visiters are at hand. Come, lad; get into the canoe, and we will hunt the ark up, while there is yet day.”

Deerslayer complied, and the canoe left the spot. Its head was turned diagonally across the lake, pointing towards the south-eastern curvature of the sheet. In that direction, the distance to the shore, or to the termination of the lake, on the course the two were now steering, was not quite a mile, and, their progress being always swift, it was fast lessening under the skilful, but easy sweeps of the paddles. When about half way across, a slight noise drew the eyes of the men towards the nearest land, and they saw that the buck was just emerging from the lake and wading towards the beach. In a minute, the noble animal shook the water from his flanks, gazed up ward at the covering of trees, and, bounding against the bank, plunged into the forest.

Frederick Douglass [1817-1895], *Narrative of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, 1845

Our house stood within a few rods of the Chesapeake Bay, whose broad bosom was ever white with sails from every quarter of the habitable globe. Those beautiful vessels, robed in purest white, so delightful to the eye of freemen, were to me so many shrouded ghosts, to terrify and torment me with thoughts of my wretched condition. I have often, in the deep stillness of a summer’s Sabbath, stood all alone upon the lofty banks of that noble bay, and traced, with saddened heart and tearful eye, the countless number of sails moving off to the mighty ocean. The sight of these always affected me powerfully. My thoughts would compel utterance; and there, with no audience but the Almighty, I would pour out my soul’s complaint, in my rude way, with an apostrophe to the moving multitude of ships:

"You are loosed from your moorings, and are free; I am fast in my chains, and am a slave! You move merrily before the gentle gale, and I sadly before the bloody whip! You are freedom’s swift-winged angels, that fly round the world; I am confined in bands of

iron! O that I were free! O, that I were on one of your gallant decks, and under your protecting wing! Alas! betwixt me and you, the turbid waters roll. Go on, go on. O that I could also go! Could I but swim! If I could fly! O, why was I born a man, of whom to make a brute! The glad ship is gone; she hides in the dim distance. I am left in the hottest hell of unending slavery. O God, save me! God, deliver me! Let me be free! Is there any God? Why am I a slave? I will run away. I will not stand it. Get caught, or get clear, I'll try it. I had as well die with ague as the fever. I have only one life to lose. I had as well be killed running as die standing. Only think of it; one hundred miles straight north, and I am free! Try it? Yes! God helping me, I will. It cannot be that I shall live and die a slave. I will take to the water. This very bay shall yet bear me into freedom. The steamboats steered in a north-east course from North Point. I will do the same; and when I get to the head of the bay, I will turn my canoe adrift, and walk straight through Delaware into Pennsylvania. When I get there, I shall not be required to have a pass; I can travel without being disturbed. Let but the first opportunity offer, and, come what will, I am off. Meanwhile, I will try to bear up under the yoke. I am not the only slave in the world. Why should I fret? I can bear as much as any of them. Besides, I am but a boy, and all boys are bound to some one. It may be that my misery in slavery will only increase my happiness when I get free. There is a better day coming."

Thus I used to think, and thus I used to speak to myself; goaded almost to madness at one moment, and at the next reconciling myself to my wretched lot.

Nathaniel Hawthorne [1804-1864], *The Scarlet Letter*, 1850

She silently ascended the steps, and stood on the platform, holding little Pearl by the hand. The minister felt for the child's other hand, and took it. The moment that he did so, there came what seemed a tumultuous rush of new life, other life than his own, pouring like a torrent into his heart, and hurrying through all his veins, as if the mother and the child were communicating their vital warmth to his half-torpid system. The three formed an electric chain.

"Minister!" whispered little Pearl.

"What wouldst thou say, child?" asked Mr. Dimmesdale.

"Wilt thou stand here with mother and me, to-morrow noontide?" inquired Pearl.

"Nay; not so, my little Pearl," answered the minister; for, with the new energy of the moment, all the dread of public exposure, that had so long been the anguish of his life, had returned upon him; and he was already trembling at the conjunction in which—with a strange joy, nevertheless—he now found himself. "Not so, my child. I shall, indeed, stand with thy mother and thee one other day, but not to-morrow."

Pearl laughed, and attempted to pull away her hand. But the minister held it fast.

"A moment longer, my child!" said he.

"But wilt thou promise," asked Pearl, "to take my hand, and mother's hand, to-morrow noontide?"

"Not then, Pearl," said the minister, "but another time."

"And what other time?" persisted the child.

"At the great judgment day," whispered the minister,—and, strangely enough, the sense that he was a professional teacher of the truth impelled him to answer the child so.

“Then, and there, before the judgment-seat, thy mother, and thou, and I must stand together. But the daylight of this world shall not see our meeting!”

Pearl laughed again.

But, before Mr. Dimmesdale had done speaking, a light gleamed far and wide over all the muffled sky. It was doubtless caused by one of those meteors, which the night-watcher may so often observe burning out to waste, in the vacant regions of the atmosphere. So powerful was its radiance, that it thoroughly illuminated the dense medium of cloud betwixt the sky and earth. The great vault brightened, like the dome of an immense lamp. It showed the familiar scene of the street, with the distinctness of mid-day, but also with the awfulness that is always imparted to familiar objects by an unaccustomed light. The wooden houses, with their jutting stories and quaint gable-peaks; the doorsteps and thresholds, with the early grass springing up about them; the garden-plots, black with freshly turned earth; the wheel-track, little worn, and, even in the market-place, margined with green on either side;—all were visible, but with a singularity of aspect that seemed to give another moral interpretation to the things of this world than they had ever borne before. And there stood the minister, with his hand over his heart; and Hester Prynne, with the embroidered letter glimmering on her bosom; and little Pearl, herself a symbol, and the connecting link between those two. They stood in the noon of that strange and solemn splendor, as if it were the light that is to reveal all secrets, and the daybreak that shall unite all who belong to one another.

Henry David Thoreau [1817-1862], *Walden*, 1854

Every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence, with Nature herself. I have been as sincere a worshipper of Aurora as the Greeks. I got up early and bathed in the pond; that was a religious exercise, and one of the best things which I did. They say that characters were engraven on the bathing tub of king Tching-thang to this effect: “Renew thyself completely each day; do it again, and again, and forever again.” I can understand that. Morning brings back the heroic ages. I was as much affected by the faint hum of a mosquito making its invisible and unimaginable tour through my apartment at earliest dawn, when I was sitting with door and windows open, as I could be by any trumpet that ever sang of fame. It was Homer’s requiem; itself an Iliad and Odyssey in the air, singing its own wrath and wanderings. There was something cosmical about it; a standing advertisement, till forbidden, of the everlasting vigor and fertility of the world. The morning, which is the most memorable season of the day, is the awakening hour. Then there is least somnolence in us; and for an hour, at least, some part of us awakes which slumbers all the rest of the day and night. Little is to be expected of that day, if it can be called a day, to which we are not awakened by our Genius, but by the mechanical nudgings of some servitor, are not awakened by our own newly-acquired force and aspirations from within, accompanied by the undulations of celestial music, instead of factory bells, and a fragrance filling the air—to a higher life than we fell asleep from; and thus the darkness bear its fruit, and prove itself to be good, no less than the light. ... Morning is when I am awake and there is a dawn in me. Moral reform is the effort to throw off sleep. Why is it that men give so poor an account of their day if they have not been slumbering? They are not such poor calculators. If they had not been overcome with drowsiness, they would have performed something. The millions are awake

enough for physical labor; but only one in a million is awake enough for effective intellectual exertion, only one in a hundred millions to a poetic or divine life. To be awake is to be alive. I have never yet met a man who was quite awake. How could I have looked him in the face?

We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep. I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor. It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look, which morally we can do. To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts. Every man is tasked to make his life, even in its details, worthy of the contemplation of his most elevated and critical hour. If we refused, or rather used up, such paltry information as we get, the oracles would distinctly inform us how this might be done.

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. For most men, it appears to me, are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or of God, and have somewhat hastily concluded that it is the chief end of man here to “glorify God and enjoy him forever.”

THE AGE OF REALISM (1865-1915)

Mark Twain [1835-1910], *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, 1884

Soon as it was night out we shoved; when we got her out to about the middle we let her alone, and let her float wherever the current wanted her to; then we lit the pipes, and dangled our legs in the water, and talked about all kinds of things – we was always naked, day and night, whenever the mosquitoes would let us – the new clothes Buck’s folks made for me was too good to be comfortable, and besides I didn’t go much on clothes, nohow.

Sometimes we’d have that whole river all to ourselves for the longest time. Yonder was the banks and the islands, across the water; and maybe a spark – which was a candle in a cabin window; and sometimes on the water you could see a spark or two – on a raft or a scow, you know; and maybe you could hear a fiddle or a song coming over from one of them crafts. It’s lovely to live on a raft. We had the sky up there, all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and look up at them, and discuss about whether they was made or only just happened. Jim he allowed they was made, but I allowed they happened; I judged it would have took too long to MAKE so many. Jim said the moon could a LAID them; well, that looked kind of reasonable, so I didn’t say nothing against it, because I’ve seen a frog lay most as many, so of course it could be done. We used to watch the stars that fell, too, and see them streak down. Jim allowed they’d got spoiled and was hove out of the nest.

Once or twice of a night we would see a steamboat slipping along in the dark, and now and then she would belch a whole world of sparks up out of her chimbleys, and they would rain down in the river and look awful pretty; then she would turn a corner and her lights would wink out and her powwow shut off and leave the river still again; and by and by her waves would get to us, a long time after she was gone, and joggle the raft a bit, and after that you wouldn’t hear nothing for you couldn’t tell how long, except maybe frogs or something.

After midnight the people on shore went to bed, and then for two or three hours the shores was black – no more sparks in the cabin windows. These sparks was our clock – the first one that showed again meant morning was coming, so we hunted a place to hide and tie up right away.

One morning about daybreak I found a canoe and crossed over a chute to the main shore – it was only two hundred yards – and paddled about a mile up a crick amongst the cypress woods, to see if I couldn’t get some berries. Just as I was passing a place where a kind of a cowpath crossed the crick, here comes a couple of men tearing up the path as tight as they could foot it. I thought I was a goner, for whenever anybody was after anybody I judged it was ME – or maybe Jim. I was about to dig out from there in a hurry, but they was pretty close to me then, and sung out and begged me to save their lives – said they hadn’t been doing nothing, and was being chased for it – said there was men and dogs a-coming. They wanted to jump right in, but I says:

“Don’t you do it. I don’t hear the dogs and horses yet; you’ve got time to crowd through the brush and get up the crick a little ways; then you take to the water and wade down to me and get in – that’ll throw the dogs off the scent.”

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will--as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been. When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under the breath: "free, free, free!" The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial. She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him--sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

"Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. "Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door--you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven's sake open the door."

"Go away. I am not making myself ill." No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister's importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister's waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Some one was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of the accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine's piercing cry; at Richards' quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease--of the joy that kills.

Stephen Crane [1871-1900], *The Red Badge of Courage*, 1895

The trees began softly to sing a hymn of twilight. The sun sank until slanted bronze rays struck the forest. There was a lull in the noises of insects as if they had bowed their beaks and were making a devotional pause. There was silence save for the chanted chorus of the trees.

Then, upon this stillness, there suddenly broke a tremendous clangor of sounds. A crimson roar came from the distance.

The youth stopped. He was transfixed by this terrific medley of all noises. It was as if worlds were being rended. There was the ripping sound of musketry and the breaking crash of the artillery.

His mind flew in all directions. He conceived the two armies to be at each other panther fashion. He listened for a time. Then he began to run in the direction of the battle. He saw that it was an ironical thing for him to be running thus toward that which he had been at such pains to avoid. But he said, in substance, to himself that if the earth and the moon were about to clash, many persons would doubtless plan to get upon the roofs to witness the collision.

As he ran, he became aware that the forest had stopped its music, as if at last becoming capable of hearing the foreign sounds. The trees hushed and stood motionless. Everything seemed to be listening to the crackle and clatter and earthshaking thunder. The chorus peaked over the still earth.

It suddenly occurred to the youth that the fight in which he had been was, after all, but perfunctory popping. In the hearing of this present din he was doubtful if he had seen real battle scenes. This uproar explained a celestial battle; it was tumbling hordes a-struggle in the air.

Reflecting, he saw a sort of a humor in the point of view of himself and his fellows during the late encounter. They had taken themselves and the enemy very seriously and had imagined that they were deciding the war. Individuals must have supposed that they were cutting the letters of their names deep into everlasting tablets of brass, or enshrining their reputations forever in the hearts of their countrymen, while, as to fact, the affair would appear in printed reports under a meek and immaterial title. But he saw that it was good, else, he said, in battle every one would surely run save forlorn hopes and their ilk.

He went rapidly on. He wished to come to the edge of the forest that he might peer out.

As he hastened, there passed through his mind pictures of stupendous conflicts. His accumulated thought upon such subjects was used to form scenes. The noise was as the voice of an eloquent being, describing.

Sometimes the brambles formed chains and tried to hold him back. Trees, confronting him, stretched out their arms and forbade him to pass. After its previous hostility this new resistance of the forest filled him with a fine bitterness. It seemed that Nature could not be quite ready to kill him.

Frank Norris [1870-1902], *The Octopus*, 1901

By now, however, it was dark. Presley hurried forward. He came to the line fence of the Quien Sabe ranch. Everything was very still. The stars were all out. There was not a sound other than the *de Profundis*, still sounding from very far away. At long intervals the great earth sighed dreamily in its sleep. All about, the feeling of absolute peace and quiet and security and untroubled happiness and content seemed descending from the stars like a benediction. The beauty of his poem, its idyl, came to him like a caress; that alone had been lacking. It was that, perhaps, which had left it hitherto incomplete. At last he was to grasp his song in all its entity.

But suddenly there was an interruption. Presley had climbed the fence at the limit of the Quien Sabe ranch. Beyond was Los Muertos, but between the two ran the railroad. He had only time to jump back upon the embankment when, with a quivering of all the earth, a locomotive, single, unattached, shot by him with a roar, filling the air with the reek of hot oil, vomiting smoke and sparks; its enormous eye, cyclopean, red, throwing a glare far in advance, shooting by in a sudden crash of confused thunder; filling the night with the terrific clamour of its iron hoofs.

Abruptly Presley remembered. This must be the crack passenger engine of which Dyke had told him, the one delayed by the accident on the Bakersfield division and for whose passage the track had been opened all the way to Fresno.

Before Presley could recover from the shock of the irruption, while the earth was still vibrating, the rails still humming, the engine was far away, flinging the echo of its frantic gallop over all the valley. For a brief instant it roared with a hollow diapason on the Long Trestle over Broderson Creek, then plunged into a cutting farther on, the quivering glare of its fires losing itself in the night, its thunder abruptly diminishing to a subdued and distant humming. All at once this ceased. The engine was gone.

But the moment the noise of the engine lapsed, Presley--about to start forward again--was conscious of a confusion of lamentable sounds that rose into the night from out the engine's wake. Prolonged cries of agony, sobbing wails of infinite pain, heart-rending, pitiful.

The noises came from a little distance. He ran down the track, crossing the culvert, over the irrigating ditch, and at the head of the long reach of track--between the culvert and the Long Trestle--paused abruptly, held immovable at the sight of the ground and rails all about him.

In some way, the herd of sheep – Vanamee's herd – had found a breach in the wire fence by the right of way and had wandered out upon the tracks. A band had been crossing just at the moment of the engine's passage. The pathos of it was beyond expression. It was a slaughter, a massacre of innocents. The iron monster had charged full into the midst, merciless, inexorable. To the right and left, all the width of the right of way, the little bodies had been flung; backs were snapped against the fence posts; brains knocked out. Caught in the barbs of the wire, wedged in, the bodies hung suspended. Under foot it was terrible. The black blood, winking in the starlight, seeped down into the clinkers between the ties with a prolonged sucking murmur.

Presley turned away, horror-struck, sick at heart, overwhelmed with a quick burst of irresistible compassion for this brute agony he could not relieve. The sweetness was gone from the evening, the sense of peace, of security, and placid contentment was stricken from the landscape. The hideous ruin in the engine's path drove all thought of his poem from his mind. The inspiration vanished like a mist. The *de Profundis* had ceased to ring.

Jack London [1876-1916], "To Build a Fire," 1902

Day had broken cold and grey, exceedingly cold and grey, when the man turned aside from the main Yukon trail and climbed the high earth-bank, where a dim and little-travelled trail led eastward through the fat spruce timberland. It was a steep bank, and he paused for breath at the top, excusing the act to himself by looking at his watch. It was nine o'clock. There was no sun nor hint of sun, though there was not a cloud in the sky. It was a clear day, and yet there seemed an intangible pall over the face of things, a subtle gloom that made the day dark, and that was due to the absence of sun. This fact did not worry the man. He was used to the lack of sun. It had been days since he had seen the sun, and he knew that a few more days must pass before that cheerful orb, due south, would just peep above the sky-line and dip immediately from view.

The man flung a look back along the way he had come. The Yukon lay a mile wide and hidden under three feet of ice. On top of this ice were as many feet of snow. It was all pure white, rolling in gentle undulations where the ice-jams of the freeze-up had formed. North and south, as far as his eye could see, it was unbroken white, save for a dark hair-line that curved and twisted from around the spruce – covered island to the south, and that curved

and twisted away into the north, where it disappeared behind another spruce-covered island. This dark hair-line was the trail – the main trail – that led south five hundred miles to the Chilcoot Pass, Dyea, and salt water; and that led north seventy miles to Dawson, and still on to the north a thousand miles to Nulato, and finally to St. Michael on Bering Sea, a thousand miles and half a thousand more.

But all this – the mysterious, far-reaching hairline trail, the absence of sun from the sky, the tremendous cold, and the strangeness and weirdness of it all – made no impression on the man. It was not because he was long used to it. He was a new-comer in the land, a chechaquo, and this was his first winter. The trouble with him was that he was without imagination. He was quick and alert in the things of life, but only in the things, and not in the significances. Fifty degrees below zero meant eighty odd degrees of frost. Such fact impressed him as being cold and uncomfortable, and that was all. It did not lead him to meditate upon his frailty as a creature of temperature, and upon man's frailty in general, able only to live within certain narrow limits of heat and cold; and from there on it did not lead him to the conjectural field of immortality and man's place in the universe. Fifty degrees below zero stood for a bite of frost that hurt and that must be guarded against by the use of mittens, ear-flaps, warm moccasins, and thick socks. Fifty degrees below zero was to him just precisely fifty degrees below zero. That there should be anything more to it than that was a thought that never entered his head.

As he turned to go on, he spat speculatively. There was a sharp, explosive crackle that startled him. He spat again. And again, in the air, before it could fall to the snow, the spittle crackled. He knew that at fifty below spittle crackled on the snow, but this spittle had crackled in the air. Undoubtedly it was colder than fifty below – how much colder he did not know. But the temperature did not matter. He was bound for the old claim on the left fork of Henderson Creek, where the boys were already. They had come over across the divide from the Indian Creek country, while he had come the roundabout way to take a look at the possibilities of getting out logs in the spring from the islands in the Yukon. He would be in to camp by six o'clock; a bit after dark, it was true, but the boys would be there, a fire would be going, and a hot supper would be ready. As for lunch, he pressed his hand against the protruding bundle under his jacket. It was also under his shirt, wrapped up in a handkerchief and lying against the naked skin. It was the only way to keep the biscuits from freezing. He smiled agreeably to himself as he thought of those biscuits, each cut open and sopped in bacon grease, and each enclosing a generous slice of fried bacon.

Henry James [1843-1916], *The Portrait of a Lady*, 1881

Isabel Archer was a young person of many theories; her imagination was remarkably active. It had been her fortune to possess a finer mind than most of the persons among whom her lot was cast; to have a larger perception of surrounding facts and to care for knowledge that was tinged with the unfamiliar. It is true that among her contemporaries she passed for a young woman of extraordinary profundity; for these excellent people never withheld their admiration from a reach of intellect of which they themselves were not conscious, and spoke of Isabel as a prodigy of learning, a creature reported to have read the classic authors—in translations. Her paternal aunt, Mrs. Varian, once spread the rumour that Isabel was writing a book—Mrs. Varian having a reverence for books, and averred that the girl would distinguish herself in print. Mrs. Varian thought highly of literature, for

which she entertained that esteem that is connected with a sense of privation. Her own large house, remarkable for its assortment of mosaic tables and decorated ceilings, was unfurnished with a library, and in the way of printed volumes contained nothing but half a dozen novels in paper on a shelf in the apartment of one of the Miss Varians. Practically, Mrs. Varian's acquaintance with literature was confined to *The New York Interviewer*; as she very justly said, after you had read the *Interviewer* you had lost all faith in culture. Her tendency, with this, was rather to keep the *Interviewer* out of the way of her daughters; she was determined to bring them up properly, and they read nothing at all. Her impression with regard to Isabel's labours was quite illusory; the girl had never attempted to write a book and had no desire for the laurels of authorship. She had no talent for expression and too little of the consciousness of genius; she only had a general idea that people were right when they treated her as if she were rather superior. Whether or no she were superior, people were right in admiring her if they thought her so; for it seemed to her often that her mind moved more quickly than theirs, and this encouraged an impatience that might easily be confounded with superiority. It may be affirmed without delay that Isabel was probably very liable to the sin of self-esteem; she often surveyed with complacency the field of her own nature; she was in the habit of taking for granted, on scanty evidence, that she was right; she treated herself to occasions of homage. Meanwhile her errors and delusions were frequently such as a biographer interested in preserving the dignity of his subject must shrink from specifying. Her thoughts were a tangle of vague outlines which had never been corrected by the judgement of people speaking with authority. In matters of opinion she had had her own way, and it had led her into a thousand ridiculous zigzags. At moments she discovered she was grotesquely wrong, and then she treated herself to a week of passionate humility. After this she held her head higher than ever again; for it was of no use, she had an unquenchable desire to think well of herself. She had a theory that it was only under this provision life was worth living; that one should be one of the best, should be conscious of a fine organisation (she couldn't help knowing her organisation was fine), should move in a realm of light, of natural wisdom, of happy impulse, of inspiration gracefully chronic. It was almost as unnecessary to cultivate doubt of one's self as to cultivate doubt of one's best friend: one should try to be one's own best friend and to give one's self, in this manner, distinguished company. The girl had a certain nobleness of imagination which rendered her a good many services and played her a great many tricks. She spent half her time in thinking of beauty and bravery and magnanimity; she had a fixed determination to regard the world as a place of brightness, of free expansion, of irresistible action: she held it must be detestable to be afraid or ashamed. She had an infinite hope that she should never do anything wrong. She had resented so strongly, after discovering them, her mere errors of feeling (the discovery always made her tremble as if she had escaped from a trap which might have caught her and smothered her) that the chance of inflicting a sensible injury upon another person, presented only as a contingency, caused her at moments to hold her breath. That always struck her as the worst thing that could happen to her. On the whole, reflectively, she was in no uncertainty about the things that were wrong. She had no love of their look, but when she fixed them hard she recognised them. It was wrong to be mean, to be jealous, to be false, to be cruel; she had seen very little of the evil of the world, but she had seen women who lied and who tried to hurt each other. Seeing such things had quickened her high spirit; it seemed indecent not to scorn them. Of course the danger of a high spirit was the danger of inconsistency—the danger of keeping up the flag after the place has surrendered; a sort of behaviour so crooked as to be almost a

dishonour to the flag. But Isabel, who knew little of the sorts of artillery to which young women are exposed, flattered herself that such contradictions would never be noted in her own conduct. Her life should always be in harmony with the most pleasing impression she should produce; she would be what she appeared, and she would appear what she was. Sometimes she went so far as to wish that she might find herself some day in a difficult position, so that she should have the pleasure of being as heroic as the occasion demanded. Altogether, with her meagre knowledge, her inflated ideals, her confidence at once innocent and dogmatic, her temper at once exacting and indulgent, her mixture of curiosity and fastidiousness, of vivacity and indifference, her desire to look very well and to be if possible even better, her determination to see, to try, to know, her combination of the delicate, desultory, flame-like spirit and the eager and personal creature of conditions: she would be an easy victim of scientific criticism if she were not intended to awaken on the reader's part an impulse more tender and more purely expectant.

Edith Wharton [1862-1937], *The House of Mirth*, 1905

The next three days demonstrated to her own complete satisfaction Miss Bart's ability to manage her affairs without extraneous aid.

As she sat, on the Saturday afternoon, on the terrace at Bellomont, she smiled at Mrs. Trenor's fear that she might go too fast. If such a warning had ever been needful, the years had taught her a salutary lesson, and she flattered herself that she now knew how to adapt her pace to the object of pursuit. In the case of Mr. Gryce she had found it well to flutter ahead, losing herself elusively and luring him on from depth to depth of unconscious intimacy. The surrounding atmosphere was propitious to this scheme of courtship. Mrs. Trenor, true to her word, had shown no signs of expecting Lily at the bridge-table, and had even hinted to the other card-players that they were to betray no surprise at her unwonted defection. In consequence of this hint, Lily found herself the centre of that feminine solicitude which envelops a young woman in the mating season. A solitude was tacitly created for her in the crowded existence of Bellomont, and her friends could not have shown a greater readiness for self-effacement had her wooing been adorned with all the attributes of romance. In Lily's set this conduct implied a sympathetic comprehension of her motives, and Mr. Gryce rose in her esteem as she saw the consideration he inspired.

The terrace at Bellomont on a September afternoon was a spot propitious to sentimental musings, and as Miss Bart stood leaning against the balustrade above the sunken garden, at a little distance from the animated group about the tea-table, she might have been lost in the mazes of an inarticulate happiness. In reality, her thoughts were finding definite utterance in the tranquil recapitulation of the blessings in store for her. From where she stood she could see them embodied in the form of Mr. Gryce, who, in a light overcoat and muffler, sat somewhat nervously on the edge of his chair, while Carry Fisher, with all the energy of eye and gesture with which nature and art had combined to endow her, pressed on him the duty of taking part in the task of municipal reform.

Mrs. Fisher's latest hobby was municipal reform. It had been preceded by an equal zeal for socialism, which had in turn replaced an energetic advocacy of Christian Science. Mrs. Fisher was small, fiery and dramatic; and her hands and eyes were admirable instruments in the service of whatever causes she happened to espouse. She had, however, the fault common to enthusiasts of ignoring any slackness of response on the part of her hearers,

and Lily was amused by her unconsciousness of the resistance displayed in every angle of Mr. Gryce's attitude. Lily herself knew that his mind was divided between the dread of catching cold if he remained out of doors too long at that hour, and the fear that, if he retreated to the house, Mrs. Fisher might follow him up with a paper to be signed. Mr. Gryce had a constitutional dislike to what he called "committing himself," and tenderly as he cherished his health, he evidently concluded that it was safer to stay out of reach of pen and ink till chance released him from Mrs. Fisher's toils. Meanwhile he cast agonized glances in the direction of Miss Bart, whose only response was to sink into an attitude of more graceful abstraction. She had learned the value of contrast in throwing her charms into relief, and was fully aware of the extent to which Mrs. Fisher's volubility was enhancing her own repose.

She was roused from her musings by the approach of her cousin Jack Stepney who, at Gwen Van Osburgh's side, was returning across the garden from the tennis court.

The couple in question were engaged in the same kind of romance in which Lily figured, and the latter felt a certain annoyance in contemplating what seemed to her a caricature of her own situation. Miss Van Osburgh was a large girl with flat surfaces and no high lights: Jack Stepney had once said of her that she was as reliable as roast mutton. His own taste was in the line of less solid and more highly-seasoned diet; but hunger makes any fare palatable, and there had been times when Mr. Stepney had been reduced to a crust.

Lily considered with interest the expression of their faces: the girl's turned toward her companion's like an empty plate held up to be filled, while the man lounging at her side already betrayed the encroaching boredom which would presently crack the thin veneer of his smile.

"How impatient men are!" Lily reflected. "All Jack has to do to get everything he wants is to keep quiet and let that girl marry him; whereas I have to calculate and contrive, and retreat and advance, as if I were going through an intricate dance, where one misstep would throw me hopelessly out of time."

THE AGE OF MODERNISM (1910-1945)

F. S. Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 1925

There was music from my neighbor's house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars. At high tide in the afternoon I watched his guests diving from the tower of his raft or taking the sun on the hot sand of his beach while his two motor-boats slit the waters of the Sound, drawing aquaplanes over cataracts of foam. On week-ends his Rolls-Royce became an omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city, between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains. And on Mondays eight servants including an extra gardener toiled all day with mops and scrubbing-brushes and hammers and garden-shears, repairing the ravages of the night before.

Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a fruiterer in New York—every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulpless halves. There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour, if a little button was pressed two hundred times by a butler's thumb.

At least once a fortnight a corps of caterers came down with several hundred feet of canvas and enough colored lights to make a Christmas tree of Gatsby's enormous garden. On buffet tables, garnished with glistening hors-d'oeuvre, spiced baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs and pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold. In the main hall a bar with a real brass rail was set up, and stocked with gins and liquors and with cordials so long forgotten that most of his female guests were too young to know one from another.

By seven o'clock the orchestra has arrived—no thin five-piece affair but a whole pitful of oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols and cornets and piccolos and low and high drums. The last swimmers have come in from the beach now and are dressing upstairs; the cars from New York are parked five deep in the drive, and already the halls and salons and verandas are gaudy with primary colors and hair shorn in strange new ways and shawls beyond the dreams of Castile. The bar is in full swing and floating rounds of cocktails permeate the garden outside until the air is alive with chatter and laughter and casual innuendo and introductions forgotten on the spot and enthusiastic meetings between women who never knew each other's names.

The lights grow brighter as the earth lurches away from the sun and now the orchestra is playing yellow cocktail music and the opera of voices pitches a key higher. Laughter is easier, minute by minute, spilled with prodigality, tipped out at a cheerful word. The groups change more swiftly, swell with new arrivals, dissolve and form in the same breath—already there are wanderers, confident girls who weave here and there among the stouter and more stable, become for a sharp, joyous moment the center of a group and then excited with triumph glide on through the sea-change of faces and voices and color under the constantly changing light.

Suddenly one of these gypsies in trembling opal, seizes a cocktail out of the air, dumps it down for courage and moving her hands like Frisco dances out alone on the canvas platform. A momentary hush; the orchestra leader varies his rhythm obligingly for her and

there is a burst of chatter as the erroneous news goes around that she is Gilda Gray's understudy from the "Follies." The party has begun.

I believe that on the first night I went to Gatsby's house I was one of the few guests who had actually been invited. People were not invited—they went there. They got into automobiles which bore them out to Long Island and somehow they ended up at Gatsby's door. Once there they were introduced by somebody who knew Gatsby and after that they conducted themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with amusement parks. Sometimes they came and went without having met Gatsby at all, came for the party with a simplicity of heart that was its own ticket of admission.

I had been actually invited. A chauffeur in a uniform of robin's egg blue crossed my lawn early that Saturday morning with a surprisingly formal note from his employer—the honor would be entirely Gatsby's, it said, if I would attend his "little party" that night. He had seen me several times and had intended to call on me long before but a peculiar combination of circumstances had prevented it—signed Jay Gatsby in a majestic hand.

Ernest Hemingway [1899-1961], *The Sun also Rises*, 1926

Robert Cohn was once middleweight boxing champion of Princeton. Do not think that I am very much impressed by that as a boxing title, but it meant a lot to Cohn. He cared nothing for boxing, in fact he disliked it, but he learned it painfully and thoroughly to counteract the feeling of inferiority and shyness he had felt on being treated as a Jew at Princeton. There was a certain inner comfort in knowing he could knock down anybody who was snooty to him, although, being very shy and a thoroughly nice boy, he never fought except in the gym. He was Spider Kelly's star pupil. Spider Kelly taught all his young gentlemen to box like featherweights, no matter whether they weighed one hundred and five or two hundred and five pounds. But it seemed to fit Cohn. He was really very fast. He was so good that Spider promptly overmatched him and got his nose permanently flattened. This increased Cohn's distaste for boxing, but it gave him a certain satisfaction of some strange sort, and it certainly improved his nose. In his last year at Princeton he read too much and took to wearing spectacles. I never met any one of his class who remembered him. They did not even remember that he was middleweight boxing champion.

I mistrust all frank and simple people, especially when their stories hold together, and I always had a suspicion that perhaps Robert Cohn had never been middleweight boxing champion, and that perhaps a horse had stepped on his face, or that maybe his mother had been frightened or seen something, or that he had, maybe, bumped into something as a young child, but I finally had somebody verify the story from Spider Kelly. Spider Kelly not only remembered Cohn. He had often wondered what had become of him.

Robert Cohn was a member, through his father, of one of the richest Jewish families in New York, and through his mother of one of the oldest. At the military school where he prepped for Princeton, and played a very good end on the football team, no one had made him race-conscious. No one had ever made him feel he was a Jew, and hence any different from anybody else, until he went to Princeton. He was a nice boy, a friendly boy, and very shy, and it made him bitter. He took it out in boxing, and he came out of Princeton with painful self-consciousness and the flattened nose, and was married by the first girl who was nice to him. He was married five years, had three children, lost most of the fifty thousand

dollars his father left him, the balance of the estate having gone to his mother, hardened into a rather unattractive mould under domestic unhappiness with a rich wife; and just when he had made up his mind to leave his wife she left him and went off with a miniature-painter. As he had been thinking for months about leaving his wife and had not done it because it would be too cruel to deprive her of himself, her departure was a very healthful shock.

The divorce was arranged and Robert Cohn went out to the Coast. In California he fell among literary people and, as he still had a little of the fifty thousand left, in a short time he was backing a review of the Arts. The review commenced publication in Carmel, California, and finished in Provincetown, Massachusetts. By that time Cohn, who had been regarded purely as an angel, and whose name had appeared on the editorial page merely as a member of the advisory board, had become the sole editor. It was his money and he discovered he liked the authority of editing. He was sorry when the magazine became too expensive and he had to give it up.

Sherwood Anderson [1876-1941], *Winesburg, Ohio*, 1919

He was an old man with a white beard and huge nose and hands. Long before the time during which we will know him, he was a doctor and drove a jaded white horse from house to house through the streets of Winesburg. Later he married a girl who had money. She had been left a large fertile farm when her father died. The girl was quiet, tall, and dark, and to many people she seemed very beautiful. Everyone in Winesburg wondered why she married the doctor. Within a year after the marriage she died.

The knuckles of the doctor's hands were extraordinarily large. When the hands were closed they looked like clusters of unpainted wooden balls as large as walnuts fastened together by steel rods. He smoked a cob pipe and after his wife's death sat all day in his empty office close by a window that was covered with cobwebs. He never opened the window. Once on a hot day in August he tried but found it stuck fast and after that he forgot all about it.

Winesburg had forgotten the old man, but in Doctor Reefy there were the seeds of something very fine. Alone in his musty office in the Heffner Block above the Paris Dry Goods Company's store, he worked ceaselessly, building up something that he himself destroyed. Little pyramids of truth he erected and after erecting knocked them down again that he might have the truths to erect other pyramids.

Doctor Reefy was a tall man who had worn one suit of clothes for ten years. It was frayed at the sleeves and little holes had appeared at the knees and elbows. In the office he wore also a linen duster with huge pockets into which he continually stuffed scraps of paper. After some weeks the scraps of paper became little hard round balls, and when the pockets were filled he dumped them out upon the floor. For ten years he had but one friend, another old man named John Spaniard who owned a tree nursery. Sometimes, in a playful mood, old Doctor Reefy took from his pockets a handful of the paper balls and threw them at the nursery man. "That is to confound you, you blathering old sentimentalist," he cried, shaking with laughter.

The story of Doctor Reefy and his courtship of the tall dark girl who became his wife and left her money to him is a very curious story. It is delicious, like the twisted little apples that grow in the orchards of Winesburg. In the fall one walks in the orchards and the

ground is hard with frost underfoot. The apples have been taken from the trees by the pickers. They have been put in barrels and shipped to the cities where they will be eaten in apartments that are filled with books, magazines, furniture, and people. On the trees are only a few gnarled apples that the pickers have rejected. They look like the knuckles of Doctor Reefy's hands. One nibbles at them and they are delicious. Into a little round place at the side of the apple has been gathered all of its sweetness. One runs from tree to tree over the frosted ground picking the gnarled, twisted apples and filling his pockets with them. Only the few know the sweetness of the twisted apples.

The girl and Doctor Reefy began their courtship on a summer afternoon. He was forty-five then and already he had begun the practice of filling his pockets with the scraps of paper that became hard balls and were thrown away. The habit had been formed as he sat in his buggy behind the jaded white horse and went slowly along country roads. On the papers were written thoughts, ends of thoughts, beginnings of thoughts.

One by one the mind of Doctor Reefy had made the thoughts. Out of many of them he formed a truth that arose gigantic in his mind. The truth clouded the world. It became terrible and then faded away and the little thoughts began again.

Sinclair Lewis [1885-1951], *Babbitt*, 1922

It was the best of nationally advertised and quantitatively produced alarm-clocks, with all modern attachments, including cathedral chime, intermittent alarm, and a phosphorescent dial. Babbitt was proud of being awakened by such a rich device. Socially it was almost as creditable as buying expensive cord tires.

He sulkily admitted now that there was no more escape, but he lay and detested the grind of the real-estate business, and disliked his family, and disliked himself for disliking them. The evening before, he had played poker at Vergil Gunch's till midnight, and after such holidays he was irritable before breakfast. It may have been the tremendous home-brewed beer of the prohibition-era and the cigars to which that beer enticed him; it may have been resentment of return from this fine, bold man-world to a restricted region of wives and stenographers, and of suggestions not to smoke so much.

From the bedroom beside the sleeping-porch, his wife's detestably cheerful "Time to get up, Georgie boy," and the itchy sound, the brisk and scratchy sound, of combing hairs out of a stiff brush.

He grunted; he dragged his thick legs, in faded baby-blue pajamas, from under the khaki blanket; he sat on the edge of the cot, running his fingers through his wild hair, while his plump feet mechanically felt for his slippers. He looked regretfully at the blanket—forever a suggestion to him of freedom and heroism. He had bought it for a camping trip which had never come off. It symbolized gorgeous loafing, gorgeous cursing, virile flannel shirts.

He creaked to his feet, groaning at the waves of pain which passed behind his eyeballs. Though he waited for their scorching recurrence, he looked blurrily out at the yard. It delighted him, as always; it was the neat yard of a successful business man of Zenith, that is, it was perfection, and made him also perfect. He regarded the corrugated iron garage. For the three-hundred-and-sixty-fifth time in a year he reflected, "No class to that tin shack. Have to build me a frame garage. But by golly it's the only thing on the place that

isn't up-to-date!" While he stared he thought of a community garage for his acreage development, Glen Oriole. He stopped puffing and jiggling. His arms were akimbo. His petulant, sleep-swollen face was set in harder lines. He suddenly seemed capable, an official, a man to contrive, to direct, to get things done.

Eudora Welty [1909-2001], *Death of a Traveling Salesman*, 1936

She was pushing the coals off the pots, and the smells of corn bread and coffee circled the room. She set everything on the table before the men, with a bone-handled knife stuck into one of the potatoes, splitting out its golden fiber. Then she stood for a minute looking at them, tall and full above them where they sat. She leaned a little toward them.

"You all can eat now," she said, and suddenly smiled.

Bowman had just happened to be looking at her. He set his cup back on the table in unbelieving protest. A pain pressed at his eyes. He saw that she was not an old woman. She was young, still young. He could think of no number of years for her. She was the same age as Sonny, and she belonged to him. She stood with the deep dark corner of the room behind her, the shifting yellow light scattering over her head and her gray form-less dress, trembling over her tall body when it bent over them in its sudden communication. She was young. Her teeth were shining and her eyes glowed. She turned and walked slowly and heavily out of the room, and he heard her sit down on the cot and then lie down. The pattern on the quilt moved.

"She's goin' to have a baby," said Sonny, popping a bite into his mouth.

Bowman could not speak. He was shocked with knowing what was really in this house. A marriage, a fruitful marriage. That simple thing. Anyone could have had that.

Somehow he felt unable to be indignant or protest, although some sort of joke had certainly been played upon him. There was nothing remote or mysterious here - only something private. The only secret was the ancient communication between two people. But the memory of the woman's waiting silently by the cold hearth, of the man's stubborn journey a mile away to get fire, and how they finally brought out their food and drink and filled the room proudly with all they had to show, was suddenly too clear and too enormous within him for response...

"You ain't as hungry as you look," said Sonny.

The woman came out of the bedroom as soon as the men had finished, and ate her supper while her husband stared peacefully into the fire.

Then they put the dogs out, with the food that was left.

"I think I'd better sleep here by the fire, on the floor," said Bowman.

He felt that he had been cheated, and that he could afford now to be generous. Ill though he was, he was not going to ask them for their bed. He was through with asking favors in this house, now that he understood what was there.

"Sure, mister."

But he had not known yet how slowly he understood. They had not meant to give him their bed. After a little interval they both rose and looking at him gravely went into the other room.

He lay stretched by the fire until it grew low and dying. He watched every tongue of blaze lick out and vanish. "There will be special reduced prices on all footwear during the month of January," he found himself repeating quietly, and then he lay with his lips tight shut.

How many noises the night had! He heard the stream running, the fire dying, and he was sure now that he heard his heart beating, too, the sound it made under his ribs. He heard breathing, round and deep, of the man and his wife in the room across the passage. And that was all. But emotion swelled patiently within him, and he wished that the child were his.

He must get back to where he had been before. He stood weakly before the red coals and put on his overcoat. It felt too heavy on his shoulders. As he started out he looked and saw that the woman had never got through with cleaning the lamp. On some impulse he put all the money from his billfold under its fluted glass base, almost ostentatiously.

Ashamed, shrugging a little, and then shivering, he took his bags and went out. The cold of the air seemed to lift him bodily. The moon was in the sky.

On the slope he began to run, he could not help it. Just as he reached the road, where his car seemed to sit in the moonlight like a boat, his heart began to give off tremendous explosions like a rifle, bang bang bang.

He sank in fright onto the road, his bags falling about him. He felt as if all this had happened before. He covered his heart with both hands to keep anyone from hearing the noise it made.

But nobody heard it.

John Steinbeck [1902-1968], *The Grapes of Wrath*, 1939

She crawled close to his voice. "I wanta touch ya again, Tom. It's like I'm blin', it's so dark. I wanta remember, even if it's on'y my fingers that remember. You got to go away, Tom."

"Yeah! I knowed it from the start."

"We made purty good," she said. "I been squirrelin' money away. Hol' out your han' Tom. I got seven dollars here."

"I ain't gonna take ya money," he said. "I'll get 'long all right."

"Hol' out ya han', Tom. I ain't gonna sleep none if you got no money. Maybe you got to take a bus, or somepin. I want you should go a long ways off, three-four hunderd miles."

"I ain't gonna take it."

"Tom," she said sternly. "You take this money. You hear me? You got no right to cause me pain."

"You ain't playin' fair," he said.

"I thought maybe you could go to a big city. Los Angeles, maybe. They wouldn't never look for you there."

"Hm-m," he said. "Lookie, Ma. I been all day an' all night hidin' alone. Guess who I been thinkin' about? Casy! He talked a lot. Used ta bother me. But now I been thinkin' what he said, an' I can remember all of it. Says one time he went out in the wilderness to find his own soul, an' he foun' he didn' have no soul that was his'n. Says he foun' he jus' got a little piece of a great big soul. Says a wilderness ain't no good, 'cause his little piece of a soul wasn't no good 'less it was with the rest, an' was whole. Funny how I remember. Didn' think I was even listenin'. But I know now a fella ain't no good alone."

"He was a good man," Ma said.

Tom went on, "He spouted out some Scripture once, an' it didn' soun' like no hell-fire Scripture. He tol' it twice, an' I remember it. Says it's from the Preacher."

"How's it go, Tom?"

"Goes, 'Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lif' up his fellow, but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up.' That's part of her."

"Go on," Ma said. "Go on, Tom."

"Jus' a little bit more. 'Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him, and a three-fold cord is not quickly broken.'"

"An' that's Scripture?"

"Casy said it was. Called it the Preacher."

"Hush-listen."

"On'y the wind, Ma. I know the wind. An' I got to thinkin', Ma most of the preachin' is about the poor we shall have always with us, an' if you got nothin', why, jus' fol' your hands an' to hell with it, you gonna git ice cream on gol' plates when you're dead. An' then this here Preacher says two get a better reward for their work."

"Tom," she said. "What you aimin' to do?"

He was quiet for a long time. "I been thinkin' how it was in that gov'ment camp, how our folks took care a theirselves, an' if they was a fight they fixed it their self; an' they wasn't no cops wagglin' their guns, but they was better order than them cops ever give. I been a-wonderin' why we can't do that all over. Throw out the cops that ain't our people. All work together for our own thingall farm our own Ian'."

Carson McCullers [1917-1967], *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, 1940

It was a night in late August and she was in a big rush. She had to be at this house by nine o'clock, and no maybe either. Her Dad called and she went into the front room. He was sitting slumped over his workbench. For some reason it never did seem natural to see him there. Until the time of his accident last year he had been a painter and carpenter. Before daylight every morning he would leave the house in his overalls, to be gone all day. Then at night sometimes he fiddled around with clocks as an extra work. A lot of times he had tried to get a job in a jewelry store where he could sit by himself at a desk all day with a clean white shirt on and a tie. Now when he couldn't carpenter any more he had put a sign at the front of the house reading 'Clocks and Watches Repaired Cheap.' But he didn't look like most jewelers—the ones downtown were quick, dark little Jew men. Her Dad was too tall for his workbench, and his big bones seemed joined together in a loose way.

Her Dad just stared at her. She could tell he didn't have any reason for calling. He only wanted real bad to talk to her. He tried to think of some way to begin. His brown eyes were too big for his long, thin face, and since he had lost every single hair the pale, bald top of his head gave him a naked look. He still looked at her without speaking and she was in a hurry. She had to be at that house by nine sharp and there was no time to waste. Her Dad saw she was in a hurry and he cleared his throat.

'I got something for you,' he said. 'Nothing much, but maybe you can treat yourself with it.'

He didn't have to give her any nickel or dime just because he was lonesome and wanted to talk. Out of what he made he only kept enough to have beer about twice a week. Two bottles were on the floor by his chair now, one empty and one just opened. And whenever he drank beer he liked to talk to somebody. Her Dad fumbled with his belt and she looked away. This summer he had gotten like a kid about hiding those nickels and dimes he kept for himself. Sometimes he hid them in his shoes, and other times in a little slit he had cut in his belt. She only halfway wanted to take the dime, but when he held it out her hand was just naturally open and ready.

'I got so much work to do I don't know where to begin,' he said.

That was just the opposite to the truth, and he knew it good as she did. He never had many watches to fix, and when he finished he would fool around the house doing any little job that was needed. Then at night he sat at his bench, cleaning old springs and wheels and trying to make the work last out until bedtime. Ever since he broke his hip and couldn't work steady he had to be doing something every minute.

'I been thinking a lot tonight,' her Dad said. He poured out his beer and sprinkled a few grains of salt on the back of his hand. Then he licked up the salt and took a swallow out of the glass.

She was in such a hurry that it was hard to stand still. Her Dad noticed this. He tried to say something—but he had not called to tell her anything special. He only wanted to talk with her for a little while. He started to speak and swallowed. They just looked at each other. The quietness grew out longer and neither of them could say a word.

That was when she realized about her Dad. It wasn't like she was learning a new fact—she had understood it all along in every way except with her brain. Now she just suddenly knew that she knew about her Dad. He was lonesome and he was an old man. Because none of the kids went to him for anything and because he didn't earn much money he felt like he was cut off from the family. And in his lonesomeness he wanted to be close to one of his kids—and they were all so busy that they didn't know it. He felt like he wasn't much real use to anybody.

She understood this while they were looking at each other. It gave her a queer feeling. Her Dad picked up a watch spring and cleaned it with a brush dipped in gasoline.

'I know you're in a hurry. I just hollered to say hello.'

'No, I'm not in any rush,' she said. 'Honest.'

That night she sat down in a chair by his bench and they talked awhile. He talked about accounts and expenses and how things would have been if he had just managed in a different way. He drank beer, and once the tears came to his eyes and he snuffled his nose against his shirt-sleeve. She stayed with him a good while that night. Even if she was in an awful hurry. Yet for some reason she couldn't tell him about the things in her mind—about the hot, dark nights.

TOWARDS POSTMODERNISM

Jack Kerouac [1922-1969], *On the Road* 1957

What is that feeling when you're driving away from people and they recede on the plain till you see their specks dispersing?-it's the too-huge world vaulting us, and it's good-by. But we lean forward to the next crazy venture beneath the skies.

We wheeled through the sultry old light of Algiers, back on the ferry, back toward the mud-splashed, crabbed old ships across the river, back on Canal, and out; on a two-lane highway to Baton Rouge in purple darkness; swung west there, crossed the Mississippi at a place called Port Alien. Port Alien-where the river's all rain and roses in a misty pinpoint darkness and where we swung around a circular drive in yellow foglight and suddenly saw the great black body below a , bridge and crossed eternity again. What is the Mississippi River?-a washed clod in the rainy night, a soft plopping (from drooping Missouri banks, a dissolving, a riding of the tide down the eternal waterbed, a contribution to brown foams, a voyaging past endless vales and trees and levees, down along, down along, by Memphis, Greenville, Eudora, Vicksburg, Natchez, Port Alien, and Port Orleans and Port of the Deltas, by Potash, Venice, and the Night's Great Gulf, and out.

With the radio on to a mystery program, and as I looked out the window and saw a sign that said USE COOPER'S PAINT and I said, "Okay, I will." we rolled across the hoodwink night of the Louisiana plains-Lawtell, Eunice, Kinder, and De Ouincy, western rickety towns becoming more bayou-like as ~~we~~ we reached the Sabine. In Old Opelousas I went into a grocery store to buy bread and cheese while Dean saw to gas and oil. It was just a shack; I could hear the family eating supper in the back. I waited a minute; they went on talking. I took bread and cheese and slipped out the door. We had barely enough money to make Frisco. Meanwhile Dean took a carton of cigarettes from the gas station and we were stocked for the voyage-gas, oil, cigarettes, and food. Crooks don't know. He pointed the car straight down the road.

Somewhere near Starks we saw a great red glow in the sky ahead; we wondered what it was; in a moment we were passing it. It was a fire beyond the trees; there were many cars parked on the highway. It must have been some kind of fish-fry, and on the other hand it might have been anything. The country turned strange and dark near Deweyville. Suddenly we were in the swamps.

"Man, do you imagine what it would be like if we found a jazzjoint in these swamps, with great big black fellas moanin guitar blues and drinkin snakejuice and makin signs at us?"

"Yes!"

There were mysteries around here. The car was going over a dirt road elevated off the swamps that dropped on both sides and drooped with vines. We passed an apparition; it was a Negro man in a white shirt walking along with his arms up-spread to the inky firmament. He must have been praying or calling down a curse. We zoomed right by; I looked out the back window to see his white eyes. "Whoo!" said Dean. "Look out. We better not stop in this here country." At one point we got stuck at a crossroads and stopped the car anyway. Dean turned off the headlamps. We were surrounded by a great forest of viny trees in which we could almost hear the slither of a million copperheads. The only thing we could see was the red ampere button on the Hudson dashboard. Marylou squealed

with fright. We began laughing maniac laughs to her. We were scared too. We wanted to get out of this mansion of the snake, this mireful drooping dark, and zoom on back to familiar American ground and cowtowns. There was a smell of oil and dead water in the air. This was a manuscript of the night we couldn't read. An owl hooted. We took a chance on one of the dirt roads, and pretty soon we were crossing the evil old Sabine River that is responsible for all these swamps. With amazement we saw great structures of light ahead of us. "Texas! It's Texas! Beaumont oil town!" Huge oil tanks and refineries loomed like cities in the oily fragrant air.

Raymond Chandler [1888-1959], *Playback*, 1958

The voice on the telephone seemed to be sharp and peremptory, but I didn't hear too well what it said—partly because I was only half awake and partly because I was holding the receiver upside down. I fumbled it around and grunted.

"Did you hear me? I said I was Clyde Umney, the lawyer."

"Clyde Umney, the lawyer. I thought we had several of them."

"You're Marlowe, aren't you?"

"Yeah. I guess so." I looked at my wrist watch. It was 6:30 A.M., not my best hour.

"Don't get fresh with me, young man."

"Sorry, Mr. Umney. But I'm not a young man. I'm old, tired and full of no coffee. What can I do for you, sir?"

"I want you to meet the Super Chief at eight o'clock, identify a girl among the passengers, follow her until she checks in somewhere, and then report to me. Is that clear?"

"No."

"Why not?" he snapped.

"I don't know enough to be sure I could accept the case."

"I'm Clyde Um-

"Don't," I interrupted. "I might get hysterical. Just tell me the basic facts. Perhaps another investigator would suit you better. I never was an FBI man."

"Oh. My secretary, Miss Vermilyea, will be at your office in half an hour. She will have the necessary information for you. She is very efficient. I hope you are."

"I'm more efficient when I've had breakfast. Have her come here, would you?"

"Where is here?"

I gave him the address of my place on Yucca Avenue, and told him how she would find it.

"Very well," he said grudgingly, "but I want one thing very clear. The girl is not to know she is being followed. This is very important. I am acting for a very influential firm of Washington attorneys. Miss Vermilyea will advance you some expense money and pay you a retainer of two hundred and fifty dollars. I expect a high degree of efficiency. And let's not waste time talking."

"I'll do the best I can, Mr. Umney."

He hung up. I struggled out of bed, showered, shaved and was nuzzling my third cup of coffee when the door bell rang.

"I'm Miss Vermilyea, Mr. Umney's secretary," she said in a rather chintzy voice.

"Please come in."

She was quite a doll. She wore a white belted raincoat, no hat, a well-cherished head of platinum hair, booties to match the raincoat, a folding plastic umbrella, a pair of blue-gray

eyes that looked at me as if I had said a dirty word. I helped her off with her raincoat. She smelled very nice. She had a pair of legs-so far as I could determine-that were not painful to look at. She wore night sheer stockings. I stared at them rather intently, especially when she crossed her legs and held out a cigarette to be lighted.

"Christian Dior," she said, reading my rather open mind. "I never wear anything else. A light, please."

"You're wearing a lot more today," I said, snapping a lighter for her.

"I don't greatly care for passes this early in the morning."

"What time would suit you, Miss Vermilyea?"

She smiled rather acidly, inventoried her handbag and tossed me a manila envelope. "I think you'll find everything you need in this."

"Well-not quite everything."

"Get on with it, you goof. I've heard all about you. Why do you think Mr. Umney chose you? He didn't. I did. And stop looking at my legs."

I opened the envelope. It contained another sealed envelope and two checks made out to me. One, for \$250, was marked "Retainer, as an advance against fees for professional services." The other was for \$200 and was marked "Advance to Philip Marlowe for necessary expenses."

"You will account for the expenses to me, in exact detail," Miss Vermilyea said. "And buy your own drinks."

Philip Roth [1933-2018], *Portnoy's Complaint*, 1969

Oh, this father! this kindly, anxious, uncomprehending, constipated father! Doomed to be obstructed by this Holy Protestant Empire! The self- confidence and the cunning, the imperiousness and the contacts, all that enabled the blond and blue-eyed of his generation to lead, to inspire, to command, if need be to oppress- he could not summon a hundredth part of it. How could he oppress?- he was the oppressed. How could he wield power?- he was the powerless. How could he enjoy triumph, when he so despised the triumphant- and probably the very idea. They worship a Jew, do you know that, Alex? Their whole big-deal religion is based on worshipping someone who was an established Jew at that time. Now how do you like that for stupidity? How do you like that for pulling the wool over the eyes of the public? Jesus Christ, who they go around telling everybody was God, was actually a Jew! And this fact, that absolutely kills me when I have to think about it, nobody else pays any attention to. That he was a Jew, like you and me, and that they took a Jew and turned him into some kind of God after he is already dead, and then-and this is what can make you absolutely crazy-then the dirty bastards turn around afterwards, and who is the first one on their list to persecute? who haven't they left their hands off of to murder and to hate for two thousand years? The Jews! who gave them their beloved Jesus to begin with! I assure you, Alex, you are never going to hear such a mishegoss of mixed-up crap and disgusting nonsense as the Christian religion in your entire life. And that's what these big shots, so-called, believe!

Unfortunately, on the home front contempt for the powerful enemy was not so readily available as a defensive strategy- for as time went on, the enemy was more and more his own beloved son. Indeed, during that extended period of rage that goes by the name of my adolescence, what terrified me most about my father was not the violence I expected him

momentarily to unleash upon me, but the violence I wished every night at the dinner table to commit upon his ignorant, barbaric carcass. How I wanted to send him howling from the land of the living when he ate from the serving bowl with his own fork, or sucked the soup from his spoon instead of politely waiting for it to cool, or attempted, God forbid, to express an opinion on any subject whatsoever . . . And what was especially terrifying about the murderous wish was this: if I tried, chances were I'd succeed! Chances were he would help me along! I would have only to leap across the dinner dishes, my fingers aimed at his windpipe, for him instantaneously to sink down beneath the table with his tongue hanging out. Shout he could shout, squabble he could squabble, and oh nudjh, could he nudjh! But defend himself? against me? Alex, keep this back talk up, my mother warns, as I depart from the roaring kitchen like Attila the Hun, run screaming from yet another half-eaten dinner, (continue with this disrespect and you will give that man a heart attack! Good! I cry, slamming in her face the door to my room. Fine! I scream, extracting from my closet the zylon jacket I wear only with my collar up (a style she abhors as much as the filthy garment itself). Wonderful! I shout, and with streaming eyes run to the corner to vent my fury on the pinball machine.

Christ, in the face of my defiance- if my father had only been my mother! and my mother my father! But what a mix-up of the sexes in our house! Who should by rights be advancing on me, retreating- and who should be retreating, advancing! Who should be scolding, collapsing in helplessness, enfeebled totally by a tender heart! And who should be collapsing, instead scolding, correcting, reproving, criticizing, faultfinding without end! Filling the patriarchal vacuum! Oh, thank God! thank God! at least he had the cock and the balls! Pregnant (putting it mildly) as his masculinity was in this world of goyim with golden hair and silver tongues, between his legs (God bless my father!) he was constructed like a man of consequence, two big healthy balls such as a king would be proud to put on display, and a shlong of magisterial length and girth. And they were his: yes, of this I am absolutely certain, they hung down off of, they were connected on to, they could not be taken away from, him!

Paul Auster [1947-], *City of Glass*, 1985

It was night. Quinn lay in bed smoking a cigarette, listening to the rain beat against the window. He wondered when it would stop and whether he would feel like taking a long walk or a short walk in the morning. An open copy of Marco Polo's *Travels* lay face down on the pillow beside him. Since finishing the latest William Wilson novel two weeks earlier, he had been languishing. His private-eye narrator, Max Work, had solved an elaborate series of crimes, had suffered through a number of beatings and narrow escapes, and Quinn was feeling somewhat exhausted by his efforts. Over the years, Work had become very close to Quinn. Whereas William Wilson remained an abstract figure for him, Work had increasingly come to life. In the triad of selves that Quinn had become, Wilson served as a kind of ventriloquist, Quinn himself was the dummy, and Work was the animated voice that gave purpose to the enterprise. If Wilson was an illusion, he nevertheless justified the lives of the other two. If Wilson did not exist, he nevertheless was the bridge that allowed Quinn to pass from himself into Work. And little by little, Work had become a presence in Quinn's life, his interior brother, his comrade in solitude.

Quinn picked up the Marco Polo and started reading the first page again. “We will set down things seen as seen, things heard as heard, so that our book may be an accurate record, free from any sort of fabrication. And all who read this book or hear it may do so with full confidence, because it contains nothing but the truth.” Just as Quinn was beginning to ponder the meaning of these sentences, to turn their crisp assurances over in his mind, the telephone rang. Much later, when he was able to reconstruct the events of that night, he would remember looking at the clock, seeing that it was past twelve, and wondering why someone should be calling him at that hour. More than likely, he thought, it was bad news. He climbed out of bed, walked naked to the telephone, and picked up the receiver on the second ring.

“Yes?”

There was a long pause on the other end, and for a moment Quinn thought the caller had hung up. Then, as if from a great distance, there came the sound of a voice unlike any he had ever heard. It was at once mechanical and filled with feeling, hardly more than a whisper and yet perfectly audible, and so even in tone that he was unable to tell if it belonged to a man or a woman.

“Hello?” said the voice.

“Who is this?” asked Quinn.

“Hello?” said the voice again.

“I’m listening,” said Quinn. “Who is this?”

“Is this Paul Auster?” asked the voice. “I would like to speak to Mr. Paul Auster.”

“There’s no one here by that name.”

“Paul Auster. Of the Auster Detective Agency.”

“I’m sorry,” said Quinn. “You must have the wrong number.”

“This is a matter of utmost urgency,” said the voice.

“There’s nothing I can do for you,” said Quinn. “There is no Paul Auster here.”

“You don’t understand,” said the voice. “Time is running out.”

“Then I suggest you dial again. This is not a detective agency.”

Quinn hung up the phone. He stood there on the cold floor, looking down at his feet, his knees, his limp penis. For a brief moment he regretted having been so abrupt with the caller. It might have been interesting, he thought, to have played along with him a little. Perhaps he could have found out something about the case—perhaps even have helped in some way. “I must learn to think more quickly on my feet,” he said to himself.

Toni Morrison [1963-2019], *Beloved*, 1987

Beloved took Denver’s hand and placed another on Denver’s shoulder. They danced then. Round and round the tiny room and it may have been dizziness, or feeling light and icy at once, that made Denver laugh so hard. A catching laugh that Beloved caught. The two of them, merry as kittens, swung to and fro, to and fro, until exhausted they sat on the floor. Beloved let her head fall back on the edge of the bed while she found her breath and Denver saw the tip of the thing she always saw in its entirety when Beloved undressed to sleep. Looking straight at it she whispered, “Why you call yourself Beloved?”

Beloved closed her eyes. “In the dark my name is Beloved.”

Denver scooted a little closer. “What’s it like over there, where you were before? Can you tell me?”

“Dark,” said Beloved. “I’m small in that place. I’m like this here.” She raised her head off the bed, lay down on her side and curled up.

Denver covered her lips with her fingers. “Were you cold?”

Beloved curled tighter and shook her head. “Hot. Nothing to breathe down there and no room to move in.”

“You see anybody?”

“Heaps. A lot of people is down there. Some is dead.”

“You see Jesus? Baby Suggs?”

“I don’t know. I don’t know the names.” She sat up.

“Tell me, how did you get here?”

“I wait; then I got on the bridge. I stay there in the dark, in the daytime, in the dark, in the daytime. It was a long time.”

“All this time you were on a bridge?”

“No. After. When I got out.”

“What did you come back for?”

Beloved smiled. “To see her face.”

“Ma’am’s? Sethe?”

“Yes, Sethe.

Denver felt a little hurt, slighted that she was not the main reason for Beloved’s return. “Don’t you remember we played together by the stream?”

“I was on the bridge,” said Beloved. “You see me on the bridge?”

“No, by the stream. The water back in the woods.”

“Oh, I was in the water. I saw her diamonds down there. I could touch them.”

“What stopped you?”

“She left me behind. By myself,” said Beloved. She lifted her eyes to meet Denver’s and frowned, perhaps. Perhaps not. The tiny scratches on her forehead may have made it seem so. Denver swallowed. “Don’t,” she said. “Don’t. You won’t leave us, will you?”

“No. Never. This is where I am.”

Donna Tartt [1963-], *The Goldfinch*, 2013

While I was still in Amsterdam, I dreamed about my mother for the first time in years. I’d been shut up in my hotel for more than a week, afraid to telephone anybody or go out; and my heart scrambled and floundered at even the most innocent noises: elevator bell, rattle of the minibar cart, even church clocks tolling the hour, de Westertoren, Krijtberg, a dark edge to the clangor, an inwrought fairy-tale sense of doom. By day I sat on the foot of the bed straining to puzzle out the Dutch-language news on television (which was hopeless, since I knew not a word of Dutch) and when I gave up, I sat by the window staring out at the canal with my camel’s-hair coat thrown over my clothes – for I’d left New York in a hurry and the things I’d brought weren’t warm enough, even indoors.

Outside, all was activity and cheer. It was Christmas, lights twinkling on the canal bridges at night; red-cheeked dames en heren, scarves flying in the icy wind, clattered down the cobblestones with Christmas trees lashed to the backs of their bicycles. In the afternoons, an amateur band played Christmas carols that hung tinny and fragile in the winter air.

Chaotic room-service trays; too many cigarettes; lukewarm vodka from duty free. During those restless, shut-up days, I got to know every inch of the room as a prisoner comes to know his cell. It was my first time in Amsterdam; I'd seen almost nothing of the city and yet the room itself, in its bleak, drafty, sunscrubbed beauty, gave a keen sense of Northern Europe, a model of the Netherlands in miniature: whitewash and Protestant probity, co-mingled with deep-dyed luxury brought in merchant ships from the East. I spent an unreasonable amount of time scrutinizing a tiny pair of gilt-framed oils hanging over the bureau, one of peasants skating on an ice-pond by a church, the other a sailboat flouncing on a choppy winter sea: decorative copies, nothing special, though I studied them as if they held, encrypted, some key to the secret heart of the old Flemish masters. Outside, sleet tapped at the windowpanes and drizzled over the canal; and though the brocades were rich and the carpet was soft, still the winter light carried a chilly tone of 1943, privation and austerities, weak tea without sugar and hungry to bed.

Early every morning while it was still black out, before the extra clerks came on duty and the lobby started filling up, I walked downstairs for the newspapers. The hotel staff moved with hushed voices and quiet footsteps, eyes gliding across me coolly as if they didn't quite see me, the American man in 27 who never came down during the day; and I tried to reassure myself that the night manager (dark suit, crew cut, horn-rimmed glasses) would probably go to some lengths to avert trouble or avoid a fuss.

The Herald Tribune had no news of my predicament but the story was all over the Dutch papers, dense blocks of foreign print which hung, tantalizingly, just beyond the reach of my comprehension. Onopgeloste moord. Onbekende. I went upstairs and got back into bed (fully clad, because the room was so cold) and spread the papers out on the coverlet: photographs of police cars, crime scene tape, even the captions were impossible to decipher, and although they didn't appear to have my name, there was no way to know if they had a description of me or if they were withholding information from the public.

The room. The radiator. Een Amerikaan met een strafblad. Olive green water of the canal.

Because I was cold and ill, and much of the time at a loss what to do (I'd neglected to bring a book, as well as warm clothes), I stayed in bed most of the day. Night seemed to fall in the middle of the afternoon. Often – amidst the crackle of strewn newspapers – I drifted in and out of sleep, and my dreams for the most part were muddied with the same indeterminate anxiety that bled through into my waking hours: court cases, luggage burst open on the tarmac with my clothes scattered everywhere and endless airport corridors where I ran for planes I knew I'd never make.

Laura Kasischke [1961-], *Mind of Winter*, 2014

CHRISTMAS, 20--

She woke up late that morning, and knew:

Something had followed them home from Russia.

This scrappy bit of information had been offered up to Holly in a dream, she supposed, a glimpse into a truth she'd carried with her for—how long?

Thirteen years?

Thirteen years!

For thirteen years she'd known this, and not known—or so it seemed to her in her half-awake state on Christmas morning. She rose from bed and went down the hallway to her daughter's bedroom, anxious to see that she was there, still asleep, perfectly safe.

Yes, there she was, Tatiana, one pale arm thrown over a pale coverlet. Dark hair spilled over a pillow. She was so still she could have been a painting. So peaceful she could have been—

But she wasn't. She was fine. Holly felt reassured and went back to the bedroom, slipped into bed beside her husband again—but as soon as she did, she thought it once more: »

It had followed them home!

This was something Holly had known, apparently, in her heart, or in her subconscious, or wherever it was inside her where bits of information like this hid themselves for years, until something made her aware of what she'd forgotten, or repressed, or—

Or was it something she'd willfully overlooked? Now she saw it:

Something had followed them home from Russia!

But what? »

And then Holly thought, I must write this down before it slips away. It was that feeling she used to have when she was younger—the almost panicked desire to write about something she'd half glimpsed, to get it on the page before it dashed away again. Sometimes it had felt nearly nauseating, that desire to yank it out of herself and put it into written words before it hid away behind some organ deep inside her—some maroonish, liverish, gillish organ she'd have to pry behind, as if fingering it out of a turkey carcass, ever to get at it again. That's what writing a poem used to feel like to Holly, and why she'd quit writing poems.

My God, though, this thought was like a poem—a secret, a truth, just out of reach. Holly would need time to pluck this out and examine it in the light, but it was in her, whether she'd known it or not until now. Like a poem that wanted to be written. A truth insisting on recognition.

Something had followed them home from Russia! »

It was the explanation for so many things!

The cat, crawling off. Her back legs, her tail.

And her husband. The bump on the back of his hand, like a tiny third fist—a homunculus's!—growing. They'd said it was benign, but how could such a thing be benign? They'd said to ignore it, but how? Something was bearing fruit inside her husband, or trying to claw its way out. How were they to ignore it?

(Although, to be fair to Dr. Fujimura, they had learned to ignore it, and it had eventually stopped growing, just as she'd said it would.) »

And Aunt Rose. How her language had changed. How she'd begun to speak in a foreign language. How Holly'd had to stop taking her calls because she couldn't stand it anymore, and how angry her cousins had been, saying She loved to talk to you. You were her favorite. You abandoned her while she was dying.

And then the hens. Ganging up on the other one, on the hen she'd so stupidly, so cavalierly, named Sally. Six weeks, and then—

Don't think about Sally. Never think of that hen and her horrible name again.

And the water stain over the dining room table in the shape of a shadowy face—although they could never find anywhere that water would have seeped through their skintight, warranty-guaranteed roof. The roof company men had stood around in their filthy boots and stared up at it, refusing to take any blame.

Also, without explanation, the wallpaper had curled away in the bathroom. Just that one edge. You could never do anything to keep it in place. They'd tried every adhesive on the market, but the daisy wallpaper would stick fast for exactly three days and nights before it peeled away again.

Holly needed to write down these things, this evidence! The cat, Aunt Rose, the bump on her husband's hand, the hens, the water stain, the wallpaper—along with the clue provided to her by her dream:

Something had followed them home from Russia.

(...)

Outside, the wind sounded like a nerve being yanked through the tree. It was Christmas morning, but late. It must be nearly nine o'clock. They never slept this late on Christmas morning! Far too much rum and eggnog last night. Was Tatty still asleep in her bed? Her pale arm, pale coverlet, pale pillow with a splash of dark hair, still. Holly had looked in on her, she remembered this, but it had been hours ago, hadn't it? Surely Tatty would be up by now, ready to open presents. Where was she? Why hadn't she come into the room to wake them up? »

Because she was fifteen, of course. She was probably also still asleep. There would never again be a Christmas morning, crack of dawn Tatty coming in to slap their faces lightly with her damp, new, tiny hands. Instead, they'd all overslept on Christmas morning, and Holly had woken up with this little horror in her mind, that something had followed them home from Russia.

Something evil?

Well, perhaps not evil. But it had sapped them. It continued to sap them.

“Oh, that's motherhood,” They would say. “You're just talking about motherhood. Children, they're energy vampires . . .”

But don't forget the cat. The wallpaper. Aunt Rose. Even when she was semi-lucid, even when the words were familiar English words, Aunt Rose had seemed to Holly to be reciting lines from “The Fire Sermon”: On Margate Sands I can connect nothing with nothing the broken finger-nails of dirty hands my people humble people who expect nothing la la . . .

And there had also been their CDs, hadn't there? All their favorites had been scratched, as if overnight—although, surely, it had been over a long period of time? Every one of their favorites had been ruined, and they'd never even bothered to replace them. They'd just left them there on a shelf, like their books, which they never took down to read now, or even to blow the dust off.

And speaking of the dust! My God, it was everywhere. It was Holly's exhaustion. It was floating and impossible, still bearing cat fur in it after all these years without the cat, as well as strands of Tatiana's long black hair. When Holly complained about the dust, Eric claimed he didn't see it, that he had no idea what she was talking about, but that if it bothered her that much she should hire a housekeeper again.

And yes, she could have hired a housekeeper again, but she'd never even found the energy to do that, not after the last one, and her accident on the back steps, slipping on ice while taking out a bag of garbage. And even before that, her allergies, her rashes, and Holly's guilt at paying another woman, a poorer woman, a Spanish-speaking woman, to do this intimate work for her that she should have been perfectly able to do for herself.

Dust, exhaustion, it was in the air:

Something had followed them home from Russia.

Repeat it, Holly thought. It is a refrain. As in a poem. Write it down. Write down the way some shadow face is finally peering around a corner on this Christmas morning (they'd slept so late) and shown itself.

Something that was here all along. Inside the house. Inside themselves. It had followed them all the way home from Russia.

Don DeLillo [1936-], *Zero K*, 2016

I walked the halls. The doors here were painted in gradations of muted blue and I tried to name the shades. Sea, sky, butterfly, indigo. All these were wrong and I began to feel more foolish with every step I took and every door I scrutinized. I wanted to see a door open and a person emerge. I wanted to know where I was and what was happening around me. A woman came striding by, briskly, and I resisted an impulse to name her like a color, or examine her for signs of something, clues to something.

Then the idea hit me. Simple. There was nothing behind the doors. I walked and thought. I speculated. There were areas on certain floors that contained offices. Elsewhere the halls were pure design, the doors simply one element in the overarching scheme, which Ross had described in a general way. I wondered whether this was visionary art, involving colors, forms and local materials, art meant to accompany and surround the hardwired initiative, the core work of scientists, counselors, technicians and medical personnel.

I liked the idea. It fit the circumstances, it met the standards of unlikelihood, or daring dumb luck, that can mark the most compelling art. All I had to do was knock on a door. Pick a color, pick a door and knock. If no one opens the door, knock on the next door and the next. But I was wary of betraying my father's trust in bringing me here. Then there were the hidden cameras. There would have to be surveillance of these hallways, with blank faces in hushed rooms scanning the monitors.

Three people came toward me, one of them a boy in a motorized wheelchair that resembled a toilet. He was nine or ten and watched me all the way. His upper body was tilted severely to one side but his eyes were alert and I wanted to stop and talk to him. The adults made it clear that this was not possible. They flanked the wheelchair and stared straight ahead, into authorized space, stranding me in my pause, my good intentions.

Soon I was turning a corner and going down a hall with walls painted raw umber, a thick runny pigment meant to resemble mud, I thought. There were matching doors, all doors the same. There was also a recess in the wall and a figure standing there, arms, legs, head, torso, a thing fixed in place. I saw that it was a mannequin, naked, hairless, without facial features, and it was reddish brown, maybe russet or simply rust. There were breasts, it had breasts, and I stopped to study the figure, a molded plastic version of the human body, a jointed model of a woman. I imagined placing a hand on a breast. This seemed required, particularly if you are me. The head was a near oval, arms positioned in a manner that I tried to decipher—self-defense, withdrawal, with one foot set to the rear. The figure was rooted to the floor, not enclosed in protective glass. A hand on a breast, a hand sliding up a thigh. It's something I would have done once upon a time. Here and now, the cameras in place, the monitors, an alarm mechanism on the body itself—I was sure of this. I stood back and looked. The stillness of the figure, the empty face, the empty hallway, the figure at night, a dummy, in fear, drawing away. I moved farther back and kept on looking.

I was strong and he was not, so it was me went to war to defend the Republic. I stepped across the border out of Indiana into Ohio. Twenty dollars, two salt-pork sandwiches, and I took jerky, biscuits, six old apples, fresh underthings, and a blanket too. There was a heat in the air so I walked in my shirtsleeves with my hat pulled low. I wasn't the only one looking to enlist and by and by we had ourselves a band. Farm folk cheered as we went by. Gave us food. Their best shade to stop in. Played to us on their fiddles. Everything you've heard about from the early days, even though it had already been a year since Fort Sumter, and there had already been the First Bull Run, and Shiloh had stole off its souls, and the early days were done and dead and gone.

The tenth or eleventh night on the road we drank whiskey and hollered under the stars. There was a running race. Knife throwing. Cracker-swallowing contest. Feats of strength. One of the boys tried to arm wrestle me and got the back of his hand scraped when I smacked it down. None of the others took a turn.

There was an old lady outside Vandalia fetched me up a drink of water from her well, took a long look at me as she handed it to me, and told me I needed to watch my step. No one else outside that lady saw what I was. I slept just exactly like a pine plank on that walk. I sent Bartholomew my first letter from Dayton. I sent him about the same one from Cincinnati. I wrote that I missed him fierce. I wrote that I was fierce happy too.

I gave my name as Ash Thompson down out of Darke County. "Where in Darke County?" they asked me, and I told them, even though I could see straight off they weren't listening, that where was in the northwest corner of that fine county on my Daddy's farm. After they had cracked on my teeth and whistled at my thick fingers and had me scrape my thumb calluses across the wood tabletop, they gave me my blues. A week later, when they saw I didn't mind work and hadn't run off, they handed me my firearm. It was a Model 1861 muzzle-loading Springfield rifle with flip-up sights and percussion lock, and they said you could use it to kill a man a quarter mile away. That was something to think about. How you could rifle a man down was looking at you and you at him but never see his face. I hadn't figured it that way when I had thought on it back home. I had figured it would be fine big faces firing back and forth at each other, not threads of color off at the horizon. A dance of men and not just their musket balls. There was another fellow, little bitty thing made me look tall, said something not too far off these lines aloud as we stood there staring at our Springfields.

"Don't you worry, sweetheart," said to him the officer was handing out the hardware, "you'll get so close to those rebel boys you won't know whether to kiss or kill."

We marched ragtag for several days south and came to a great camp near the river. They gave me a shovel to go with my rifle and set me to digging fresh latrines. Some already there had it in their minds my first day to strip me down and throw me in the creek, but one of the band I'd come in with said it wasn't worth the trouble I would give them if they tried it, so they picked on someone else instead. I stood on the bank and laughed with the others when they had him down to his dirty skin, but it was me who waded in when it came out he couldn't swim. I wasn't sorry after I'd fetched him, as the wet and cool settled off some of my stink. That evening I walked a ways down the creek past all the eyes and shucked off my own clothing and went back in. I'd have floated on my back a good long while but I

could already see that a camp was a sprawly thing and who knew who else might have had the same idea, so I got in and out and dried and dressed back up quick.

The boys at my tent had a game of cards going when I got back and I stood awhile and watched it. In between bets they talked about all the rebel-whipping to come. They had pipes in their mouths, and cheeks still fat from their farms. I did not know what was coming any better than they did but it did not feel like a thing to rattle happy at the dark about. Still, when one of them looked up from his poor hand and asked how many rebels I planned on killing, I smiled and put my own pipe in my mouth and said I'd get my hundred. A little later after I had tended to my gun and polished my bayonet I lay under my blanket and thought about that hundred. I thought about my Bartholomew too. I thought about the hundred then I thought about Bartholomew then I fell asleep and dreamed I was floating dead as the ages in the cool waters of the creek.

COMMONWEALTH LITERATURE

Katherine Mansfield [1888-1923], "The Wind Blows," 1915

SUDDENLY—dreadfully—she wakes up. What has happened? Something dreadful has happened. No—nothing has happened. It is only the wind shaking the house, rattling the windows, banging a piece of iron on the roof and making her bed tremble. Leaves flutter past the window, up and away; down in the avenue a whole newspaper wags in the air like a lost kite and falls, spiked on a pine tree. It is cold. Summer is over—it is autumn—everything is ugly. The carts rattle by, swinging from side to side; two Chinamen lollop along under their wooden yokes with the straining vegetable baskets—their pigtailed and blue blouses fly out in the wind. A white dog on three legs yelps past the gate. It is all over! What is? Oh, everything! And she begins to plait her hair with shaking fingers, not daring to look in the glass. Mother is talking to grandmother in the hall.

"A perfect idiot! Imagine leaving anything out on the line in weather like this. . . . Now my best little Teneriffe-work tea-cloth is simply in ribbons. What is that extraordinary smell? It's the porridge burning. Oh, heavens—this wind!"

She has a music lesson at ten o'clock. At the thought the minor movement of the Beethoven begins to play in her head, the trills long and terrible like little rolling drums. . . . Marie Swainson runs into the garden next door to pick the "chrysanthums" before they are ruined. Her skirt flies up above her waist; she tries to beat it down, to tuck it between her legs while she stoops, but it is no use—up it flies. All the trees and bushes beat about her. She picks as quickly as she can, but she is quite distracted. She doesn't mind what she does—she pulls the plants up by the roots and bends and twists them, stamping her foot and swearing.

"For heaven's sake keep the front door shut! Go round to the back," shouts someone. And then she hears Bogey:

"Mother, you're wanted on the telephone. Telephone, Mother. It's the butcher."

How hideous life is—revolting, simply revolting. . . . And now her hat-elastic's snapped. Of course it would. She'll wear her old tam and slip out the back way. But Mother has seen.

"Matilda. Matilda. Come back im-me-diatly! What on earth have you got on your head? It looks like a tea cosy. And why have you got that mane of hair on your forehead?"

"I can't come back, Mother. I'll be late for my lesson."

"Come back immediately!"

She won't. She won't. She hates Mother. "Go to hell," she shouts, running down the road.

In waves, in clouds, in big round whirls the dust comes stinging, and with it little bits of straw and chaff and manure. There is a loud roaring sound from the trees in the gardens, and standing at the bottom of the road outside Mr. Bullen's gate she can hear the sea sob: "Ah! . . . Ah! . . . Ah-h!" But Mr. Bullen's drawing-room is as quiet as a cave. The windows are closed, the blinds half-pulled, and she is not late. The-girl-before-her has just started playing MacDowell's "To an Iceberg." Mr. Bullen looks over at her and half smiles.

"Sit down," he says. "Sit over there in the sofa corner, little lady."

How funny he is. He doesn't exactly laugh at you . . . but there is just something. . . . Oh, how peaceful it is here. She likes this room. It smells of art serge and stale smoke and

chrysanthemums . . . there is a big vase of them on the mantelpiece behind the pale photograph of Rubinstein . . . á mon ami Robert Bullen. . . . Over the black glittering piano hangs "Solitude"—a dark tragic woman draped in white, sitting on a rock, her knees crossed, her chin on her hands.

"No, no!" says Mr. Bullen, and he leans over the other girl, puts his arms over her shoulders and plays the passage for her. The stupid—she's blushing! How ridiculous!

Now the-girl-before-her has gone; the front door slams. Mr. Bullen comes back and walks up and down, very softly, waiting for her. What an extraordinary thing. Her fingers tremble so that she can't undo the knot in the music satchel. It's the wind. . . . And her heart beats so hard she feels it must lift her blouse up and down. Mr. Bullen does not say a word. The shabby red piano seat is long enough for two people to sit side by side. Mr. Bullen sits down by her.

"Shall I begin with scales?" she asks, squeezing her hands together. "I had some arpeggios, too." But he does not answer. She doesn't believe he even hears . . . and then suddenly his fresh hand with the ring on it reaches over and opens Beethoven.

"Let's have a little of the old master," he says. But why does he speak so kindly—so awfully kindly—and as though they had known each other for years and years and knew everything about each other.

Nadine Gordimer [1923-2014], "Once Upon a Time," *Jump & Other Stories*, 1991

Someone has written to ask me to contribute to an anthology of stories for children. I reply that I don't write children's stories; and he writes back that at a recent congress/book fair/seminar a certain novelist said every writer ought to write at least one story for children. I think of sending a postcard saying I don't accept that I "ought" to write anything. And then last night I woke up – or rather was awakened without knowing what had roused me.

A voice in the echo-chamber of the subconscious? A sound.

A creaking of the kind made by the weight carried by one foot after another along a wooden floor. I listened. I felt the apertures of my ears distend with concentration. Again: the creaking. I was waiting for it; waiting to hear if it indicated that feet were moving from room to room, coming up the passage – to my door. I have no burglar bars, no gun under the pillow, but I have the same fears as people who do take these precautions, and my windowpanes are thin as rime, could shatter like a wineglass. A woman was murdered (how do they put it) in broad daylight in a house two blocks away, last year, and the fierce dogs who guarded an old widower and his collection of antique clocks were strangled before he was knifed by a casual laborer he had dismissed without pay.

I was staring at the door, making it out in my mind rather than seeing it, in the dark. I lay quite still – a victim already – the arrhythmia of my heart was fleeing, knocking this way and that against its body-cage. How finely tuned the senses are, just out of rest, sleep! I could never listen intently as that in the distractions of the day, I was reading every faintest sound, identifying and classifying its possible threat.

But I learned that I was to be neither threatened nor spared. There was no human weight pressing on the boards, the creaking was a buckling, an epicenter of stress. I was in it. The house that surrounds me while I sleep is built on undermined ground; far beneath my bed, the floor, the house's foundations, the stopes and passages of gold mines have hollowed the

rock, and when some face trembles, detaches and falls, three thousand feet below, the whole house shifts slightly, bringing uneasy strain to the balance and counterbalance of brick, cement, wood and glass that hold it as a structure around me. The misbeats of my heart tailed off like the last muffled flourishes on one of the wooden xylophones made by the Chopi and Tsonga migrant miners who might have been down there, under me in the earth at that moment. The stope where the fall was could have been disused, dripping water from its ruptured veins; or men might now be interred there in the most profound of tombs. I couldn't find a position in which my mind would let go of my body – release me to sleep again. So I began to tell myself a story, a bedtime story.

In a house, in a suburb, in a city, there were a man and his wife who loved each other very much, and were living happily ever after. They had a little boy, and they loved him very much. They had a cat and a dog that the little boy loved very much. They had a car and a caravan trailer for holidays, and a swimming-pool which was fenced so that the little boy and his playmates would not fall in and drown. They had a housemaid who was absolutely trustworthy and an itinerant gardener who was highly recommended by the neighbours. For when they began to live happily ever after they were warned, by that wise old witch, the husband's mother, not to take on anyone off the street. They were inscribed in a benefit society, their pet dog was licensed, they were insured against fire, flood damage and theft, and subscribed to the local Neighbourhood Watch, which supplied them with a plaque for their gates lettered YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED over the silhouette of a would-be intruder. He was masked; it could not be said if he was black or white, and therefore proved the property owner was no racist.

It was not possible to insure the house, the swimming pool or the car against riot damage. There were riots, but there were outside the city where people of another colour were quartered. These people were not allowed into the suburb except as reliable housemaids and gardeners, so there was nothing to fear, the husband told the wife. Yet she was afraid that some day such people might come up the street and tear off the plaque YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED and open the gates and stream in Nonsense, my dear, said the husband, there are police and soldiers and tear-gas and guns to keep them away. But to please her — for he loved her very much and buses were being burned, cars stoned, and schoolchildren shot by the police in those quarters out of sight and hearing of the suburb — he had electronically-controlled gates fitted. Anyone who pulled off the sign YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED and tried to open the gates would have to announce his intentions by pressing a button and speaking into a receiver relayed to the house. The little boy was fascinated by the device and used it as a walkie-talkie in cops and robbers play with his small friends.

The riots were suppressed, but there were many burglaries in the suburb and somebody's trusted housemaid was tied up and shut in a cupboard by thieves while she was in charge of her employers' house. The trusted housemaid of the man and wife and little boy was so upset by this misfortune befalling a friend left, as she herself often was, with responsibility for the possessions of the man and his wife and the little boy that she implored her employers to have burglar bars attached to the doors and windows of the house, and an alarm system installed. The wife said, She is right, let us take heed of her advice. So from every window and door in the house where they were living happily ever after they now saw the trees and sky through bars, and when the little boy's pet cat tried to climb in by the fanlight to keep him company in his little bed at night, as it customarily had done, it set off the alarm keening through the house.

David Malouf [1934-], *Remembering Babylon*, 1993

In the intense heat that made everything you looked at warp and glare, a fragment of ti-tree swamp, some bit of the land over there that was forbidden to them, had detached itself from the band of grey that made up the far side of the swamp, and in a shape more like a watery, heat-struck mirage than a thing of substance, elongated and airily indistinct, was bowling, leaping, flying towards them.

A black! That was the boy's first thought. We're being raided by blacks. After so many false alarms it had come.

The two little girls stood spellbound. They had given a gasp, one sharp intake of breath, then forgotten to breathe out. The boy too was struck but had begun to recover. Though he was very pale about the mouth, he did what his manhood required him to do. Holding fast to the stick, he stepped resolutely in front.

But it wasn't a raid, there was just one of them; and the thing, as far as he could make it through the sweat in his eyes and its flamelike flickering, was not even, maybe, human. The stick-like legs, all knobbed at the joints, suggested a wounded waterbird, a brolga, or a human that in the manner of the tales they told one another, all spells and curses, had been changed into a bird, but only halfway, and now, neither one thing nor the other, was hopping and flapping towards them out of a world over there, beyond the no-man's land of the swamp, that was the abode of everything savage and fearsome; and since it lay so far beyond experience, not just their own but their parents' too, of nightmare rumours, superstitions and all that belonged to Absolute Dark.

A bit of blue rag was at its middle from which sleeves hung down. They swung and signalled. But the sticks of arms above its head were also signalling, or beating off flies, or licks of invisible flame. Ah, that was it. It was a scarecrow that had somehow caught the spark of life, got down from its pole, and now, in a raggedy, rough-headed way, was stumbling about over the blazing earth, its leathery face scorched black, but with hair, they saw, as it bore down upon them, as sun-bleached and pale-straw coloured as their own.

Whatever it was, it was the boy's intention to confront it. Very sturdy and purposeful, two paces in front of his cousins, though it might have been a hundred yards in the tremendous isolation he felt, and with a belief in the power of the weapon he held that the knew was impossible and might not endure, he pushed the stick into his shoulder and took his stance.

The creature, almost upon them now and with Flash at its heels, came to a halt, gave a kind of squawk, and leaping up onto the top rail of the fence, hung there, its arms outflung as if preparing for flight. Then the ragged mouth gapped.

'Do not shoot,' it shouted. 'I am a B-b-british object!'

Alice Munro [1931-] "The Bear Came Over the Mountain," 1999

Over a year ago, Grant had started noticing so many little yellow notes stuck up all over the house. That was not entirely new. Fiona had always written things down—the title

of a book she'd heard mentioned on the radio or the jobs she wanted to make sure she got done that day. Even her morning schedule was written down. He found it mystifying and touching in its precision: "7 a.m. yoga. 7:30–7:45 teeth face hair. 7:45–8:15 walk. 8:15 Grant and breakfast."

The new notes were different. Stuck onto the kitchen drawers—Cutlery, Dish-towels, Knives. Couldn't she just open the drawers and see what was inside?

Worse things were coming. She went to town and phoned Grant from a booth to ask him how to drive home. She went for her usual walk across the field into the woods and came home by the fence line—a very long way round. She said that she'd counted on fences always taking you somewhere.

It was hard to figure out. She'd said that about fences as if it were a joke, and she had remembered the phone number without any trouble.

"I don't think it's anything to worry about," she said. "I expect I'm just losing my mind."

He asked if she had been taking sleeping pills.

"If I am I don't remember," she said. Then she said she was sorry to sound so flippant. "I'm sure I haven't been taking anything. Maybe I should be. Maybe vitamins."

Vitamins didn't help. She would stand in doorways trying to figure out where she was going. She forgot to turn on the burner under the vegetables or put water in the coffeemaker. She asked Grant when they'd moved to this house.

"Was it last year or the year before?"

"It was twelve years ago," he said.

"That's shocking."

"She's always been a bit like this," Grant said to the doctor. He tried without success to explain how Fiona's surprise and apologies now seemed somehow like routine courtesy, not quite concealing a private amusement. As if she'd stumbled on some unexpected adventure. Or begun playing a game that she hoped he would catch on to.

"Yes, well," the doctor said. "It might be selective at first. We don't know, do we? Till we see the pattern of the deterioration, we really can't say."

In a while it hardly mattered what label was put on it. Fiona, who no longer went shopping alone, disappeared from the supermarket while Grant had his back turned. A policeman picked her up as she was walking down the middle of the road, blocks away. He asked her name and she answered readily. Then he asked her the name of the Prime Minister.

"If you don't know that, young man, you really shouldn't be in such a responsible job."

He laughed. But then she made the mistake of asking if he'd seen Boris and Natasha. These were the now dead Russian wolfhounds she had adopted many years ago, as a favor to a friend, then devoted herself to for the rest of their lives. Her taking them over might have coincided with the discovery that she was not likely to have children. Something about her tubes being blocked, or twisted—Grant could not remember now. He had always avoided thinking about all that female apparatus. Or it might have been after her mother died. The dogs' long legs and silky hair, their narrow, gentle, intransigent faces made a fine match for her when she took them out for walks. And Grant himself, in those days, landing his first job at the university (his father-in-law's money welcome there in spite of the political taint), might have seemed to some people to have been picked up on another of

Fiona's eccentric whims, and groomed and tended and favored—though, fortunately, he didn't understand this until much later.