

LEN161M1

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**Oral Littérature**

**Explication de textes**

**2026-2027**

# INTRODUCTION

La présente anthologie a été élaborée par l'ensemble des professeurs de littérature du département. Un seul exemplaire vous en sera remis. Il appartient à chaque étudiant d'en prendre soin et d'en connaître tous les textes. L'examen oral de littérature en janvier portera sur l'un des extraits proposés ici. Certains de ces extraits seront étudiés en cours, et ne pourront alors faire l'objet d'une interrogation orale lors de l'examen, afin que vous vous retrouviez tous dans les mêmes conditions de préparation. Au moment des interrogations, il sera considéré que tous les textes de l'anthologie ont été lus et préparés : connaissance du lexique, de l'auteur, du type d'œuvre et de son genre littéraire, voire de certains éléments de contexte. Une bonne préparation de l'épreuve suppose donc un entraînement régulier en cours, une maîtrise de la technique du commentaire de texte, et la lecture éclairée des extraits de l'anthologie. Il est ainsi conseillé de lire les textes avec un dictionnaire, et de prendre des notes (mise en fiches) à partir d'anthologies, de manuels, et des cours de littérature que vous avez suivis jusqu'à présent (CM et TD). Les titres suivants sont des exemples d'ouvrages qui peuvent vous être utiles :

- **Histoire littéraire**

*The Norton Anthology of British Literature* (vols. 1 and 2).

*The Norton Anthology of American Literature*.

Françoise Grellet, *Literature in English*, Hachette, 2015.

Marion Wyne-Davies, ed., *The Bloomsbury Guide to English Literature*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1989.

- **Terminologie de l'analyse littéraire**

Françoise Grellet, *A Handbook of Literary Terms. Introduction au vocabulaire littéraire anglais*. Hachette Supérieur, 1996, 2009.

Mireille Quivy, *Glossaire bilingue des termes littéraires, français-anglais*, Ellipses.

J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1992

- **Méthodologie de l'analyse littéraire**

Claudine Verley, *Lectures critiques en anglais. A Guide to the Critical Reading of Fiction in English*. Ophrys, 1998.

Hélène, Auffret-Boucé, et al. *Figures libres, figures imposées : l'explication de texte en anglais (fiction)*, Hachette Supérieur, 1993.

Martin Stephen, *English Literature, A student Guide*, London: Longman, 1986.

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# BRITISH LITERATURE

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## William Shakespeare, *Richard III* (1591-92), Act I, scene 1

---

London. A street.

*Enter GLOUCESTER, solus*

**GLOUCESTER.** Now is the winter of our discontent  
Made glorious summer by this sun of York<sup>1</sup>;  
And all the clouds that lour'd<sup>2</sup> upon our house  
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.  
Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths;  
Our bruised arms hung up for monuments;  
Our stern alarums<sup>3</sup> changed to merry meetings,  
Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.  
Grim-visaged war hath smooth'd his wrinkled front;  
And now, instead of mounting barded<sup>4</sup> steeds<sup>5</sup>  
To fright the souls of fearful adversaries,  
He capers<sup>6</sup> nimbly in a lady's chamber  
To the lascivious pleasing of a lute.  
But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,  
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass;  
I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty  
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;  
I, that am curtail'd<sup>7</sup> of this fair proportion,  
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,  
Deformed, unfinish'd, sent before my time  
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,  
And that so lamely and unfashionable  
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them;  
Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace<sup>8</sup>,  
Have no delight to pass away the time,  
Unless to spy my shadow in the sun  
And descant<sup>9</sup> on mine own deformity:  
And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,  
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,

---

<sup>1</sup> **Sun of York:** A blazing sun, adopted by Edward IV in memory of the three suns which appeared the day before the battle of Mortimer's Cross, fought in 1461.

<sup>2</sup> **Lour'd:** Threatened.

<sup>3</sup> **Alarums:** calls to arms, as by beat of drum, or trumpet call. Italian *all'arme*, to arms! from Lat. *ad ilia arma*, to those arms! to your arms!

<sup>4</sup> **Barbed:** armed and harnessed.

<sup>5</sup> **Steeds:** horses.

<sup>6</sup> **He,** war, personified as a soldier. **Capers,** dances or leaps like a goat. Lat. *capra*, a she-goat.

<sup>7</sup> **Curtail'd:** deprived of.

<sup>8</sup> **Piping time:** The tabor and the pipe were emblems of peace, as opposed to the drum and the fife, emblems of war.

<sup>9</sup> **Descant:** to comment.

I am determined to prove a villain  
 And hate the idle pleasures of these days.  
 Plots have I laid, inductions<sup>10</sup> dangerous,  
 By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams,  
 To set my brother Clarence and the king  
 In deadly hate the one against the other:  
 And if King Edward be as true and just  
 As I am subtle, false and treacherous,  
 This day should Clarence closely be mew'd up<sup>11</sup>,  
 About a prophecy, which says that 'G'  
 Of Edward's heirs the murderer shall be.  
 Dive, thoughts, down to my soul: here  
 Clarence comes.

---

## William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (1599-1601) Act II, scene 2

---

*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*

**HAMLET** Ay so, God bye to you. Now I am alone.

O what a rogue and peasant slave am I!  
 Is it not monstrous that this player here,  
 But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,  
 Could force his soul so to his own conceit\*  
 That from her working all his visage wann'd\*,  
 Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect\*,  
 A broken voice, and his whole function suiting  
 With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing?  
 For Hecuba!

*\*imagination*

*\*face paled*

*\*in his look*

What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,  
 That he should weep for her? What would he do,  
 Had he the motive and the cue for passion  
 That I have? He would drown the stage with tears,  
 And cleave\* the general ear with horrid speech, \*split  
 Make mad the guilty and appal the free,  
 Confound\* the ignorant, and amaze indeed  
 The very faculties of eyes and ears. Yet I,  
 A dull and muddy-mettled\* rascal, peak\*  
 Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,  
 And can say nothing – no, not for a king,  
 Upon whose property and most dear life  
 A damned defeat was made. Am I a coward?  
 Who calls me villain, breaks my pate\* across,  
 Plucks off my beard and blows it in my face,  
 Tweaks me by th' nose, gives me the lie i' th' throat\*  
 As deep as to the lungs? Who does me this?

*\*confuse*

*\*cowardly and sluggish \*mope*

*\*skull*

*\*deep down*

---

<sup>10</sup> **Inductions:** beginnings

<sup>11</sup> **Mew'd up:** shut up, imprisoned.

Ha, 'swounds\*, I should take it, for it cannot be \**God's wounds (an oath)*  
 But I am pigeon-livered, and lack gall\* \**courage*  
 To make oppression bitter, or ere this  
 I should ha' fatt'd all the region kites\* \**scavenging birds*  
 With this slave's offal\*. Bloody, bawdy villain! \**entrails*  
 Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!  
 Oh, vengeance!  
 Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,  
 That I, the son of a dear murder'd\*, \**a murdered father*  
 Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,  
 Must like a whore unpack my heart with words,  
 And fall a-cursing, like a very drab,  
 A scullion\*! \**drab/scullion= low-ranking servant (or prostitute)*  
 Fie upon't, foh! About, my brains. Hum, I have heard  
 That guilty creatures sitting at a play  
 Have by the very cunning of the scene  
 Been struck so to the soul, that presently\* \**immediately*  
 They have proclaimed their malefactions\*; \**evil deeds*  
 For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak  
 With most miraculous organ\*. I'll have these players \**voice*  
 Play something like the murder of my father  
 Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks,  
 I'll tent\* him to the quick. If a do blench\*, \**probe* \**if he flinches*  
 I know my course. The spirit that I have seen  
 May be the devil – and the devil hath power  
 T'assume a pleasing shape. Yea, and perhaps,  
 Out of my weakness and my melancholy,  
 As he is very potent with such spirits,  
 Abuses me to damn me. I'll have grounds  
 More relative\* than this. The play's the thing \**relevant, conclusive*  
 Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.  
*Exit*

---

## William Shakespeare, Sonnet 5 (1609)

---

Those hours, that with gentle work did frame  
 The lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell,  
 Will play the tyrants to the very same  
 And that unfair which fairly doth excel;  
 For never-resting time leads summer on  
 To hideous winter, and confounds him there;  
 Sap checked with frost, and lusty leaves quite gone,  
 Beauty o'er-snowed and bareness every where:  
 Then were not summer's distillation left,  
 A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass,  
 Beauty's effect with beauty were bereft,  
 Nor it, nor no remembrance what it was:  
 But flowers distill'd, though they with winter meet,  
 Leese but their show; their substance still lives sweet.

---

## William Shakespeare, Sonnet 60 (1609)

---

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,  
So do our minutes hasten to their end;  
Each changing place with that which goes before,  
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.  
Nativity, once in the main of light,  
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crowned,  
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,  
And Time that gave doth now his gift confound.  
Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth  
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow,  
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,  
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow:  
And yet to times in hope, my verse shall stand  
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.

---

## Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* (c.1592) Act I, Scene III

---

*Mephistophilis.* Now, Faustus, what would'st thou have me to do?

*Faust.* I charge thee wait upon me whilst I live,  
To do whatever Faustus shall command,

Be it to make the moon drop from her sphere, 35  
Or the ocean to overwhelm the world.

*Meph.* I am a servant to great Lucifer,  
And may not follow thee without his leave  
No more than he commands must we perform.

*Faust.* Did not he charge thee to appear to me? 40

*Meph.* No, I came hither of mine own accord.

*Faust.* Did not my conjuring speeches raise thee? Speak.

*Meph.* That was the cause, but yet *per accidens*;  
For when we hear one rack the name of God,  
Abjure the Scriptures and his Saviour Christ, 45  
We fly in hope to get his glorious soul;

Nor will we come, unless he use such means  
Whereby he is in danger to be damn'd:  
Therefore the shortest cut for conjuring  
Is stoutly to abjure the Trinity, 50  
And pray devoutly to the Prince of Hell.

*Faust.* So Faustus hath  
Already done; and holds this principle,  
There is no chief but only Belzebub,  
To whom Faustus doth dedicate himself. 55  
This word "damnation" terrifies not him,  
For he confounds hell in Elysium;  
His ghost be with the old philosophers!  
But, leaving these vain trifles of men's souls,  
Tell me what is that Lucifer thy lord? 60

*Meph.* Arch-regent and commander of all spirits.

*Faust.* Was not that Lucifer an angel once?

*Meph.* Yes, Faustus, and most dearly lov'd of God.

*Faust.* How comes it then that he is Prince of devils?

*Meph.* O, by aspiring pride and insolence; 65  
For which God threw him from the face of Heaven.

*Faust.* And what are you that you live with Lucifer?

*Meph.* Unhappy spirits that fell with Lucifer,  
Conspir'd against our God with Lucifer,  
And are for ever damn'd with Lucifer. 70

*Faust.* Where are you damn'd?

*Meph.* In hell.

*Faust.* How comes it then that thou art out of hell?

*Meph.* Why this is hell, nor am I out of it.  
Think'st thou that I who saw the face of God, 75

And tasted the eternal joys of Heaven,  
Am not tormented with ten thousand hells,  
In being depriv'd of everlasting bliss?  
O Faustus! leave these frivolous demands,  
Which strike a terror to my fainting soul. 80

*Faust.* What, is great Mephistophilis so passionate  
For being depriv'd of the joys of Heaven?  
Learn thou of Faustus manly fortitude,  
And scorn those joys thou never shalt possess.  
Go bear these tidings to great Lucifer: 85

Seeing Faustus hath incurr'd eternal death  
By desperate thoughts against Jove's deity,  
Say he surrenders up to him his soul,  
So he will spare him four and twenty years,  
Letting him live in all voluptuousness; 90

Having thee ever to attend on me;  
To give me whatsoever I shall ask,  
To tell me whatsoever I demand,  
To slay mine enemies, and aid my friends,  
And always be obedient to my will. 95

Go and return to mighty Lucifer,  
And meet me in my study at midnight,  
And then resolve me of thy master's mind.

*Meph.* I will, Faustus. *Exit.*

---

**John Donne, “The Flea” (1633)**

---

Mark but this flea, and mark in this,  
How little that which thou deniest me is;  
It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,  
And in this flea our two bloods mingled be;  
Thou know’st that this cannot be said  
A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead,  
Yet this enjoys before it woo,  
And pampered swells with one blood made of two,  
And this, alas, is more than we would do.

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,  
Where we almost, nay more than married are.  
This flea is you and I, and this  
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;  
Though parents grudge, and you, w’are met,  
And cloistered in these living walls of jet.  
Though use make you apt to kill me,  
Let not to that, self-murder added be,  
And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.

Cruel and sudden, hast thou since  
Purpled thy nail, in blood of innocence?  
Wherein could this flea guilty be,  
Except in that drop which it sucked from thee?  
Yet thou triumph’st, and say’st that thou  
Find’st not thy self, nor me the weaker now;  
’Tis true; then learn how false, fears be:  
Just so much honor, when thou yield’st to me,  
Will waste, as this flea’s death took life from thee.

---

**John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 9 (1667)**

---

So spake the Enemy of Mankind, enclosed

In serpent, inmate bad, and toward Eve

Addressed his way—not with indented wave,

4

95

Prone on the ground, as since, but on his rear,  
 Circular base of rising folds, that towered  
 Fold above fold, a surging maze; his head  
 Crested aloft, and carbuncle his eyes; 5  
 With burnished neck of verdant gold, erect 00  
 Amidst his circling spires, that on the grass  
 Floated redundant. Pleasing was his shape  
 And lovely; never since the serpent kind  
 Lovelier—not those that in Illyria changed 5  
 Hermione and Cadmus, or the God 05  
 In Epidaurus; nor to which transformed  
 Ammonian Jove, or Capitoline, was seen,  
 He with Olympias, this with her who bore  
 Scipio, the height of Rome. With tract oblique 5  
 At first, as one who sought access but feared 10  
 To interrupt, sidelong he works his way.  
 As when a ship, by skillful steersman wrought  
 Nigh river's mouth or foreland, where the wind  
 Veers oft, as oft so steers, and shifts her sail, 5  
 So varied he, and of his tortuous train 15  
 Curled many a wanton wreath in sight of Eve,  
 To lure her eye. She, busied, heard the sound  
 Of rustling leaves, but minded not, as used  
 To such disport before her through the field 5  
 From every beast, more duteous at her call 20  
 Than at Circean call the herd disguised.

He, bolder now, uncalled before her stood,  
 But as in gaze admiring. Oft he bowed  
 His turret crest and sleek enamelled neck, 5  
 Fawning, and licked the ground whereon she 25  
 trod.  
 His gentle dumb expression turned at length  
 The eye of Eve to mark his play; he, glad  
 Of her attention gained, with serpent-tongue  
 Organic, or impulse of vocal air, 5  
 His fraudulent temptation thus began:— 30  
 “Wonder not, sovereign mistress (if perhaps  
 Thou canst who art sole wonder), much less arm  
 Thy looks, the heaven of mildness, with disdain,  
 Displeased that I approach thee thus, and gaze 5  
 Insatiate, I thus single, nor have feared 35  
 Thy awful brow, more awful thus retired.  
 Fairest resemblance of thy Maker fair,  
 Thee all things living gaze on, all things thine  
 By gift, and thy celestial beauty adore, 5  
 With ravishment beheld—there best beheld 40  
 Where universally admired. ~~But here,~~  
~~In this enclosure wild, these beasts among,~~

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## John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678)

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Then I saw in my dream, that when they were got out of the wilderness, they presently saw a town before them, and the name of that town is Vanity; and at the town there is a fair kept, called Vanity Fair<sup>12</sup>. It is kept all the year long. It beareth the name of Vanity Fair, because the town where it is kept is lighter than vanity, Psa. 62:9; and also because all that is there sold, or that cometh thither, is vanity; as is the saying of the wise, "All that cometh is vanity." Eccl. 11:8; see also 1:2-14; 2:11-17; Isa. 40:17.

This fair is no new-erected business but a thing of ancient standing. I will show you the original of it.

Almost five thousand years ago there were pilgrims walking to the Celestial City, as these two honest persons are: and Beelzebub, Apollyon, and Legion, with their companions, perceiving by the path that the pilgrims made, that their way to the city lay through this town of Vanity, they contrived here to set up a fair; a fair wherein should be sold all sorts of vanity, and that it should last all the year long. Therefore, at this fair are all such merchandise sold as houses, lands, trades, places, honors, preferments, titles, countries, kingdoms, lusts, pleasures; and delights of all sorts, as harlots, wives, husbands, children, masters, servants, lives, blood, bodies, souls, silver, gold, pearls, precious stones, and what not.

And moreover, at this fair there is at all times to be seen jugglings, cheats, games, plays, fools, apes, knaves, and rogues, and that of every kind.

Here are to be seen, too, and that for nothing, thefts, murders, adulteries, false-swearers, and that of a blood-red color.

And, as in other fairs of less moment, there are the several rows and streets<sup>13</sup> under their proper names, where such and such wares are vended; so here, likewise, you have the proper places, rows, streets, (namely, countries and kingdoms,) where the wares of this fair are soonest to be found. Here is the Britain Row, the French Row, the Italian Row, the Spanish Row, the German Row, where several sorts of vanities are to be sold. But, as in other fairs, some one commodity is as the chief of all the fair; so the ware of Rome and her merchandise is greatly promoted in this fair; only our English nation, with some others, have taken a dislike thereat.

Now, as I said, the way to the Celestial City lies just through this town, where this lusty fair is kept; and he that will go to the city, and yet not go through this town, "must needs go out of the world." 1 Cor. 4:10. The Prince of princes himself, when here, went through this town to his own country, and that upon a fair-day too; yea, and, as I think, it was Beelzebub, the chief lord of this fair, that invited him to buy of his vanities, yea, would have made him lord of the fair, would he but have done him reverence as he went through the town. Yea, because he was such a person of honor, Beelzebub had him from street to street, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a little time, that he might, if possible, allure that blessed One to cheapen and buy some of his vanities; but he had no mind to the merchandise, and therefore left the town, without laying out so much as one farthing upon these vanities. Matt. 4:8,9; Luke 4:5-7. This fair, therefore, is an ancient thing, of long standing, and a very great fair.

Now, these pilgrims, as I said, must needs go through this fair. Well, so they did; but behold,

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<sup>12</sup> *Vanity-Fair* - For this allegory of the world's pleasures Bunyan probably draws on his knowledge of the great annual fair held in Stourbridge near Cambridge; it had its own "Court of Piepowder" (*Pieds pouldreux*, dusty feet) to try offences committed in the fair. "Here is a court of justice always open from morning till night, where the mayor of Cambridge, or his deputy, sits as judge" (Nichols, *Bibliothographia Topographia Britannica*, 1790, v. 82).

<sup>13</sup> *Several rows and streets* - Again, the naming of rows of stalls after countries might be borrowed from Stourbridge Fair, where different groups of foreign merchants were represented.

even as they entered into the fair, all the people in the fair were moved; and the town itself, as it were, in a hubbub about them, and that for several reasons: for,

First, The Pilgrims were clothed with such kind of raiment as was diverse from the raiment of any that traded in that fair. The people, therefore, of the fair made a great gazing upon them: some said they were fools; 1 Cor. 4:9,10; some, they were bedlams<sup>14</sup>; and some, they were outlandish men.

Secondly, And as they wondered at their apparel, so they did likewise at their speech; for few could understand what they said. They naturally spoke the language of Canaan<sup>15</sup>; but they that kept the fair were the men of this world: so that from one end of the fair to the other, they seemed barbarians each to the other. 1 Cor. 2:7,8.

Thirdly, But that which did not a little amuse the merchandisers was, that these pilgrims set very light by all their wares. They cared not so much as to look upon them; and if they called upon them to buy, they would put their fingers in their ears, and cry, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity," Psa. 119:37, and look upward, signifying that their trade and traffic was in heaven. Phil. 3: 20,21.

One chanced, mockingly, beholding the carriage of the men, to say unto them, "What will ye buy?" But they, looking gravely upon him, said, "We buy the truth." Prov. 23:23. At that there was an occasion taken to despise the men the more; some mocking, some taunting, some speaking reproachfully, and some calling upon others to smite them. At last, things came to an hubbub and great stir in the fair, insomuch that all order was confounded. Now was word presently brought to the great one of the fair, who quickly came down, and deputed some of his most trusty friends to take those men into examination about whom the fair was almost overturned.

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### Andrew Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress" (1681)

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Had we but world enough, and time,  
This coyness, Lady, were no crime.  
We would sit down and think which way  
To walk and pass our long love's day.  
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side  
Shouldst rubies find: I by the tide  
Of Humber would complain. I would  
Love you ten years before the Flood,  
And you should, if you please, refuse  
Till the conversion of the Jews.  
My vegetable love should grow  
Vaster than empires, and more slow;  
An hundred years should go to praise  
Thine eyes and on thy forehead gaze;  
Two hundred to adore each breast;  
But thirty thousand to the rest;  
An age at least to every part,  
And the last age should show your heart;  
For, Lady, you deserve this state,  
Nor would I love at lower rate.

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<sup>14</sup> *Bedlams* - Lunatics : from the hospital of St Mary of Bethlehem, used as an asylum.

<sup>15</sup> *The language of Canaan* – The special features of Puritan speech were often ridiculed, especially by the writers of comedy (e.g. Ben Jonson in *Bartholomew Fair*).

But at my back I always hear  
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;  
And yonder all before us lie  
Deserts of vast eternity.  
Thy beauty shall no more be found,  
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound  
My echoing song: then worms shall try  
That long preserved virginity,  
And your quaint honour turn to dust,  
And into ashes all my lust:  
The grave's a fine and private place,  
But none, I think, do there embrace.

Now therefore, while the youthful hue  
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,  
And while thy willing soul transpires  
At every pore with instant fires,  
Now let us sport us while we may,  
And now, like amorous birds of prey,  
Rather at once our time devour  
Than languish in his slow-chapt power.  
Let us roll all our strength and all  
Our sweetness up into one ball,  
And tear our pleasures with rough strife  
Thorough the iron gates of life:  
Thus, though we cannot make our sun  
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

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**William Congreve, *The Way of the World* (1699)**

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MRS. MILLAMANT, MIRABELL.

MILLAMANT.

[...] Ah, I'll never marry, unless I am first made sure of my will and pleasure.

MIRABELL.

Would you have 'em both before marriage? Or will you be contented with the first now, and stay for the other till after grace?

MILLAMANT.

Ah, don't be impertinent. My dear liberty, shall I leave thee? My faithful solitude, my darling contemplation, must I bid you then adieu? Ay, adieu. My morning thoughts, agreeable wakings, indolent slumbers, all ye *douceurs*, ye *sommeils du matin*, adieu. I can't do't, 'tis more than impossible—positively, Mirabell, I'll lie a-bed in a morning as long as I please.

MIRABELL.

Then I'll get up in a morning as early as I please.

MILLAMANT.

Ah! Idle creature, get up when you will. And d'ye hear, I won't be called names after I'm married; positively I won't be called names.

MIRABELL.

Names?

MILLAMANT.

Ay, as wife, spouse, my dear, joy, jewel, love, sweetheart, and the rest of that nauseous cant, in which men and their wives are so fulsomely familiar—I shall never bear that. Good Mirabell, don't let us be familiar or fond, nor kiss before folks, like my Lady Fadler and Sir Francis; nor go to Hyde Park together the first Sunday in a new chariot, to provoke eyes and whispers, and then never be seen there together again, as if we were proud of one another the first week, and ashamed of one another ever after. Let us never visit together, nor go to a play together, but let us be very strange and well-bred. Let us be as strange as if we had been married a great while, and as well-bred as if we were not married at all.

MIRABELL.

Have you any more conditions to offer? Hitherto your demands are pretty reasonable.

MILLAMANT.

Trifles; as liberty to pay and receive visits to and from whom I please; to write and receive letters, without interrogatories or wry faces on your part; to wear what I please, and choose conversation with regard only to my own taste; to have no obligation upon me to converse with wits that I don't like, because they are your acquaintance, or to be intimate with fools, because they may be your relations. Come to dinner when I please, dine in my dressing-room when I'm out of humour, without giving a reason. To have my closet inviolate; to be sole empress of my tea-table, which you must never presume to approach without first asking leave. And lastly, wherever I am, you shall always knock at the door before you come in. These articles subscribed, if I continue to endure you a little longer, I may by degrees dwindle into a wife.

MIRABELL.

Your bill of fare is something advanced in this latter account. Well, have I liberty to offer conditions:—that when you are dwindled into a wife, I may not be beyond measure enlarged into a husband?

MILLAMANT.

You have free leave: propose your utmost, speak and spare not.

MIRABELL.

I thank you. *Imprimis*, then, I covenant that your acquaintance be general; that you admit no sworn confidant or intimate of your own sex; no she-friend to screen her affairs under your countenance, and tempt you to make trial of a mutual secrecy. No decoy-duck to wheedle you a *fop-scrambling* to the play

in a mask, then bring you home in a pretended fright, when you think you shall be found out, and rail at me for missing the play, and disappointing the frolic which you had to pick me up and prove my constancy.

MILLAMANT.

Detestable *imprimis*! I go to the play in a mask!

MIRABELL.

*Item*, I article, that you continue to like your own face as long as I shall, and while it passes current with me, that you endeavour not to new-coin it. To which end, together with all vizards for the day, I prohibit all masks for the night, made of oiled skins and I know not what—hog's bones, hare's gall, pig water, and the marrow of a roasted cat. In short, I forbid all commerce with the gentlewomen in what-d'ye-call-it court. *Item*, I shut my doors against all bawds with baskets, and pennyworths of muslin, china, fans, atlases, etc. *Item*, when you shall be breeding—

MILLAMANT.

Ah, name it not!

MIRABELL.

Which may be presumed, with a blessing on our endeavours—

MILLAMANT.

Odious endeavours!

MIRABELL.

I denounce against all strait lacing, squeezing for a shape, till you mould my boy's head like a sugar-loaf, and instead of a man-child, make me father to a crooked billet. Lastly, to the dominion of the tea-table I submit; but with proviso, that you exceed not in your province, but restrain yourself to native and simple tea-table drinks, as tea, chocolate, and coffee. As likewise to genuine and authorised tea-table talk, such as mending of fashions, spoiling reputations, railing at absent friends, and so forth. But that on no account you encroach upon the men's prerogative, and presume to drink healths, or toast fellows; for prevention of which, I banish all foreign forces, all auxiliaries to the tea-table, as orange-brandy, all aniseed, cinnamon, citron, and Barbadoes waters, together with ratafia and the most noble spirit of claret. But for cowslip-wine, poppy-water, and all dormitives, those I allow. These provisos admitted, in other things I may prove a tractable and complying husband.

MILLAMANT.

Oh, horrid provisos! Filthy strong waters! I toast fellows, odious men! I hate your odious provisos.

MIRABELL.

Then we're agreed. Shall I kiss your hand upon the contract? And here comes one to be a witness to the sealing of the deed.

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**Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)**

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It happened one day, about noon, going towards my boat, I was exceedingly surprised with the print of a man's naked foot on the shore, which was very plain to be seen on the sand. I stood like one thunderstruck, or as if I had seen an apparition. I listened, I looked round me, but I could hear nothing, nor see anything; I went up to a rising ground to look farther; I went up the shore and down the shore, but it was all one; I could see no other impression but that one. I went to it again to see if there were any more, and to observe if it might not be my fancy; but there was no room for that, for there was exactly the print of a foot—toes, heel, and every part of a foot. How it came thither I knew not, nor could I in the least imagine; but after innumerable fluttering thoughts, like a man perfectly confused and out of myself, I came home to my fortification, not feeling, as we say, the ground I went on, but terrified to the last degree, looking behind me at every two or three steps, mistaking every bush and tree, and fancying every stump at a distance to be a man. Nor is it possible to describe how many various shapes my affrighted imagination represented things to me in, how many wild ideas were found every moment in my fancy, and what strange, unaccountable whimsies came into my thoughts by the way.

When I came to my castle (for so I think I called it ever after this), I fled into it like one pursued. Whether I went over by the ladder, as first contrived, or went in at the hole in the rock, which I had called a door, I cannot remember; no, nor could I remember the next morning, for never frightened hare fled to cover, or fox to earth, with more terror of mind than I to this retreat.

I slept none that night; the farther I was from the occasion of my fright, the greater my apprehensions were, which is something contrary to the nature of such things, and especially to the usual practice of all creatures in fear; but I was so embarrassed with my own frightful ideas of the thing, that I formed nothing but dismal imaginations to myself, even though I was now a great way off. Sometimes I fancied it must be the devil, and reason joined in with me in this supposition, for how should any other thing in human shape come into the place? Where was the vessel that brought them? What marks were there of any other footstep? And how was it possible a man should come there? But then, to think that Satan should take human shape upon him in such a place, where there could be no manner of occasion for it, but to leave the print of his foot behind him, and that even for no purpose too, for he could not be sure I should see it—this was an amusement the other way. I considered that the devil might have found out abundance of other ways to have terrified me than this of the single print of a foot; that as I lived quite on the other side of the island, he would never have been so simple as to leave a mark in a place where it was ten thousand to one whether I should ever see it or not, and in the sand too, which the first surge of the sea, upon a high wind, would have defaced entirely. All this seemed inconsistent with the thing itself and with all the notions we usually entertain of the subtlety of the devil.

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**Samuel Richardson, *Pamela; or Virtue Rewarded* (1740)**

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LETTER I

DEAR FATHER AND MOTHER,

I have great trouble, and some comfort, to acquaint you with. The trouble is, that my good lady died of the illness I mentioned to you, and left us all much grieved for the loss of her; for she was a dear good lady, and kind to all us her servants. Much I feared, that as I was taken by her ladyship to

wait upon her person, I should be quite destitute again, and forced to return to you and my poor mother, who have enough to do to maintain yourselves; and, as my lady's goodness had put me to write and cast accounts, and made me a little expert at my needle, and otherwise qualified above my degree, it was not every family that could have found a place that your poor Pamela was fit for: but God, whose graciousness to us we have so often experienced at a pinch, put it into my good lady's heart, on her death-bed, just an hour before she expired, to recommend to my young master all her servants, one by one; and when it came to my turn to be recommended, (for I was sobbing and crying at her pillow) she could only say, My dear son!—and so broke off a little; and then recovering—Remember my poor Pamela—And these were some of her last words! O how my eyes run—Don't wonder to see the paper so blotted.

Well, but God's will must be done!—And so comes the comfort, that I shall not be obliged to return back to be a clog upon my dear parents! For my master said, I will take care of you all, my good maidens; and for you, Pamela, (and took me by the hand; yes, he took my hand before them all,) for my dear mother's sake, I will be a friend to you, and you shall take care of my linen. God bless him! and pray with me, my dear father and mother, for a blessing upon him, for he has given mourning and a year's wages to all my lady's servants; and I having no wages as yet, my lady having said she should do for me as I deserved, ordered the housekeeper to give me mourning with the rest; and gave me with his own hand four golden guineas, and some silver, which were in my old lady's pocket when she died; and said, if I was a good girl, and faithful and diligent, he would be a friend to me, for his mother's sake. And so I send you these four guineas for your comfort; for Providence will not let me want: And so you may pay some old debt with part, and keep the other part to comfort you both. If I get more, I am sure it is my duty, and it shall be my care, to love and cherish you both; for you have loved and cherished me, when I could do nothing for myself. I send them by John, our footman, who goes your way: but he does not know what he carries; because I seal them up in one of the little pill-boxes, which my lady had, wrapt close in paper, that they mayn't chink; and be sure don't open it before him.

I know, dear father and mother, I must give you both grief and pleasure; and so I will only say, Pray for your Pamela; who will ever be

Your most dutiful DAUGHTER.

I have been scared out of my senses; for just now, as I was folding up this letter in my late lady's dressing-room, in comes my young master! Good sirs! how was I frightened! I went to hide the letter in my bosom; and he, seeing me tremble, said, smiling, To whom have you been writing, Pamela?—I said, in my confusion, Pray your honour forgive me!—Only to my father and mother. He said, Well then, let me see how you are come on in your writing! O how ashamed I was!—He took it, without saying more, and read it quite through, and then gave it me again;—and I said, Pray your honour forgive me!—Yet I know not for what: for he was always dutiful to his parents; and why should he be angry that I was so to mine? And indeed he was not angry; for he took me by the hand, and said, You are a good girl, Pamela, to be kind to your aged father and mother. I am not angry with you for writing such innocent matters as these: though you ought to be wary what tales you send out of a family.—Be faithful and diligent; and do as you should do, and I like you the better for this. And then he said, Why, Pamela, you write a very pretty hand, and spell tolerably too. I see my good mother's care in your learning has not been thrown away upon you. She used to say you loved reading; you may look into any of her books, to improve yourself, so you take care of them. To be sure I did nothing but courtesy and cry, and was all in confusion, at his goodness. Indeed he is the best of gentlemen, I think! But I am making another long letter: So will only add to it, that I shall ever be Your dutiful daughter, PAMELA ANDREWS.

effects had the spotless example of the amiable Pamela, and the excellent sermons of Mr Adams, wrought upon him.

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## Thomas Gray, "Elegy in a Country Churchyard" (1751)

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The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,  
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,  
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimm'ring landscape on the sight,  
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,  
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,  
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r  
The moping owl does to the moon complain  
Of such, as wand'ring near her secret bow'r,  
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,  
Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,  
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,  
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,  
The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,  
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,  
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,  
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:  
No children run to lisp their sire's return,  
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

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## Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1759)

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Imagine to yourself a little squat, uncourtly figure of a Doctor Slop, of about four feet and a half perpendicular height, with a breadth of back, and a sesquipedality of belly, which might have done honour to a serjeant in the horse-guards.

Such were the out-lines of Dr. Slop's figure, which—if you have read Hogarth's analysis of beauty, and if you have not, I wish you would;—you must know, may as certainly be caricatured, and conveyed to the mind by three strokes as three hundred.

Imagine such a one,—for such, I say, were the outlines of Dr. Slop's figure, coming slowly along, foot by foot, waddling thro' the dirt upon the vertebrae of a little diminutive pony, of a pretty colour—but of strength,—alack!—scarce able to have made an amble of it, under such a fardel, had the roads been in an ambling condition.—They were not.—Imagine to yourself, Obadiah mounted upon a strong monster of a coach-horse, pricked into a full gallop, and making all practicable speed

the adverse way.

Pray, Sir, let me interest you a moment in this description.

Had Dr. Slop beheld Obadiah a mile off, posting in a narrow lane directly towards him, at that monstrous rate,—splashing and plunging like a devil thro' thick and thin, as he approached, would not such a phaenomenon, with such a vortex of mud and water moving along with it, round its axis,—have been a subject of juster apprehension to Dr. Slop in his situation, than the worst of Whiston's comets?—To say nothing of the Nucleus; that is, of Obadiah and the coach-horse.—In my idea, the vortex alone of 'em was enough to have involved and carried, if not the doctor, at least the doctor's pony, quite away with it. What then do you think must the terror and hydrophobia of Dr. Slop have been, when you read (which you are just going to do) that he was advancing thus warily along towards Shandy-Hall, and had approached to within sixty yards of it, and within five yards of a sudden turn, made by an acute angle of the garden-wall,—and in the dirtiest part of a dirty lane,—when Obadiah and his coach-horse turned the corner, rapid, furious,—pop,—full upon him!—Nothing, I think, in nature, can be supposed more terrible than such a rencounter,—so imprompt! so ill prepared to stand the shock of it as Dr. Slop was.

What could Dr. Slop do?—he crossed himself + —Pugh!—but the doctor, Sir, was a Papist.—No matter; he had better have kept hold of the pummel.—He had so;—nay, as it happened, he had better have done nothing at all; for in crossing himself he let go his whip,—and in attempting to save his whip betwixt his knee and his saddle's skirt, as it slipped, he lost his stirrup,—in losing which he lost his seat;—and in the multitude of all these losses (which, by the bye, shews what little advantage there is in crossing) the unfortunate doctor lost his presence of mind. So that without waiting for Obadiah's onset, he left his pony to its destiny, tumbling off it diagonally, something in the stile and manner of a pack of wool, and without any other consequence from the fall, save that of being left (as it would have been) with the broadest part of him sunk about twelve inches deep in the mire.

Obadiah pull'd off his cap twice to Dr. Slop;—once as he was falling,—and then again when he saw him seated.—Ill-timed complaisance;—had not the fellow better have stopped his horse, and got off and help'd him?—Sir, he did all that his situation would allow;—but the Momentum of the coach-horse was so great, that Obadiah could not do it all at once; he rode in a circle three times round Dr. Slop, before he could fully accomplish it any how;—and at the last, when he did stop his beast, 'twas done with such an explosion of mud, that Obadiah had better have been a league off. In short, never was a Dr. Slop so beluted, and so transubstantiated, since that affair came into fashion.

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### R.B. Sheridan, *The School for Scandal* (1777)

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Enter MRS. CANDOUR

MRS. CANDOUR. My dear Lady Sneerwell how have you been this Century? I have never seen you tho' I have heard of you very often.—Mr. Surface—the World says scandalous things of you—but indeed it is no matter what the world says, for I think one hears nothing else but scandal.

SURFACE. Just so, indeed, Ma'am.

MRS. CANDOUR. Ah Maria Child—what ! is the whole affair off between you and Charles? His extravagance; I presume—The Town talks of nothing else——

MARIA. I am very sorry, Ma'am, the Town has so little to do.

MRS. CANDOUR. True, true, Child; but there's no stopping people's Tongues. I own I was hurt to hear it—as I indeed was to learn from the same quarter that your guardian, Sir Peter, and Lady Teazle have not agreed lately so well as could be wish'd.

MARIA. 'Tis strangely impertinent for people to busy themselves so.

MRS. CANDOUR. Very true, Child; but what's to be done? People will talk—there's no

preventing it.—why it was but yesterday I was told that Miss Gadabout had eloped with Sir Filagree Flirt. But, Lord! there is no minding what one hears; tho' to be sure I had this from very good authority.

MARIA. Such reports are highly scandalous.

MRS. CANDOUR. So they are Child—shameful! shameful! but the world is so censorious no character escapes. Lord, now! who would have suspected your friend, Miss Prim, of an indiscretion Yet such is the ill-nature of people, that they say her uncle stopped her last week just as she was stepping into a Postchaise with her Dancing-master.

MARIA. I'll answer for't there are no grounds for the Report.

MRS. CANDOUR. Oh, no foundation in the world I dare swear; no more probably than for the story circulated last month, of Mrs. Festino's affair with Colonel Cassino—tho' to be sure that matter was never rightly clear'd up.

SURFACE. The license of invention some people take is monstrous indeed.

MARIA. 'Tis so but in my opinion, those who report such things are equally culpable.

MRS. CANDOUR. To be sure they are; Tale Bearers are as bad as the Tale makers—'tis an old observation and a very true one—but what's to be done as I said before—how will you prevent People from talking—to-day, Mrs. Clackitt assured me, Mr. and Mrs. Honeymoon were at last become mere man and wife—like the rest of their acquaintance—she likewise hinted that a certain widow in the next street had got rid of her Dropsy and recovered her shape in a most surprising manner—at the same time Miss Tattle, who was by affirm'd, that Lord Buffalo had discover'd his Lady at a house of no extraordinary Fame—and that Sir Harry Bouquet and Tom Saunter were to measure swords on a similar Provocation. But—Lord! do you think I would report these Things—No, no! Tale Bearers as I said before are just as bad as the tale-makers.

SURFACE. Ah! Mrs. Candour, if everybody had your Forbearance and good nature—

MRS. CANDOUR. I confess Mr. Surface I cannot bear to hear People traduced behind their Backs; and when ugly circumstances come out against our acquaintances I own I always love to think the best—by the bye I hope 'tis not true that your Brother is absolutely ruin'd—

SURFACE. I am afraid his circumstances are very bad indeed, Ma'am—

MRS. CANDOUR. Ah! I heard so—but you must tell him to keep up his Spirits—everybody almost is in the same way—Lord Spindle, Sir Thomas Splint, Captain Quinze, and Mr. Nickit—all up, I hear, within this week; so, if Charles is undone, He'll find half his Acquaintance ruin'd too, and that, you know, is a consolation—

SURFACE. Doubtless, Ma'am—a very great one.

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## William Blake, *The Book Of Urizen* (1964), Chapter I

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1. Lo, a shadow of horror is risen  
In Eternity! Unknown, unprolific!  
Self-closd, all-repelling: what Demon  
Hath form'd this abominable void  
This soul-shudd'ring vacuum?—Some said  
"It is Urizen", But unknown, abstracted  
Brooding secret, the dark power hid.

2. Times on times he divided, & measur'd  
Space by space in his ninefold darkness  
Unseen, unknown! changes appear'd

In his desolate mountains rifted furious  
By the black winds of perturbation

3. For he strove in battles dire  
In unseen conflictions with shapes  
Bred from his forsaken wilderness,  
Of beast, bird, fish, serpent & element  
Combustion, blast, vapour and cloud.

4. Dark revolving in silent activity:  
Unseen in tormenting passions;  
An activity unknown and horrible;  
A self-contemplating shadow,  
In enormous labours occupied

5. But Eternals beheld his vast forests  
Age on ages he lay, clos'd, unknown  
Brooding shut in the deep; all avoid  
The petrific abominable chaos

6. His cold horrors silent, dark Urizen  
Prepar'd: his ten thousands of thunders  
Rang'd in gloom'd array stretch out across  
The dread world, & the rolling of wheels  
As of swelling seas, sound in his clouds  
In his hills of stor'd snows, in his mountains  
Of hail & ice; voices of terror,  
Are heard, like thunders of autumn,  
When the cloud blazes over the harvests.

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**William Blake, "Earth's Answer", *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794)**

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Earth rais'd up her head,  
From the darkness dread & drear.  
Her light fled:  
Stony dread!  
And her locks cover'd with grey despair.  
Prison'd on watry shore  
Starry Jealousy does keep my den  
Cold and hoar  
Weeping o'er  
I hear the Father of the ancient men

Selfish father of men  
Cruel, jealous, selfish fear  
Can delight  
Chain'd in night  
The virgins of youth and morning bear.

Does spring hide its joy  
When buds and blossoms grow?  
Does the sower?  
Sow by night?  
Or the plowman in darkness plow?

Break this heavy chain,  
That does freeze my bones around  
Selfish! vain!  
Eternal bane!  
That free Love with bondage bound.

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**MG. Lewis, *The Monk* (1796)**

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It was almost two o'clock before the lustful monk ventured to bend his steps towards Antonia's dwelling. It has been already mentioned that the abbey was at no great distance from the strada di San Iago. He reached the house unobserved. Here he stopped, and hesitated for a moment. He reflected on the enormity of the crime, the consequences of a discovery, and the probability, after what had passed, of Elvira's suspecting him to be her daughter's ravisher. On the other hand it was suggested that she could do no more than suspect; that no proofs of his guilt could be produced; that it would seem impossible for the rape to have been committed without Antonia's knowing when, where, or by whom; and finally, he believed that his fame was too firmly established to be shaken by the unsupported accusations of two unknown women. This latter argument was perfectly false. He knew not how uncertain is the air of popular applause, and that a moment suffices to make him to-day the detestation of the world, who yesterday was its idol. The result of the monk's deliberations was that he should proceed in his enterprise. He ascended the steps leading to the house. No sooner did he touch the door with the silver myrtle than it flew open, and presented him with a free passage. He entered, and the door closed after him of its own accord.

Guided by the moon-beams, he proceeded up the stair-case with slow and cautious steps. He looked round him every moment with apprehension and anxiety. He saw a spy in every shadow, and heard a voice in every murmur of the night-breeze. Consciousness of the guilty business on which he was employed appalled his heart, and rendered it more timid than a woman's. Yet still he proceeded. He reached the door of Antonia's chamber. He stopped, and listened. All was hushed within. The total silence persuaded him that his intended victim was retired to rest, and he ventured to lift up the latch. The door was fastened, and resisted his efforts. But no sooner was it touched by the talisman than the bolt flew back. The ravisher stepped on, and found himself in the chamber where slept the innocent girl, unconscious how dangerous a visitor was drawing near her couch. The door closed after him, and the bolt shot again into its fastening.

Ambrosio advanced with precaution. He took care that not a board should creak under his foot, and held in his breath as he approached the bed. His first attention was to perform the magic ceremony, as Matilda had charged him: he breathed thrice upon the silver myrtle, pronounced over it Antonia's name, and laid it upon her pillow. The effects which it had already produced permitted not his doubting its success in prolonging the slumbers of his devoted mistress. No sooner was the enchantment performed than he considered her to be absolutely in his power, and his eyes flashed with lust and impatience. He now ventured to cast a glance upon the sleeping beauty. A single lamp, burning before the statue of St. Rosolia, shed a faint light through the room, and permitted him to examine all the charms of the lovely object before him. The heat of the weather had obliged her to

throw off part of the bed-clothes. Those which still covered her Ambrosio's insolent hand hastened to remove. She lay with her cheek reclining upon one ivory arm: the other rested on the side of the bed with graceful indolence. A few tresses of her hair had escaped from beneath the muslin which confined the rest, and fell carelessly over her bosom, as it heaved with slow and regular suspiration. The warm air had spread her cheek with a higher colour than usual. A smile inexpressibly sweet played round her ripe and coral lips, from which every now and then escaped a gentle sigh, or an half-pronounced sentence. An air of enchanting innocence and candour pervaded her whole form; and there was a sort of modesty in her very nakedness, which added fresh stings to the desires of the lustful monk

He remained for some moments devouring those charms with his eyes which soon were to be subjected to his ill-regulated passions. Her mouth half-opened seem to solicit a kiss: he bent over her: he joined his lips to hers, and drew in the fragrance of her breath with rapture. This momentary pleasure increased his longing for still greater. His desires were raised to that frantic height by which brutes are agitated. He resolved not to delay for one instant longer the accomplishment of his wishes, and hastily proceeded to tear off those garments which impeded the gratification of his lust.

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### **William Wordsworth, "Composed upon Westminster Bridge, Sept. 3, 1802"**

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Earth has not any thing to show more fair:  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty:  
This City now doth, like a garment, wear  
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.  
Never did sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;  
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!  
The river glideth at his own sweet will:  
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

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### **S.T. Coleridge, "Kubla Khan: Or a Vision in a Dream. A Fragment" (1816)**

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In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure dome decree:  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea.  
So twice five miles of fertile ground  
With walls and towers were girdled round:  
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,  
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;  
And here were forests ancient as the hills,  
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted  
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!  
A savage place! as holy and enchanted  
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted  
By woman wailing for her demon lover!  
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,  
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,  
A mighty fountain momently was forced:  
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst  
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,  
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:  
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever  
It flung up momently the sacred river.  
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion  
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,  
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,  
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:  
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far  
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure  
Floated midway on the waves;  
Where was heard the mingled measure  
From the fountain and the caves.  
It was a miracle of rare device,  
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!  
A damsel with a dulcimer  
In a vision once I saw;  
It was an Abyssinian maid,  
And on her dulcimer she played,  
Singing of Mount Abora.  
Could I revive within me  
Her symphony and song,  
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,  
That with music loud and long,  
I would build that dome in air,  
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!  
And all who heard should see them there,  
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!  
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!  
Weave a circle round him thrice,  
And close your eyes with holy dread,  
For he on honey-dew hath fed,  
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

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## Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)

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"Believe me, my dear Miss Elizabeth, that your modesty, so far from doing you any disservice, rather adds to your other perfections. You would have been less amiable in my eyes had there *not* been this little unwillingness; but allow me to assure you that I have your respected mother's permission for this address. You can hardly doubt the purport of my discourse, however your natural delicacy may lead you to dissemble; my attentions have been too marked to be mistaken. Almost as soon as I entered the house I singled you out as the companion of my future life. But before I am run away with by my feelings on this subject, perhaps it will be advisable for me to state my reasons for marrying—and moreover for coming into Hertfordshire with the design of selecting a wife, as I certainly did."

The idea of Mr. Collins, with all his solemn composure, being run away with by his feelings, made Elizabeth so near laughing that she could not use the short pause he allowed in any attempt to stop him farther, and he continued:

"My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it a right thing for every clergyman in easy circumstances (like myself) to set the example of matrimony in his parish. Secondly, that I am convinced it will add very greatly to my happiness; and thirdly—which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier, that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honour of calling patroness. Twice has she condescended to give me her opinion (unasked too!) on this subject; and it was but the very Saturday night before I left Hunsford—between our pools at quadrille, while Mrs. Jenkinson was arranging Miss de Bourgh's foot-stool, that she said, 'Mr. Collins, you must marry. A clergyman like you must marry.—Chuse properly, chuse a gentlewoman for *my* sake; and for your *own*, let her be an active, useful sort of person, not brought up high, but able to make a small income go a good way. This is my advice. Find such a woman as soon as you can, bring her to Hunsford, and I will visit her.' Allow me, by the way, to observe, my fair cousin, that I do not reckon the notice and kindness of Lady Catherine de Bourgh as among the least of the advantages in my power to offer. You will find her manners beyond any thing I can describe; and your wit and vivacity I think must be acceptable to her, especially when tempered with the silence and respect which her rank will inevitably excite. Thus much for my general intention in favour of matrimony; it remains to be told why my views were directed to Longbourn instead of my own neighbourhood, where I assure you there are many amiable young women. But the fact is, that being, as I am, to inherit this estate after the death of your honoured father, (who, however, may live many years longer,) I could not satisfy myself without resolving to chuse a wife from among his daughters, that the loss to them might be as little as possible, when the melancholy event takes place—which, however, as I have already said, may not be for several years. This has been my motive, my fair cousin, and I flatter myself it will not sink me in your esteem. And now nothing remains for me but to assure you in the most animated language of the violence of my affection. To fortune I am perfectly indifferent, and shall make no demand of that nature on your father, since I am well aware that it could not be complied with; and that one thousand pounds in the 4 per cents. which will not be yours till after your mother's decease, is all that you may ever be entitled to. On that head, therefore, I shall be uniformly silent; and you may assure yourself that no ungenerous reproach shall ever pass my lips when we are married."

It was absolutely necessary to interrupt him now.

"You are too hasty, Sir," she cried. "You forget that I have made no answer. Let me do it without farther loss of time. Accept my thanks for the compliment you are paying me. I am very sensible of the

honour of your proposals, but it is impossible for me to do otherwise than decline them."

"I am not now to learn," replied Mr. Collins, with a formal wave of the hand, "that it is usual with young ladies to reject the addresses of the man whom they secretly mean to accept, when he first applies for their favour; and that sometimes the refusal is repeated a second or even a third time. I am therefore by no means discouraged by what you have just said, and shall hope to lead you to the altar ere long."

"Upon my word, Sir," cried Elizabeth, "your hope is rather an extraordinary one after my declaration. I do assure you that I am not one of those young ladies (if such young ladies there are) who are so daring as to risk their happiness on the chance of being asked a second time. I am perfectly serious in my refusal.—You could not make *me* happy, and I am convinced that I am the last woman in the world who would make *you* so.—Nay, were your friend Lady Catherine to know me, I am persuaded she would find me in every respect ill qualified for the situation."

"Were it certain that Lady Catherine would think so," said Mr. Collins very gravely—"but I cannot imagine that her ladyship would at all disapprove of you. And you may be certain that when I have the honour of seeing her again I shall speak in the highest terms of your modesty, economy, and other amiable qualifications."

"Indeed, Mr. Collins, all praise of me will be unnecessary. You must give me leave to judge for myself, and pay me the compliment of believing what I say. I wish you very happy and very rich, and by refusing your hand, do all in my power to prevent your being otherwise. In making me the offer, you must have satisfied the delicacy of your feelings with regard to my family, and may take possession of

Longbourn estate whenever it falls, without any self-reproach. This matter may be considered, therefore, as finally settled." And rising as she thus spoke, she would have quitted the room, had not Mr. Collins thus addressed her,

"When I do myself the honour of speaking to you next on this subject I shall hope to receive a more favourable answer than you have now given me; though I am far from accusing you of cruelty at present, because I know it to be the established custom of your sex to reject a man on the first application, and perhaps you have even now said as much to encourage my suit as would be consistent with the true delicacy of the female character."

"Really, Mr. Collins," cried Elizabeth with some warmth, "you puzzle me exceedingly. If what I have hitherto said can appear to you in the form of encouragement, I know not how to express my refusal in such a way as may convince you of its being one."

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## John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1820)

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I.

THOU still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape  
Of deities or mortals, or of both,

In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?  
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?  
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

II.

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;  
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:  
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave  
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;  
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
Though winning near the goal - yet, do not grieve;  
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,  
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

III.

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed  
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;  
And, happy melodist, unwearied,  
For ever piping songs for ever new;  
More happy love! more happy, happy love!  
For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,  
For ever panting, and for ever young;  
All breathing human passion far above,  
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,  
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

IV.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?  
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,  
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,  
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?  
What little town by river or sea shore,  
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,  
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?  
And, little town, thy streets for evermore  
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell  
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

V.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede  
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,  
With forest branches and the trodden weed;

Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of  
thought As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!  
When old age shall this generation waste,  
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
«Beauty is truth, truth beauty,»- that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

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**Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818), Chapter V**

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It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishments of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning: the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

[How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.

The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature. I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room and continued a long time traversing my bedchamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep. At length lassitude succeeded to the tumult I had before endured, and I threw myself on the bed in my clothes, endeavouring to seek a few moments of forgetfulness. But it was in vain; I slept, indeed, but I was disturbed by the wildest dreams. I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her, but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. I started from my sleep in horror; a cold dew covered my forehead, my teeth chattered, and every limb became convulsed; when, by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window shutters, I beheld the wretch – the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped and rushed downstairs. I took refuge in the courtyard belonging to the house I inhabited, where I remained during the rest of the night, walking up and down in the greatest agitation, listening attentively, catching

and fearing each sound as if it were to announce the approach of the daemoniacal corpse to which I had so miserably given life.]

Oh! No mortal could support the horror of that countenance. A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch. I had gazed on him while unfinished; he was ugly then, but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived.

I passed the night wretchedly. Sometimes my pulse beat so quickly and hardly that I felt the palpitation of every artery; at others, I nearly sank to the ground through languor and extreme weakness. Mingled with this horror, I felt the bitterness of disappointments; dreams that had been my food and pleasant rest for so long a space were now become a hell to me; and the change was so rapid, the overthrow so complete!

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## Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (1847), chapter 26

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*After Jane's aborted wedding with Rochester: the discovery of Bertha Mason, the "mad woman in the attic"*

Still holding me fast, he left the church: the three gentlemen came after. At the front door of the hall we found the carriage.

"Take it back to the coach-house, John," said Mr. Rochester coolly; "it will not be wanted to-day."

At our entrance, Mrs. Fairfax, Adèle, Sophie, Leah, advanced to meet and greet us.

"To the right-about—every soul!" cried the master; "away with your congratulations! Who wants them? Not I!—they are fifteen years too late!"

He passed on and ascended the stairs, still holding my hand, and still beckoning the gentlemen to follow him, which they did. We mounted the first staircase, passed up the gallery, proceeded to the third storey: the low, black door, opened by Mr. Rochester's master-key, admitted us to the tapestried room, with its great bed and its pictorial cabinet.

"You know this place, Mason," said our guide; "she bit and stabbed you here."

He lifted the hangings from the wall, uncovering the second door: this, too, he opened. In a room without a window, there burnt a fire guarded by a high and strong fender, and a lamp suspended from the ceiling by a chain. Grace Poole bent over the fire, apparently cooking something in a saucepan. In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.

"Good-morrow, Mrs. Poole!" said Mr. Rochester. "How are you? and how is your charge to-day?"

"We're tolerable, sir, I thank you," replied Grace, lifting the boiling mess carefully on to the hob: "rather snappish, but not 'rageous.'"

A fierce cry seemed to give the lie to her favourable report: the clothed hyena rose up, and stood tall on its hind-feet.

"Ah! sir, she sees you!" exclaimed Grace: "you'd better not stay."

"Only a few moments, Grace: you must allow me a few moments."

"Take care then, sir!—for God's sake, take care!"

The maniac bellowed: she parted her shaggy locks from her visage, and gazed wildly at her visitors. I recognised well that purple face,—those bloated features. Mrs. Poole advanced.

“Keep out of the way,” said Mr. Rochester, thrusting her aside: “she has no knife now, I suppose, and I’m on my guard.”

“One never knows what she has, sir: she is so cunning: it is not in mortal discretion to fathom her craft.”

“We had better leave her,” whispered Mason.

“Go to the devil!” was his brother-in-law’s recommendation.

“Ware!” cried Grace. The three gentlemen retreated simultaneously. Mr. Rochester flung me behind him: the lunatic sprang and grappled his throat viciously, and laid her teeth to his cheek: they struggled. She was a big woman, in stature almost equalling her husband, and corpulent besides: she showed virile force in the contest—more than once she almost throttled him, athletic as he was. He could have settled her with a well-planted blow; but he would not strike: he would only wrestle. At last he mastered her arms; Grace Poole gave him a cord, and he pinioned them behind her: with more rope, which was at hand, he bound her to a chair. The operation was performed amidst the fiercest yells and the most convulsive plunges. Mr. Rochester then turned to the spectators: he looked at them with a smile both acrid and desolate.

“That is *my wife*,” said he. “Such is the sole conjugal embrace I am ever to know—such are the endearments which are to solace my leisure hours! And *this* is what I wished to have” (laying his hand on my shoulder): “this young girl, who stands so grave and quiet at the mouth of hell, looking collectedly at the gambols of a demon, I wanted her just as a change after that fierce ragout. Wood and Briggs, look at the difference! Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder—this face with that mask—this form with that bulk; then judge me, priest of the gospel and man of the law, and remember with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged! Off with you now. I must shut up my prize.”

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## Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (1854), chapter 5

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### THE KEYNOTE

Coketown, to which Messrs. Bounderby and Gradgrind now walked, was a triumph of fact; it had no greater taint of fancy in it than Mrs. Gradgrind herself. Let us strike the key-note, Coketown, before pursuing our tune.

It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood, it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. It contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and to-morrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next.

These attributes of Coketown were in the main inseparable from the work by which it was sustained; against them were to be set off, comforts of life which found their way all over the world, and elegancies of life which made, we will not ask how much of the fine lady, who could scarcely bear to hear the place mentioned. The rest of its features were voluntary, and they were these.

You saw nothing in Coketown but what was severely workful. If the members of a religious persuasion built a chapel there—as the members of eighteen religious persuasions had done—they made it a pious warehouse of red brick, with sometimes (but this is only in highly ornamental

examples) a bell in a birdcage on the top of it. The solitary exception was the New Church; a stuccoed edifice with a square steeple over the door, terminating in four short pinnacles like florid wooden legs. All the public inscriptions in the town were painted alike, in severe characters of black and white. The jail might have been the infirmary, the infirmary might have been the jail, the town-hall might have been either, or both, or anything else, for anything that appeared to the contrary in the graces of their construction. Fact, fact, fact, everywhere in the material aspect of the town; fact, fact, fact, everywhere in the immaterial. The M'Choakumchild school was all fact, and the school of design was all fact, and the relations between master and man were all fact, and everything was fact between the lying-in hospital and the cemetery, and what you couldn't state in figures, or show to be purchaseable in the cheapest market and saleable in the dearest, was not, and never should be, world without end, Amen.

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### William M. Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* (1848)

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'You don't mean that, Amelia?' William said, sadly. 'You don't mean that these words, uttered in a hurried moment, are to weigh against a whole life's devotion. I think that George's memory has not been injured by the way in which I have dealt with it, and if we are come to bandying reproaches, I at least merit none from his widow and the mother of his son. Reflect, afterwards when—when you are at leisure, and your conscience will withdraw this accusation. It does even now.' Amelia held down her head.

'It is not that speech of yesterday,' he continued, 'which moves you. That is but the pretext, Amelia, or I have loved you and watched you for fifteen years in vain. Have I not learned in that time to read all your feelings, and look into your thoughts? I know what your heart is capable of: it can cling faithfully to a recollection, and cherish a fancy; but it can't feel such an attachment as mine deserves to mate with, and such as I would have won from a woman more generous than you. No, you are not worthy of the love which I have devoted to you. I knew all along that the prize I had set my life on was not worth the winning; that I was a fool, with fond fancies, too, bartering away my all of truth and ardour against your little feeble remnant of love. I will bargain no more: I withdraw. I find no fault with you. You are very good-natured, and have done your best; but you couldn't—you couldn't reach up to the height of the attachment which I bore you, and which a loftier soul than yours might have been proud to share. Good-bye, Amelia! I have watched your struggle. Let it end. We are both weary of it.'

Amelia stood scared and silent as William thus suddenly broke the chain by which she held him, and declared his independence and superiority. He had placed himself at her feet so long that the poor little woman had been accustomed to trample upon him. She didn't wish to marry him but she wished to keep him. She wished to give him nothing, but that he should give her all. It is a bargain not unfrequently levied in love.

William's sally had quite broken and cast her down. *Her* assault was long since over and beaten back.

'Am I to understand then,—that you are going—away,—William?' she said.

He gave a sad laugh. 'I went once before,' he said, 'and came back after twelve years. We were young then, Amelia. Good-bye. I have spent enough of my life at this play.'

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**Christina Rossetti, “In an Artist’s Studio” (1856)**

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One face looks out from all his canvases,  
One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans:  
We found her hidden just behind those screens,  
That mirror gave back all her loveliness.  
A queen in opal or in ruby dress,  
A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,  
A saint, an angel — every canvas means  
The same one meaning, neither more or less.  
He feeds upon her face by day and night,  
And she with true kind eyes looks back on him,  
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:  
Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;  
Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;  
Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.

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**Dante Gabriel Rossetti [1828-1882], “Body’s Beauty” (1868), Alternately titled: Lady Lilith**

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Of Adam’s first wife, Lilith, it is told  
(The witch he loved before the gift of Eve,)  
That, ere the snake’s, her sweet tongue could deceive,  
And her enchanted hair was the first gold.  
And still she sits, young while the earth is old, And,  
subtly of herself contemplative,  
Draws men to watch the bright web she can weave,  
Till heart and body and life are in its hold.

The rose and poppy are her flowers; for where  
Is he not found, O Lilith, whom shed scent  
And soft-shed kisses and soft sleep shall snare?  
Lo! as that youth’s eyes burned at thine, so went  
Thy spell through him, and left his straight neck bent  
And round his heart one strangling golden hair.

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## Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891)

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*Twice wronged by Alec D'Urberville, Tess was driven to murder him. She now finds herself at Stonehenge with Angel Clare, who had abandoned her when she confessed her affair with Alec, but has now come back repentant. It is her last moment of liberty before she is arrested and hanged*

To walk across country without much regard to roads was not new to Tess, and she showed her old agility in the performance. The intercepting city, ancient Melchester, they were obliged to pass through in order to take advantage of the town bridge for crossing a large river that obstructed them. It was about midnight when they went along the deserted streets, lighted fitfully by the few lamps, keeping off the pavement that it might not echo their footsteps. The graceful pile of cathedral architecture rose dimly on their left hand, but it was lost upon them now. Once out of the town they followed the turnpike-road, which after a few miles plunged across an open plain.

Though the sky was dense with cloud, a diffused light from some fragment of a moon had hitherto helped them a little. But the moon had now sunk, the clouds seemed to settle almost on their heads, and the night grew as dark as a cave. However, they found their way along, keeping as much on the turf as possible that their tread might not resound, which it was easy to do, there being no hedge or fence of any kind. All around was open loneliness and black solitude, over which a stiff breeze blew.

They had proceeded thus gropingly two or three miles further when on a sudden Clare became conscious of some vast erection close in his front, rising sheer from the grass. They had almost struck themselves against it.

"What monstrous place is this?" said Angel.

"It hums," said she. "Hearken!"

He listened. The wind, playing upon the edifice, produced a booming tune, like the note of some gigantic one-stringed harp. No other sound came from it, and lifting his hand and advancing a step or two, Clare felt the vertical surface of the structure. It seemed to be of solid stone, without joint or moulding. Carrying his fingers onward he found that what he had come in contact with was a colossal rectangular pillar; by stretching out his left hand he could feel a similar one adjoining. At an indefinite height overhead something made the black sky blacker, which had the semblance of a vast architrave uniting the pillars horizontally. They carefully entered beneath and between; the surfaces echoed their soft rustle; but they seemed to be still out of doors. The place was roofless. Tess drew her breath fearfully, and Angel, perplexed, said —

"What can it be?"

Feeling sideways they encountered another tower-like pillar, square and uncompromising as the first; beyond it another and another. The place was all doors and pillars, some connected above by continuous architraves.

"A very Temple of the Winds," he said.

The next pillar was isolated; others composed a trilithon; others were prostrate, their flanks forming a causeway wide enough for a carriage; and it was soon obvious that they made up a forest of monoliths grouped upon the grassy expanse of the plain. The couple advanced further into this pavilion of the night till they stood in its midst.

"It is Stonehenge!" said Clare.

"The heathen temple, you mean?"

"Yes. Older than the centuries; older than the d'Urbervilles! Well, what shall we do, darling? We may find shelter further on."

But Tess, really tired by this time, flung herself upon an oblong slab that lay close at hand, and was sheltered from the wind by a pillar. Owing to the action of the sun during the preceding day, the stone was warm and dry, in comforting contrast to the rough and chill grass around, which had damped her skirts and shoes.

"I don't want to go any further, Angel," she said, stretching out her hand for his. "Can't we bide here?"

"I fear not. This spot is visible for miles by day, although it does not seem so now."

"One of my mother's people was a shepherd hereabouts, now I think of it. And you used to say at Talbothays that I was a heathen. So now I am at home."

He knelt down beside her outstretched form, and put his lips upon hers.

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**Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest, Trivial Comedy for Serious People*, (1895)**

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**Lady Bracknell.** [Sitting down.] You can take a seat, Mr. Worthing.

[Looks in her pocket for note-book and pencil.]

**Jack.** Thank you, Lady Bracknell, I prefer standing.

**Lady Bracknell.** [Pencil and note-book in hand.] I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible young men, although I have the same list as the dear Duchess of Bolton has. We work together, in fact. However, I am quite ready to enter your name, should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires. Do you smoke?

**Jack.** Well, yes, I must admit I smoke.

**Lady Bracknell.** I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind. There are far too many idle men in London as it is. How old are you?

**Jack.** Twenty-nine.

**Lady Bracknell.** A very good age to be married at. I have always been of opinion that a man who desires to get married should know either everything or nothing. Which do you know?

**Jack.** [After some hesitation.] I know nothing, Lady Bracknell.

**Lady Bracknell.** I am pleased to hear it. I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square. What is your income?

**Jack.** Between seven and eight thousand a year.

**Lady Bracknell.** [Makes a note in her book.] In land, or in investments?

**Jack.** In investments, chiefly.

**Lady Bracknell.** That is satisfactory. What between the duties expected of one during one's lifetime, and the duties exacted from one after one's death, land has ceased to be either a profit or a pleasure. It gives one position, and prevents one from keeping it up. That's all that can be said about land.

**Jack.** I have a country house with some land, of course, attached to it, about fifteen hundred acres, I believe; but I don't depend on that for my real income. In fact, as far as I can make out, the poachers are the only people who make anything out of it.

**Lady Bracknell.** A country house! How many bedrooms? Well, that point can be cleared up afterwards. You have a town house, I hope? A girl with a simple, unspoiled nature, like Gwendolen, could hardly be expected to reside in the country.

**Jack.** Well, I own a house in Belgrave Square, but it is let by the year to Lady Bloxham. Of course, I can get it back whenever I like, at six months' notice.

**Lady Bracknell.** Lady Bloxham? I don't know her.

**Jack.** Oh, she goes about very little. She is a lady considerably advanced in years.

**Lady Bracknell.** Ah, nowadays that is no guarantee of respectability of character. What number in Belgrave Square?

**Jack.** 149.

**Lady Bracknell.** [Shaking her head.] The unfashionable side. I thought there was something. However, that could easily be altered.

**Jack.** Do you mean the fashion, or the side?

**Lady Bracknell.** [Sternly.] Both, if necessary, I presume. What are your politics?

**Jack.** Well, I am afraid I really have none. I am a Liberal Unionist.

**Lady Bracknell.** Oh, they count as Tories. They dine with us. Or come in the evening, at any rate. Now to minor matters. Are your parents living?

**Jack.** I have lost both my parents.

**Lady Bracknell.** To lose one parent, Mr. Worthing, may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness. Who was your father? He was evidently a man of some wealth. Was he born in what the Radical papers call the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of the aristocracy?

**Jack.** I am afraid I really don't know. The fact is, Lady Bracknell, I said I had lost my parents. It would be nearer the truth to say that my parents seem to have lost me . . . I don't actually know who I am by birth. I was . . . well, I was found.

**Lady Bracknell.** Found!

**Jack.** The late Mr. Thomas Cardew, an old gentleman of a very charitable and kindly disposition, found me, and gave me the name of Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. Worthing is a place in Sussex. It is a seaside resort.

**Lady Bracknell.** Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?

**Jack.** [Gravely.] In a hand-bag.

**Lady Bracknell.** A hand-bag?

**Jack.** [Very seriously.] Yes, Lady Bracknell. I was in a hand-bag—a somewhat large, black leather hand-bag, with handles to it—an ordinary hand-bag in fact.

**Lady Bracknell.** In what locality did this Mr. James, or Thomas, Cardew come across this ordinary hand-bag?

**Jack.** In the cloak-room at Victoria Station. It was given to him in mistake for his own.

**Lady Bracknell.** The cloak-room at Victoria Station?

**Jack.** Yes. The Brighton line.

**Lady Bracknell.** The line is immaterial. Mr. Worthing, I confess I feel somewhat bewildered by what you have just told me. To be born, or at any rate bred, in a hand-bag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that reminds one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to? As for the particular locality in which the hand-bag was found, a cloak-room at a railway station might serve to conceal a social indiscretion—has probably, indeed, been used for that purpose before now—but it could hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognised position in good society.

**Jack.** May I ask you then what you would advise me to do? I need hardly say I would do anything in the world to ensure Gwendolen's happiness.

**Lady Bracknell.** I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over.

**Jack.** Well, I don't see how I could possibly manage to do that. I can produce the hand-bag at any moment. It is in my dressing-room at home. I really think that should satisfy you, Lady Bracknell.

**Lady Bracknell.** Me, sir! What has it to do with me? You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter—a girl brought up with the utmost care—to marry into a cloak-room, and form an alliance with a parcel? Good morning, Mr. Worthing!

[**Lady Bracknell** sweeps out in majestic indignation.]

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### **Bram Stoker (1847-1912), *Dracula* (1897) Chapter III, “Jonathan’s diary”**

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Later the morning of 16 May.—God preserve my sanity, for to this I am reduced. Safety and the assurance of safety are things of the past. Whilst I live on here there is but one thing to hope for, that I may not go mad, if, indeed, I be not mad already. If I be sane, then surely it is maddening to think that of all the foul things that lurk in this hateful place the Count is the least dreadful to me, that to him alone I can look for safety, even though this be only whilst I can serve his purpose. Great God! Merciful God, let me be calm, for out of that way lies madness indeed. I begin to get new lights on certain things which have puzzled me. Up to now I never quite knew what Shakespeare meant when he made Hamlet say:—

My tablets! Quick, my  
tablets! ‘Tis meet that I put it  
down,” etc.,

for now, feeling as though my own brain were unhinged or as if the shock had come which must end in its undoing, I turn to my diary for repose. The habit of entering accurately must help to soothe me.

The Count’s mysterious warning frightened me at the time. It frightens me more now when I think of it, for in the future he has a fearful hold upon me. I shall fear to doubt what he may say!

When I had written in my diary and had fortunately replaced the book and pen in my pocket I felt sleepy. The Count’s warning came into my mind, but I took pleasure in disobeying it. The sense of sleep was upon me, and with it the obstinacy which sleep brings as outrider. The soft moonlight soothed, and the wide expanse without gave a sense of freedom which refreshed me. I determined not to return tonight to the gloom-haunted rooms, but to sleep here, where, of old, ladies had sat and sung and lived sweet lives whilst their gentle breasts were sad for their menfolk away in the midst of remorseless wars. I drew a great couch out of its place near the corner, so that as I lay, I could look at the lovely view to east and south, and unthinking of and uncaring for the dust, composed myself for sleep.

[I suppose I must have fallen asleep. I hope so, but I fear, for all that followed was startlingly real—so real that now sitting here in the broad, full sunlight of the morning, I cannot in the least believe that it was all sleep.

I was not alone. The room was the same, unchanged in any way since I came into it. I could see along the floor, in the brilliant moonlight, my own footsteps marked where I had disturbed the long accumulation of dust. In the moonlight opposite me were three young women, ladies by their dress and manner. I thought at the time that I must be dreaming when I saw them, they threw no shadow on the floor. They came close to me, and looked at me for some time, and then whispered together. Two were dark, and had high aquiline noses, like the Count, and great dark, piercing eyes, that seemed to be almost red when contrasted with the pale yellow moon. The other was fair, as fair as can be, with great masses of golden hair and eyes like pale sapphires. I seemed somehow to know her face, and to know it in connection with some dreamy fear, but I could not recollect at the moment how or where. All three had brilliant white teeth that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips. There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips. It is not good to note this down, lest some day it should meet Mina’s eyes and cause her pain, but it is the truth. They whispered together, and then they all three laughed—such a silvery, musical laugh, but as hard as though the sound never could have come through the softness of

human lips. It was like the intolerable, tingling sweetness of water glasses when played on by a cunning hand. The fair girl shook her head coquettishly, and the other two urged her on.] One said:—

‘Go on! You are first, and we shall follow. Yours’ is the right to begin.’ The other added—

‘He is young and strong. There are kisses for us all.’ ] I lay quiet, looking out from under my eyelashes in an agony of delightful anticipation. The fair girl advanced and bent over me till I could feel the movement of her breath upon me. Sweet it was in one sense, honey-sweet, and sent the same tingling through the nerves as her voice, but with a bitter underlying the sweet, a bitter offensiveness, as one smells in blood.

I was afraid to raise my eyelids, but looked out and saw perfectly under the lashes. The girl went on her knees, and bent over me, simply gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth. Lower and lower went her head as the lips went below the range of my mouth and chin and seemed to fasten on my throat. Then she paused, and I could hear the churning sound of her tongue as it licked her teeth and lips, and I could feel the hot breath on my neck. Then the skin of my throat began to tingle as one’s flesh does when the hand that is to tickle it approaches nearer—nearer. I could feel the soft, shivering touch of the lips on the super sensitive skin of my throat, and the hard dents of two sharp teeth, just touching and pausing there. I closed my eyes in languorous ecstasy and waited—waited with beating heart.

But at that instant, another sensation swept through me as quick as lightning. I was conscious of the presence of the Count, and of his being as if lapped in a storm of fury. As my eyes opened involuntarily I saw his strong hand grasp the slender neck of the fair woman and with giant’s power draw it back, the blue eyes transformed with fury, the white teeth champing with rage, and the fair cheeks blazing red with passion. But the Count! Never did I imagine such wrath and fury, even to the demons of the pit. His eyes were positively blazing. The red light in them was lurid, as if the flames of hell fire blazed behind them. His face was deathly pale, and the lines of it were hard like drawn wires. The thick eyebrows that met over the nose now seemed like a heaving bar of white-hot metal. With a fierce sweep of his arm, he hurled the woman from him, and then motioned to the others, as though he were beating them back. It was the same imperious gesture that I had seen used to the wolves. In a voice which, though low and almost in a whisper seemed to cut through the air and then ring round the room as he said:—

‘How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it? Back, I tell you all! This man belongs to me! Beware how you meddle with him, or you’ll have to deal with me.’

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## Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1902)

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"Kurtz discoursed. A voice! a voice! It rang deep to the very last. It survived his strength to hide in the magnificent folds of eloquence the barren darkness of his heart. Oh, he struggled! he struggled! The wastes of his weary brain were haunted by shadowy images now -- images of wealth and fame revolving obsequiously round his unextinguishable gift of noble and lofty expression. My Intended, my station, my career, my ideas -- these were the subjects for the occasional utterances of elevated sentiments. The shade of the original Kurtz frequented the bedside of the hollow sham, whose fate it was to be buried presently in the mould of primeval earth. But both the diabolic love and the unearthly hate of the mysteries it had penetrated fought for the possession of that soul satiated with primitive emotions, avid of lying fame, of sham distinction, of all the appearances of success and power.

"Sometimes he was contemptibly childish. He desired to have kings meet him at railway-stations on his return from some ghastly Nowhere, where he intended to accomplish great things. 'You show them you have in you something that is really profitable, and then there will be no limits to the recognition of your ability,' he would say. 'Of course you must take care of the motives -- right motives -- always.' The long reaches that were like one and the same reach, monotonous bends that were exactly alike, slipped past the steamer with their multitude of secular trees looking patiently after this grimy fragment of another world, the forerunner of change, of conquest, of trade, of massacres, of blessings. I looked ahead -- piloting. 'Close the shutter,' said Kurtz suddenly one day; 'I can't bear to look at this.' I did so. There was a silence. 'Oh, but I will wring your heart yet!' he cried at the invisible wilderness.

"We broke down -- as I had expected -- and had to lie up for repairs at the head of an island. This delay was the first thing that shook Kurtz's confidence. One morning he gave me a packet of papers and a photograph -- the lot tied together with a shoe-string. 'Keep this for me,' he said. 'This noxious fool' (meaning the manager) 'is capable of prying into my boxes when I am not looking.' In the afternoon I saw him. He was lying on his back with closed eyes, and I withdrew quietly, but I heard him mutter, 'Live rightly, die, die . . .' I listened. There was nothing more. Was he rehearsing some speech in his sleep, or was it a fragment of a phrase from some newspaper article? He had been writing for the papers and meant to do so again, 'for the furthering of my ideas. It's a duty.'

"His was an impenetrable darkness. I looked at him as you peer down at a man who is lying at the bottom of a precipice where the sun never shines. But I had not much time to give him, because I was helping the engine-driver to take to pieces the leaky cylinders, to straighten a bent connecting-rod, and in other such matters. I lived in an infernal mess of rust, filings, nuts, bolts, spanners, hammers, ratchet-drills -- things I abominate, because I don't get on with them. I tended the little forge we fortunately had aboard; I toiled wearily in a wretched scrap-heap -- unless I had the shakes too bad to stand.

"One evening coming in with a candle I was startled to hear him say a little tremulously, 'I am lying here in the dark waiting for death.' The light was within a foot of his eyes. I forced myself to murmur, 'Oh, nonsense!' and stood over him as if transfixed.

"Anything approaching the change that came over his features I have never seen before, and hope never to see again. Oh, I wasn't touched. I was fascinated. It was as though a veil had been rent. I saw on that ivory face the expression of sombre pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror -- of an intense and hopeless despair. Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision -- he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath:

"The horror! The horror!"

"I blew the candle out and left the cabin. The pilgrims were dining in the mess-room, and I took my place opposite the manager, who lifted his eyes to give me a questioning glance, which I successfully ignored. He leaned back, serene, with that peculiar smile of his sealing the unexpressed depths of his meanness. A continuous shower of small flies streamed upon the lamp, upon the cloth, upon our hands and faces. Suddenly the manager's boy put his insolent black head in the doorway, and said in a tone of scathing contempt:

"Mistah Kurtz -- he dead."

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## George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion*. (1913)

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HIGGINS [*rising hastily and running to Mrs. Higgins*] Here she is, mother. [*He stands on tiptoe and makes signs over his mother's head to Eliza to indicate to her which lady is her hostess*].

*Eliza, who is exquisitely dressed, produces an impression of such remarkable distinction and beauty as she enters that they all rise, quite flustered. Guided by Higgins's signals, she comes to Mrs. Higgins with studied grace.*

LIZA [*speaking with pedantic correctness of pronunciation and great beauty of tone*] How do you do, Mrs. Higgins? [*She gasps slightly in making sure of the H in Higgins, but is quite successful*]. Mr. Higgins told me I might come.

MRS. HIGGINS [*cordially*] Quite right: I'm very glad indeed to see you.

PICKERING. How do you do, Miss Doolittle?

LIZA [*shaking hands with him*] Colonel Pickering, is it not?

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. I feel sure we have met before, Miss Doolittle. I remember your eyes.

LIZA. How do you do? [*She sits down on the ottoman gracefully in the place just left vacant by Higgins*].

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL [*introducing*] My daughter Clara.

LIZA. How do you do?

CLARA [*impulsively*] How do you do? [*She sits down on the ottoman beside Eliza, devouring her with her eyes*].

FREDDY [*coming to their side of the ottoman*] I've certainly had the pleasure.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL [*introducing*] My son Freddy.

LIZA. How do you do?

*Freddy bows and sits down in the Elizabethan chair, infatuated.*

HIGGINS [*suddenly*] By George, yes: it all comes back to me! [*They stare at him*]. Covent Garden! [*Lamentably*] What a damned thing!

MRS. HIGGINS. Henry, please! [*He is about to sit on the edge of the table*]. Don't sit on my writing-table: you'll break it.

HIGGINS [*sulkily*] Sorry.

*He goes to the divan, stumbling into the fender and over the fire-irons on his way; extricating himself with muttered imprecations; and finishing his disastrous journey by throwing himself so impatiently on the divan that he almost breaks it. Mrs. Higgins looks at him, but controls herself and says nothing. A long and painful pause ensues.*

MRS. HIGGINS [*at last, conversationally*] Will it rain, do you think?

LIZA. The shallow depression in the west of these islands is likely to move slowly in an easterly direction. There are no indications of any great change in the barometrical situation.

FREDDY. Ha! ha! how awfully funny!

LIZA. What is wrong with that, young man? I bet I got it right.

FREDDY. Killing!

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. I'm sure I hope it won't turn cold. There's so much influenza about. It runs right through our whole family regularly every spring.

LIZA [*darkly*] My aunt died of influenza: so they said.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL [*clicks her tongue sympathetically*]!!!

LIZA [*in the same tragic tone*] But it's my belief they done the old woman in.

MRS. HIGGINS [*puzzled*] Done her in?

LIZA. Y-e-e-e-es, Lord love you! Why should she die of influenza? She come through diphtheria right enough the year before. I saw her with my own eyes. Fairly blue with it, she was. They all

thought she was dead; but my father he kept ladling gin down her throat til she came to so sudden that she bit the bowl off the spoon.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL [*startled*] Dear me!

LIZA [*piling up the indictment*] What call would a woman with that strength in her have to die of influenza? What become of her new straw hat that should have come to me? Somebody pinched it; and what I say is, them as pinched it done her in.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. What does doing her in mean?

HIGGINS [*hastily*] Oh, that's the new small talk. To do a person in means to kill them.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL [*to Eliza, horrified*] You surely don't believe that your aunt was killed?

LIZA. Do I not! Them she lived with would have killed her for a hat-pin, let alone a hat.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. But it can't have been right for your father to pour spirits down her throat like that. It might have killed her.

LIZA. Not her. Gin was mother's milk to her. Besides, he'd poured so much down his own throat that he knew the good of it.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. Do you mean that he drank?

LIZA. Drank! My word! Something chronic.

MRS. EYNSFORD HILL. How dreadful for you!

LIZA. Not a bit. It never did him no harm what I could see. But then he did not keep it up regular. [*Cheerfully*] On the burst, as you might say, from time to time. And always more agreeable when he had a drop in. When he was out of work, my mother used to give him fourpence and tell him to go out and not come back until he'd drunk himself cheerful and loving-like. There's lots of women has to make their husbands drunk to make them fit to live with. [*Now quite at her ease*] You see, it's like this. If a man has a bit of a conscience, it always takes him when he's sober; and then it makes him low-spirited. A drop of booze just takes that off and makes him happy. [*To Freddy, who is in convulsions of suppressed laughter*] Here! what are you sniggering at?

FREDDY. The new small talk. You do it so awfully well.

LIZA. If I was doing it proper, what was you laughing at? [*To Higgins*] Have I said anything I oughtn't?

MRS. HIGGINS [*interposing*] Not at all, Miss Doolittle.

LIZA. Well, that's a mercy, anyhow. [*Expansively*] What I always say is—

HIGGINS [*rising and looking at his watch*] Ahem!

LIZA [*looking round at him; taking the hint; and rising*] Well: I must go. [*They all rise. Freddy goes to the door.*]  
So pleased to have met you. Good-bye. [*She shakes hands with Mrs. Higgins.*]

MRS. HIGGINS. Good-bye.

LIZA. Good-bye, Colonel Pickering.

PICKERING. Good-bye, Miss Doolittle. [*They shake hands.*]

LIZA [*nodding to the others*] Good-bye, all.

FREDDY [*opening the door for her*] Are you walking across the Park, Miss Doolittle? If so—

LIZA. Walk! Not bloody likely. [*Sensation*]. I am going in a taxi. [*She goes out.*]  
*Pickering gasps and sits down. Freddy goes out on the balcony to catch another glimpse of Eliza.*

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## James Joyce, “The Dead” (1914)

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Gabriel had not gone to the door with the others. He was in a dark part of the hall gazing up the staircase. A woman was standing near the top of the first flight, in the shadow also. He could not see her face but he could see the terra-cotta and salmon-pink panels of her skirt which the shadow made appear black and white. It was his wife. She was leaning on the banisters, listening to something. Gabriel was surprised at her stillness and strained his ear to listen also. But he could hear little save the

noise of laughter and dispute on the front steps, a few chords struck on the piano and a few notes of a man's voice singing.

He stood still in the gloom of the hall, trying to catch the air that the voice was singing and gazing up at his wife. There was grace and mystery in her attitude as if she were a symbol of something. He asked himself what is a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of. If he were a painter he would paint her in that attitude. Her blue felt hat would show off the bronze of her hair against the darkness and the dark panels of her skirt would show off the light ones. Distant Music he would call the picture if he were a painter.

The hall-door was closed; and Aunt Kate, Aunt Julia and Mary Jane came down the hall, still laughing.

"Well, isn't Freddy terrible?" said Mary Jane. "He's really terrible."

Gabriel said nothing but pointed up the stairs towards where his wife was standing. Now that the hall-door was closed the voice and the piano could be heard more clearly. Gabriel held up his hand for them to be silent. The song seemed to be in the old Irish tonality and the singer seemed uncertain both of his words and of his voice. The voice, made plaintive by distance and by the singer's hoarseness, faintly illuminated the cadence of the air with words expressing grief:

O, the rain falls on my heavy locks  
And the dew wets my skin  
My babe lies cold...

"O," exclaimed Mary Jane. "It's Bartell D'Arcy singing and he wouldn't sing all the night. O, I'll get him to sing a song before he goes."

"O, do, Mary Jane," said Aunt Kate.

Mary Jane brushed past the others and ran to the staircase, but before she reached it the singing stopped and the piano was closed abruptly.

"O, what a pity!" she cried. "Is he coming down, Gretta?"

Gabriel heard his wife answer yes and saw her come down towards them. A few steps behind her were Mr. Bartell D'Arcy and Miss O'Callaghan.

"O, Mr. D'Arcy," cried Mary Jane, "it's downright mean of you to break off like that when we were all in raptures listening to you."

"I have been at him all the evening," said Miss O'Callaghan, "and Mrs. Conroy, too, and he told us he had a dreadful cold and couldn't sing."

"O, Mr. D'Arcy," said Aunt Kate, "now that was a great fib to tell."

"Can't you see that I'm as hoarse as a crow?" said Mr. D'Arcy roughly.

He went into the pantry hastily and put on his overcoat. The others, taken aback by his rude speech, could find nothing to say. Aunt Kate wrinkled her brows and made signs to the others to drop the subject. Mr. D'Arcy stood swathing his neck carefully and frowning.

"It's the weather," said Aunt Julia, after a pause.

"Yes, everybody has colds," said Aunt Kate readily, "everybody."

"They say," said Mary Jane, "we haven't had snow like it for thirty years; and I read this morning in the newspapers that the snow is general all over Ireland."

"I love the look of snow," said Aunt Julia sadly.

"So do I," said Miss O'Callaghan. "I think Christmas is never really Christmas unless we have the snow on the ground."

"But poor Mr. D'Arcy doesn't like the snow," said Aunt Kate, smiling.

Mr. D'Arcy came from the pantry, fully swathed and buttoned, and in a repentant tone told them the history of his cold. Everyone gave him advice and said it was a great pity and urged him to be very careful of his throat in the night air. Gabriel watched his wife, who did not join in the conversation. She was standing right under the dusty fanlight and the flame of the gas lit up the rich bronze of her hair, which he had seen her drying at the fire a few days before. She was in the same attitude and seemed unaware of the talk about her. At last she turned towards them and Gabriel saw that there was colour on her cheeks and that her eyes were shining. A sudden tide of joy went leaping out of his heart.

"Mr. D'Arcy," she said, "what is the name of that song you were singing?"

"It's called The Lass of Aughrim," said Mr. D'Arcy, "but I couldn't remember it properly. Why? Do you know it?"

"The Lass of Aughrim," she repeated. "I couldn't think of the name."

"It's a very nice air," said Mary Jane. "I'm sorry you were not in voice tonight."

"Now, Mary Jane," said Aunt Kate, "don't annoy Mr. D'Arcy. I won't have him annoyed."

Seeing that all were ready to start she shepherded them to the door, where good-night was said:

"Well, good-night, Aunt Kate, and thanks for the pleasant evening."

"Good-night, Gabriel. Good-night, Gretta!"

"Good-night, Aunt Kate, and thanks ever so much. Goodnight, Aunt Julia."

"O, good-night, Gretta, I didn't see you."

"Good-night, Mr. D'Arcy. Good-night, Miss O'Callaghan."

"Good-night, Miss Morkan."

"Good-night, again."

"Good-night, all. Safe home."

"Good-night. Good night."

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### **Wilfred Owen, "Anthem for Doomed Youth (1917)"**

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What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?

– Only the monstrous anger of the guns.

Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle

Can patter out their hasty orisons.

No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;

Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, –

The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;

And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?

Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes

Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-byes.

The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;

Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,

And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

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## Virginia Woolf, *Flush: A Biography* (1933)

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*Flush is the fictional biography based on real facts of Flush, the dog of Victorian poetess Elizabeth Barrett Browning. In this excerpt, he is offered to Elizabeth Barrett by her friend, another Victorian writer, Mary Russell Mitford. The action takes place in London, in Miss Barrett's family home*

Very slowly, very dimly, with much sniffing and pawing, Flush by degrees distinguished the outlines of several articles of furniture. That huge object by the window was perhaps a wardrobe. Next to it stood, conceivably, a chest of drawers. In the middle of the room swam up to the surface what seemed to be a table with a ring round it; and then the vague amorphous shapes of armchair and table emerged. But everything was disguised. On top of the wardrobe stood three white busts; the chest of drawers was surmounted by a bookcase; the bookcase was pasted over with crimson merino; the washing-table had a coronal of shelves upon it; on top of the shelves that were on top of the washing-table stood two more busts. Nothing in the room was itself; everything was something else. Even the window-blind was not a simple muslin blind; it was a painted fabric [1] with a design of castles and gateways and groves of trees, and there were several peasants taking a walk. Looking-glasses further distorted these already distorted objects so that there seemed to be ten busts of ten poets instead of five; four tables instead of two. And suddenly there was a more terrifying confusion still. Suddenly Flush saw staring back at him from a hole in the wall another dog with bright eyes flashing, and tongue lolling! He paused amazed. He advanced in awe.

Thus advancing, thus withdrawing, Flush scarcely heard, save as the distant drone of wind among the tree-tops, the murmur and patter of voices talking. He pursued his investigations, cautiously, nervously, as an explorer in a forest softly advances his foot, uncertain whether that shadow is a lion, or that root a cobra. At last, however, he was aware of huge objects in commotion over him; and, unstrung as he was by the experiences of the past hour, he hid himself, trembling, behind a screen. The voices ceased. A door shut. For one instant he paused, bewildered, unstrung. Then with a pounce as of clawed tigers memory fell upon him. He felt himself alone--deserted. He rushed to the door. It was shut. He pawed, he listened. He heard footsteps descending. He knew them for the familiar footsteps of his mistress. They stopped. But no--on they went, down they went. Miss Mitford was slowly, was heavily, was reluctantly descending the stairs. And as she went, as he heard her footsteps fade, panic seized upon him. Door after door shut in his face as Miss Mitford went downstairs; they shut on freedom; on fields; on hares; on grass; on his adored, his venerated mistress--on the dear old woman who had washed him and beaten him and fed him from her own plate when she had none too much to eat herself--on all he had known of happiness and love and human goodness! There! The front door slammed. He was alone. She had deserted him.

Then such a wave of despair and anguish overwhelmed him, the irrevocableness and implacability of fate so smote him, that he lifted up his head and howled aloud. A voice said "Flush." He did not hear it. "Flush," it repeated a second time. He started. He had thought himself alone. He turned. Was there something alive in the room with him? Was there something on the sofa? In the wild hope that this being, whatever it was, might open the door, that he might still rush after Miss Mitford and find her--that this was some game of hide-and-seek such as they used to play in the greenhouse at home--Flush darted to the sofa.

"Oh, Flush!" said Miss Barrett. For the first time she looked him in the face. For the first time Flush looked at the lady lying on the sofa.

Each was surprised. Heavy curls hung down on either side of Miss Barrett's face; large bright eyes shone out; a large mouth smiled. Heavy ears hung down on either side of Flush's face; his eyes, too, were large and bright: his mouth was wide. There was a likeness between them. As they gazed at each other each felt: Here am I--and then each felt: But how different! Hers was the pale worn face of an invalid, cut off from air, light, freedom. His was the warm ruddy face of a young animal; instinct

with health and energy. Broken asunder, yet made in the same mould, could it be that each completed what was dormant in the other? She might have been--all that; and he--But no. Between them lay the widest gulf that can separate one being from another. She spoke. He was dumb. She was woman; he was dog. Thus closely united, thus immensely divided, they gazed at each other. Then with one bound Flush sprang on to the sofa and laid himself where he was to lie for ever after--on the rug at Miss Barrett's feet.

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## J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (1937), chapter 1

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### AN UNEXPECTED PARTY

In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat: it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort.

It had a perfectly round door like a porthole, painted green, with a shiny yellow brass knob in the exact middle. The door opened on to a tube-shaped hall like a tunnel: a very comfortable tunnel without smoke, with panelled walls, and floors tiled and carpeted, provided with polished chairs, and lots and lots of pegs for hats and coats — the hobbit was fond of visitors. The tunnel wound on and on, going fairly but not quite straight into the side of the hill — The Hill, as all the people for many miles round called it — and many little round doors opened out of it, first on one side and then on another. No going upstairs for the hobbit: bedrooms, bathrooms, cellars, pantries (lots of these), wardrobes (he had whole rooms devoted to clothes), kitchens, dining-rooms, all were on the same floor, and indeed on the same passage. The best rooms were all on the left-hand side (going in), for these were the only ones to have windows, deep-set round windows looking over his garden, and meadows beyond, sloping down to the river.

This hobbit was a very well-to-do hobbit, and his name was Baggins. The Bagginses had lived in the neighbourhood of The Hill for time out of mind, and people considered them very respectable, not only because most of them were rich, but also because they never had any adventures or did anything unexpected: you could tell what a Baggins would say on any question without the bother of asking him. This is a story of how a Baggins had an adventure, and found himself doing and saying things altogether unexpected. He may have lost the neighbours' respect, but he gained — well, you will see whether he gained anything in the end.

The mother of our particular hobbit — what is a hobbit? I suppose hobbits need some description nowadays, since they have become rare and shy of the Big People, as they call us. They are (or were) a little people, about half our height, and smaller than the bearded Dwarves. Hobbits have no beards. There is little or no magic about them, except the ordinary everyday sort which helps them to disappear quietly and quickly when large stupid folk like you and me come blundering along, making a noise like elephants which they can hear a mile off. They are inclined to be fat in the stomach; they dress in bright colours (chiefly green and yellow); wear no shoes, because their feet grow natural leathery soles and thick warm brown hair like the stuff on their heads (which is curly); have long clever brown fingers, good-natured faces, and laugh deep fruity laughs (especially after dinner, which they have twice a day when they can get it). Now you know enough to go on with. As I was saying, the mother of this hobbit — of Bilbo Baggins, that is — was the famous Belladonna Took, one of the three remarkable daughters of the Old Took, head of the hobbits who lived across The Water, the small river that ran at the foot of The Hill. It was often said (in other families) that

long ago one of the Took ancestors must have taken a fairy wife. That was, of course, absurd, but certainly there was still something not entirely hobbitlike about them, and once in a while members of the Took-clan would go and have adventures. They discreetly disappeared, and the family hushed it up; but the fact remained that the Tookes were not as respectable as the Bagginses, though they were undoubtedly richer.

Not that Belladonna Took ever had any adventures after she became Mrs. Bungo Baggins. Bungo, that was Bilbo's father, built the most luxurious hobbit-hole for her (and partly with her money) that was to be found either under The Hill or over The Hill or across The Water, and there they remained to the end of their days. Still it is probable that Bilbo, her only son, although he looked and behaved exactly like a second edition of his solid and comfortable father, got something a bit queer in his make-up from the Took side, something that only waited for a chance to come out. The chance never arrived, until Bilbo Baggins was grown up, being about fifty years old or so, and living in the beautiful hobbit-hole built by his father, which I have just described for you, until he had in fact apparently settled down immovably.

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### Neil M. Gunn, *Second Sight* (1940)

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The young man was eagerly watching the hill-tops and could not tell her what had happened.

"Did he miss the first time?"

"Yes." Then he added. "Or may be he tried for a second one."

They stood there for a long time, but neither Harry nor Alick appeared.

"Perhaps he wounded him," said Donald.

Helen's face winced, as she asked what that would mean.

"When you wound a beast, you have to follow him", explained Donald, until you kill him!"

"Will that take time?"

"It all depends. If he is badly wounded it mightn't take so long, but sometimes you may have to follow him into another forest."

"But you must get him?"

"If you can."

Helen nodded. Pain and death, pain and death. From the hills, from the moors. The incoming surge hurt and frightened her. Not to-day! cried her spirit. Oh, not to-day!

"Does the wounded beast just run on?" she asked calmly.

"If he is badly wounded, he falls out soon. He tries to find a place. Then you stalk him there."

"And the others run on and desert him?"

"Not always. Often another stag or two will stay with him and keep guard."

"Do they?" asked Helen, heartened.

"Yes," said Donald.

They were silent for a long time. Running deer, lovely running deer. Her sympathies were with the deer and not with the hunters. This was like a betrayal, a betrayal of Harry, of all her men, the hunters that came over horizon after primeval horizon, through dark ages and medieval ages, into the September sun of this day she was alive in.

[As she shifted her stance, she glanced at Donald. His eyes never left a certain point in the hills. He had the keen concentrated expression of the hunter, the eyebrows gathered a little over far-sighted eyes. Ruthless, she thought.

And all at once she was struck by something terrifying in the aspect of man, something she had never experienced before, that separated man from her, some dark force of the spirit, that could grip male flesh. Donald never moved. He looked as if he could stand like that for ever.

The moment's sensation carried within it its own visual image—an aspect of man, a man's questing head, potent and mythological. Deep in her it would remain for ever.

For here was Helen, Helen Marway, in the bright sun, running with the invisible deer, running beyond men, in the light.]

Not pain, not death, not potent mythological faces—but light and the hooves of the running deer.

Until she felt in herself the dreadful cleavage, the awful balancing, pull and counter-pull, passion and ecstasy, between dark and light.

"There they are," said Donald.

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## W.H. Auden, "As I walked Out One Evening" (1940)

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As I walked out one evening,  
Walking down Bristol Street,  
The crowds upon the pavement  
Were fields of harvest wheat.

And down by the brimming river  
I heard a lover sing  
Under an arch of the railway:  
"Love has no ending.

"I'll love you, dear, I'll love you  
Till China and Africa meet,  
And the river jumps over the mountain  
And the salmon sing in the street,

"I'll love you till the ocean  
Is folded and hung up to dry  
And the seven stars go squawking  
Like geese about the sky.

"The years shall run like rabbits,  
For in my arms I hold  
The Flower of the Ages,  
And the first love of the world."

But all the clocks in the city  
Began to whirr and chime:  
"O let not Time deceive you,  
You cannot conquer Time.

"In the burrows of the Nightmare  
Where Justice naked is,  
Time watches from the shadow  
And coughs when you would kiss.

"In headaches and in worry  
Vaguely life leaks away,  
And Time will have his fancy  
To-morrow or to-day.

"Into many a green valley  
Drifts the appalling snow;  
Time breaks the threaded dances  
And the diver's brilliant bow.

"O plunge your hands in water,  
Plunge them in up to the wrist;  
Stare, stare in the basin  
And wonder what you've missed.

"The glacier knocks in the cupboard,  
The desert sighs in the bed,  
And the crack in the tea-cup opens  
A lane to the land of the dead.

"Where the beggars raffle the banknotes  
And the Giant is enchanting to Jack,  
And the Lily-white Boy is a Roarer,  
And Jill goes down on her back.

"O look, look in the mirror?  
O look in your distress:  
Life remains a blessing  
Although you cannot bless.

"O stand, stand at the window  
As the tears scald and start;  
You shall love your crooked neighbour  
With your crooked heart."

It was late, late in the evening,  
The lovers they were gone;  
The clocks had ceased their chiming,  
And the deep river ran on.

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## Samuel Becket, *Waiting for Godot* (1953)

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*Silence. They put on their hats.*

ESTRAGON: Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!

VLADIMIR: *(to Pozzo)*. Tell him to think.

POZZO: Give him his hat.

VLADIMIR: His hat?

POZZO: He can't think without his hat.

VLADIMIR: *(to Estragon)*. Give him his hat.

ESTRAGON: Me! After what he did to me! Never!

VLADIMIR: I'll give it to him.

*He does not move.*

ESTRAGON: *(to Pozzo)*. Tell him to go and fetch it.

POZZO: It's better to give it to him.

VLADIMIR: I'll give it to him.

*He picks up the hat and tenders it at arm's length to Lucky, who does not move.*

POZZO: You must put it on his head.

ESTRAGON: *(to Pozzo)*. Tell him to take it.

POZZO: It's better to put it on his head.

VLADIMIR: I'll put it on his head.

*He goes round behind Lucky, approaches him cautiously, puts the hat on his head and recoils smartly. Lucky does not move. Silence.*

ESTRAGON: What's he waiting for?

POZZO: Stand back! *(Vladimir and Estragon move away from Lucky. Pozzo jerks the rope. Lucky looks at Pozzo.)* Think, pig! *(Pause. Lucky begins to dance.)* Stop! *(Lucky stops.)* Forward! *(Lucky advances.)* Stop! *(Lucky stops.)* Think!

*Silence.*

LUCKY: On the other hand with regard to—

POZZO: Stop! *(Lucky stops.)* Back! *(Lucky moves back.)* Stop! *(Lucky stops.)* Turn! *(Lucky turns towards auditorium.)* Think!

*During Lucky's tirade the others react as follows.*

1) *Vladimir and Estragon all attention, Pozzo dejected and disgusted.*

2) *Vladimir and Estragon begin to protest, Pozzo's sufferings increase.*

3) *Vladimir and Estragon attentive again, Pozzo more and more agitated and groaning.*

4) *Vladimir and Estragon protest violently. Pozzo jumps up, pulls on the rope. General outcry. Lucky pulls on the rope, staggers, shouts his text. All three throw themselves on Lucky who struggles and shouts his text.*

LUCKY: Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Puncher and Wattmann of a personal God quaquaquaquaqu with white beard quaquaquaquaqu outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown but time will tell and suffers like the divine Miranda with those who for reasons unknown but time will tell are plunged in torment plunged in fire whose fire flames if that continues and who can doubt it will fire the firmament that is to say blast hell to heaven so blue still and calm so calm with a calm which even though intermittent is better than nothing but not so fast and considering what is more that as a result of the labors left unfinished crowned by the Acacacademy of Anthropopometry of Essy-in-Possy of Testew and Cunard it is established beyond all doubt all other doubt than that which clings to the labors of men that as a result of the labors unfinished of Testew and Cunnard it is established as hereinafter but not so fast for reasons unknown that as a result

of the public works of Puncher and Wattmann it is established beyond all doubt that in view of the labors of Fartov and Belcher left unfinished for reasons unknown of Testew and Cunard left unfinished it is established what many deny that man in Possy of Testew and Cunard that man in Essy that man in short that man in brief in spite of the strides of alimentation and defecation wastes and pines wastes and pines and concurrently simultaneously what is more for reasons unknown in spite of the strides of physical culture the practice of sports such as tennis football running cycling swimming flying floating riding gliding conating camogie skating tennis of all kinds dying flying sports of all sorts autumn summer winter winter tennis of all kinds hockey of all sorts penicillin and succedanea in a word I resume flying gliding golf over nine and eighteen holes tennis of all sorts in a word for reasons unknown in Feckham Peckham Fulham Clapham namely concurrently simultaneously what is more for reasons unknown but time will tell fades away I resume Fulham Clapham in a word the dead loss per head since the death of Bishop Berkeley being to the tune of one inch four ounce per head approximately by and large more or less to the nearest decimal good measure round figures stark naked in the stockinged feet in Connemara in a word for reasons unknown no matter what matter the facts are there and considering what is more much more grave that in the light of the labors lost of Steinweg and Peterman it appears what is more much more grave that in the light the light the light of the labors lost of Steinweg and Peterman that in the plains in the mountains by the seas by the rivers running water running fire the air is the same and then the earth namely the air and then the earth in the great cold the great dark the air and the earth abode of stones in the great cold alas alas in the year of their Lord six hundred and something the air the earth the sea the earth abode of stones in the great deeps the great cold on sea on land and in the air I resume for reasons unknown in spite of the tennis the facts are there but time will tell I resume alas alas on on in short in fine on on abode of stones who can doubt it I resume but not so fast I resume the skull fading fading fading and concurrently simultaneously what is more for reasons unknown in spite of the tennis on on the beard the flames the tears the stones so blue so calm alas alas on on the skull the skull the skull the skull in Connemara in spite of the tennis the labors abandoned left unfinished graver still abode of stones in a word I resume alas alas abandoned unfinished the skull the skull in Connemara in spite of the tennis the skull alas the stones Cunard (*mêlée, final vociferations*) . . . tennis . . . the stones . . . so calm . . . Cunard . . . unfinished . . . .

POZZO: His hat!

*Vladimir seizes Lucky's hat.*

*Silence of Lucky. He falls. Silence. Panting of the victors.*

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## William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* (1954), chapter 7

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Roger called from the coverts.

"Come and see!" The ground was turned over near the pig-run and there were droppings that teamed. Jack bent down to them as though he loved them. "Ralph—we need meat even if we are hunting the other thing." "If you mean going the right way, we'll hunt." They set off again, the hunters bunched a little by fear of the mentioned beast, while Jack quested ahead. They went more slowly than Ralph had bargained for; yet in a way he was glad to loiter, cradling his spear. Jack came up against some emergency of his craft and soon the procession stopped. Ralph leaned against a tree and at once the daydreams came swarming up. Jack was in charge of the hunt and there would be time to get to the mountain— Once, following his father from Chatham to Devonport, they had lived in a cottage on the edge of the moors. In the succession of houses that Ralph had known, this one stood out with particular clarity because after that house he had been sent away to school. Mummy had still been with them and Daddy had come home every day. Wild ponies came to the stone walls at the bottom of the

garden, and it had snowed. Just behind the cottage there was a sort of shed and you could lie up there, watching the flakes swirl past. You could see the damp spot where each flake died; then you could mark the first flake that lay down without melting and watch the whole ground turn white. You could go indoors when you were cold and look out of the window, past the bright copper kettle and the plate with the little blue men —

When you went to bed there was a bowl of cornflakes with sugar and cream. And the books — they stood on the shelf by the bed, leaning together with always two or three laid flat on top because he had not bothered to put them back properly. They were dog-eared and scratched. There was the bright, shining one about Topsy and Mopsy that he never read because it was about two girls; there was the one about the Magician which you read with a kind of tied-down terror, skipping page twenty-seven with the awful picture of the spider; there was a book about people who had dug things up, Egyptian things; there was the *Boy's Book of Trains*, *The Boy's Book of Ships*. Vividly they came before him; he could have reached up and touched them, could feel the weight and slow slide with which the *Mammoth Book for Boys* would come out and slither down... Everything was all right; everything was good-humoured and friendly.

The bushes crashed ahead of them. Boys flung themselves wildly from the pig track and scrabbled in the creepers, screaming. Ralph saw Jack nudged aside and fall. Then there was a creature bounding along the pig track toward him, with tusks gleaming and an intimidating grunt.

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### Harold Pinter, *The Room* (1957)

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*Scene: A room in a large house. A door down right. A gas-fire down left. A gas-stove and sink, up left. A window up centre. A table and chairs, centre. A rocking chair, left centre. The foot of a double-bed protrudes from alcove, up right.*

*BERT is at the table, wearing a cap, a magazine propped in front of him. ROSE is at the stove.*

ROSE. Here you are. This'll keep the cold out.

*She places bacon and eggs on a plate, turns off the gas and takes the plate to the table.*

It's very cold out, I can tell you. It's murder.

*She returns to the stove and pours water from the kettle into the teapot, turns off the gas and brings the teapot to the table, pours salt and sauce on the plate and cuts two slices of bread. BERT begins to eat.*

That's right. You eat that. You'll need it. You can feel it in here. Still, the room keeps warm. It's better than the basement, anyway.

*She butters the bread.*

I don't know how they live down there. It's asking for trouble. Go on. Eat it up. It'll do you good.

*She goes to the sink, wipes a cup and saucer and brings them to the table.*

If you want to go out you might as well have something inside you. Because you'll feel it when you get out.

*She pours milk into the cup.*

Just now I looked out of the window. It was enough for me. There wasn't a soul about. Can you hear the wind?

*She sits in the rocking-chair.*

I've never seen who it is. Who is it? Who lives down there? I'll have to ask. I mean, you might as well know, Bert. But whoever it is, it can't be too cosy.

*Pause.*

I think it's changed hands since I was last there. I didn't see who moved in then. I mean the first time it was taken.

*Pause.*

Anyway, I think they've gone now.

*Pause.*

But I think someone else has gone in now. I wouldn't like to live in that basement. Did you ever see the walls? They were running. This is all right for me. Go on, Bert. Have a bit more bread.

*She goes to the table and cuts a slice of bread.*

I'll have some cocoa on when you come back.

*She goes to the window and settles the curtain.*

No, this room's all right for me. I mean, you know where you are. When it's cold, for instance.

*She goes to the table.*

What about the rasher? Was it all right? It was a good one, I know, but not as good as the last lot I got in. It's the weather.

*She goes to the rocking-chair, and sits.*

Anyway, I haven't been out. I haven't been so well. I didn't feel up to it. Still, I'm much better today. I don't know about you though. I don't know whether you ought to go out. I mean, you shouldn't, straight after you've been laid up. Still. Don't worry, Bert. You go. You won't be long.

*She rocks.*

It's good you were up here, I can tell you. It's good you weren't down there, in the basement. That's no joke. Oh, I've left the tea. I've left the tea standing.

*She goes to the table and pours tea into the cup.*

No, it's not bad. Nice weak tea. Lovely weak tea. Here you are. Drink it down. I'll wait for mine. Anyway, I'll have it a bit stronger.

*She takes a plate to the sink and leaves it.*

Those walls would have finished you off. I don't know who lives down there now. Whoever it is, they're taking a big chance. Maybe they're foreigners.

*She goes to the rocking-chair and sits.*

I'd have pulled you through.

*Pause.*

There isn't room for two down there anyway. I think there was one first, before he moved out. Maybe they've got two now.

*She rocks.*

If ever they ask you, Bert, I'm quite happy where I am. We're quiet, we're all right. You're happy up here. It's not far up either, when you come in from outside. And we're not bothered. And nobody bothers us.

*Pause.*

I don't know why you have to go out. Couldn't you run it down tomorrow? I could put the fire in later. You could sit by the fire. That's what you like, Bert, of an evening. It'll be dark in a minute as well, soon.

*She rocks.*

It gets dark now.

*She rises and pours out tea at the table.*

I made plenty. Go on.

*She sits at the table.*

You looked out today? It's got ice on the roads. Oh, I know you can drive. I'm not saying you can't drive. I mentioned to Mr. Kidd this morning that you'd be doing a run today. I told him you hadn't been too grand, but I said, still, he's a marvellous driver. I wouldn't mind what time, where, nothing, Bert. You know how to drive. I told him.

*She wraps her cardigan about her.*

But it's cold. It's really cold today, chilly. I'll have you some nice cocoa on for when you get back.

*She rises, goes to the window, and looks out.*

It's quiet. Be coming on for dark. There's no one about.

*She stands, looking.*

Wait a minute.

*Pause.*

I wonder who that is.

*Pause.*

No. I thought I saw someone.

*Pause.*

No.

*She drops the curtain.*

You know what though? It looks a bit better. It's not so windy. You'd better put on your thick jersey.

*She goes to the rocking-chair, sits and rocks.*

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### **Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966)**

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In this room I wake early and lie shivering for it is very cold. At last Grace Poole, the woman who looks after me, lights a fire with paper and sticks and lumps of coal. She kneels to blow it with bellows. The paper shrivels, the sticks crackle and spit, the coal smoulders and glowers. In the end flames shoot up and they are beautiful. I get out of bed and go close to watch them and to wonder why I have been brought here. For what reason? There must be a reason. What is it that I must do? When I first came I thought it would be for a day, two days, a week perhaps. I thought that when I saw him and spoke to him I would be wise as serpents, harmless as doves. 'I give you all I have freely,' I would say, 'and I will not trouble you again if you will let me go.' But he never came.

The woman Grace sleeps in my room. At night I sometimes see her sitting at the table counting money. She holds a gold piece in her hand and smiles. When she puts it all into a little canvas bag with a drawstring and hangs the bag round her neck so that it is hidden in her dress. At first she used to look at me before she did this but I always pretended to be asleep, now she does not trouble about me. She drinks from a bottle on the table then she goes to bed, or puts her arms on the table, her head on her arms, and sleeps. But I lie watching the fire die out. When she is snoring I get up and I have tasted the drink without colour in the bottle. The first time I did this I wanted to spit it out but managed to swallow it. When I got back into bed I could remember more and think again. I was not so cold.

There is one window high up – you cannot see out of it. My bed had doors but they have been taken away. There is no much else in the room. Her bed, a black press, the table in the middle and two black chairs carved with fruit and flowers. They have high backs and no arms. The dressing room is very small, the room next to this one is hung with tapestry. Looking at the tapestry one day I recognized my mother dressed in an evening gown but with bare feet. She looked away from me, over my head just as she used to do. I wouldn't tell Grace this. Her name oughtn't to be Grace. Names matter, like when he wouldn't call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents, her pretty clothes and her looking-glass.

There is no looking-glass here and I don't know what I am like now. I remember watching myself brush my hair and how my eyes looked back at me. The girl I saw was myself yet not quite

myself. Long ago when I was a child and very lonely I tried to kiss her. But the glass was between us – hard, cold and misted over with my breath. Now they have taken everything away. What am I doing in this place and who am I? (...)

When night comes, and [Grace Poole] has had several drinks and sleeps, it is easy to take the keys. I know now where she keeps them. Then I open the door and walk into their world. It is, as I always knew, made of cardboard. I have seen it before somewhere, this cardboard world where everything is coloured brown or dark or yellow that has no light in it. As I walk along the passages I wish I could see what is behind the cardboard. They tell me I am in England but I don't believe them. We lost our way to England. When? Where? I don't remember, but we lost it. Was it that evening in the cabin when he found me talking to the young man who brought me my food? I put my arms round his neck and asked him to help me. He said, 'I didn't know what to do, sir.' I smashed the glasses and plates against the porthole. I hoped it would break and the sea come in. A woman came and then an older man who cleared up the broken thing on the floor. He did not look at me while he was doing it. The third man said drink this and you will sleep. I drank it and I said, 'It isn't like it seems to be.' – 'I know. It never is,' he said. And then I slept. When I woke it was a different sea. Colder. It was that night, I think, that we changed course and lost our way to England. This cardboard house where I walk at night is not England.

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### **Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1966)**

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B. [ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN are two minor characters in Shakespeare's Hamlet. Here they are lost in Tom

Stoppard's 1966 rewriting of Hamlet.]

ROS. What are you playing at?

GUIL. Words, words. They're all we have to go on.

(Pause.)

ROS. Shouldn't we be doing something constructive ?

GUIL. What did you have in mind ? ... A short, blunt human pyramid... ?

ROS. We could go.

GUIL. Where?

ROS. After him1.

GUIL. Why? They've got us placed now – if we start moving around, we'll all be chasing each other all night.

(Hiatus.)

ROS (at footlights): How very intriguing! (Turns.) I feel like a spectator – an appalling prospect. The only thing that makes it

bearable is the irrational belief that somebody interesting will come on in a minute....

GUIL. See anyone?

ROS. No. You?

GUIL. No. (At footlights.) What a fine persecution – to be kept intrigued without ever quite being enlightened ... (Pause.)

We've had no practice.

ROS. We could play at questions.

GUIL. What good would that do?

ROS. Practice!

GUIL. Statement! One-love.

ROS. Cheating!

GUIL. How?  
ROS. I hadn't started yet?  
GUIL. Statement. Two-love.  
ROS. Are you counting that?  
GUIL. What?  
ROS. Are you counting that?  
GUIL. Foul. No repetitions. Three-love. First game to ...  
ROS. I'm not going to play if you're going to be like that.  
GUIL. Whose serve?  
ROS. Hah?  
GUIL. Foul. No grunts. Love-one.  
ROS. Whose go?  
GUIL. Why?  
ROS. Why not?  
GUIL. What for?  
ROS. Foul. No synonyms. One-all.  
GUIL. What in God's name is going on?  
ROS. Foul. No rhetoric. Two-one.  
GUIL. What does it all add up to?  
ROS. Can't you guess?  
GUIL. Were you addressing me?  
ROS. Is there anyone else?  
GUIL. Who?  
ROS. How would I know?  
GUIL. Why do you ask?  
ROS. Are you serious?  
GUIL. Was that rhetoric?  
ROS. No.  
GUIL. Statement! Two-all. Game point.  
ROS. What's the matter with you today?  
GUIL. When?  
ROS. What?  
GUIL. Are you deaf?  
ROS. Am I dead?  
GUIL. Yes or no?  
ROS. Is there a choice?  
GUIL. Is there a God?  
ROS. Foul! No non sequiturs, three—two, one game all.

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## Angela Carter, “The Fall River Axe Murders” (1987)

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Lizzie Borden with an axe  
Gave her father forty whacks  
When she saw what she had done  
She gave her mother forty one  
Children’s rhyme

Early in the morning of the fourth of August, 1892.

Hot, hot, hot ... very early in the morning, before the factory whistle, but, even at this hour, everything shimmers and quivers under the attack of the white, furious sun already high in the still air.

Its inhabitants have never come to terms with these hot, humid summers – for it is the humidity more than the heat that makes them intolerable; the weather clings like a low fever you cannot shake off. The Indians who lived here first had the sense to take off their buckskins when hot weather came and sit up to their necks in ponds; not so the descendants of the industrious, self-mortifying saints who imported the Protestant ethic wholesale into a country intended for the siesta and are proud, proud! of flying in the face of nature. In most latitudes with summers like these, everything slows down, then. You stay all day in penumbra behind drawn blinds and closed shutters; you wear clothes loose enough to make your own breeze to cool yourself when you infrequently move. But the ultimate decade of the last century finds us at the high point of hard work, here; all will soon be bustle, men will go out into the furnace of the morning well wrapped up in flannel underclothes, linen shirts, vests and coats and trousers of sturdy woollen cloth, and they garrotte themselves with neckties, too, they think it is so virtuous to be uncomfortable.

And today it is the middle of a heat-wave; so early in the morning and the mercury has touched the middle eighties, already, and shows no sign of slowing down its headlong ascent.

As far as clothes were concerned, women only appeared to get off more lightly. On this morning, when, after breakfast and the performance of a few household duties, Lizzie Borden will murder her parents, she will, on rising, don a simple cotton frock – but, under that, went a long, starched cotton petticoat; another short, starched cotton petticoat; long drawers; woollen stockings; a chemise; and a whalebone corset that took her viscera in a stern hand and squeezed them very tightly. She also strapped a heavy linen napkin between her legs because she was menstruating.

In all these clothes, out of sorts and nauseous as she was, in this dementing heat, her belly in a vice, she will heat up a flat-iron on a stove and press handkerchiefs with the heated iron until it is time for her to go down to the cellar woodpile to collect the hatchet with which our imagination – ‘Lizzie Borden with an axe’ – always equips her, just as we always visualise St Catherine rolling along her wheel, the emblem of her passion.

Soon, in just as many clothes as Miss Lizzie wears, if less fine, Bridget, the servant girl, will slop kerosene on a sheet of last night’s newspaper crumpled with a stick or two of kindling. When the fire settles down, she will cook breakfast; the fire will keep her suffocating company as she washes up afterwards.

In a serge suit, one look at which would be enough to bring you out in prickly heat, Old Borden will perambulate the perspiring town, truffling for money like a pig until he will return home mid-morning to keep a pressing appointment with destiny.

But nobody here is up and about, yet; it is still early morning, before the factory whistle, the perfect stillness of hot weather, a sky already white, the shadowless light of New England like blows from the eye of God, and the sea, white, and the river, white.

If we have largely forgotten the physical discomforts of the itching, oppressive garments of the past and the corrosive effects of perpetual physical discomfort on the nerves, then we have mercifully forgotten, too, the smells of the past, the domestic odours – ill-washed flesh; infrequently changed underwear; chamber-pots; slop-pails; inadequately plumbed privies; rotting food; unattended teeth; and the streets are no fresher than indoors, the omnipresent acidity of horse piss and dung, drains, sudden stench of old death from butchers' shops, the amniotic horror of the fishmonger.

You would drench your handkerchief with eau de cologne and press it to your nose. You would splash yourself with parma violet so that the reek of fleshly decay you always carried with you was overlaid by that of the embalming parlour. You would abhor the air you breathed.

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## **Ian McEwan, *The Daydreamer* (1994)**

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### The Cat

It was just one such afternoon, a Tuesday as it happened, four o'clock and already the light fading, curtains drawn and lights on, when Peter eased himself on to the carpet where William lay before a bright fire whose flames were curling round a fat elm log. Down the chimney came the moan of the freezing wind as it whipped across the rooftops. Peter had sprinted from the bus stop with Kate to keep warm. Now he was safely indoors with his old friend who was pretending to be younger than his years by rolling on to his back and letting his front paws flop helplessly. He wanted his chest tickled. As Peter began to move his fingers lightly through the fur, the rumbling noise grew louder, so loud that every bone in the old cat's body rattled. And then, William stretched out a paw to Peter's fingers and tried to draw them up higher. Peter let the cat guide his hand.

'Do you want me to tickle your chin?' he murmured. But no. The cat wanted to be touched right at the base of his throat. Peter felt something hard there. It moved from side to side when he touched it. Something had got trapped in the fur. Peter propped himself on an elbow in order to investigate. He parted the fur. At first he thought he was looking at a piece of jewellery, a little silver tag. But there was no chain, and as he poked and peered he saw that it was not metal at all, but polished bone, oval and flattened in the centre, and most curiously of all, that it was attached to William Cat's skin. The piece of bone fitted well between his forefinger and thumb. He tightened his grip and gave a tug. William Cat's purr grew even louder. Peter pulled again, downwards, and this time he felt something give.

Looking down through the fur, and parting it with the tips of his fingers, he saw that he had opened up a small slit in the cat's skin. It was as if he were holding the handle of a zip. Again he pulled, and now there was a dark opening two inches long. William Cat's purr was coming from in there. Perhaps, Peter thought, I'll see his heart beating. A paw was gently pushing against his fingers again. William Cat wanted him to go on.

And this is what he did. He unzipped the whole cat from throat to tail. Peter wanted to part the skin to peep inside. But he did not wish to appear nosy. He was just about to call out to Kate when there was a movement, a stirring inside the cat, and from the opening in the fur there came a faint pink glow which grew brighter. And suddenly, out of William Cat climbed a, well, a thing, a creature. But Peter was not certain that it was really there to touch, for it seemed to be made entirely of light. And while it did not have whiskers or a tail, or a purr, or even fur, or four legs, everything about it seemed to say 'cat'. It was the very essence of the word, the heart of the idea. It was a quiet, slinky, curvy fold of pink and purple light, and it was climbing out of the cat.

‘You must be William’s spirit,’ Peter said aloud. ‘Or are you a ghost?’

The light made no sound, but it understood. It seemed to say, without actually speaking the words, that it was both these things, and much more besides.

When it was clear of the cat, which continued to lie on its back on the carpet in front of the re, the cat spirit drifted into the air, and floated up to Peter’s shoulder where it settled. Peter was not frightened. He felt the glow of the spirit on his cheek. And then the light drifted behind his head, out of sight. He felt it touch his neck and a warm shudder ran down his back. The cat spirit took hold of something knobbly at the top of his spine and drew it down, right down his back, and as his own body opened up, he felt the cool air of the room tickle the warmth of his insides.

It was the oddest thing, to climb out of your body, just step out of it and leave it lying on the carpet like a shirt you had just taken off. Peter saw his own glow, which was purple and the purest white. The two spirits hovered in the air facing each other. And then Peter suddenly knew what he wanted to do, what he had to do. He floated towards William Cat and hovered. The body stood open, like a door, and it looked so inviting, so welcoming. He dropped down and stepped inside. How new it was, to dress yourself as a cat. It was not squelchy, as he thought all insides must be. It was dry and warm. He lay on his back and slipped his arms into William’s front legs. Then he wiggled his legs into William’s back legs. His head fitted perfectly inside the cat’s head. He glanced across at his own body just in time to see William Cat’s spirit disappear inside.

Using his paws, Peter was able to zip himself up easily. He stood, and took a few steps. What a delight, to walk on four soft white paws. He could see his whiskers springing out from the sides of his face, and he felt his tail curling behind him. His tread was light, and his fur was like the most comfortable of old woollen jumpers. As his pleasure in being a cat grew, his heart swelled, and a tingling sensation deep in his throat became so strong that he could actually hear himself. Peter was purring. He was Peter Cat, and over there, was William Boy.

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**Liz Lochhead, *Blood and Ice* (first played in 1982 / 2003 revised text)**

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**ACT ONE** *In an England of darkness and loneliness, MARY SHELLEY, a young widow in her late twenties, is stretched out asleep.*

*The ‘nightmare is upon her’, the image is that of the famous Fuseli painting and there is perhaps an actual and physical manifestation of the smothering homunculous on her chest that appears momentarily in a flash of lightning and disappears again in the beat of darkness that follows it. Certainly, shadows move. A dream whisper breaks her sleep.*

CREATURE’S VOICE. Why did you make me?... Frankenstein?

MARY wakes with a gasp of fear. Dead silence. She breathes, listening. Wind blows the window open, it bangs once, twice, three times. She gets up and, barefoot, pads across the floorboards to fasten it, her relief palpable.

*Ideal or important pieces of set and furniture are a double-sided oval mirror on a stand (a cheval glass) and a nightmarish perhaps oversized rocking horse. It rocks now of its own will, but when MARY turns around, it stops.*

MARY (sighing relief). Nothing.

CREATURE’S VOICE (a whisper). Frankenstein?

MARY. Such dreams.

Night after night, such bad dreams.

I go to my new book, for I will write it, I must!

And dreams of that old one, the one that’s done and dusted, in print and out there in the world, making whatever stumbling way it can, for better or worse – dreams of my infamous creation come back to haunt me.

Come back to haunt me and I cannot shake it off.

I have the strongest presentiment something terrible is about to happen.

Last night I dreamed, I dreamed I was seventeen, we were back in Poland Street, I found my little baby, my firstborn, it was not dead but... cold merely. Shelley and I rubbed it before the fire and it lived! Awoke and found no baby.

No Shelley.

CREATURE'S VOICE. Why?

MARY. Don't think of him.

When they found him washed up, his eyes, his face, all parts of him... not protected by his clothes were eaten away, they only knew him by – in his pocket they found... that volume of Keats he carried with him always.

Sometimes I wake up. Cold. Bathed in a moon sweat. And I rub myself slowly to life again.

The dead of night.

Don't think of him.

*More movement, shadows, and suddenly:*

SHELLEY'S VOICE. Oh, Mary! You don't seem to care how much it grieves me that you won't sail with me...

Come and see her.

New arrived from Genoa, *The Ariel*, the bonniest boat that ever sailed the seas!

MARY. Don't think of him.

*She goes to her writing desk with great effort of will.*

*Loud cries of 'Mama, Mama, Mama' and suddenly a very flesh and blood bonny wee six-year-old CHILD with girlish soft long fair hair, runs in, capering with a toy windmill or a ball, some toy in motion. MARY, laughing, runs and catches him up and tickles him. He giggles and squirms.*

Oh, Perciflo, you rascal! Your mama's best boy, her only! What am I to do with you! Your mama is busy, she must write her new storybook and earn lots of pennies for her big bonny best boy!

Nurse! Nurse! Come and fetch him, please!

*NURSE appears, a quick in-and-out shadow of a girl who takes the CHILD, kicking, under her arms, and exits with him. MARY calls offstage after them.*

See Percy Florence gets to bed again and has himself a proper night's sleep – and no argument about it, my naughty little, my nice little, my naughty little man!

*Alone again, she sits at her work.*

My sweet, sweet boy, my only consolation...

Oh, how am I to take care of you, all by myself? This new book of mine will save us both. Must! *The Last Man*... such a good fantastical idea for a philosophical and terrifying novel. If I work constantly on this one and manage a mere thousand words a day, then in only a hundred days... allow two more months for copying and revisions and... surely on the strength alone of the stir that surrounded my last publication –

CREATURE'S VOICE. Frankenstein, why did you make me?

MARY. Well, it wasn't for the money anyway. Nor for the wager, or the challenge of the competition –

*Shadows move.*

BYRON'S VOICE. I'll set us a little contest. Why should we content ourselves with translated, traditional horrors, all bookish and stilted. Home-grown ones are the best. Who can make the most stirring unnatural tale?

MARY. There were three of us.

SHELLEY'S VOICE. Mary!

BYRON'S VOICE. Mary!

CLAIRE'S VOICE (a giggle). Mary!

MARY (*as if silencing her*). There were three of us!

*Shadows move.*

ELISES'S VOICE. Mrs Shelley, madame! Milord Byron's man says he is here to fetch both the ladies –

MARY *firmly suppresses these voices from the past.*

MARY. There was Shelley... and Byron... and me.

CREATURE'S VOICE *overlaps and echoes.*

CREATURE'S VOICE. Me... Me... Me!... Tell me about the night you made me, Frankenstein.

MARY *blows out the candle, casts off her heavy, dark dressing gown and is a laughing eighteen-year-old in white muslin back in Switzerland, 1816 – summer, daytime, in a totally bright and different light. The lake and Mont Blanc above it.*

*Wet and naked, capering,*

SHELLEY, a boy of twenty-two, wrapped only in a lace tablecloth, spins her round and kisses her.

SHELLEY. Mary Godwin, you are such a prude! Such blushes! Come here until I kiss them better.

MARY. Shelley, how could you? Honestly... put some clothes on.

SHELLEY. Swimming, Mary. I want to learn to swim.

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## **Bernardine Evaristo, *Girl, Woman, Other* (2019)**

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### **Chapter 3**

#### **Shirley**

Shirley

(not yet Mrs King)

arrives at Peckham School for Boys and Girls

a former Victorian workhouse with two rectangular blocks of concrete attached incongruously to both ends of it

approached by what was once called the Paupers' Path

leading up to its castle-sized doors

she's wearing a light grey pencil skirt and jacket, powder-blue blouse, grey neck-tie, black patent leather court shoes, and her pride

as she passes through the formidable doors into the wood-panelled entrance

wide staircases sweep up either side of the lobby ascending to the upper floors

long corridors extend in two directions either side of her

she's way too early, wanders through the empty school, explores its light-filled classrooms, imagines

its essence pouring into her soul, yes, her very soul

she isn't going to be a good teacher but a great one

one who'll be remembered by generations of working-class children as the person who made them feel capable of achieving anything in life

a local girl made good, come back to generously pass on

her parents, Winsome and Clovis, are proud of her for making it to university to read History and thereafter gaining a Certificate in Education

she's the one who's made it, not her older brothers

who didn't have to do any housework or even wash their own clothes, whereas she had to spend her Saturday mornings doing both

who were given first helpings at meals they never had to cook, and extra portions because they were growing lads, including mega-helpings of the most desirable desserts

who weren't punished for speaking their mind, whereas she was sent to her room at the slightest sign of insurrection, keep your thoughts to yourself, Shir! and while it's true they got the strap and she didn't – for going out without permission or not coming home on time from school – it was only because she never broke the rules everyone thought Tony and Errol were destined to be football stars, Pelés in the making, one step away from World Cup glory until they reached sixteen and their early talent didn't burgeon into a professional one, and their junior club memberships were terminated they left secondary school early, became clerks pushing pens instead of kicking a ball around Wembley she's the Family Success Story

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### Kim Sherwood, *A Wild and True Relation* (2023)

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If there was anything more frightening than God's fury, it was Tom West, trying to hold his temper.

The skies rained salt water. The world turned upside down, waves lifted into clouds. High tide blanketed Bantham Beach and slammed against the cliffs. The Avon surged, breaking its banks. The tempest destroyed Grace Tucker's garden, ripping up tender buds and frostbitten roots, until finally forcing the front door of the cottage open, admitting the violence of the night.

Grace stood in the parlour, boxed between Tom West, the boy Benedict and the struggling fire – the heart of her home, black from providing heat for food and light for the table, which was stained too, with ink spills and the scratches of a child's first pen strokes. Now, the flames were reduced to embers, just as the kitchen seemed to shrink with Benedict hovering in the cross-passage and Tom leaning against Molly's bedroom door. The column of Tom's body had collapsed, those huge shoulders dragging on a failing back. In one hand, he held her journal. In the other, a pistol.

'Please, Tom,' said Grace. 'Tell me what's happened.'

Tom raised the book. In the firelight, he could make out where Grace had pressed nib to leather: *A True Relation of My Life and Deeds*.

'You must have kept this little confessional somewhere safe when I came around. Strange, to find it out tonight, with all the fineries I bought you. As if you was packing. As if you was running, while Devon drowns. And with my name on nearly every page.'

'It has only my life,' said Grace. 'I write it for Molly. And – for myself. There is nothing harmful in that. Please, tell me what is wrong – why have you brought this boy here?'

In the doorway, Benedict felt every bit the boy she called him. He had never met Tom's lover before. None of the crew had. Whenever they came ashore, ship burdened with barrels of brandy or chests of tea, Tom came here. The crew whispered about it: Tom West and his lover, a woman with a child begot by another man, Grace Tucker's dead husband, Kit. But never in front of Tom. No one told him he was a lucky devil, having a lady of quality to lie with whenever he wished, the likes of her reduced to a cottage like this, and only him for company; no one said how strange it was, Tom caring for a bairn with nothing of his blood in its veins. Yet this was more than a warm bed and pottage in the morning. Benedict understood that now, but not why Tom had raced here, tonight, as cattle drowned and church bells clamoured, rung by the gale. What did Grace Tucker mean to the men they'd dragged from the river, smugglers and Revenue bleeding alike?

He shuffled back. 'We should go,' he said. 'The horses—'

'No harm in it?' Tom said, cutting through him. 'Then I take it there is none of my movements in this masterpiece of yours?'

'What do you mean?' said Grace.

‘A little late to play the fool, my love.’

‘I play at nothing.’

‘No?’ said Tom. ‘Then it weren’t your words in the ears of Dick English that got me and my men ambushed tonight?’

‘Ambushed?’ Grace edged back, the heat of the fire against her calves.

‘Captain Dick English and his Revenue was waiting by the tidal road at Aveton Gifford,’ said Tom. ‘The wind has been up all week. Only you knew I’d venture it anyway. Only you knew the profit at stake, and the satisfaction I’d get, seeing a storm in view and riding it. Only you knew where I’d bring the goods in. Nero and Daniel are dead. Shot while rowing. No warning, no chance.’

Grace paled. ‘Are you hurt?’

Tom laughed. He squeezed the pistol’s walnut grip, his fist swelling like a joint of pork strung too tight. ‘Would it matter?’

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## **Xiaolu Guo, *Call Me Ishmaelle* (2025)**

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CALL ME ISHMAELLE. But know that I have not always gone by this name. Names carry much power and in my own case that power has defined my story. It is a saga that begins and ends with the sea, and in the middle concerns a fantastical creature. I will need to tell it to you gradually. Some memories are as clear as day, others cloudy, and I must pause to recover them. I hope I will be true, both to what happened and to what I am. But first, the sea.

I was born in a windswept cottage on the coast of Kent in the year of 1843. It was the month of May, when the geraniums of our village graveyard burst into mauve and white blooms. That was an auspicious sign for a birth. But the night I was born there was a storm, and according to my mother, a great flock of seagulls hovered above our roof. They squawked and squealed, just as I did, a slimy wrinkled creature in my mother’s arms.

I grew up strong. I learned to walk like all children, but I also learned to swim. One summer, I remember the passing fin of a dolphin as I swam with my brother through the bay. That winter I watched grey seals and their pups, and I knew they came ashore to give birth on our beaches. During my early childhood, my brother and I lived in innocence, away from the great world, absorbed by sand, waves and marvels of the ocean.

In that great world, Queen Victoria sat on the throne of England. I knew nothing about kings and queens. But I remember when I was seven years old, my father told me that Queen Victoria was almost assassinated by an army officer! Miraculously, the queen survived and she managed to attend the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace the following year. I was very impressed by the idea of this woman king, who had already borne several children. I, who had never ventured beyond the coast of Kent, imagined within the plain stone walls of our house that I was Queen Victoria. I imagined the way she might walk and eat and talk. But, Ishmaelle, I told myself, you are too lowly to imagine a grand queen’s life. And it was true. The only rich person I knew was the foul-tempered butcher near our house who kept pigs, rabbits and chickens in his backyard.

We lived by the sea near Saxonham, on the salty fields of Denge Marsh. Saxonham was a village – not much more than a hamlet in truth – a few miles from Dungeness. Our cottage was surrounded by hard shingle and bitter eelgrass. God seemed to have forgotten us from the very beginning. The two front windows overlooked the beach. At the back of the house, in open fields, were three large windmills. They had been there for as long as I could remember. My father said one of the three was built by my grandfather with the help of the villagers. There were windmills all along the marshes stretching as far as the port town of Lydd, where goods and horses were sold at market. Those windmills stood on mud and marshes amid samphire and pink thrift flowers, the only

warm glow around our house. They looked ghostly, especially at night, but they were full of life forms. Sea thrift loved to grow around their base in the spring. Then there were the robins and field puffins, they too liked to nest about the windmills.

When I was a young girl, I loved picking the white sea campions that grew on the coastal rocks. We called these flowers dead man's bells, though they had another grisly name: witches' thimbles. They grew on the edges of cliffs, and that was bad luck. Nothing should live on the edges of sea cliffs unless it is a sad barnacle or a fearful clam, my mother said. She told me that we should not pick white sea campions, otherwise some terrible disaster would befall us. But I did, in spring and summer. I picked them and made gallants and hung them around my neck. I hung them on our doorknobs too. I loved those little white creamy petals. Dead man's bells, I heard the children sing. Dead man's bells ring. One day, on the dock where my father worked as a carpenter, he vomited blood. A week later he was dead. He left behind my mother, my brother Joseph and my three-month-old sister who howled all day and all night. My poor mother had to work as a maid in the village. Every day, she left the crying baby with me and walked across the marsh to the village. I became a little witch. I stole potatoes and pig intestines from the butcher. I strolled to Saxonham and entered farmers' houses to steal clothing while they were out milking cows. But a witch with witches' thimbles was no good. I was a curse. I had toyed with fate, and disaster came.

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# AMERICAN LITERATURE

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## Edgar Allan Poe, “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1843)

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TRUE!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses—not destroyed—not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily—how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

[It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! He had the eye of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees—very gradually—I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded—with what caution—with what foresight—with what dissimulation I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it—oh so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly—very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man’s sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha! would a madman have been so wise as this?] And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously—oh, so cautiously—cautiously (for the hinges creaked)—I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights—every night just at midnight—but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he has passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch’s minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night had I felt the extent of my own powers—of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea; and perhaps he heard me; for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you may think that I drew back—but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness, (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear of robbers,) and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing it on steadily, steadily.

I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in bed, crying out—”Who’s there?”

I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening;—just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief—oh, no!—it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul

when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself—"It is nothing but the wind in the chimney—it is only a mouse crossing the floor," or "It is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp." Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions: but he had found all in vain. All in vain; because Death, in approaching him had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel—although he neither saw nor heard—to feel the presence of my head within the room.

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little—a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it—you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily—until, at length a simple dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and fell full upon the vulture eye.

It was open—wide, wide open—and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness—all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot.

And have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over-acuteness of the sense?—now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew that sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

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## Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850)

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### CHAPTER I THE PRISON-DOOR

A throng of bearded men, in sad-coloured garments and grey steeple-crowned hats, inter-mixed with women, some wearing hoods, and others bareheaded, was assembled in front of a wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes.

The founders of a new colony, whatever Utopia of human virtue and happiness they might originally project, have invariably recognised it among their earliest practical necessities to allot a portion of the virgin soil as a cemetery, and another portion as the site of a prison. In accordance with this rule it may safely be assumed that the forefathers of Boston had built the first prison-house somewhere in the Vicinity of Cornhill, almost as seasonably as they marked out the first burial-ground, on Isaac Johnson's lot, and round about his grave, which subsequently became the nucleus of all the congregated sepulchres in the old churchyard of King's Chapel. Certain it is that, some fifteen or twenty years after the settlement of the town, the wooden jail was already marked with weather-stains and other indications of age, which gave a yet darker aspect to its beetle-browed and gloomy front. The rust on the ponderous iron-work of its oaken door looked more antique than anything else in the New World. Like all that pertains to crime, it seemed never to have known a youthful era. Before this ugly

edifice, and between it and the wheel-track of the street, was a grass-plot, much overgrown with burdock, pig-weed, apple-pern, and such unsightly vegetation, which evidently found something congenial in the soil that had so early borne the black flower of civilised society, a prison. But on one side of the portal, and rooted almost at the threshold, was a wild rose-hush, covered, in this month of June, with its delicate gems, which might be imagined to offer their fragrance and fragile beauty to the prisoner as he went in, and to the condemned criminal as he came forth to his doom, in token that the deep heart of Nature could pity and be kind to him.

This rose-bush, by a strange chance, has been kept alive in history; but whether it had merely survived out of the stern old wilderness, so long after the fall of the gigantic pines and oaks that originally overshadowed it, or whether, as there is far authority for believing, it had sprung up under the footsteps of the sainted Ann Hutchinson as she entered the prison-door, we shall not take upon us to determine. Finding it so directly on the threshold of our narrative, which is now about to issue from that inauspicious portal, we could hardly do otherwise than pluck one of its flowers, and present it to the reader. It may serve, let us hope, to symbolise some sweet moral blossom that may be found along the track, or relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow.

## CHAPTER XVIII A FLOOD OF SUNSHINE

‘Let us not look back,’ answered Hester Prynne. ‘The past is gone! Wherefore should we linger upon it now? See! With this symbol I undo it all, and make it as if it had never been!’ So speaking, she undid the clasp that fastened the scarlet letter, and, taking it from her bosom, threw it to a distance among the withered leaves. The mystic token alighted on the hither verge of the stream. With a hand’s-breadth further flight, it would have fallen into the water, and have give, the little brook another woe to carry onward, besides the unintelligible tale which it still kept murmuring about. But there lay the embroidered letter, glittering like a lost jewel, which some ill-fated wanderer might pick up, and thenceforth be haunted by strange phantoms of guilt, sinkings of the heart, and unaccountable misfortune. The stigma gone, Hester heaved a long, deep sigh, in which the burden of shame and anguish departed from her spirit. O exquisite relief! She had not known the weight until she felt the freedom! By another impulse, she took off the formal cap that confined her hair, and down it fell upon her shoulders, dark and rich, with at once a shadow and a light in its abundance, and imparting the charm of softness to her features. There played around her mouth, and beamed out of her eyes, a radiant and tender smile, that seemed gushing from the very heart of womanhood. A crimson flush was glowing on her cheek, that had been long so pale. Her sex, her youth, and the whole richness of her beauty, came back from what men call the irrevocable past, and clustered themselves with her maiden hope, and a happiness before unknown, within the magic circle of this hour. And, as if the gloom of the earth and sky had been but the effluence of these two mortal hearts, it vanished with their sorrow. All at once, as with a sudden smile of heaven, forth burst the sunshine, pouring a very flood into the obscure forest, gladdening each green leaf, transmuting the yellow fallen ones to gold, and gleaming adown the gray trunks of the solemn trees. The objects that had made a shadow hitherto, embodied the brightness now. The course of the little brook might be traced by its merry gleam afar into the wood’s heart of mystery, which had become a mystery of joy. Such was the sympathy of Nature—that wild, heathen Nature of the forest, never subjugated by human law, nor illumined by higher truth—with the bliss of these two spirits! Love, whether newly-born, or aroused from a death-like slumber, must always create a sunshine, filling the heart so full of radiance, that it overflows upon the outward world. Had the forest still kept its gloom, it would have been bright in Hester’s eyes, and bright in Arthur Dimmesdale’s!

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## Walt Whitman, "I hear America Singing," (1860)

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I hear America Singing  
I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,  
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe  
and strong,  
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,  
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off  
work,  
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the  
deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,  
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing  
as he stands,  
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the  
morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,  
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at  
work, or of the girl sewing or washing,  
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,  
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young  
fellows, robust, friendly,  
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

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## Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), chapter 6

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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.

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### Emily Dickinson, "My Life had stood - a Loaded Gun -" (c. 1863)

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My Life had stood - a Loaded Gun -  
In Corners - till a Day  
The Owner passed - identified -  
And carried Me away -

And now We roam in Sovereign Woods -  
And now We hunt the Doe -  
And every time I speak for Him  
The Mountains straight reply -

And do I smile, such cordial light  
Opon the Valley glow -  
It is as a Vesuvian face  
Had let it's pleasure through -

And when at Night - Our good Day done -  
I guard My Master's Head -  
'Tis better than the Eider Duck's  
Deep Pillow - to have shared -

To foe of His - I'm deadly foe -  
None stir the second time -  
On whom I lay a Yellow Eye -  
Or an emphatic Thumb -

Though I than He - may longer live  
He longer must - than I -  
For I have but the power to kill,  
Without - the power to die -

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## Emily Dickinson, "Hope" (1891)

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"Hope" is the thing with feathers -  
That perches in the soul -  
And sings the tune without the words -  
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -  
And sore must be the storm -  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chilliest land -  
And on the strangest Sea -  
Yet - never - in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb - of me.

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## Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895)

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The youth cringed as if discovered in a crime. By heavens, they had won after all! The imbecile line had remained and become victors. He could hear cheering.

He lifted himself upon his toes and looked in the direction of the fight. A yellow fog lay wallowing on the treetops. From beneath it came the clatter of musketry. Hoarse cries told of an advance.

He turned away amazed and angry. He felt that he had been wronged.

He had fled, he told himself, because annihilation approached. He had done a good part in saving himself, who was a little piece of the army. He had considered the time, he said, to be one in which it was the duty of every little piece to rescue itself if possible. Later the officers could fit the little pieces together again, and make a battle front. If none of the little pieces were wise enough to save themselves from the flurry of death at such a time, why, then, where would be the army? It was all plain that he had proceeded according to very correct and commendable rules. His actions had been sagacious things. They had been full of strategy. They were the work of a master's legs.

Thoughts of his comrades came to him. The brittle blue line had withstood the blows and won. He grew bitter over it. It seemed that the blind ignorance and stupidity of those little pieces had betrayed him. He had been overturned and crushed by their lack of sense in holding the position, when intelligent deliberation would have convinced them that it was impossible. He, the enlightened man who looks afar in the dark, had fled because of his superior perceptions and knowledge. He felt a great anger against his comrades. He knew it could be proved that they had been fools.

He wondered what they would remark when later he appeared in camp. His mind heard howls of derision. Their density would not enable them to understand his sharper point of view.

He began to pity himself acutely. He was ill used. He was trodden beneath the feet of an iron injustice. He had proceeded with wisdom and from the most righteous motives under heaven's blue only to be frustrated by hateful circumstances.

A dull, animal-like rebellion against his fellows, war in the abstract, and fate grew within him. He shambled along with bowed head, his brain in a tumult of agony and despair. When he looked loweringly up, quivering at each sound, his eyes had the expression of those of a criminal who thinks

his guilt little and his punishment great, and knows that he can find no words.

He went from the fields into a thick woods, as if resolved to bury himself. He wished to get out of hearing of the crackling shots which were to him like voices.

The ground was cluttered with vines and bushes, and the trees grew close and spread out like bouquets. He was obliged to force his way with much noise. The creepers, catching against his legs, cried out harshly as their sprays were torn from the barks of trees. The swishing saplings tried to make known his presence to the world. He could not conciliate the forest. As he made his way, it was always calling out protestations. When he separated embraces of trees and vines the disturbed foliages waved their arms and turned their face leaves toward him. He dreaded lest these noisy motions and cries should bring men to look at him. So he went far, seeking dark and intricate places.

After a time the sound of musketry grew faint and the cannon boomed in the distance. The sun, suddenly apparent, blazed among the trees. The insects were making rhythmical noises. They seemed to be grinding their teeth in unison. A woodpecker stuck his impudent head around the side of a tree. A bird flew on lighthearted wing.

Off was the rumble of death. It seemed now that Nature had no ears.

This landscape gave him assurance. A fair field holding life. It was the religion of peace. It would die if its timid eyes were compelled to see blood. He conceived Nature to be a woman with a deep aversion to tragedy.

He threw a pine cone at a jovial squirrel, and he ran with chattering fear. High in a treetop he stopped, and, poking his head cautiously from behind a branch, looked down with an air of trepidation.

The youth felt triumphant at this exhibition. There was the law, he said. Nature had given him a sign. The squirrel, immediately upon recognizing danger, had taken to his legs without ado. He did not stand stolidly baring his furry belly to the missile, and die with an upward glance at the sympathetic heavens. On the contrary, he had fled as fast as his legs could carry him; and he was but an ordinary squirrel, too—doubtless no philosopher of his race. The youth wended, feeling that Nature was of his mind. She re-enforced his argument with proofs that lived where the sun shone.

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### Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (1898)

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I got hold of Mrs. Grose as soon after this as I could; and I can give no intelligible account of how I fought out the interval. Yet I still hear myself cry as I fairly threw myself into her arms:

“They *know*—it’s too monstrous: they know, they know!”

“And what on earth—?” I felt her incredulity as she held me.

“Why, all that *we* know—and heaven knows what else besides!” Then, as she released me, I made it out to her, made it out perhaps only now with full coherency even to myself. “Two hours ago, in the garden”—I could scarce articulate—“Flora *saw*!”

Mrs. Grose took it as she might have taken a blow in the stomach. “She has told you?” she panted.

“Not a word—that’s the horror. She kept it to herself! The child of eight, *that* child!” Unutterable still, for me, was the stupefaction of it.

Mrs. Grose, of course, could only gape the wider. “Then how do you know?”

“I was there—I saw with my eyes: saw that she was perfectly aware.”

“Do you mean aware of *him*?”

“No—of *her*.” I was conscious as I spoke that I looked prodigious things, for I got the slow reflection of them in my companion’s face. “Another person—this time; but a figure of quite as unmistakable horror and evil: a woman in black, pale and dreadful—with such an air also, and such a face!—on the other side of the lake. I was there with the child—quiet for the hour; and in the midst of it she came.”

“Came how—from where?”

"From where they come from! She just appeared and stood there—but not so near."

"And without coming nearer?"

"Oh, for the effect and the feeling, she might have been as close as you!"

My friend, with an odd impulse, fell back a step. "Was she someone you've never seen?"

"Yes. But someone the child has. Someone *you* have." Then, to show how I had thought it all out:

"My predecessor—the one who died."

"Miss Jessel?"

"Miss Jessel. You don't believe me?" I pressed.

She turned right and left in her distress. "How can you be sure?"

This drew from me, in the state of my nerves, a flash of impatience. "Then ask Flora—*she's* sure!"

But I had no sooner spoken than I caught myself up. "No, for God's sake, *don't!* She'll say she isn't—she'll lie!"

Mrs. Grose was not too bewildered instinctively to protest. "Ah, how *can* you?"

"Because I'm clear. Flora doesn't want me to know."

"It's only then to spare you."

"No, no—there are depths, depths! The more I go over it, the more I see in it, and the more I see in it, the more I fear. I don't know what I *don't* see—what I *don't* fear!"

Mrs. Grose tried to keep up with me. "You mean you're afraid of seeing her again?"

"Oh, no; that's nothing—now!" Then I explained. "It's of *not* seeing her."

But my companion only looked wan. "I don't understand you."

"Why, it's that the child may keep it up—and that the child assuredly *will*—without my knowing it."

At the image of this possibility Mrs. Grose for a moment collapsed, yet presently to pull herself together again, as if from the positive force of the sense of what, should we yield an inch, there would really be to give way to. "Dear, dear—we must keep our heads! And after all, if she doesn't mind it—!" She even tried a grim joke. "Perhaps she likes it!"

"Likes *such* things—a scrap of an infant!"

"Isn't it just a proof of her blessed innocence?" my friend bravely inquired.

She brought me, for the instant, almost round. "Oh, we must clutch at *that*—we must cling to it! If it isn't a proof of what you say, it's a proof of—God knows what! For the woman's a horror of horrors."

Mrs. Grose, at this, fixed her eyes a minute on the ground; then at last raising them, "Tell me how you know," she said.

"Then you admit it's what she was?" I cried.

"Tell me how you know," my friend simply repeated.

"Know? By seeing her! By the way she looked."

"At you, do you mean—so wickedly?"

"Dear me, no—I could have borne that. She gave me never a glance. She only fixed the child."

Mrs. Grose tried to see it. "Fixed her?"

"Ah, with such awful eyes!"

She stared at mine as if they might really have resembled them. "Do you mean of dislike?"

"God help us, no. Of something much worse."

"Worse than dislike?"—this left her indeed at a loss.

"With a determination—indescribable. With a kind of fury of intention."

I made her turn pale. "Intention?"

"To get hold of her." Mrs. Grose—her eyes just lingering on mine—gave a shudder and walked to the window; and while she stood there looking out I completed my statement. "*That's* what Flora knows."

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## Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (1899)

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Edna had attempted all summer to learn to swim. She had received instructions from both the men and women; in some instances from the children. Robert had pursued a system of lessons almost daily; and he was nearly at the point of discouragement in realizing the futility of his efforts. A certain ungovernable dread hung about her when in the water, unless there was a hand near by that might reach out and reassure her.

But that night she was like the little tottering, stumbling, clutching child, who of a sudden realizes its powers, and walks for the first time alone, boldly and with over-confidence. She could have shouted for joy. She did shout for joy, as with a sweeping stroke or two she lifted her body to the surface of the water.

A feeling of exultation overtook her, as if some power of significant import had been given her soul. She grew daring and reckless, overestimating her strength. She wanted to swim far out, where no woman had swum before.

Her unlooked-for achievement was the subject of wonder, applause, and admiration. Each one congratulated himself that his special teachings had accomplished this desired end.

"How easy it is!" she thought. "It is nothing," she said aloud; "why did I not discover before that it was nothing. Think of the time I have lost splashing about like a baby!" She would not join the groups in their sports and bouts, but intoxicated with her newly conquered power, she swam out alone.

She turned her face seaward to gather in an impression of space and solitude, which the vast expanse of water, meeting and melting with the moonlit sky, conveyed to her excited fancy. As she swam she seemed to be reaching out for the unlimited in which to lose herself.

Once she turned and looked toward the shore, toward the people she had left there. She had not gone any great distance—that is, what would have been a great distance for an experienced swimmer. But to her unaccustomed vision the stretch of water behind her assumed the aspect of a barrier which her unaided strength would never be able to overcome.

A quick vision of death smote her soul, and for a second of time appalled and enfeebled her senses. But by an effort she rallied her staggering faculties and managed to regain the land.

She made no mention of her encounter with death and her flash of terror, except to say to her husband, "I thought I should have perished out there alone."

"You were not so very far, my dear; I was watching you," he told her.

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## Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929)

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It stormed all that day. The wind drove down the rain and everywhere there was standing water and mud. The plaster of the broken houses was grey and wet. Late in the afternoon the rain stopped and from out number two post I saw the bare wet autumn country with clouds over the top of the hills and the straw screening over the roads wet and dripping. The sun came out once before it went down and shone on the bare woods beyond the ridge. There were many Austrian guns in the woods on that ridge but only a few fired. I watched the sudden round puffs of shrapnel smoke in the sky above a broken farmhouse near where the line was; soft puffs with a yellow white flash in the centre. You saw the flash, then heard the crack, then saw the smoke distort and thin in the wind. There were many iron shrapnel balls in the rubble of the houses and on the road beside the broken house where the post was, but they did not shell near the post that afternoon. We loaded two cars and drove down the road that was screened with wet mats and the last of the sun came through in the breaks between the strips of mattings. Before we were out on the clear road behind the hill the sun was down. We went on down the clear road and as it turned a corner into the open and went into the square arched tunnel of matting the rain started again.

The wind rose in the night and at three o'clock in the morning with the rain coming in sheets there was a bombardment and the Croatians came over across the mountain meadows and through patches of woods and into the front line. They fought in the dark in the rain and a counter-attack of scared men from the second line drove them back. There was much shelling and many rockets in the rain and machine-gun and rifle fire all along the line. They did not come again and it was quieter and between the gusts of wind and rain we could hear the sound of a great bombardment far to the north.

The wounded were coming into the post, some were carried on stretchers, some walking and some were brought on the backs of men that came across the field. They were wet to the skin and all were scared. We filled two cars with stretcher cases as they came up from the cellar of the post and as I shut the door of the second car and fastened it I felt the rain on my face turn to snow. The flakes were coming heavy and fast in the rain.

When daylight came the storm was still blowing but the snow had stopped. It had melted as it fell on the wet ground and now it was raining again. There was another attack just after daylight but it was unsuccessful. We expected an attack all day but it did not come until the sun was going down. The bombardment started to the south below the long wooded ridge where the Austrian guns were concentrated. We expected a bombardment but it did not come. It was getting dark. Guns were firing from the field behind the village and the shells, going away, had a comfortable sound.

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### William Faulkner, *Sanctuary* (1931), incipit

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I

From beyond the screen of bushes which surrounded the spring, Popeye watched the man drinking. A faint path led from the road to the spring. Popeye watched the man, a tall, thin man, hatless, in worn gray flannel trousers and carrying a tweed coat over his arm-- emerge from the path and kneel to drink from the spring.

The spring welled up at the root of a beech tree and flowed away upon a bottom of whorled and waved sand. It was surrounded by a thick growth of cane and brier, of cypress and gum in which broken sunlight lay sourceless. Somewhere, hidden and secret yet nearby, a bird sang three notes and ceased.

In the spring the drinking man leaned his face to the broken and myriad reflection of his own drinking. When he rose up he saw among them the scattered reflection of Popeye's straw hat, though he had heard no sound. He saw, facing him across the spring, a man of under size, his hands in his coat pockets, a cigarette slanted from his chin. His suit was black, with a tight, high-waisted coat. His trousers were rolled once and caked with mud above mud-caked shoes. His face had a queer, bloodless color, as though seen by electric light; against the sunny silence, in his slanted straw hat and his slightly akimbo arms, he had that vicious depthless quality of stamped tin.

Behind him the bird sang again, three bars in monotonous repetition: a sound meaningless and profound out of a suspirant and peaceful following silence which seemed to isolate the spot, and out of which a moment later came the sound of an automobile passing along a road and dying away.

The drinking man knelt beside the spring.

"You've got a pistol in that pocket, I suppose," he said.

Across the spring Popeye appeared to contemplate him with two knobs of soft black rubber. "I'm asking you," Popeye said. "What's that in your pocket?"

The other man's coat was still across his arm. He lifted his other hand toward the coat, out of one pocket of which protruded a crushed felt hat, from the other a book.

"Which pocket?" he said.

"Don't show me," Popeye said. "Tell me."

The other man stopped his hand. "It's a book."

"What book?" Popeye said.

"Just a book. The kind that people read. Some people do."

"Do you read books?" Popeye said.

The other man's hand was frozen above the coat. Across the spring they looked at one another. The cigarette wreathed its faint plume across Popeye's face, one side of his face squinted against the smoke like a mask carved into two simultaneous expressions.

From his hip pocket Popeye took a soiled handkerchief and spread it upon his heels. Then he squatted, facing the man across the spring. That was about four o'clock on an afternoon in May. They squatted so, facing one another across the spring, for two hours. Now and then the bird sang back in the swamp, as though it were worked by a clock; twice more invisible automobiles passed along the highroad and died away. Again the bird sang.

"And of course you don't know the name of it," the man across the spring said. "I don't suppose you'd know a bird at all, without it was singing in a cage in a hotel lounge, or cost four dollars on a plate." Popeye said nothing. He squatted in his tight black suit, his right-hand coat pocket sagging compactly against his flank, twisting and pinching cigarettes in his little, doll-like hands, spitting into the spring. His skin had a dead, dark pallor. His nose was faintly aquiline, and he had no chin at all. His face just went away, like the face of a wax doll set too near a hot fire and forgotten.

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## Eugene O'Neill, *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931)

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(SCENE--Ezra Mannon's bedroom. A big four-poster bed is at rear, center, the foot front, the head against the rear wall. A small stand, with a candle on it, is by the head of the bed on the left. To the left of the stand is a door leading into Christine's room. The door is open. In the left wall are two windows. At left, front, is a table with a lamp on it and a chair beside it. In the right wall, front, is a door leading to the hall. Further back, against the wall, is a bureau. None of these details can be discerned at first because the room is in darkness, except for what moonlight filters feebly through the shutters. It is around dawn of the following morning.

Christine's form can be made out, a pale ghost in the darkness, as she slips slowly and stealthily from the bed. She tiptoes to the table, left front, and picks up a light-colored dressing-gown that is flung over the chair and puts it on. She stands listening for some sound from the bed. A pause. Then Mannon's voice comes suddenly from the bed, dull and lifeless.

CHRISTINE--(starts violently--in a strained voice) Yes.

MANNON--Must be near daybreak, isn't it?

CHRISTINE--Yes. It is beginning to get gray.

MANNON--What made you jump when I spoke? Is my voice so strange to you?

CHRISTINE--I thought you were asleep.

MANNON--I haven't been able to sleep. I've been lying here thinking. What makes you so uneasy?

CHRISTINE--I haven't been able to sleep either.

MANNON--You slunk out of bed so quietly.

CHRISTINE--I didn't want to wake you.

MANNON--(bitterly) Couldn't you bear it--lying close to me?

CHRISTINE--I didn't want to disturb you by tossing around.

MANNON--We'd better light the light and talk a while.

CHRISTINE--(with dread) I don't want to talk! I prefer the dark.

MANNON--I want to see you. (He takes matches from the stand by the bed and lights the candle on it. Christine

*hastily sits down in the chair by the table, pushing it so she sits facing left, front, with her face turned three-quarters away from him. He pushes his back up against the head of the bed in a half sitting position. His face, with the flickering candle light on its side, has a grim, bitter expression.*) You like the dark where you can't see your old man of a husband, is that it?

CHRISTINE--I wish you wouldn't talk like that, Ezra. If you are going to say stupid things, I'll go in my own room. *(She gets to her feet but keeps her face turned away from him.)*

MANNON--Wait! *(then a note of pleading in his voice)* Don't go. I don't want to be alone. *(She sits again in the same position as before. He goes on humbly.)* I didn't mean to say those things. I guess there's bitterness inside me--my own cussedness, maybe--and sometimes it gets out before I can stop it.

CHRISTINE--You have always been bitter.

MANNON--Before we married?

CHRISTINE--I don't remember.

MANNON--You don't want to remember you ever loved me!

CHRISTINE--*(tensely)* I don't want to talk of the past! *(abruptly changing the subject)* Did you hear Vinnie the first part of the night? She was pacing up and down before the house like a sentry guarding you. She didn't go to bed until two. I heard the clock strike.

MANNON--There is one who loves me, at least! *(then after a pause)* I feel strange, Christine.

CHRISTINE--You mean--your heart? You don't think you are going to be--taken ill, do you?

MANNON--*(harshly)* No! *(a pause--then accusingly)* Is that what you're waiting for? Is that why you were so willing to give yourself tonight? Were you hoping--?

CHRISTINE--*(springing up)* Ezra! Stop talking like that! I can't stand it! *(She moves as if to go into her own room.)*

MANNON--Wait! I'm sorry I said that. *(Then, as she sits down again, he goes on gloomily.)* It isn't my heart. It's something uneasy troubling my mind--as if something in me was listening, watching, waiting for something to happen.

CHRISTINE--Waiting for what to happen?

MANNON--I don't know. *(A pause--then he goes on somberly.)* This house is not my house. This is not my room nor my bed. They are empty--waiting for someone to move in! And you are not my wife! You are waiting for something!

CHRISTINE--*(beginning to snap under the strain--jumps to her feet again)* What would I be waiting for?

MANNON--For death--to set you free!

CHRISTINE--Leave me alone! Stop nagging at me with your crazy suspicions! *(then anger and hatred come into her voice)* Not your wife! You acted as if I were your wife--your property--not so long ago!

MANNON--*(with bitter scorn)* Your body? What are bodies to me? I've seen too many rotting in the sun to make grass greener! Ashes to ashes, dirt to dirt! Is that your notion of love? Do you think I married a body? *(then, as if all the bitterness and hurt in him had suddenly burst its dam)* You were lying to me tonight as you've always lied! You were only pretending love! You let me take you as if you were a nigger slave I'd bought at auction! You made me appear a lustful beast in my own eyes!--as you've always done since our first marriage night! I would feel cleaner now if I had gone to a brothel! I would feel more honor between myself and life!

CHRISTINE--*(in a stifled voice)* Look out, Ezra! I won't stand--

MANNON--*(with a harsh laugh)* And I had hoped my homecoming would mark a new beginning--new love between us! I told you my secret feelings. I tore my insides out for you--thinking you'd understand! By God, I'm an old fool!

CHRISTINE--*(her voice grown strident)* Did you think you could make me weak--make me forget all the years? Oh no, Ezra! It's too late! *(Then her voice changes, as if she had suddenly resolved on a course of action, and becomes deliberately taunting.)* You want the truth? You've guessed it! You've used me, you've given me children, but I've never once been yours! I never could be! And whose fault is it? I loved you when I married you! I wanted to give myself! But you made me so I couldn't give! You filled me with disgust!

MANNON--*(furiously)* You say that to me! *(then trying to calm himself--stammers)* No! Be quiet! We mustn't fight! I mustn't lose my temper! It will bring on--!

CHRISTINE--(*goads him with calculating cruelty*) Oh, no! You needn't adopt that pitiful tone! You wanted the truth and you're going to hear it now!

MANNON--(*frightened--almost pleading*) Be quiet, Christine!

CHRISTINE--I've lied about everything! I lied about Captain Brant! He is Marie Brantôme's son! And it was I he came to see, not Vinnie! I made him come!

MANNON--(*seized with fury*) You dared--! You--! The son of that--!

CHRISTINE--Yes, I dared! And all my trips to New York weren't to visit Father but to be with Adam! He's gentle and tender, he's everything you've never been. He's what I've longed for all these years with you--a lover! I love him! So now you know the truth!

MANNON--(*in a frenzy--struggling to get out of bed*) You--you whore--I'll kill you! (*Suddenly he falls back, groaning, doubled up on his left side, with intense pain.*)

CHRISTINE--(*with savage satisfaction*) Ah! (*She hurries through the doorway into her room and immediately returns with a small box in her hand. He is facing away from her door, and, even if the intense pain left him any perception, he could not notice her departure and return, she moves so silently.*)

MANNON--(*gaspingly*) Quick--medicine!

CHRISTINE--(*turned away from him, takes a pellet from the box, asking tensely as she does so*) Where is your medicine?

MANNON--On the stand! Hurry!

CHRISTINE--Wait. I have it now. (*She pretends to take something from the stand by the head of the bed--then holds out the pellet and a glass of water which is on the stand.*) Here. (*He turns to her, groaning and opens his mouth. She puts the pellet on his tongue and presses the glass of water to his lips.*) Now drink.

MANNON--(*takes a swallow of water--then suddenly a wild look of terror comes over his face. He gasps*) That's not--my medicine! (*She shrinks back to the table, the hand with the box held out behind her, as if seeking a hiding place. Her fingers release the box on the table top and she brings her hand in front of her as if instinctively impelled to prove to him she has nothing. His eyes are fixed on her in a terrible accusing glare. He tries to call for help but his voice fades to a wheezy whisper.*) Help! Vinnie! (*He falls back in a coma, breathing stertorously. Christine stares at him fascinatedly--then starts with terror as she hears a noise from the hall and frantically snatches up the box from the table and holds it behind her back, turning to face the door as it opens and Lavinia appears in the doorway. She is dressed as at the end of Act Three, in nightgown, wrapper and slippers. She stands, dazed and frightened and hesitating, as if she had just awakened.*)

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## Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947)

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[The bathroom door opens a little.]

BLANCHE [looking out]: Is the coast clear?

STELLA: Yes, Blanche. [To Eunice] Tell her how well she's looking.

BLANCHE: Please close the curtains before I come out.

STELLA: They're closed.

STANLEY: --How many for you?

PABLO: --Two.

STEVE: --Three. [Blanche appears in the amber tinge of the door. She has a tragic radiance in her red satin robe following the sculptural lines of her body. The "Varsouviana" rises audibly as Blanche enters the bedroom.]

BLANCHE [with faintly hysterical vivacity]: I have just washed my hair.

STELLA: Did you?

BLANCHE: I'm not sure I got the soap out.

EUNICE: Such fine hair!

BLANCHE [accepting the compliment]: It's a problem. Didn't I get a call?

STELLA: Who from, Blanche?

BLANCHE: Shep Huntleigh....

STELLA: Why, not yet, honey!

BLANCHE: How strange! I-- [At the sound of Blanche's voice Mitch's arm supporting his cards has sagged and his gaze is dissolved into space. Stanley slaps him on the shoulder.]

STANLEY: Hey, Mitch, come to! [The sound of this new voice shocks Blanche. She makes a shocked gesture, forming his name with her lips. Stella nods and looks quickly away. Blanche stands quite still for some moments-- the silver-backed mirror in her hand and a look of sorrowful perplexity as though all human experience shows on her face. Blanche finally speaks but with sudden hysteria.]

BLANCHE: What's going on here? [She turns from Stella to Eunice and back to Stella. Her rising voice penetrates the concentration of the game. Mitch ducks his head lower but Stanley shoves back his chair as if about to rise. Steve places a restraining hand on his arm.]

BLANCHE [continuing]: What's happened here? I want an explanation of what's happened here.

STELLA [agonizingly]: Hush! Hush!

EUNICE: Hush! Hush! Honey.

STELLA: Please, Blanche.

BLANCHE: Why are you looking at me like that? Is something wrong with me?

EUNICE: You look wonderful, Blanche. Don't she look wonderful?

STELLA: Yes.

EUNICE: I understand you are going on a trip.

STELLA: Yes, Blanche is. She's going on a vacation.

EUNICE: I'm green with envy.

BLANCHE: Help me, help me get dressed!

STELLA [handing her dress]: Is this what you—

BLANCHE: Yes, it will do! I'm anxious to get out of here--this place is a trap!

EUNICE: What a pretty blue jacket.

STELLA: It's lilac colored.

BLANCHE: You're both mistaken. It's Delia Robbia blue. The blue of the robe in the old Madonna pictures. Are these grapes washed? [She fingers the bunch of grapes which Eunice had brought in.]

EUNICE: Huh?

BLANCHE: Washed, I said. Are they washed?

EUNICE: They're from the French Market.

BLANCHE: That doesn't mean they've been washed.

[*The cathedral bells chime*]

Those cathedral bells--they're the only clean thing in the Quarter. Well, I'm going now. I'm ready to go.

EUNICE [*whispering*]: She's going to walk out before they get here.

STELLA: Wait, Blanche.

BLANCHE: I don't want to pass in front of those men. EUNICE: Then wait'll the game breaks up.

STELLA: Sit down and... [*Blanche turns weakly, hesitantly about. She lets them push her into a chair.*]

BLANCHE: I can smell the sea air. The rest of my time I'm going to spend on the sea. And when I die, I'm going to die on the sea. You know what I shall die of? [*She plucks a grape*] I shall die of eating an unwashed grape one day out on the ocean. I will die--with my hand in the hand of some nice-looking ship's doctor, a very young one with a small blond mustache and a big silver watch. "Poor lady," they'll say, "the quinine did her no good. That unwashed grape has transported her soul to heaven." [*The cathedral chimes are heard*] And I'll be buried at sea sewn up in a clean white sack and dropped overboard--at noon--in the blaze of summer--and into an ocean as blue as [*Chimes again*] my first lover's eyes! [*A Doctor and a Matron have appeared around the corner of the building and climbed the steps to the porch. The gravity of their profession is exaggerated--the unmistakable aura of the state institution with its cynical detachment. The Doctor rings the doorbell. The murmur of the game is interrupted.*]

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## Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (1949)

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### REQUIEM

CHARLEY: It's getting dark, Linda.

(*Linda doesn't react. She stares at the grave.*)

BIFF: How about it, Mom? Better get some rest, heh? They'll be closing the gate soon.

(*Linda makes no move. Pause.*)

HAPPY (*deeply angered*): He had no right to do that. There was no necessity for it. We would've helped him.

CHARLEY (*grunting*): Hmmm.

BIFF: Come along, Mom.

LINDA: Why didn't anybody come?

CHARLEY: It was a very nice funeral.

LINDA: But where are all the people he knew? Maybe they blame him.

CHARLEY: Naa. It's a rough world, Linda. They wouldn't blame him.

LINDA: I can't understand it. At this time especially. First time in thirty-five years we were just about free and clear. He only needed a little salary. He was even finished with the dentist.

CHARLEY: No man only needs a little salary.

LINDA: I can't understand it.

BIFF: There were a lot of nice days. When he'd come home from a trip; or on Sundays, making the stoop; finishing the cellar; putting on the new porch; when he built the extra bathroom; and put up the garage. You know something, Charley, there's more of him in that front stoop than in all the sales he ever made.

CHARLEY: Yeah. He was a happy man with a batch of cement.

LINDA: He was so wonderful with his hands.

BIFF: He had the wrong dreams. All, all, wrong.

HAPPY (*almost ready to fight Biff*): Don't say that!

BIFF: He never knew who he was.

CHARLEY (*stopping Happy's movement and reply. To Biff*): No body dast blame this man. You

don't understand: Willy was a salesman. And for a salesman, there is no rock bottom to the life. He don't put a bolt to a nut, he don't tell you the law or give you medicine. He's man way out there in the blue, riding on a smile and a Shoeshine. And when they start not smiling back — that's an earthquake. And then you get yourself a couple of spots on your hat, and you're finished. Nobody dast blame this man. A salesman is got to dream, boy. It comes with the territory.

BIFF: Charley, the man didn't know who he was.

HAPPY (*infuriated*): Don't say that!

BIFF: Why don't you come with me, Happy?

HAPPY: I'm not licked that easily. I'm staying right in this city, and I'm gonna beat this racket! (*He looks at Biff, his chin set.*) The Loman Brothers!

BIFF: I know who I am, kid.

HAPPY: All right, boy. I'm gonna show you and everybody else that Willy Loman did not die in vain. He had a good dream. It's the only dream you can have — to come out number-one man. He fought it out here, and this is where I'm gonna win it for him.

BIFF (*with a hopeless glance at Happy, bends toward his mother*): Let's go, Mom.

LINDA: I'll be with you in a minute. Go on, Charley. (*He hesitates.*) I want to, just for a minute. I never had a chance to say good-by.

(*Charley moves away, followed by Happy. Biff remains a slight distance up and left of Linda. She sits there, summoning herself. The flute begins, not far away, playing behind her speech.*)

LINDA: Forgive me, dear. I can't cry. I don't know what it is, I can't cry. I don't understand it. Why did you ever do that? Help me Willy, I can't cry. It seems to me that you're just on another trip. I keep expecting you. Willy, dear, I can't cry. Why did you do it? I search and search and I search, and I can't understand it, Willy. I made the last payment on the house today. Today, dear. And there'll be nobody home. (*A sob rises in her throat.*) We're free and clear. (*Sobbing more fully, released.*)

We're free. (*Biff comes slowly toward her.*) We're free... We're free... (*Biff lifts her to her feet and moves out up right with her in his arms. Linda sobs quietly. Bernard and Charley come together and follow them, followed by Happy. Only the music of the flute is left on the darkening stage as over the house the hard towers of the apartment buildings rise into sharp focus, and the curtain falls.*)

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## Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (1952)

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### Prologue

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids -- and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination -- indeed, everything and anything except me.

Nor is my invisibility exactly a matter of a bio-chemical accident to my epidermis. That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality. I am not complaining, nor am I protesting either. It is sometimes advantageous to be unseen, although it is most often rather wearing on the nerves. Then too, you're constantly being bumped against by those of poor vision. Or again, you often doubt if you really exist. You wonder whether you aren't simply a phantom in other people's minds. Say, a figure in a nightmare which the sleeper tries with all his strength to destroy. It's when you feel like this that, out of

resentment, you begin to bump people back. And, let me confess, you feel that way most of the time. You ache with the need to convince yourself that you do exist in the real world, that you're a part of all the sound and anguish, and you strike out with your fists, you curse and you swear to make them recognize you. And, alas, it's seldom successful.

One night I accidentally bumped into a man, and perhaps because of the near darkness he saw me and called me an insulting name. I sprang at him, seized his coat lapels and demanded that he apologize. He was a tall blond man, and as my face came close to his he looked insolently out of his blue eyes and cursed me, his breath hot in my face as he struggled. I pulled his chin down sharp upon the crown of my head, butting him as I had seen the West Indians do, and I felt his flesh tear and the blood gush out, and I yelled, "Apologize! Apologize!" But he continued to curse and struggle, and I butted him again and again until he went down heavily, on his knees, profusely bleeding. I kicked him repeatedly, in a frenzy because he still uttered insults though his lips were frothy with blood. Oh yes, I kicked him! And in my outrage I got out my knife and prepared to slit his throat, right there beneath the lamplight in the deserted street, holding him by the collar with one hand, and opening the knife with my teeth -- when it occurred to me that the man had not seen me, actually; that he, as far as he knew, was in the midst of a walking nightmare! And I stopped the blade, slicing the air as I pushed him away, letting him fall back to the street. I stared at him hard as the lights of a car stabbed through the darkness. He lay there, moaning on the asphalt; a man almost killed by a phantom. It unnerved me. I was both disgusted and ashamed. I was like a drunken man myself, wavering about on weakened legs. Then I was amused. Something in this man's thick head had sprung out and beaten him within an inch of his life. I began to laugh at this crazy discovery. Would he have awakened at the point of death? Would Death himself have freed him for wakeful living? But I didn't linger. I ran away into the dark, laughing so hard I feared I might rupture myself. The next day I saw his picture in the Daily News, beneath a caption stating that he had been "mugged." Poor fool, poor blind fool, I thought with sincere compassion, mugged by an invisible man!

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### William Carlos Williams: "The Orchestra" (1952)

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The precise counterpart  
    of a cacophony of bird calls  
        lifting the sun almighty  
into his sphere: wood winds  
    clarinet and violins  
        sound a prolonged A!  
Ah! the sun, the sun! is about to rise  
    and shed his beams  
        as he has always done  
  
upon us all,  
    drudges and those  
        who live at ease,  
women and men,  
    upon the old,  
        upon children and the sick  
who are about to die and are indeed  
    dead in their beds,  
        to whom his light  
is forever lost. The cello

raises his base note  
manfully in the treble din:  
Ah, ah and ah!  
together, unattuned  
seeking a common tone.  
Love is that common tone  
shall raise his fiery head  
and sound his note.

THE PURPOSE of an orchestra  
is to organize those sounds  
and hold them  
to an assembled order  
in spite of the  
“wrong note.” Well, shall we  
think or listen? Is there a sound addressed  
not wholly to the ear?  
We half close  
our eyes. We do not  
hear it through our eyes.  
It is not  
a flute-note either, it is the relation  
of a flute-note  
to a drum. I am wide  
awake. The mind  
is listening. The ear  
is alerted. But the ear  
in a half reluctant mood  
stretches  
. . . and yawns.

AND SO THE banked violins  
in three tiers  
enliven the scene,  
Pizzicato. For a short  
memory or to  
make the listener listen  
the theme is repeated  
stressing a variant:  
it is a principle of music  
to repeat the theme. Repeat  
and repeat again,  
as the pace mounts. The  
theme is difficult  
but no more difficult  
than the fact to be  
resolved. Repeat  
and repeat the theme  
and all it develops to be  
until thought is dissolved

in tears.  
Our dreams  
have been assaulted  
by a memory that will not  
sleep. The  
French horns  
interpose  
their voices:  
I love you. My heart  
is innocent. And this  
the first day of the world!

SAY TO THEM:

“Man has survived hitherto because he was too ignorant to  
know how to realize his wishes. Now that he can realize  
them, he must either change them or perish.”

NOW IS THE time.

in spite of the “wrong note”  
I love you. My heart is  
innocent.  
And this the first  
(and last) day of the world.

THE BIRDS TWITTER now anew

but a design  
surmounts their twittering.  
It is a design of a man  
that makes them twitter.  
It is a design.

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**Flannery O'Connor, “The Displaced Person”, *A Good Man is Hard to Find and Other Stories* (1955)**

---

The peacock was following Mrs. Shortley up the road to the hill where she meant to stand. Moving one behind the other, they looked like a complete procession. Her arms were folded and as she mounted the prominence, she might have been the giant wife of the countryside, come out at some sign of danger to see what the trouble was. She stood on two tremendous legs, with the grand self-confidence of a mountain, and rose, up narrowing bulges of granite, to two icy-blue points of light that pierced forward, surveying everything. She ignored the white afternoon sun which was creeping behind a ragged wall of cloud as if it pretended to be an intruder and cast her gaze down the red-clay road that turned off from the highway.

The peacock stopped just behind her, his tail—glittering green-gold and blue in the sunlight—lifted just enough so that it would not touch the ground. It flowed out on either side like a floating train and his head on the long blue reed-like neck was drawn back as if his attention were fixed in the

distance on something no one else could see.

Mrs. Shortley was watching a black car turn through the gate from the highway. Over by the toolshed, about fifteen feet away, the two Negroes, Astor and Sulk, had stopped work to watch. They were hidden by a mulberry tree but Mrs. Shortley knew they were there.

Mrs. McIntyre was coming down the steps of her house to meet the car. She had on her largest smile but Mrs. Shortley, even from her distance, could detect a nervous slide in it. These people who were coming were only hired help, like the Shortleys themselves or the Negroes. Yet here was the owner of the place out to welcome them. Here she was, wearing her best clothes and a string of beads, and now bounding forward with her mouth stretched.

The car stopped at the walk just as she did and the priest was the first to get out. He was a long-legged black-suited old man with a white hat on and a collar that he wore backwards, which, Mrs. Shortley knew, was what priests did who wanted to be known as priests. It was this priest who had arranged for these people to come here. He opened the back door of the car and out jumped two children, a boy and a girl, and then, stepping more slowly, a woman in brown, shaped like a peanut. Then the front door opened and out stepped the man, the Displaced Person. He was short and a little sway-backed and wore gold-rimmed spectacles.

Mrs. Shortley's vision narrowed on him and then widened to include the woman and the two children in a group picture. The first thing that struck her as very peculiar was that they looked like other people. Every time she had seen them in her imagination, the image she had got was of the three bears, walking single file, with wooden shoes on like Dutchmen and sailor hats and bright coats with a lot of buttons. But the woman had on a dress she might have worn herself and the children were dressed like anybody from around. The man had on khaki pants and a blue shirt. Suddenly, as Mrs. McIntyre held out her hand to him, he bobbed down from the waist and kissed it.

Mrs. Shortley jerked her own hand up toward her mouth and then after a second brought it down and rubbed it vigorously on her seat. If Mr. Shortley had tried to kiss her hand, Mrs. McIntyre would have knocked him into the middle of next week, but then Mr. Shortley wouldn't have kissed her hand anyway. He didn't have time to mess around.

She looked closer, squinting. The boy was in the center of the group, talking. He was supposed to speak the most English because he had learned some in Poland and so he was to listen to his father's Polish and say it in English and then listen to Mrs. McIntyre's English and say that in Polish. The priest had told Mrs. McIntyre his name was Rudolph and he was twelve and the girl's name was Sledgewig and she was nine. Sledgewig sounded to Mrs. Shortley like something you would name a bug, or vice versa, as if you named a boy Bollweevil. All of them's last name was something that only they themselves and the priest could pronounce. All she could make out of it was Gobblehook. She and Mrs. McIntyre had been calling them the Gobblehooks all week while they got ready for them.

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### Allan Ginsberg, "A Supermarket in California", *Howl and Other Poems* (1955)

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What thoughts I have of you tonight, Walt Whitman, for I walked down the  
streets under the trees with a headache self-conscious looking at the full moon.

In my hungry fatigue, and shopping for images, I went into the neon fruit  
supermarket, dreaming of your enumerations!  
What peaches and what penumbras! Whole families shopping at night! Aisles  
full of husbands! Wives in the avocados, babies in the tomatoes! --- and you,  
Garcia Lorca, what were you doing down by the watermelons?

I saw you, Walt Whitman, childless, lonely old grubber, poking among the meats in the refrigerator and eyeing the grocery boys.  
I heard you asking questions of each: Who killed the pork chops? What price bananas? Are you my Angel?  
I wandered in and out of the brilliant stacks of cans following you, and followed in my imagination by the store detective.  
We strode down the open corridors together in our solitary fancy tasting artichokes, possessing every frozen delicacy, and never passing the cashier.  
Where are we going, Walt Whitman? The doors close in an hour. Which way does your beard point tonight?  
(I touch your book and dream of our odyssey in the supermarket and feel absurd.)  
Will we walk all night through solitary streets? The trees add shade to shade, lights out in the houses, we'll both be lonely.  
Will we stroll dreaming of the lost America of love past blue automobiles in driveways, home to our silent cottage?  
Ah, dear father, graybeard, lonely old courage-teacher, what America did you have when Charon quit poling his ferry and you got out on a smoking bank and stood watching the boat disappear on the black waters of Lethe?

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### **Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (1957)**

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I first met Dean not long after my wife and I split up. I had just gotten over a serious illness that I won't bother to talk about, except that it had something to do with the miserably weary split-up and my feeling that everything was dead. With the coming of Dean Moriarty began the part of my life you could call my life on the road. Before that I'd often dreamed of going West to see the country, always vaguely planning and never taking off. Dean is the perfect guy for the road because he actually was born on the road, when his parents were passing through Salt Lake City in 1926, in a jalopy, on their way to Los Angeles. First reports of him came to me through Chad King, who'd shown me a few letters from him written in a New Mexico reform school. I was tremendously interested in the letters because they so naively and sweetly asked Chad to teach him all about Nietzsche and all the wonderful intellectual things that Chad knew. At one point Carlo and I talked about the letters and wondered if we would ever meet the strange Dean Moriarty. This is all far back, when Dean was not the way he is today, when he was a young jaillid shrouded in mystery. Then news came that Dean was out of reform school and was coming to New York for the first time; also there was talk that he had just married a girl called Marylou.

One day I was hanging around the campus and Chad and Tim Gray told me Dean was staying in a cold-water pad in East Harlem, the Spanish Harlem. Dean had arrived the night before, the first time in New York, with his beautiful little sharp chick Marylou; they got off the Greyhound bus at 50th Street and cut around the corner looking for a place to eat and went right in Hector's, and since then Hector's cafeteria has always been a big symbol of New York for Dean. They spent money on beautiful big glazed cakes and creampuffs.

All this time Dean was telling Marylou things like this: «Now, darling, here we are in New York and although I haven't quite told you everything that I was thinking about when we crossed Missouri and especially at the point when we passed the Booneville reformatory which reminded me of my jail problem, it is absolutely necessary now to postpone all those leftover things concerning our personal lovethings and at once begin thinking of specific worklife plans . . .» and so on in the way that he had in those early days.

I went to the cold-water flat with the boys, and Dean came to the door in his shorts. Marylou was

jumping off the couch; Dean had dispatched the occupant of the apartment to the kitchen, probably to make coffee, while he proceeded with his loveproblems, for to him sex was the one and only holy and important thing in life, although he had to sweat and curse to make a living and so on. You saw that in the way he stood bobbing his head, always looking down, nodding, like a young boxer to instructions, to make you think he was listening to every word, throwing in a thousand «Yeses» and «That's rights.» My first impression of Dean was of a young Gene Autry - trim, thin-hipped, blueeyed, with a real Oklahoma accent - a sideburned hero of the snowy West. In fact he'd just been working on a ranch, Ed Wall's in Colorado, before marrying Marylou and coming East. Marylou was a pretty blonde with immense ringlets of hair like a sea of golden tresses; she sat there on the edge of the couch with her hands hanging in her lap and her smoky blue country eyes fixed in a wide stare because she was in an evil gray New York pad that she'd heard about back West, and waiting like a longbodied emaciated Modigliani surrealist woman in a serious room. But, outside of being a sweet little girl, she was awfully dumb and capable of doing horrible things. That night we all drank beer and pulled wrists and talked till dawn, and in the morning, while we sat around dumbly smoking butts from ashtrays in the gray light of a gloomy day, Dean got up nervously, paced around, thinking, and decided the thing to do was to have Marylou make breakfast and sweep the floor. «In other words we've got to get on the ball, darling, what I'm saying, otherwise it'll be fluctuating and lack of true knowledge or crystallization of our plans.» Then I went away.

During the following week he confided in Chad King that he absolutely had to learn how to write from him; Chad said I was a writer and he should come to me for advice. Meanwhile Dean had gotten a job in a parking lot, had a fight with Marylou in their Hoboken apartment - God knows why they went there - and she was so mad and so down deep vindictive that she reported to the police some false trumped-up hysterical crazy charge, and Dean had to lam from Hoboken. So he had no place to live. He came right out to Paterson, New Jersey, where I was living with my aunt, and one night while I was studying there was a knock on the door, and there was Dean, bowing, shuffling obsequiously in the dark of the hall, and saying, «Hello, you remember me - Dean Moriarty? I've come to ask you to show me how to write.»

«And where's Marylou?» I asked, and Dean said she'd apparently whored a few dollars together and gone back to Denver - »the whore!» So we went out to have a few beers because we couldn't talk like we wanted to talk in front of my aunt, who sat in the living room reading her paper. She took one look at Dean and decided that he was a madman.

In the bar I told Dean, «Hell, man, I know very well you didn't come to me only to want to become a writer, and after all what do I really know about it except you've got to stick to it with the energy of a benny addict.» And he said, «Yes, of course, I know exactly what you mean and in fact all those problems have occurred to me, but the thing that I want is the realization of those factors that should one depend on Schopenhauer's dichotomy for any inwardly realized . . .» and so on in that way, things I understood not a bit and he himself didn't. In those days he really didn't know what he was talking about; that is to say, he was a young jailkid all hung-up on the wonderful possibilities of becoming a real intellectual, and he liked to talk in the tone and using the words, but in a jumbled way, that he had heard from «real intellectuals» - although, mind you, he wasn't so naive as that in all other things, and it took him just a few months with Carlo Marx to become completely in there with all the terms and jargon. Nonetheless we understood each other on other levels of madness, and I agreed that he could stay at my house till he found a job and furthermore we agreed to go out West sometime. That was the winter of 1947.

One night when Dean ate supper at my house - he already had the parking-lot job in New York - he leaned over my shoulder as I typed rapidly away and said, «Come on man, those girls won't wait, make it fast.»

I said, «Hold on just a minute, I'll be right with you soon as I finish this chapter,» and it was one of the best chapters in the book. Then I dressed and off we flew to New York to meet some girls. As we rode in the bus in the weird phosphorescent void of the Lincoln Tunnel we leaned on each other with fingers waving and yelled and talked excitedly, and I was beginning to get the bug like Dean. He

was simply a youth tremendously excited with life, and though he was a con-man, he was only conning because he wanted so much to live and to get involved with people who would otherwise pay no attention to him. He was conning me and I knew it (for room and board and «howto-write,» etc.), and he knew I knew (this has been the basis of our relationship), but I didn't care and we got along fine - no pestering, no catering; we tiptoed around each other like heartbreaking new friends. I began to learn from him as much as he probably learned from me. As far as my work was concerned he said, «Go ahead, everything you do is great.» He watched over my shoulder as I wrote stories, yelling, «Yes! That's right! Wow! Man!» and «Phew!» and wiped his face with his handkerchief. «Man, wow, there's so many things to do, so many things to write! How to even begin to get it all down and without modified restraints and all hung-up on like literary inhibitions and grammatical fears . . .»

«That's right, man, now you're talking.» And a kind of holy lightning I saw flashing from his excitement and his visions, which he described so torrentially that people in buses looked around to see the «overexcited nut.» In the West he'd spent a third of his time in the poolhall, a third in jail, and a third in the public library. They'd seen him rushing eagerly down the winter streets, bareheaded, carrying books to the poolhall, or climbing trees to get into the attics of buddies where he spent days reading or hiding from the law.

We went to New York - I forget what the situation was, two colored girls - there were no girls there; they were supposed to meet him in a diner and didn't show up. We went to his parking lot where he had a few things to do - change his clothes in the shack in back and spruce up a bit in front of a cracked mirror and so on, and then we took off. And that was the night Dean met Carlo Marx. A tremendous thing happened when Dean met Carlo Marx. Two keen minds that they are, they took to each other at the drop of a hat. Two piercing eyes glanced into two piercing eyes - the holy conman with the shining mind, and the sorrowful poetic con-man with the dark mind that is Carlo Marx. From that moment on I saw very little of Dean, and I was a little sorry too. Their energies met headon, I was a lout compared, I couldn't keep up with them.

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### **John Updike, *Rabbit, Run*, (1960)**

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Rabbit picks up his folded coat and carries it in one hand like a letter as he runs. Up the alley. Past the deserted ice plant with its rotting wooden skids on the fallen loading porch. Ashcans, garage doors, fences of chicken-wire caging crisscrossing stalks of dead flowers. The month is March. Love makes the air light. Things start anew; Rabbit tastes through sour aftersmoke the fresh chance in the air, plucks the pack of cigarettes from his bobbling shirt pocket, and without breaking stride cans it in somebody's open barrel. His upper lip nibbles back from his teeth in self-pleasure. His big suede shoes skim in thumps above the skittering litter of alley gravel.

Running. At the end of this block of the alley he turns up a street, Wilbur Street in the town of Mt. Judge, suburb of the city of Brewer, fifth largest city in Pennsylvania. Running uphill. Past a block of big homes, small fortresses of cement and brick inset with doorways of stained and beveled glass and windows of potted plants; and then half the way up another block, which holds a development built all at once in the Thirties. The frame homes climb the hill like a single staircase. The space of six feet or so that each double house rises above its neighbor contains two wan windows, wide-spaced like the eyes of an animal, and is covered with composition shingling varying in color from bruise to dung. The fronts are scabby clapboards, once white. There are a dozen three-story homes, and each has two doors. The seventh door is his. The wood steps up to it are worn; under them there is a cubbyhole of dirt where a lost toy molders. A plastic clown. He's seen it there all winter but he always thought some kid would be coming back for it.

Rabbit pauses in the sunless vestibule, panting. Overhead, a daytime bulb burns dustily. Three tin mailboxes hang empty above a brown radiator. His downstairs neighbor's door across the hall is shut like a hurt face. There is that smell which is always the same but that he can never identify; sometimes it seems cabbage cooking, sometimes the furnace's rusty breath, sometimes something soft decaying in the walls. He climbs the stairs to his home, the top floor.

The door is locked. In fitting the little key into the lock his hand trembles, pulsing with unusual exertion, and the metal scratches. But when he opens the door he sees his wife sitting in an armchair with an Old-fashioned, watching television turned down low.

"You're *here*," he says. "What's the door locked for?"

She looks to one side of him with vague dark eyes reddened by the friction of watching. "It just locked itself."

"Just locked itself," he repeats, but bends down to kiss her glossy forehead nevertheless. She is a small woman whose skin tends toward olive and looks tight, as if something swelling inside is straining against her littleness. Just yesterday, it seems to him, she stopped being pretty. With the addition of two short wrinkles at the corners, her mouth has become greedy; and her hair has thinned, so he keeps thinking of her skull under it. These tiny advances into age have occurred imperceptibly, so it seems just possible that tomorrow they'll be gone and she'll be his girl again. He makes a stab at kidding her into it. "Whaddeya afraid of? Whodeya think's gonna come in that door? Errol Flynn?"

She doesn't answer. Carefully he unfolds his coat and goes to the closet with it and takes out a wire hanger. The closet is in the living room and the door only opens halfway, since the television set is in front of it. He is careful not to kick the wire, which is plugged into a socket on the other side of the door. One time Janice, who is especially clumsy when pregnant or drunk, got the wire wrapped around her foot and nearly pulled the set, a hundred and forty-nine dollars, down *smash* on the floor. Luckily he got to it while it was still rocking in the metal cradle and before Janice began kicking out in one of her panics. What made her get that way? What was she afraid of? An order-loving man, he deftly inserts the corners of the hanger into the armholes of the coat and with his long reach hangs it on the painted pipe with his other clothes. He wonders if he should remove the Demonstrator badge from the lapel but decides he will wear the same suit tomorrow. He has only two, not counting a dark blue that is too hot for this time of year. He presses the door shut and it clicks but then swings open again an inch or two. Locked doors. It rankles: his hand trembling in the lock like some old wreck and her sitting in here listening to the scratching.

He turns and asks her, "If you're home where's the car? It's not out front."

"It's in front of my mother's. You're in my way."

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### Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*, (1963)

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A fine drizzle started drifting down from the grey sky, and I grew very depressed.

I couldn't find my father anywhere.

Low, shaggy clouds scudded over that part of the horizon where the sea lay, behind the marshes and the beach shanty settlements, and raindrops darkened the black mackintosh I had bought that morning. A clammy dampness sank through to my skin.

I had asked the salesgirl, 'Is it water-repellent?'

And she had said, 'No raincoat is ever *water-repellent*. It's showerproofed.'

And when I asked her what showerproofed was, she told me I had better buy an umbrella.

But I hadn't enough money for an umbrella. What with bus fare in and out of Boston and peanuts and newspapers and abnormal psychology books and trips to my old home town by the sea,

my New York fund was almost exhausted.

I had decided that when there was no more money in my bank account I would do it, and that morning I'd spent the last of it on the black raincoat.

Then I saw my father's gravestone.

It was crowded right up by another gravestone, head to head, the way people are crowded in a charity ward when there isn't enough space. The stone was of a molded pink marble, like tinned salmon, and all there was on it was my father's name and, under it, two dates, separated by a little dash.

At the foot of the stone I arranged the rainy armful of azaleas I had picked from a bush at the gateway of the graveyard. Then my legs folded under me, and I sat down in the sopping grass. I couldn't understand why I was crying so hard.

Then I remembered that I had never cried for my father's death.

My mother hadn't cried either. She had just smiled and said what a merciful thing it was for him he had died, because if he had lived he would have been crippled and an invalid for life, and he couldn't have stood that, he would rather have died than had that happen.

I laid my face to the smooth face of the marble and howled my loss into the cold salt rain.

---

## Bob Dylan, 'The Times They Are A-Changin'' (1963-64)

---

Come gather 'round people  
Wherever you roam  
And admit that the waters  
Around you have grown  
And accept it that soon  
You'll be drenched to the bone  
If your time to you is worth savin'  
Then you better start swimmin' or you'll sink like a stone  
For the times they are a-changin'

Come writers and critics  
Who prophesize with your pen  
And keep your eyes wide  
The chance won't come again  
And don't speak too soon  
For the wheel's still in spin  
And there's no tellin' who that it's namin'  
For the loser now will be later to win  
For the times they are a-changin'

Come senators, congressmen  
Please heed the call  
Don't stand in the doorway  
Don't block up the hall  
For he that gets hurt  
Will be he who has stalled  
There's a battle outside and it is ragin'  
It'll soon shake your windows and rattle your walls  
For the times they are a-changin'

Come mothers and fathers  
Throughout the land  
And don't criticize  
What you can't understand  
Your sons and your daughters  
Are beyond your command  
Your old road is rapidly agin'  
Please get out of the new one if you can't lend your hand  
For the times they are a-changin'

The line it is drawn  
The curse it is cast  
The slow one now  
Will later be fast  
As the present now  
Will later be past  
The order is rapidly fadin'  
And the first one now will later be last  
For the times they are a-changin'

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**Robert Hayden [1913-1980], "Frederick Douglass" (1966)**

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When it is finally ours, this freedom, this liberty, this beautiful  
and terrible thing, needful to man as air,  
usable as earth; when it belongs at last to all,  
when it is truly instinct, brain matter, diastole, systole,  
reflex action; when it is finally won; when it is more  
than the gaudy mumbo jumbo of politicians:  
this man, this Douglass, this former slave, this Negro  
beaten to his knees, exiled, visioning a world  
where none is lonely, none hunted, alien,  
this man, superb in love and logic, this man  
shall be remembered. Oh, not with statues' rhetoric,  
not with legends and poems and wreaths of bronze alone,  
but with the lives grown out of his life, the lives  
fleshing his dream of the beautiful, needful thing.

---

**Thom Gunn, “No Speech from the Scaffold” (1975)**

---

There will be no speech from  
the scaffold, the scene must  
be its own commentary.

The glossy chipped  
surface of the block is like  
something for kitchen use.

And the masked man with his  
chopper: we know him: he  
works in a warehouse nearby.

Last, the prisoner, he  
is pale, he walks through  
the dewy grass, nodding

a goodbye to acquaintances.  
There will be no speech. And we  
have forgotten his offense.

What he did is, now,  
immaterial. It is the  
execution that matters, or,  
rather, it is his conduct  
as he rests there, while  
he is still a human.

---

**Raymond Carver, “Popular Mechanics” (1978), *What we Talk About When We talk About Love***

---

Early that day the weather turned and the snow was melting into dirty water. Streaks of it ran down from the little shoulder-high window that faced the backyard. Cars slushed by on the street outside, where it was getting dark. But it was getting dark on the inside too.

He was in the bedroom pushing clothes into a suitcase when she came to the door.

I’m glad you’re leaving! I’m glad you’re leaving! she said. Do you hear?

He kept on putting his things into the suitcase.

Son of a bitch! I’m so glad you’re leaving! She began to cry. You can’t even look me in the face, can you?

Then she noticed the baby’s picture on the bed and picked it up.

He looked at her and she wiped her eyes and stared at him before turning and going back to the living room.

Bring that back, he said.

Just get your things and get out, she said.

He did not answer. He fastened the suitcase, put on his coat, looked around the bedroom before turning off the light. Then he went out to the living room.

She stood in the doorway of the little kitchen, holding the baby.  
 I want the baby, he said.  
 Are you crazy?  
 No, but I want the baby. I'll get someone to come for his things.  
 You're not touching this baby, she said. The baby had begun to cry and she uncovered the blanket from around his head.  
 Oh, oh, she said, looking at the baby.  
 He moved toward her.  
 For God's sake! she said. She took a step back into the kitchen.  
 I want the baby.  
 Get out of here!  
 She turned and tried to hold the baby over in a corner behind the stove.  
 But he came up. He reached across the stove and tightened his hands on the baby.  
 Let go of him, he said.  
 Get away, get away! she cried.  
 The baby was red-faced and screaming. In the scuffle they knocked down a flowerpot that hung behind the stove. He crowded her into the wall then, trying to break her grip. He held onto the baby and pushed with all his weight.  
 Let go of him, he said.  
 Don't, she said. You're hurting the baby, she said.  
 I'm not hurting the baby, he said.  
 The kitchen window gave no light. In the near dark he worked on her fisted fingers with one hand and with the other hand he gripped the screaming baby up under an arm near the shoulder.  
 She felt her fingers being forced open. She felt the baby going from her.  
 No! she screamed just as her hands came loose.  
 She would have it, this baby. She grabbed for the baby's other arm.  
 She caught the baby around the wrist and leaned back.  
 But he would not let go. He felt the baby slipping out of his hands and he pulled back very hard.  
 In this manner, the issue was decided.

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### **Toni Morrison, *Sula* (1980)**

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In that place, where they tore the nightshade and blackberry patches from their roots to make room for the Medallion City Golf Course, there was once a neighborhood. It stood in the hills above the valley town of Medallion and spread all the way to the river. It is called the suburbs now, but when black people lived there it was called the Bottom. One road, shaded by beeches, oaks, maples and chestnuts, connected it to the valley. The beeches are gone now, and so are the pear trees where children sat and yelled down through the blossoms to passerby. Generous funds have been allotted to level the stripped and faded buildings that clutter the road from Medallion up to the golf course. They are going to raze the Time and a Half Pool Hall, where feet in long tan shoes once pointed down from chair rungs. A steel ball will knock to dust Irene's Palace of Cosmetology, where women used to lean their heads back on sink trays and doze while Irene lathered Nu Nile into their hair. Men in khaki work clothes will pry loose the slats of Reba's Grill, where the owner cooked in her hat because she couldn't remember the ingredients without it.

There will be nothing left of the Bottom (the footbridge that crossed the river is already gone), but perhaps it is just as well, since it wasn't a town anyway: just a neighborhood where on quiet days people in valley houses could hear singing sometimes, banjos sometimes, and, if a valley man happened to have business up in those hills—collecting rent or insurance payments—he might see a dark woman in a flowered dress doing a bit of cakewalk, a bit of black bottom, a bit of “messing around” to the

lively notes of a mouth organ. Her bare feet would raise the saffron dust that floated down on the coveralls and bunion-split shoes of the man breathing music in and out of his harmonica. The black people watching her would laugh and rub their knees, and it would be easy for the valley man to hear the laughter and not notice the adult pain that rested somewhere under the eyelids, somewhere under their head rags and soft felt hats, somewhere in the palm of the hand, somewhere behind the frayed lapels, somewhere in the sinew's curve. He'd have to stand in the back of Greater Saint Matthews' and let the tenor's voice dress him in silk, or touch the hands of the spoon carvers (who had not worked in eight years) and let the fingers that danced on wood kiss his skin. Otherwise the pain would escape him even though the laughter was part of the pain.

A shucking, knee-slapping, wet-eyed laughter that could even describe and explain how they came to be where they were.

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## **Don DeLillo, *Underworld* (1997)**

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He speaks in your voice, American, and there's a shine in his eye that's halfway hopeful.

It's a school day, sure, but he's nowhere near the classroom. He wants to be here instead, standing in the shadow of this old rust-hulk of a structure, and it's hard to blame him - this metropolis of steel and concrete and flaky paint and cropped grass and enormous Chesterfield packs aslant on the scoreboards, a couple of cigarettes jutting from each.

Longing on a large scale is what makes history. This is just a kid with a local yearning but he is part of an assembling crowd, anonymous thousands off the buses and trains, people in narrow columns tramping over the swing bridge above the river, and even if they are not a migration or a revolution, some vast shaking of the soul, they bring with them the body heat of a great city and their own small reveries and desperations, the unseen something that haunts the day - men in fedoras and sailors on shore leave, the stray tumble of their thoughts, going to a game.

The sky is low and gray, the roily gray of sliding surf.

He stands at the curbstone with the others. He is the youngest, at fourteen, and you know he's flat broke by the edgy leaning look he hangs on his body. He has never done this before and he doesn't know any of the others and only two or three of them seem to know each other but they can't do this thing singly or in pairs so they have found one another by means of sidly looks that detect the fellow foolhard and here they stand, black kids and white kids up from the subways or off the local Harlem streets, lean shadows, bandidos, fifteen in all, and according to topical legend maybe four will get through for every one that's caught.

They are waiting nervously for the ticket holders to clear the turnstiles, the last loose cluster of fans, the stragglers and loiterers. They watch the late-arriving taxis from downtown and the brilliantined men stepping dapper to the windows, policy bankers and supper club swells and Broadway hotshots, high aura'd, picking lint off their mohair sleeves. They stand at the curb and watch without seeming to look, wearing the sourish air of corner hangabouts. All the hubbub has died down, the pregame babble and swirl, vendors working the jammed sidewalks waving scorecards and pennants and calling out in ancient singsong, scraggy men hustling buttons and caps, all dispersed now, gone to their roomlets in the beaten streets.

They are at the curbstone, waiting. Their eyes are going grim, sending out less light. Somebody takes his hand out of his pockets. They are waiting and then they go, one of them goes, a mick who shouts *Geronimo*.

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## Richard Powers, *The Time of Our Singing* (2003)

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[Context: [Marian Anderson Sings at the Lincoln Memorial](#)]

This day, a nation turns out for its own wake. The air is raw, but scrubbed by last night's rain. Sunday rises, red and protestant, over the Potomac. Light's paler synonyms scratch at the capital's monuments, edging the blocks of the Federal Triangle, turning sandstone to marble, marble to granite, granite to slate, settling down on the Tidal Basin like water seeking its level. The palette of this dawn is pure Ashcan School. Early morning coats every cornice with magentas that deepen as the hours unfold. But memory will forever replay this day in black and white, the slow voice-over pan of Movietone.

Laborers drift across a Mall littered with scraps of funny papers scattering on the April wind. Sawhorses and police cones corral the lawless expanse of public space. Federal work teams—split by race—finish ratcheting together a grandstand on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. A handful of organizers gazes over the reflecting pool, swapping bets about the size of the crowd that will turn out for this funeral turned jubilee. The crowds about to descend on them in three hours will swamp their most outrageous guesses.

Knots of the curious gather to witness these last-minute preparations. Accounts have been flying for some time now—word of this forbidden concert. American Dream and American Reality square off, their long trajectories arcing toward midair collision. The ancient ship of state, gone too long without a hull scrape, groaned at anchor last night in the Washington Navy Yard, upriver on the Anacostia, and now entire neighborhoods of the city, this Easter morning, 1939—in crowds already assembling to the east of Scott Circle and north of Q Street, all the way up into the Maryland suburbs; whole communities still in church, calling out their response to this year's recounting of the ancient Resurrection fable—begin to wonder whether today might witness the leaky old brig's mercy scuttling, a full-fledged burial at sea.

"How long?" the church songs ask. "How long until that Day?" As late as last Friday, no tune dared more than soon, no singer thought sooner than never. Yet this morning, by some overlooked miracle, the stone has rolled away, Rome's imperial elite lie sprawled about the tomb, and the messenger angel floats front and center, beating its wings over the Jefferson Memorial, saying now, singing release in the key of C.

Over on Pennsylvania Avenue, pink children in vests and pinafores hunt for Easter eggs on the White House lawn. Inside the Oval Office, the silver-tongued president and his speechwriters conspire on the next fireside chat to a country still hoping to evade the flames. Each new paternal radio address stores up more strained reassurances. "Brutality," the old man tells his fireside family, "is a nightmare that must waken to democracy." A loving-enough lie, perhaps even believable, to those who've never strolled northward up Fourteenth Street. But Roosevelt's address on the widening crisis goes hunting, this Easter, for an audience. Today, the nation's radios tune to a different performance, a wider frequency. Today, Radio America broadcasts a new song.

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## Joyce Carol Oates, *The Falls* (2004)

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...Waking that morning to the rude and incontrovertible fact that she who'd slept alone all her life was yet alone again on the morning following her wedding day. Waking alone though she was no longer Miss Ariaiah Juliet Littrell but Mrs. Gilvert Erskine. Though no longer the spinster daughter of Reverend and Mrs. Thaddeus Littrell of Troy, New York, piano and voice instructor at the Troy Academy of Music, but the bride of Reverend Gilbert Erskine, recently named minister of the First Presbyterian Church of Palmyra, New York.

Waking alone and in that instant she knew. Yet she could not believe, her pride was too great. Not allowing herself to think *I am alone. Am I?*

A clamor of wedding bells had followed her here. Hundreds of miles. Her head was ringed in pain as if in a vise. Her bowels were sick as if the very intestines were corroded and rotting. In this unfamiliar bed smelling of damp linen, damp flesh and desperation. Where, where was she, what was the name of the hotel he'd brought her to, a paradise for honeymooners, and Niagara Falls was the Honeymoon Capital of the World, a pulse in her head beat so violently she couldn't think. Having been married so briefly she knew little of husbands yet it seemed to her plausible (Ariah was telling herself this as a frightened child might tell herself a story to ward off harm) that Gilbert had only just slipped quietly from the bed and was in the bathroom. She lay very still listening for sounds of faucets, a bath running, a toilet flushing, hoping to hear even as her sensitive nerves resisted hearing. The awkwardness, embarrassment, shame of such intimacy was new to her, like the intimacy of marriage. The "marital bed." Nowhere to hide. His pungent Vitalis hair-oil, and her coyly sweet Lily of the Valley cologne in collision. Just Ariah and Gilbert whom no one called Gil alone together breathless and smiling hard and determined to be cheerful, pleasant, polite with each other as they'd always been before the wedding had joined them in holy matrimony except Ariah had to know something was wrong, she'd been jolted from her hot stuporous sleep to his knowledge.

*Gone. He's gone. Can't be gone. Where?*

God damn! She was a new, shy bride. So the world perceived her and the world was not mistaken. At the hotel registration desk she'd signed, for the first time, *Mrs. Ariah Erskine*, and her cheeks had flamed. A virgin, twenty-nine years old. Inexperienced with men as with another species of being. As she lay wracked with pain she didn't dare even to reach out in the enormous bed for fear of touching him.

She wouldn't have wanted him to misinterpret her touch.

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## **J. Robert Lennon, *Broken River* (2017)**

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It is a few minutes past one in the morning when the front door slams shut. Anyone remaining in the house—but there is no one—would be able to hear, through the closed door, the footsteps of three people hurrying across the porch and down the stairs. There are voices, too—a man's and a woman's, and a child's. The adults are quiet, or they are trying to be quiet, but their voices betray strong emotion: fear, in the case of the woman; and in the case of the man, impatience and frustration, which could easily be interpreted as a response to his own fear. The child's voice is plaintive and confused, as though she (a girl, most likely, of around five) has been awoken from sleep and hurried out of the house without explanation.

The state of the now-empty house would suggest that this is precisely what has happened. Many of the lights have been left on. In the kitchen, dinner dishes are still soaking under sudsy water in the sink, and a drawer and a cabinet have been left open and disordered, as though objects have been removed from them in haste. Three of the four mismatched wooden chairs that surround a small table—its laminated plastic surface scratched and gouged and peeling up at one corner—are pushed neatly underneath it; the fourth is lying on its side upon a linoleum floor that is equally scratched and gouged. A few coins lie on the tabletop, along with a half-empty pack of cigarettes, one of which burns in a white plastic ashtray.

Anyone standing in the kitchen right now would hear, through the screened, half-open window over the sink, footsteps on gravel outside. The three people—the man, woman, and child—have evidently reached a driveway or parking area adjacent to the porch. The man and woman are arguing, and it is possible to determine from their tone that they are trying to decide upon something quickly

and don't agree about the proper course of action. An especially perceptive listener might describe the woman's voice as accusatory and the man's as defensive, and might be willing to imagine a scenario in which the man is to blame for this crisis, and in which the woman is registering her displeasure about the circumstances that led to it. The child, meanwhile, has begun to cry and is demanding something that has been left behind.

If an observer in the house were to climb the stairs that lead up from the kitchen, he or she would reach a narrow hallway interrupted by three doorways. Two of them are open right now, and light spills through them onto the frayed hall carpet. The first of the doors is on the left, and behind it lies a small bedroom: clearly the child's. The bed is unmade; open drawers interrupt the face of a painted bureau. Some clothes appear to have been hastily grabbed from these drawers; a few articles have fallen on the floor. One drawer has tumbled out of the bureau entirely and lies facedown on the pink-painted wide-plank floor, on a pile of small socks and underpants. Also visible on the floor, between the upturned drawer and the bed, is a stuffed toy frog. Perhaps this is the item that the crying child is demanding.

If so, the child's parents do not sound enthusiastic about the possibility of going back to retrieve it. Instead, their footsteps in the gravel outside have stopped, and the jingle of keys window, he or she could make out the family standing around a station wagon parked at an awkward angle on a weedy gravel drive. The car is a Volvo, from the mid-eighties, perhaps, with rust eating away at the edges of the doors and in the wheel wells. It is hard to tell the color by starlight (tonight is a clear night), but gray or light blue would be a good bet. The man has gotten the driver's-side door open and has dived into the car, and the woman is shouting at him to unlock the other doors. The man curses, and there is a moment of relative quiet wherein an attentive observer could discern the sound of the other locks popping open. The child is wailing now—she is clearly terrified by this strange nocturnal excursion and by the unprecedented desperation of her parents. The woman flings the rear passenger-side door open and pushes the child inside. She is in there for several long seconds, attempting to reassure the child that all will be well, in a tone of voice that indicates the precise opposite. Perhaps she is attempting to fasten the child's seat belt. The man is shouting at her to just get in, fucking get in with her and close the door. In the end the woman obeys, and before the door is even shut, the engine has been started and the car begins to execute a sloppy three-point turn. At last the car is pointed away from the house; it is thrown into gear, and the tires spin, sending a shower of gravel out behind it.

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## **Maggie Shiphead, *Great Circle* (2021)**

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### MARRIAGE

*North Atlantic*

*October 1931*

*Two months after Jamie came home from Seattle*

Marian Macqueen, seventeen years old and newly married, stood at the stern of an ocean liner, the chill of the railing seeping through her gloves as light drained from the murky sky. Barclay was bringing her to Scotland for a honeymoon. She'd been told she would meet his father's people and his acquaintances from school and see castles and highlands. They'd gone by train from Missoula to New York City. "I don't know what you're looking at," Barclay had said somewhere in the plains while Marian stared hungrily out the window. "There's nothing out there."

The gust of the train washed through golden prairie grass, tossed blackbirds into flight. "I want to see it anyway," she said.

After a week in New York, they had boarded this ship (Cunard, not L&O) bound for Liverpool, from where they would take another train north. The first three days had been stormy enough that the decks were closed to passengers except for the glassed-in parts of the promenade, and Marian had roamed impatiently, peering out the rain-streaked windows at the shifting, whitecapped water. Barclay was seasick, but she was untouched. Quickly she'd developed the knack for inclining her body with the roll of the ship, penduluming from side to side as she walked down the corridors. Other passengers staggered drunkenly or clung to the railings while she only grazed her fingertips along the walls.

"Very good, madam!" said a passing steward. "You have your sea legs."

She imagined her father would be proud to see how unaffected she was. She imagined explaining to Addison that she was accustomed to motion, describing her aerobatics, how the plane felt like an extension of her own body, except *more* responsive, *more* coordinated than her limbs ever would be. She could spin and loop and always know exactly where she was. He would be proud of that, too, she thought. An undertow of self-pity caught her. It would be nice if *somebody* were proud of her. Wallace wasn't capable. She and Jamie were barely speaking, and who could ever tell what Caleb thought. Barclay was proud of having married her, but he saw her flying as a rival.

On deck, damp blew around her, scouring her cheeks. As best she could figure, at some point during this night they would pass not far from where the *Josephina* had gone down, where she, Marian, had been set on a course that had taken turn after turn until returning her to this patch of ocean as a rich man's bride, the wife of a criminal.

She was wearing clothes selected for her by women at Henri Bendel in New York to replace the clothes that, after their engagement, had been selected for her by women at the Missoula Mercantile to replace her shirts and trousers: a silk dress and stockings, T-strap shoes, onyx-and-diamond dangles clamped to her ears, a rope of pearls slung twice around her neck, a mink coat and a navy cloche. She had three trunks full of such things. Barclay had insisted on all of it. The responsibility of owning so many fine and delicate possessions, so many sparkling bits and bobs that served no real purpose but must not be forgotten or lost or broken, worked on her like a kind of drag, slowing her. She was unused to shoes that should not be gotten wet and gossamer fabrics that snagged or stretched unless she remembered to move cautiously at all times. If the three trunks had gone up in a bonfire, she would have felt only relief, but since Barclay knew far more about how women should look than she did, she deferred.

Her hair had been cut in the Plaza Hotel salon by a woman whose own hair was a miracle of sharp angles and avian sleekness, like Mercury's helmet. "It's so short already I don't know if I can do much with it," the woman had said, fingering Marian's pale crop, but somehow she had snipped it into something that might be taken as daring and gamine.

Another woman had taught her how to make up her face, sold her an assortment of mirrored compacts and a fistful of brushes and pencils. Her skin had been powdered and rouged until her freckles vanished; her eyes were ringed in black, her lips painted red. When she caught sight of her reflection, she had the same uncanny feeling she'd had at Miss Dolly's, of glimpsing a stranger who turned out to be herself.

What would have happened if, when they'd first met, Barclay had simply set his mind on seducing her? She would have gone willingly enough. Why all the fuss? He'd needed to break the feral pull between them, tame and subdue it. Since the wedding, though, she had sensed some buried, unacknowledgable regret in him. He could neither tolerate wildness nor reconcile himself to its loss.

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# COMMONWEALTH LITERATURE

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## Henry Lawson, "The Drover's Wife" (1892)

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The two-roomed house is built of round timber, slabs, and stringy-bark, and floored with split slabs. A big bark kitchen standing at one end is larger than the house itself, veranda included.

Bush all around - bush with no horizon, for the country is flat. No ranges in the distance. The bush consists of stunted, rotten native apple-trees. No undergrowth. Nothing to relieve the eye save the darker green of a few she-oaks which are sighing above the narrow, almost waterless creek. Nineteen miles to the nearest sign of civilisation - a shanty on the main road.

The drover, an ex-squatter, is away with sheep. His wife and children are left here alone.

Four ragged, dried-up-looking children are playing about the house. Suddenly one of them yells: "Snake! Mother, here's a snake!"

The gaunt, sun-browned bushwoman dashes from the kitchen, snatches her baby from the ground, holds it on her left hip, and reaches for a stick.

"Where is it?"

"Here! Gone in the wood-heap;" yells the eldest boy - a sharp-faced urchin of eleven. "Stop there, mother! I'll have him. Stand back! I'll have the beggar!"

"Tommy, come here, or you'll be bit. Come here at once when I tell you, you little wretch!"

The youngster comes reluctantly, carrying a stick bigger than himself. Then he yells, triumphantly:

"There it goes - under the house!" and darts away with club uplifted. At the same time the big, black, yellow-eyed dog-of-all-breeds, who has shown the wildest interest in the proceedings, breaks his chain and rushes after that snake. He is a moment late, however, and his nose reaches the crack in the slabs just as the end of its tail disappears. Almost at the same moment the boy's club comes down and skins the aforesaid nose. Alligator takes small notice of this, and proceeds to undermine the building; but he is subdued after a struggle and chained up. They cannot afford to lose him.

The drover's wife makes the children stand together near the dog-house while she watches for the snake. She gets two small dishes of milk and sets them down near the wall to tempt it to come out; but an hour goes by and it does not show itself.

It is near sunset, and a thunderstorm is coming. The children must be brought inside. She will not take them into the house, for she knows the snake is there, and may at any moment come up through a crack in the rough slab floor; so she carries several armfuls of firewood into the kitchen, and then takes the children there. The kitchen has no floor - or, rather, an earthen one - called a "ground floor" in this part of the bush. There is a large, roughly-made table in the centre of the place. She brings the children in, and makes them get on this table. They are two boys and two girls - mere babies. She gives some supper, and then, before it gets dark, she goes into house, and snatches up some pillows and bedclothes - expecting to see or lay or hand on the snake any minute. She makes a bed on the kitchen table for the children, and sits down beside it to watch all night.

She has an eye on the corner, and a green sapling club laid in readiness on the dresser by her side; also her sewing basket and a copy of the *Young Ladies' Journal*. She has brought the dog into the room.

Tommy turns in, under protest, but says he'll lie awake all night and smash that blinded snake.

His mother asks him how many times she has told not to swear.

He has his club with him under the bedclothes, and Jacky protests:

"Mummy! Tommy's skinnin' me alive wif his club. Make him take it out."

Tommy: "Shet up you little ---! D'yer want to be bit with the snake?"

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**Katherine Mansfield, “Marriage à la Mode”, *The Garden Party and Other Stories* (1922).**

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On his way to the station William remembered with a fresh pang of disappointment that he was taking nothing down to the kiddies. Poor little chaps! It was hard lines on them. Their first words always were as they ran to greet him, “What have you got for me, daddy?” and he had nothing. He would have to buy them some sweets at the station. But that was what he had done for the past four Saturdays; their faces had fallen last time when they saw the same old boxes produced again.

And Paddy had said, “I had red ribbing on mine *bee-*fore!” And Johnny had said, “It’s always pink on mine. I hate pink.”

But what was William to do? The affair wasn’t so easily settled. In the old days, of course, he would have taken a taxi off to a decent toyshop and chosen them something in five minutes. But nowadays they had Russian toys, French toys, Serbian toys—toys from God knows where. It was over a year since Isabel had scrapped the old donkeys and engines and so on because they were so “dreadfully sentimental” and “so appallingly bad for the babies’ sense of form.”

“It’s so important,” the new Isabel had explained, “that they should like the right things from the very beginning. It saves so much time later on. Really, if the poor pets have to spend their infant years staring at these horrors, one can imagine them growing up and asking to be taken to the Royal Academy.”

And she spoke as though a visit to the Royal Academy was certain immediate death to any one...

“Well, I don’t know,” said William slowly. “When I was their age I used to go to bed hugging an old towel with a knot in it.”

The new Isabel looked at him, her eyes narrowed, her lips apart. “*Dear William!* I’m sure you did!” She laughed in the new way.

Sweets it would have to be, however, thought William gloomily, fishing in his pocket for change for the taxi-man. And he saw the kiddies handing the boxes round—they were awfully generous little chaps—while Isabel’s precious friends didn’t hesitate to help themselves...

What about fruit? William hovered before a stall just inside the station. What about a melon each? Would they have to share that, too? Or a pineapple, for Pad, and a melon for Johnny? Isabel’s friends could hardly go sneaking up to the nursery at the children’s meal-times. All the same, as he bought the melon William had a horrible vision of one of Isabel’s young poets lapping up a slice, for some reason, behind the nursery door.

With his two very awkward parcels he strode off to his train. The platform was crowded, the train was in. Doors banged open and shut. There came such a loud hissing from the engine that people looked dazed as they scurried to and fro. William made straight for a first-class smoker, stowed away his suit-case and parcels, and taking a huge wad of papers out of his inner pocket, he flung down in the corner and began to read.

“Our client moreover is positive...We are inclined to reconsider...in the event of—” Ah, that was better. William pressed back his flattened hair and stretched his legs across the carriage floor. The familiar dull gnawing in his breast quietened down. “With regard to our decision—” He took out a blue pencil and scored a paragraph slowly.

Two men came in, stepped across him, and made for the farther corner. A young fellow swung his golf clubs into the rack and sat down opposite. The train gave a gentle lurch, they were off. William glanced up and saw the hot, bright station slipping away. A red-faced girl raced along by the carriages, there was something strained and almost desperate in the way she waved and called. "Hysterical!" thought William dully. Then a greasy, black-faced workman at the end of the platform grinned at the passing train. And William thought, "A filthy life!" and went back to his papers.

When he looked up again there were fields, and beasts standing for shelter under the dark trees. A wide river, with naked children splashing in the shallows, glided into sight and was gone again. The sky shone pale, and one bird drifted high like a dark fleck in a jewel.

"We have examined our client's correspondence files..." The last sentence he had read echoed in his mind. "We have examined ..." William hung on to that sentence, but it was no good; it snapped in the middle, and the fields, the sky, the sailing bird, the water, all said, "Isabel." The same thing happened every Saturday afternoon. When he was on his way to meet Isabel there began those countless imaginary meetings. She was at the station, standing just a little apart from everybody else; she was sitting in the open taxi outside; she was at the garden gate; walking across the parched grass; at the door, or just inside the hall.

And her clear, light voice said, "It's William," or "Hillo, William!" or "So William has come!" He touched her cool hand, her cool cheek.

The exquisite freshness of Isabel! When he had been a little boy, it was his delight to run into the garden after a shower of rain and shake the rose-bush over him. Isabel was that rose-bush, petal-soft, sparkling and cool. And he was still that little boy. But there was no running into the garden now, no laughing and shaking. The dull, persistent gnawing in his breast started again. He drew up his legs, tossed the papers aside, and shut his eyes.

"What is it, Isabel? What is it?" he said tenderly. They were in their bedroom in the new house. Isabel sat on a painted stool before the dressing-table that was strewn with little black and green boxes.

"What is what, William?" And she bent forward, and her fine light hair fell over her cheeks.

"Ah, you know!" He stood in the middle of the room and he felt a stranger. At that Isabel wheeled round quickly and faced him.

"Oh, William!" she cried imploringly, and she held up the hair-brush: "Please! Please don't be so dreadfully stuffy and—tragic. You're always saying or looking or hinting that I've changed. Just because I've got to know really congenial people, and go about more, and am frightfully keen on—on everything, you behave as though I'd—" Isabel tossed back her hair and laughed—"killed our love or something. It's so awfully absurd"—she bit her lip—"and it's so maddening, William. Even this new house and the servants you grudge me."

But the imbecile thing, the absolutely extraordinary thing was that he hadn't the slightest idea that Isabel wasn't as happy as he. God, what blindness! He hadn't the remotest notion in those days that she really hated that inconvenient little house, that she thought the fat Nanny was ruining the babies, that she was desperately lonely, pining for new people and new music and pictures and so on. If they hadn't gone to that studio party at Moira Morrison's—if Moira Morrison hadn't said as they were leaving, "I'm going to rescue your wife, selfish man. She's like an exquisite little Titania"—if Isabel hadn't gone with Moira to Paris—if— if...

BY now the tall grass was almost dry, so that there issued from it a sharper sighing when the wind blew. The wind bent the grass into tawny waves, on the crests of which floated the last survivors of flowers, and shrivelled and were sucked under by the swell. All day the horses and the cattle swam through this grass sea. Their barrels rolled and gurgled. All night the beasts were glutting themselves on dew and grass, but in the dreams of men the waves of grass and the waves of sleep were soon one. Dogs curled in pockets of the grass, shivered and bristled as they floated on their own dreams.

It was the dogs that first confirmed the German's opinion that they must be in the vicinity of Jildra. On a certain evening, as the expedition continued to advance, the dogs had begun to whine, and gulp, and lift their legs repeatedly. Their muzzles had grown leaner, the eyes were bulging from their skulls, when, with very little further warning, suddenly foreign tails, then the bodies of foreign dogs were emerging from the grass. Thus having come together, the two parties of animals were stalking round and round, in stiff, shocked silence, awaiting some sign.

The members of the expedition had shaded their eyes with their hands, as an extension to the already broad brims of their hats, and eventually one of them, Mr Judd it was, remarked that he could see a man approaching on horseback above the waving grass. Other eyes were soon focused on this figure, who came on through the red light, firmly clamped by the thighs to the body of his strong, chestnut horse. As he advanced, erect, moving in the saddle just enough to emphasize the arrogance of ownership, it was disclosed that the man himself was of a reddish, chestnut colour, intensified by the evening sun.

There he was, at last, reining in. The suspicious horse snorted.

'Boyle is my name,' announced the man, on thick lips, holding out a hand that did not waver.

'Of Jildra,' added Voss.

'That is correct.'

No further civilities were expended on the meeting, but Mr Boyle turned his horse and proceeded to escort the party along the track he had made by his coming. The band of sweating horses, straight mules, lowing, heavy-headed cattle, and parched, tingling men went on towards Jildra. By the time the homestead was reached, the western sky was of a blood red. The foreground had almost foundered, through which ran the figures of a number of individuals, if they were not animated, black sticks, to receive the reins from the hands of the new arrivals. Smoke was ascending, and dust from the broad road the animals had trampled, together with the vapours of night. All was confused, nor did the approaching unity of darkness promise great consolation.

Mr Brendan Boyle was of that order of males who will destroy any distinction with which they have been born, because it accuses them, they feel, and they cannot bear the shame of it. In consequence, the station-owner had torn the boards off Homer to chock the leg of the table, and such other books as he had inherited, or even bought in idealistic youth, now provided material for spills, or could hope at best to be ignored, except by insects, dust, and mould. In his house, or shack of undaubed slab, that admitted day-and starlight in their turn, several pieces of smooth Irish silver stood cheek by jowl with pocked iron, the former dented somewhat savagely, in reprisal it seemed, for elegance. The dirt floor was littered with crumbs and crusts of bread. Birds and mice could always be relied upon to carry off a certain amount of this rubbish, but some lay there until it became petrified by time, or was ground to dust under the hard feet of those black women who satisfied the crude requirements of Brendan Boyle.

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## Ernest Buckler, *The Cruellest Month* (1963)

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In sudden accidents it seems as if the moment itself slews and splits open like the rocks before Jason's dove. Whatever monstrous force it is that trails and ambushes every second pounces through the rift, strikes, and just escaping the rocks' closing again, leaps back in one flash.

There was the sow's squeal of brakes, Rex's scream, and then the unearthly bark of wounded metal. And then everything was sideways and dishevelled, but the moment itself was instantly bland and blind again, vibrating only with after-glimpse.

Bruce's car was partly in the ditch. Its fender had scraped a rock, but otherwise it was not damaged. The only blemish on Rex's was a long stripe of abraded paint. Miraculously, no one had been injured, but pallor and shock stripped all their faces to bare maps of themselves, to legibility. Landmarks of chronic thought and feeling were pencilled in like rivers and mountains.

The moment Rex saw that his own car was in the clear he stepped on the gas.

"Rex!" Sheila cried. "Stop!"

"I'm *going* to stop," he said.

She knew he hadn't been going to stop. She'd seen that look on his face too often, of taking to its heels. The scream, though, was something new.

She looked closer at him, but he seemed to be calmer than she was now.

They got out of the car and approached Bruce in the road.

All three had regained hold enough on themselves that now the instinct for self-exoneration was uppermost.

Bruce noticed Rex's limp.

"Are you hurt?" he said.

"No!" Rex gave his foot another quick amputative glance, and Bruce saw then how its shoe had long since shaped itself to chronic deformity. "No one's hurt. But we're just damn lucky. You believe in taking plenty of road when you drive, don't you."

"You think so, Bruce said. "Well, have a look. Whose car had to take the ditch for it? And whose was coming around that blind corner fifty, sixty miles an hour?"

"We could have been driving too fast," Sheila said. "I admit that."

"Well *now*," Rex said. "*That's* interesting?" He smiled at Bruce and delivered Sheila to him with a nod of his head. "You've got yourself a witness. Voluntary, no less."

"Rex!" Sheila said.

"What's your name?" Rex said to Bruce.

"Bruce Mansfield. Do you want to see my license?"

"Not specially," Rex said. "I just wanted to make the introductions. My name is Rex Giorno. And I'd like you to meet my wife, Sheila Giorno. Of Greenwich and New York, as they say." He waved his arm toward her. "Your witness. All yours. It's only in murder trials that the wife can't testify against her husband, isn't it?"

"Rex, Sheila said. "For Heaven's sake. Don't be so unreasonable. You know you were driving too fast."

"I'm not being unreasonable at all," he said in an ultra-reasonable tone. "Just outnumbered. So you two fix it up between you anyway you like."

He stepped back a pace.

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Alice Munro, "Boys and Girls" (1964), *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968)

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It was an odd thing to see my mother down at the barn. She did not often come out of the house unless it was to do something – hang out the wash or dig potatoes in the garden. She looked out of place, with her bare lumpy legs, not touched by the sun, her apron still on and damp across the stomach from the supper dishes. Her hair was tied up in a kerchief, wisps of it falling out. She would tie her hair up like this in the morning, saying she did not have time to do it properly, and it would stay tied up all day. It was true, too; she really did not have time. These days our back porch was piled with baskets of peaches and grapes and pears, bought in town, and onions and tomatoes and cucumbers grown at home, all waiting to be made into jelly and jam and preserves, pickles and chili sauce. In the kitchen there was a fire in the stove all day, jars clinked in boiling water, sometimes a cheesecloth bag was strung on a pole between two chairs straining blue-back grape pulp for jelly. I was given jobs to do and I would sit at the table peeling peaches that had been soaked in hot water, or cutting up onions, my eyes smarting and streaming. As soon as I was done I ran out of the house, trying to get out of earshot before my mother thought of what she wanted me to do next. I hated the hot dark kitchen in summer, the green blinds and the flypapers, the same old oilcloth table and wavy mirror and bumpy linoleum. My mother was too tired and preoccupied to talk to me, she had no heart to tell about the Normal School Graduation Dance; sweat trickled over her face and she was always counting under breath, pointing at jars, dumping cups of sugar. It seemed to me that work in the house was endless, dreary, and peculiarly depressing; work done out of doors, and in my father's service, was ritualistically important.

I wheeled the tank up to the barn, where it was kept, and I heard my mother saying, "Wait till Laird gets a little bigger, then you'll have a real help."

What my father said I did not hear. I was pleased by the way he stood listening, politely as he would to a salesman or a stranger, but with an air of wanting to get on with his real work. I felt my mother had no business down here and I wanted him to feel the same way. What did she mean about Laird? He was no help to anybody. Where was he now? Swinging himself sick on the swing, going around in circles, or trying to catch caterpillars. He never once stayed with me till I was finished.

"And then I can use her more in the house," I heard my mother say. She had a dead-quiet regretful way of talking about me that always made me uneasy. "I just get my back turned and she runs off. It's not like I had a girl in the family at all."

I went and sat on a feed bag in the corner of the barn, not wanting to appear when this conversation was going on. My mother, I felt, was not to be trusted. She was kinder than my father and more easily fooled, but you could not depend on her, and the real reasons for the things she said and did were not to be known. She loved me, and she sat up late at night making a dress of the difficult style I wanted, for me to wear when school started, but she was also my enemy. She was always plotting. She was plotting now to get me to stay in the house more, although she knew I hated it (because she knew I hated it) and keep me from working for my father. It seemed to me she would do this simply out of perversity, and to try her power. It did not occur to me that she could be lonely, or jealous. No grown-up could be; they were too fortunate. I sat and kicked my heels monotonously against a feed bag, raising dust, and did not come out till she was gone.

At any rate, I did not expect my father to pay any attention to what she said. Who could imagine Laird doing my work – Laird remembering the padlock and cleaning out the watering dishes with a leaf on the end of a stick, or even wheeling the tank without it tumbling over? It showed how little my mother knew about the way things really were.

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**Kamala Das, "An Introduction", *Summer in Calcutta* (1965)**

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I don't know politics but I know the names  
Of those in power, and can repeat them like  
Days of week, or names of months, beginning with Nehru.  
I am Indian, very brown, born in Malabar,  
I speak three languages, write in  
Two, dream in one.  
Don't write in English, they said, English is  
Not your mother-tongue. Why not leave  
Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,  
Every one of you? Why not let me speak in  
Any language I like? The language I speak,  
Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses  
All mine, mine alone.  
It is half English, half Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,  
It is as human as I am human, don't  
You see? It voices my joys, my longings, my  
Hopes, and it is useful to me as cawing  
Is to crows or roaring to the lions, it  
Is human speech, the speech of the mind that is  
Here and not there, a mind that sees and hears and  
Is aware. Not the deaf, blind speech  
Of trees in storm or of monsoon clouds or of rain or the  
Incoherent mutterings of the blazing  
Funeral pyre. I was child, and later they  
Told me I grew, for I became tall, my limbs  
Swelled and one or two places sprouted hair.  
When I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask  
For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the  
Bedroom and closed the door, He did not beat me  
But my sad woman-body felt so beaten.  
The weight of my breasts and womb crushed me.  
I shrank Pitifully.  
Then ... I wore a shirt and my  
Brother's trousers, cut my hair short and ignored  
My womanliness. Dress in sarees, be girl  
Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,  
Be a quarreller with servants. Fit in. Oh,  
Belong, cried the categorizers. Don't sit  
On walls or peep in through our lace-draped windows.  
Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or, better  
Still, be Madhavikutty. It is time to  
Choose a name, a role. Don't play pretending games.  
Don't play at schizophrenia or be a

Nympho. Don't cry embarrassingly loud when  
Jilted in love ... I met a man, loved him. Call  
Him not by any name, he is every man  
Who wants. a woman, just as I am every  
Woman who seeks love. In him... the hungry haste  
Of rivers, in me... the oceans' tireless  
Waiting. Who are you, I ask each and everyone,  
The answer is, it is I. Anywhere and,  
Everywhere, I see the one who calls himself I  
In this world, he is tightly packed like the  
Sword in its sheath. It is I who drink lonely  
Drinks at twelve, midnight, in hotels of strange towns,  
It is I who laugh, it is I who make love  
And then, feel shame, it is I who lie dying  
With a rattle in my throat. I am sinner,  
I am saint. I am the beloved and the  
Betrayed. I have no joys that are not yours, no  
Aches which are not yours. I too call myself I.

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### Margaret Atwood, "Siren Song" (1974)

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This is the one song everyone  
would like to learn: the song  
that is irresistible:  
the song that forces men  
to leap overboard in squadrons  
even though they see the beached skulls

the song nobody knows  
because anyone who has heard it  
is dead, and the others can't remember.

Shall I tell you the secret  
and if I do, will you get me  
out of this bird suit?

I don't enjoy it here  
squatting on this island  
looking picturesque and mythical

with these two feathery maniacs,  
I don't enjoy singing  
this trio, fatal and valuable.

I will tell the secret to you,

to you, only to you.  
Come closer. This song

is a cry for help: Help me!  
Only you, only you can,  
you are unique

at last. Alas  
it is a boring song  
but it works every time.

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**Anita Desai, *Clear Light of Day* (1980)**

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The koels began to call before daylight. Their voices rang out from the dark trees like an arrangement of bells, calling and echoing each others' calls, mocking and enticing each other into ever higher and shriller calls. More and more joined in as the sun rose and when Tara could no longer bear the querulous demand in their voices, she got up and went out onto the veranda to find the blank white glare of the summer sun thrusting in between the round pillars and the purple bougainvillea. Wincing, she shielded her eyes as she searched for the birds that had clamoured for her appearance, but saw nothing. The cane chairs on the veranda stood empty. A silent line of ants filed past her feet and down the steps into the garden. Then she saw her sister's figure in white, slowly meandering along what as children they had called 'the rose walk'.

Dropping her hands to pick up the hem of her long nightdress, Tara ran down the steps, bowing her head to the morning sun that came slicing down like a blade of steel onto the back of her neck, and crossed the dry crackling grass of the lawn to join her sister who stood watching, smiling.

The rose walk was a strip of grass, still streaked green and grey, between two long beds of roses at the far end of the lawn where a line of trees fringed the garden – fig and silver oak, mulberry and eucalyptus. Here there was still shade and, it seemed to Tara, the only bit of cultivation left; everything else, even the papaya and lemon trees, the bushes of hibiscus and oleander, the beds of canna lilies, seemed abandoned to dust and neglect, to struggle as they could against the heat and sun of summer.

But the rose walk had been maintained almost as it was. Or was it? It seemed to Tara that there had been far more roses in it when she was a child – luscious shaggy pink ones, small crisp white ones tinged with green, silky yellow ones that smelt of tea – and not just these small negligible crimson heads that lolled weakly on their thin stems. Tara had grown to know them on those mornings when she had trailed up and down after her mother who was expecting her youngest child and had been advised by the doctor to take some exercise. Her mother had not liked exercise, perhaps not the new baby either, and had paced up and down with her arms folded and her head sunk in thought while the koels mocked and screamed and dive-bombed the trees. Tara had danced and skipped after her, chattering, till she spied something flashing from under a pile of fallen rose petals – a pearl, or a silver ring? – and swooped upon it with a cry that broke into her mother's reverie and made her stop and frown. Tara had excitedly swept aside the petals and uncovered – a small, blanched snail. Her face wrinkling with disgust, her mother turned and paced on without a word, leaving Tara on her knees to contemplate the quality of disillusion.

But there was Bim. Bim, grey and heavy now and not so unlike their mother in appearance, only

awake, watchful, gazing at her with her fullest attention and appraisal. Bim laughed when she saw Tara panting slightly in her eagerness.

Tara laughed back. 'Bim, the old rose walk is still here.'

'Of course,' said Bim, 'only the roses grow smaller and sicker every year,' and she bent to shake a long spindly branch from which a fully bloomed rose dangled. It came apart instantly, revealing a small naked centre and a few pathetic stamens clinging to the bald head while the petals fell in a bunch to the chocolate earth below.

Tara's mouth opened in dismay at the destruction of a rose in full bloom – she would never have done what Bim did – and then she saw the petals that had clung together in a bunch in their fall part and scatter themselves. As she stared, a petal rose and tumbled onto its back and she saw uncovered the gleam of a – a pearl? a silver ring? – Something that gleamed, something that flashed, then flowed – and she saw it was her childhood snail slowly, resignedly making its way from under the flower up a clod of earth only to tumble off the top onto its side – an eternal, miniature Sisyphus. She brought her hands together in a clap and cried, 'Look, a snail!'

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### **Roger Nash, "Several Excuses for Having Stayed" (1983)**

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I knew I just shouldn't stay. But the butter  
in her eyes melted over my shoes  
when I started to walk away. Then the gate  
fumbled free from under my hand  
and went to earth in the rockery.

I knew I shouldn't step in. The empty sofa  
creaked like a snare. There was a flash  
of gunshots from her hair as the light  
ricocheted around it; and geese  
in the print of the wall took faded light.

I knew I shouldn't sit down. But each pear  
on the table stuttered its speckles of brown,  
anxious for conversation. Her smile  
laced my shoes together, while the sun  
pulled me up the glint on a chair.

I knew I shouldn't sit near. But the guitar  
on the radio borrowed my hand to steer  
glittering chords through her hair. Light  
wouldn't let us out of its sight  
each beam brought pans on the wall

to brass crescendos. The kitchen was caught  
in the fevered throat of a constricted trumpet  
its sides gleamed in and flared us together.  
We knew we just shouldn't stay. But the sun  
wouldn't stop to let us go away.

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**Nadine Gordimer, "Loot" in *Loot and Other Stories* (2003)**

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Once upon our time, there was an earthquake: but this one is the most powerful ever recorded since the invention of the Richter scale made possible for us to measure apocalyptic warnings.

It tipped a continental shelf. These tremblings often cause floods; this colossus did the reverse, drew back the ocean as a vast breath taken. The most secret level of our world lay revealed: the sea-bedded - wrecked ships, facades of houses, ballroom candelabra, toilet bowl, pirate chest, TV screen, mail-coach, aircraft fuselage, canon, marble torso, Kalashnikov, metal carapace of a tourist bus-load, baptismal font, automatic dishwasher, computer, swords sheathed in barnacles, coins turned to stone. The astounded gaze raced among these things; the population who had fled from their toppling houses to the maritime hills, ran down. Where terrestrial crash and bellow had terrified them, there was naked silence. The saliva of the sea glistened upon these objects; it is given that time does not, never did, exist down there where the materiality of the past and the present as they lie has no chronological order, all is one, all is nothing - or all is possessible at once.

People rushed to take; take, take. This was - when, anytime, sometime - valuable, that might be useful, what was this, well someone will know, that must have belonged to the rich, it's mine now, if you don't grab what's over there someone else will, feet slipped and slithered on seaweed and sank in soggy sand, gasping sea-plants gaped at them, no-one remarked there were no fish, the living inhabitants of this unearthen had been swept up and away with the water. The ordinary opportunity of looting shops which was routine to people during the political uprisings was no comparison. Orgiastic joy gave men, women and their children strength to heave out of the slime and sand what they did not know they wanted, quickened their staggering gait as they ranged, and this was more than profiting by happenstance, it was robbing the power of nature before which they had fled helpless. Take, take; while grabbing they were able to forget the wreck of their houses and the loss of time-bound possessions there. They had tattered the silence with their shouts to one another and under these cries like the cries of the absent seagulls they did not hear a distant approach of sound rising as a great wind does. And then the sea came back, engulfed them to add to its treasury.

That is what is known; in television coverage that really had nothing to show but the pewter skin of the depths, in radio interviews with those few infirm, timid or prudent who had not come down from the hills, and in newspaper accounts of bodies that for some reason the sea rejected, washed up down the coast somewhere

But the writer knows something no-one else knows; the sea-change of the imagination.

Now listen, there's a man who has wanted a certain object (what) all his life. He has a lot of - things - some of which his eye falls upon often, so he must be fond of, some of which he doesn't notice, deliberately, that he probably shouldn't have acquired but cannot cast off, there's an art nouveau lamp he reads by, and above his bed-head a Japanese print, a Hokusai, 'The Great Wave', he

doesn't really collect oriental stuff, although if it had been on the wall facing him it might have been more than part of the furnishings, it's been out of sight behind his head for years. All these - things - but not the one.

He's a retired man, long divorced, chosen an old but well-appointed villa in the maritime hills as the site from which to turn his back on the assault of the city. A woman from the village cooks and cleans and doesn't bother him with any other communication. It is a life blessedly freed of excitement, he's had enough of that kind of disturbance, pleasurable or not, but the sight from his lookout of what could never have happened, never ever have been vouchsafed, is a kind of command. He is one of those who are racing out over the glistening sea-bed, the past - detritus-treasure, one and the same - stripped bare.

Like all the other looters with whom he doesn't mix, has nothing in common, he races from object to object, turning over the shards of painted china, the sculptures created by destruction, abandonment and rust, the brine-vintaged wine casks, a plunged racing motorcycle, a dentist's chair, his stride landing on disintegrated human ribs and metatarsals he does not identify. But unlike the others, he takes nothing - until: there, ornate with tresses of orange-brown seaweed, stuck-fast with nacreous shells and crenellations of red coral, is *the* object. (A mirror?) It's as if the impossible is true; he knew that was where it was, beneath the sea, that's why he didn't know what it was, could never find it before. It could be revealed only by something that had never happened, the greatest paroxysm of our earth ever measured on the Richter scale.

He takes it up, the object, the mirror, the sand pours off it, the water that was the only bright glance left to it streams from it, he is taking it back with him, taking possession at last.

And the great wave comes from behind his bed-head and takes him.

His name well-known in the former regime circles in the capital is not among the survivors. Along with him among the skeletons of the latest victims, with the ancient pirates and fishermen, there are those dropped from planes during the dictatorship so that with the accomplice of the sea they would never be found. Who recognized them, that day, where they lie?

No carnation or rose floats.

Full fathom five.

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### **Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2007)**

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Ugwu wanted to die, at first. It was not because of the hot tingle in his head or the stickiness of blood on his back or the pain in his buttocks or the way he gasped for air, but because of his thirst. His throat was scorched. The infantrymen carrying him were talking about how rescuing him had given them a reason to run away, how their bullets had finished and they had sent for reinforcements and nothing was forthcoming and the vandals were advancing. But Ugwu's thirst clogged his ears and muffled their words. He was on their shoulders, bandaged with their shirts, the pain shooting all over his body as they walked. He gulped for air, gasped, and sucked but somehow he could not get enough. His thirst nauseated him.

'Water, please,' he croaked. They would not give him any; if he had the energy, he would

invoke all the curses he knew on them. If he had a gun he would have shot them all and then shot himself.

Now, in the hospital where they had left him, he no longer wanted to die, but he feared he would; there were so many bodies littered around him, on mats, on mattresses, on the bare floor. There was so much blood everywhere. He heard the sharp screams of men when the doctor examined them and knew that his was not the worst case, even as he felt his own blood seeping out, first warm and then clammy cold against his side. The blood took his will; he was too exhausted to do anything about it and when the nurses hurried past him and left his bandaging unchanged, he did not call out to them. He said nothing, either, when they came and pushed him to his side and gave him quick, unceremonious injections. In his delirious moments, he saw Eberechi wearing her tight skirt and making gestures to him that he could not understand. And in his lucid moments, death occupied him. He tried to visualize a heaven, a God seated on a throne, but could not. Yet the alternative vision, that death was nothing but an endless silence, seemed unlikely. There was a part of him that dreamed, and he was not sure if that part could ever retreat into an interminable silence. Death would be a complete knowingness, but what frightened him was this: not knowing beforehand what it was he would know.

In the evenings, in the dim half-light, the people from Caritas came, a priest and two helpers carrying kerosene lanterns, giving out milk and sugar to the soldiers, asking their names and where they had come from.

‘Nsukka,’ Ugwu said, when he was asked. He thought the priest’s voice was vaguely familiar, but then everything was vaguely familiar here: The blood of the man next to him smelt like his, the nurse who placed a bowl of thin akamu next to him smiled like Eberechi.

‘Nsukka? What is your name?’ the priest asked.

Ugwu struggled to focus on the rounded face, the glasses, the browned collar. It was Father Damian. ‘I am Ugwu. I used to come with my madam Olanna to St Vincent de Paul.’

‘Ah!’ Father Damian squeezed his hand and Ugwu winced. ‘You fought for the cause? Where were you wounded? What have they done for you?’

Ugwu shook his head. One part of his buttocks was wrapped in fiery red pain; it consumed him. Father Damian spooned some powdered milk into his mouth and then placed a bag of sugar and milk next to him.

‘I know Odenigbo is with Manpower. I will send word to them,’ Father Damian said. Before he left, he slipped a wooden rosary onto Ugwu’s wrist.

The rosary was there, a cold pressure against his skin, when Mr Richard came some days later.

‘Ugwu, Ugwu.’ The fair hair and the strange-coloured eyes swam above him, and Ugwu was not sure who it was.

‘Can you hear me, Ugwu? I’ve come to take you.’ It was the same voice that had asked Ugwu questions about his village festival years ago. Ugwu knew then who it was. Mr Richard tried to help him get up and the pain shot up from his side and buttock to his head and eyes. Ugwu cried out, then clenched his teeth and bit his lip and sucked his own blood.

‘Easy now, easy now,’ Mr Richard said.

The bumpy ride lying in the backseat of the Peugeot 404 and the fierce sun that sparkled the windscreen made Ugwu wonder if he had died and this was what happened at death: an unending journey in a car. Finally, they stopped at a hospital that smelt not of blood but of disinfectant. Only when Ugwu lay in a real bed did he think that perhaps he was not going to die after all.

She lived in the graveyard like a tree. At dawn she saw the crows off and welcomed the bats home. At dusk she did the opposite. Between shifts she conferred with the ghosts of vultures that loomed in her high branches. She felt the gentle grip of their talons like an ache in an amputated limb. She gathered they weren't altogether unhappy at having excused themselves and exited from the story.

When she first moved in, she endured months of casual cruelty like a tree would – without flinching. She didn't turn to see which small boy had thrown a stone at her, didn't crane her neck to read the insults scratched into her bark. When people called her names – clown without a circus, queen without a palace – she let the hurt blow through her branches like a breeze and used the music of her rustling leaves as balm to ease the pain.

It was only after Ziauddin, the blind imam who had once led the prayers in the Fatehpuri Masjid, befriended her and began to visit her that the neighbourhood decided it was time to leave her in peace.

Long ago a man who knew English told her that her name written backwards (in English) spelled Majnu. In the English version of the story of Laila and Majnu, he said, Majnu was called Romeo and Laila was Juliet. She found that hilarious. "You mean I've made a *khichdi* of their story?" she asked. "What will they do when they find that Laila may actually be Majnu and Romi was really Juli?" The next time he saw her, the Man Who Knew English said he'd made a mistake. Her name spelled backwards would be Mujna, which wasn't a name and meant nothing at all. To this she said, "It doesn't matter. I'm all of them, I'm Romi and Juli, I'm Laila and Majnu. And Mujna, why not? Who says my name is Anjum? I'm not Anjum, I'm Anjuman. I'm a *mehfil*, I'm a gathering. Of everybody and nobody, of everything and nothing. Is there anyone else you would like to invite? Everyone's invited."

The Man Who Knew English said it was clever of her to come up with that one. He said he'd never have thought of it himself. She said, "How could you have, with your standard of Urdu? What d'you think? English makes you clever automatically?"

He laughed. She laughed at his laugh. They shared a filter cigarette. He complained that Wills Navy Cut cigarettes were short and stumpy and simply not worth the price. She said she preferred them any day to Four Square or the very manly Red & White.

She didn't remember his name now. Perhaps she never knew it. He was long gone, the Man Who Knew English, to wherever he had to go. And she was living in the graveyard behind the government hospital. For company she had her steel Godrej almirah in which she kept her music – scratched records and tapes – an old harmonium, her clothes, jewellery, her father's poetry books, her photo albums and a few press clippings that had survived the fire at the Khwabgah. She hung the key around her neck on a black thread along with her bent silver toothpick. She slept on a threadbare Persian carpet that she locked up in the day and unrolled between two graves at night (as a private joke, never the same two on consecutive nights). She still smoked. Still Navy Cut.

One morning, while she read the newspaper aloud to him, the old imam, who clearly hadn't been listening, asked – affecting a casual air – "Is it true that even the Hindus among you are buried, not cremated?"

Sensing trouble, she prevaricated. "True? Is what true? What is Truth?"